



**3RD BATTALION, THE RIFLES**

Rifleman Mark Turner, was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated while he was on patrol to the north of Kajaki, in Helmand, Afghanistan.

Mark Turner was born on 11 October 1988. He grew up in Gateshead and was educated at Thomas Hepburn Community School and then went to work as a panel beater before joining the Army.

Rifleman Turner joined the Army in January 2006 at the age of eighteen, completing phase one training before joining Second Battalion the Light Infantry in the summer of 2006. Rifleman Turner was a trained Assault Pioneer and Team Medic and had been on several overseas exercises including Kenya and Belize. He had already been on one previous tour of duty in Afghanistan from September 2006 to April 2007 during which he was injured in a road traffic accident.

Rifleman Turner was killed on 04 April 2010 when an improvised explosive device detonated while he was patrolling with his platoon to the north of Kajaki, in Helmand, Afghanistan. He leaves behind his family and fiancée.

Rifleman Turner's family:

Mark was a proper Mammy's boy described by his loving family as being 'daft as a brush'. He was a fanatical supporter of Newcastle United who looked forward to their imminent return to the Premier League, boasting about the fact that he had managed to watch the recent match against Nottingham Forest whilst out in Afghanistan. Mark loved to play poker and he also enjoyed listening to all types of music, having a distinct like of Dean Martin songs. He loved his food and regularly took up his passion of devouring cheese pizzas; however in food terms, nothing could surpass his desire of yellow Telly Tubby biscuits, sent out to him by his family.

His fiancée said that he always insisted on perfection and referred to their affection when Mark said they were both like 'peas and carrots'. Mark will be dearly missed by his mother Anne, fiancée Liesha, stepfather Joe, brother David and three sisters Lisa, Joanne and Julie.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES Battle Group

Rifleman Mark Turner was a remarkable young man who took in his stride the toughest and most dangerous job available here in Afghanistan. Daily he took responsibility for the lives of his friends by putting himself out in front and clearing the ground of the deadly devices left by insurgents with nothing to call on but a metal detector and his own instincts. It typifies the selfless can-do, the unflinching get-on-with-the-job attitude of our Riflemen to see young men such as he carrying out this task willingly, without thought for their own safety, merely for that of their friends and comrades.

Rifleman Turner was a much loved and respected member of his Company and of this Battle Group. His conduct and talents were nothing short of exemplary and he was blessed with a smile and a joke for every occasion. The kind of stoicism, humour and determination he showed on a daily basis is something of which our nation can be very proud. He has made an invaluable contribution to the marked achievements of his Company around the strategically crucial area of the Kajaki Dam in the very north of Helmand.

Rifleman Turner died doing a job he loved and for which he had a prolific talent. His brothers in arms will miss both the security and confidence he provided and the warmth of his wit and friendship. His loss is a tragedy and is felt most keenly by all in the Battle Group. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and his fiancée Leisha at this terrible time. We know that they will remember him as we do; as an exceptional soldier and a loving, loyal friend.

Major Mike Lynch, Officer Commanding C Company, 3 RIFLES

Rifleman Turner, Turtle to his mates, was one of the bravest men I have ever had the pleasure of working alongside. He had an inner bravery which made it even more humbling. He epitomised everything you could ever ask for in a Rifleman: selfless, warm hearted, and extremely professional. Quiet and unassuming by nature, he always led from the front clearing safe routes on every patrol. From the outset he proved himself to be exceptionally thorough spending painstakingly long periods of time lying on the ground finding countless IEDs by intuition alone. I am in no doubt that he saved the lives of many of his fellow Riflemen - his mental and physical endurance were truly remarkable. We all felt completely safe and confident following his cleared routes because he was so meticulous and methodical. He never sought recognition for this tough job; he never grumbled or complained, he just got on with the job at hand with dogged determination and a complete disregard for his own safety. On more than one occasion Rifleman Turner cleared safe routes, whilst under fire, knowing full well that he was putting his life in danger in order to secure a safe route into cover for his comrades - a true testament to his courage which never faltered.

His cheeky grin and sense of humour were infectious even after long and demanding patrols. Everyone wanted to be his friend and he was always surrounded by fellow Riflemen: it would be

very rare to see him on his own. His short term aspiration was to become a JNCO by the end of the year and I have no doubt that he would have made a first class NCO and an excellent role model for the young Riflemen. He died saving the lives of his comrades. We will all miss him dearly and the only thing left to say is thank you Rifleman Turner for keeping us safe. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and fiancée at this difficult time.

