



It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Warrant Officer Class 2 Leonard Perran Thomas of the Royal Corps of Signals was killed in Afghanistan on Sunday 1 July 2012.

On 1 July 2012, he went on patrol to a checkpoint known as Kamarack Pul to help organise a meeting (shura) with the local detachment of Afghan National Civil Order Police. Having completed their task and on leaving the compound, was attacked by small arms fire and fatally wounded. He was based in Forward Operating Base Ouellette in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province, Afghanistan.

Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Thomas deployed to Afghanistan on 17 February 2012 as the Military Stabilisation Support Team (MSST) operator attached to Combined Force Burma.

He was born on 8 August 1967 and was from Ross-on-Wye. He enlisted into the Army in 1990, aged 23. On completion of training he joined the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards and deployed on Operation GRANBY to Kuwait and Iraq the same year.

He later transferred to the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, finishing his regular service in 2005. Much of his career was spent with the Reconnaissance Platoon and he served with distinction whilst in Northern Ireland. As a career soldier he joined the Reserve Forces, continuing his career with 37 Signal Regiment (Volunteers). More recently he held a Full Time Reserve Service appointment in Headquarters Army where he continued supporting operations in the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device area.

WO2 Thomas was in the twilight of an exemplary military career. This was his final operational tour and he was looking forward to spending time pursuing his passion for the outdoors and spending time with his long-term partner Rachel and his mother Sylvia.

WO2 Thomas leaves behind his mother, partner Rachel, and younger brother Tristan (43).

The family of WO2 Thomas paid the following tribute:

"Pez was a military man through and through. He thrived in extreme environments, both in the military and in his spare time.

"He was a keen climber and mountaineer and will be sorely missed by everyone who had the privilege to have met him."

Colonel Alan Richmond, late Queen's Dragoon Guards, Commander, Military Stabilisation Support Group, said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 'Pez' Thomas was a soldier of great experience, wisdom and dedication.

"A proud member of 37 Signal Regiment (Volunteers), with 15 years of regular military service behind him, 'Pez' became interested in the activities of the Military Stabilisation Support Group whilst supporting its training. Yearning for a final military deployment, he volunteered to serve with the Group where his presence, passion and experience helped bind together an eclectic team drawn from all sections of the Armed Forces.

"The toughest jobs are given to most able and 'Pez' was deployed to a challenging area of Helmand. There he acted as a Stabilisation Operator; striving to enhance the lives of the people by improving local governance, infrastructure and basic services. It was whilst working tirelessly to build the foundations for a lasting peace that he was so tragically struck down alongside cherished colleagues from the Welsh Guards.

"The Military Stabilisation Support Group mourns the loss of a much valued and respected comrade. For our small tight-knit team in Helmand the grief will be most acute but the loss will undoubtedly strengthen our resolve to get back out and continue his selfless work.

"At this difficult time our prayers and thoughts rest with his partner Rachel and his mother Sylvia."

Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Allison, Royal Logistic Corps, SO1 Transition, Headquarters Task Force Helmand, said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas will be remembered by the Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers of the Military Stabilisation Support Group (Afghanistan) as a highly professional, passionate and forthright soldier who was genuinely driven by a desire to make a difference.

"A consummate Warrant Officer he was hardworking, hugely experienced, possessed a keen sense of humour and was rightly proud of his prestigious military career, the majority of which was spent as a member of the Welsh Guards. A measure of the type of man he was is the fact that he had willingly volunteered for one last operational deployment, having spent two and a half years on Full Time Reserve Service working in the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device area within Headquarters Army. On deployment to Afghanistan he then volunteered to be the Military Stabilisation Support Team Operator within Combined Force Burma due to his prior

experience as an Infantry Senior Non-Commissioned Officer.

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas persevered in his pursuit to improve the lives of Afghans living in this area and to help connect them to official government structures. During his time, and due to his emphatic approach and dedication, he managed to make huge strides forward and was in the final stages of starting a number of significant projects. This excellent work will not be allowed to falter and will prove a lasting legacy to his memory.