Lieutenant Will Melia, 9 Platoon Commander, C Company 3 RIFLES

I first met Rifleman Mark "Turtle" Turner while I was still in officer training, a fact that he would never let me forget, claiming that the only reason that I ever made it into the Army was because he carried all my kit and wrote all my orders. Turtle represented all that is good about soldiers in the Rifles. He was selfless, resolute and courageous and, at the same time, remained a funny, cheeky young man with a mischievous sense of humour. It was a rare occurrence to see Turtle without a grin on his face and he was one of the most popular Riflemen in the Company. This was Rifleman Turner's second tour of Afghanistan, having been seriously injured during his first. It is a testament to his strength of character that he returned so willingly. Rifleman Turner was not fearless; he knew fear yet chose to overcome it, and in doing so is the bravest individual I have ever had the pleasure of serving with. He knew that he was putting himself into harm's way by leading patrols and searching for IEDs, but he continued to do so, proud in the knowledge that he was keeping his mates safe. On one occasion, under sustained heavy enemy fire, Rifleman Turner put himself directly into the line of fire in order to clear a bunker for his fellow Riflemen to occupy. Acts such as this epitomised Turtle; a man who was always looking out for his friends, always putting their safety before his own.

Rifleman Turner was exceptionally good at his job and every man in my Platoon, myself included, is keenly aware that it is due to his hard work and dedication that we are still alive today. On the day of his death, Turtle had already found one device and was clearing his comrades into a position of cover when a second IED struck. Rifleman Turner was one of the stars of my platoon and, on returning from Afghanistan, was due to attend a JNCO cadre, and I have no reservations in predicting that he would have made an excellent leader of men.

Turtle had three loves in life: his family, his fiancée Liesha and his beloved Newcastle United. He was probably most vocal about the third of these and was often to be found in the small hours of the morning in the cook house following the Magpies' charge for promotion. It is not an exaggeration to say that Turtle was the most liked member of the platoon, a close friend to all, with never a bad word said against him, and to have him torn from us so late in the tour has been heart-wrenching. My thoughts are with Liesha and his family in this time of bereavement and I offer my heartfelt condolences. Rifleman Turner was an outstanding soldier and a terrific young man. I cannot stress enough how sorely he will be missed by his platoon.

Lieutenant Robert Fellows, 7 Platoon Commander, C Company

Rifleman Turner was a popular and respectable member of C Company. In the words of the men 'he was pure morale' and could always be counted on to lift spirits with a joke or a prank. With the Company split up I had not seen turtle for many months but have fond memories of him. The thoughts of the whole platoon are with our brother Rifleman in 9 Platoon, his family,

friends and loved ones.

Warrant Officer Class 2 Steve Watts, Company Serjeant Major, C Company, 3 RIFLES

When I look back on this tour there will be one group of people that will stand out above all that took part, BARMA Men. In Kajaki there was one real legend when it came to BARMA, Rifleman Mark Turner or "Turtle" as the lads knew him. Rifleman Turner was the epitome of a Rifleman, cheeky, fit and robust and above all brave. Moments before he died he had found an IED, which he did regularly, saving countless lives throughout the tour in the process. He had found more IEDs than any other BARMA man in Kajaki during the tour. Turtle had been injured before on a previous OP HERRICK in a road traffic accident, and had come back to Afghanistan recovered and raring to go.

As one of the old sweats he was a real example to the younger Riflemen. In barracks he was never in trouble, always well dressed and on time, making him as unique in barracks as he was on operations amongst the other Riflemen. He was on the list of volunteers for the Battalion JNCO Cadre in the summer but sadly the Battalion and Regiment as a whole have lost a future leader of men who had so much potential. The loss has hit the Company hard and he will leave a gap that can't be filled. Our loss is nothing compared to the loss his family must feel and all our thoughts are with them at this terrible time.

Colour Serjeant Jamie Rufus, C Company, 3 RIFLES

I did not know Rifleman Turner as well as some. However, I do know that whenever following the routes that he had personally cleared, you had this warm and confident feeling that it was safe. He had found dozens of devices in our time in Kajaki no doubt saving countless lives - we all owe him.

Serjeant Jonpaul Greenwood, Platoon Serjeant, 9 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Mark Turner was, in my eyes, a true friend and a fantastic soldier. On my arrival to the Platoon, taking over as Platoon Serjeant in 2007, he was the first one to come up to me and show his disgust that I supported Leeds United. At first, not knowing how to take a chirpy Geordie lad like himself, I realised he had true character, grit, determination and potential to one day be a true leader of men. During my time with the Platoon we've become very close. He did a lot of 2IC's jobs under my command and he did them with an outstanding ability, proving to me that he was not just a cheeky character, he was an excellent soldier. Throughout HERRICK 11 he has been to the forefront of everything we've done. He has BARMA'd without fear, finding different types of IEDs then turning round with his Geordie accent to say "Sarge, I've got something". Whenever he turned round to me and said this I knew nine times out of ten it was an IED. This man, throughout this tour, has saved a lot of his comrades' lives within the Platoon and also the Company. Even up to the point of his unfortunate incident, when I was stood next to him, he reminded me that I owed him £50 for Newcastle getting promoted to the Premiership next season. He turned round and laughed, showing his cheeky Geordie grin and he carried on leading from the front, which he has done all the way through (Turtle, in my eyes you are a true hero, Rest in Peace my friend, you will be missed not just as a colleague, but as a true friend.)

My heart goes out to his future wife Liesha and all his family.

Rest in Piece Turtle. You will never be forgotten.

Corporal Damien Gray, 1 Section Commander, 9 Platoon, C Company

Turtle was a Rifleman that every section commander wanted as their BARMA man. He showed great courage leading the platoon whilst under fire. I am proud to have called him one of my friends. My thoughts go to his family. RIP mate.

Corporal David Kavanagh, 7 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Turner (Turtle) one of the strongest brothers C Company had, loved by all who worked with him. Always led from the front showing immense courage, this is the type of man he is. I remember the first time I met turtle it was training for Op Herrick 6 where he was stood there looking ready for what ever would come his way. We soon gave him the name turtle due to the fact he had a long neck and small head. He lived up to his name by never hiding under his shell though which made him a strong character. This made him well respected by all. All my thoughts go to his family at this hard time.

Lance Corporal Mark Reynolds, 9 Platoon, C Company

I am proud to have served with Mark Turner (or Turtle as we all call him). He was a good friend to everyone and always ready to have a laugh and a joke, to lift the atmosphere. I have lost a best friend and a colleague. I will never forget you, a true legend loved by all his mates, love you always.

Lance Corporal David Carlton, C Company Snipers

I have known Rifleman Turner aka Turtle since he joined C Company. As soon as he spoke I knew him to be a Geordie supporter, with me being a Mackem supporter we had some heated debates about football. It was an honour to have served with him and have him as my friend. My thoughts are with his family and friends at this difficult time. RIP mate.

Lance Corporal Michael Flanagan, C Company Snipers

When Rifleman Turner first got to the Battalion I was section Second In Command. He was very quiet and reserved to begin with however it didn't take long for him to establish himself as a humorous person, not to mention a top class soldier. He always managed to boost morale with his wit especially when everyone else was snapped. It's hard to believe he is no longer with us and my thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones at this difficult time.

Lance Corporal David Nicol, 7 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Mark Turner was an exceptional Rifleman, he was fit, confident and fearless always bringing a smile to the blokes with his smart humour. From the worst exercise at the Infantry

Training Centre to Afghanistan, Turner was never short of morale and was happy to do any task put in front of him. He was a rifleman that the younger rifleman should aspire to be. Turner will be a great loss to the Company and Battalion, I will never forget him, my thoughts go out to his family and girlfriend that he leaves behind. RIP Turtle, you will always be in my thoughts. Rifleman Turner like many who fell before him a prime example that the good die young.

Rifleman Ollie Smith, 9 Platoon, C Company

Turtle was there for me since day one. He was a courageous soldier and an amazing friend. Words can't explain the devastation within the platoon. I owe my life to T and I just want to say thank you mate and you will be greatly missed. RIP mate.

Rifleman Mickey Harris, 9 Platoon, C Company

To Turtle,

I'd like to say a massive thank you mucker. One for being such a good mate and an absolute legend. Two for always being there for people when they needed anything and caring so much about them. And finally a thank you from all the blokes and myself for without a doubt saving everyone's life with your actions by being such a caring bloke and a top notch squaddie. Love ya and gonna miss you mate.

Rifleman Jason Seymour, 9 Platoon, C Company

I only knew Turtle for a year but in that year I always knew he was a quality bloke. During this tour I've had some good laughs with him. Whether it was up on the Peaks or down on the ground his morale never dropped. I will never forget him and we owe our lives to him. RIP mate.

Rifleman Salima Ragogo, 9 Platoon, C Company

Turner: A brother, a friend and a brave soldier. We wouldn't have made it this far if it wasn't for you. It is sad to see you leave us this way. You will be sorely missed around here bro. Rest in Peace mate.

Rifleman Dave Jones, 9 Platoon, C Company

Turtle, I know we've only known each other nearly a year, but in that year we've done so much and had a lot of laughs. Since we've been out here, I've been patrolling right behind you, with you always leading the way for us and I wouldn't want to be behind anyone else. You're gonna be truly missed by everyone. RIP mate.

Rifleman Scott Basnett, 9 Platoon, C Company

Mark, I am one of the many people who were lucky enough to know you. You were one of my closest friends in the platoon. I knew I could come to you with any problem and you would take time out to listen to me. I can never thank you enough for all the good times we had together.

You inspired a lot of people with your professionalism and enthusiasm in everything you did. That cheeky smile of yours was quality and you could get away with anything with it. You were an outstanding soldier and an even better friend. My thoughts go out to you fiancée Liesha and all of your family in this tragic time. I love you mate and I will never forget the time we spent together. You will never be forgotten. Rest in Peace mate.

Rifleman Thomas Saldanha, 9 Platoon, C Company

Turtle was a truly inspirational man; never one to shirk when a job needed doing, and always there for advice and to keep morale high. These qualities were truly shown in his ability as an exceptional BARMA man, always point man, he'd never shy away when a dangerous tasking was ahead. He'd just give a cheeky grin and, with a "let's get it on" was off clearing a safe path for the platoon. This natural confidence always gave me the encouragement and motivation to follow on behind him. There is no doubt that he has saved many lives within the platoon, including my own and for that I am forever grateful. The platoon won't be the same without your wisdom and composure. I am glad I had the pleasure to serve with you and you'll never be forgotten mate. My thoughts go to your family and beloved girlfriend. Rest in Peace mate.

Rifleman Aaron Gaskell, 9 Platoon, C Company

Mark, you were what everyone needed in 9 Platoon. I knew Mark for almost three years and he was one of my closest friends. I enjoyed the laughs that we had together; there was never a quiet moment when you were in the same area as me. You will be sorely missed, not just by 9 Platoon but by everyone who had the privilege to know you. My heart goes out to Mark's family and his beloved fiancée Liesha at this time of sadness. In everyone's eyes he was a true hero and saved countless lives. I will miss the laughs, jokes and all the good times we had. You will always be in our thoughts and prayers and will never be forgotten. RIP Mark. Love you loads mate.

Rifleman James Hills, 7 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Turner was an asset to the company. As one of the more senior blokes he was a friend to everyone. He was about to do the JNCO Cadre and he would have made a brilliant NCO at that. You will be missed mate RIP.

Rifleman Christopher Hooker, 7 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Turner known by all as 'Turtle' a strong and experienced Rifleman. His second tour of Afghanistan, he led from the front. Every one of the lads looked up to him. After completing basic skiing together in Germany, Turtle got the chance to go to Norway on advance skiing course leaving the rest of us. Turtle always excelled at everything he did, he will be truly missed.

Rifleman Aaron Barry, 7 Platoon, C Company

Rifleman Mark Turner or Turtle as he was known to his mates was an outstanding Rifleman and

an even better mate. I first met turtle just after two years ago when I came to the Battalion. He wasn't the type of bloke that wouldn't talk to you because you were the new lad, he was the type to be the first to guide you in the right direction. I think that's why turtle grew to be one of my best mates not only at work but on Civvy Street too. I will never forget times we spent together or the things he taught me. Turner was a model rifleman and the younger lads of the Company and Battalion should aspire to be like him, like I did and continue to do so in his memory.

My thoughts and prayers go out to his family, friends and girlfriend at this difficult time RIP Turtle, you will always be in my thoughts. 'Gone but not forgotten' Sleep tight mate, there is a star in the night sky for you.