"The Military Stabilisation Support Group (Afghanistan), his colleagues and friends will miss his wit, healthy cynicism and good company. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with his partner, Rachel, and his family at this tragic time. We mourn their loss; he is gone but will never be forgotten. His sacrifice will inspire others to follow his example. Rest in peace old comrade."

Lieutenant Colonel Dominique Cairns, Commanding Officer, 37 Signal Regiment (Volunteers), said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas was a dedicated and professional soldier who was a long standing member of the Army in many roles, both as a regular soldier and reservist. He will be remembered for his lively sense of humour and incredible enthusiasm. He took immense pride in passing on his wealth of knowledge to recruits and colleagues alike who will join us all in the deep sadness and sense of loss that we feel. He was an immensely proud and professional soldier who will be sorely missed by all that knew him.

"He leaves behind his long term partner, Sergeant Rachel Prosser, also a member of 37 Signal Regiment (Volunteers), and his mother Sylvia."

Major Freddie Grounds, The Royal Anglian Regiment, Officer Commanding Military Stabilisation Support Team (Afghanistan), said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas was an utterly outstanding soldier: professional, dedicated, courageous and dependable, yet also modest and self-effacing, with a dry sense of humour. He was exceptionally proud of his Welsh Guards pedigree, he was Blue, Red, Blue to the core, but he was equally proud of his more recent affiliation with the Royal Signals, with whom he had the opportunity to continue his military service.

"His contribution to the Military Stabilisation Support team on Op HERRICK 16 has been immense and his determination to persevere with bringing something tangible to the people of the Upper Gereshk Valley has been a mark of the type of man he was. His tragic and untimely loss leaves a huge gap in our team. Our grief however is dwarfed by that which will be felt by his mother, Sylvia, and partner, Rachel. I hope some small comfort can be taken from the fact that he died doing the job he loved, surrounded by his Welsh Guards brothers, who held him in such high esteem."

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Webb, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh, said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas made an enormous impact during his time with Combined

Force Burma. He deployed to Forward Operating Base Ouellette about a month before the 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh Battle Group and was already immersed in his role by the time we arrived. He genuinely believed in his work and relished the opportunity to make a difference for local Afghans.

"This part of Nahr-e Saraj is a challenging area in which to deliver projects, but through his experience, expertise and determination he made considerable progress and much more than any of us thought possible at the start of our tour. Through his frequent meetings with the local population he showed an empathy and sense of purpose in dealing with their concerns which was an example to us all.

"In a very short space of time Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas became a very highly regarded member of our team. He was hard-working, fun and utterly professional. Having deployed on numerous operational tours, he consistently displayed the highest courage, professionalism and ideals. He will be hugely missed and our thoughts and prayers are with his partner, Rachel, and his family at this difficult time."

Major Adam Greenfield, Royal Regiment of Artillery, Officer Commanding Military Stabilisation Support Team, Nahr-e Saraj (North), said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 'Pez' Thomas was a good man, a good friend and a proud Welsh Guardsman through and through. His passion and loyalty for the Battalion in which he began his career never wavered despite transferring to the Royal Signals. The Guards influence never left him and when you spoke to Pez you would be forgiven for thinking that he had never left the Guards.

"His passion for soldiering was matched only by his love for the outdoors and his partner Rachel: without doubt his two motivators in life and during his time in Afghanistan. It was rare that I had a conversation with Pez without at some point him talking of Rachel and his plans for a future with her. It was a pleasure to have known Pez and my thoughts are with Rachel and the rest of his family and friends at this very sad time."

Major Matt England, Adjutant General's Corps (Educational and Training Services), Officer Commanding Joint Theatre Education Centre, said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas was exactly the kind of Warrant Officer all soldiers aspire to be. He always wanted to be at the point where he could make the most difference. He was articulate, bright and fit, and I was lucky enough to work with him and also call him a friend.

"He had the ability to sum up, in one sentence, what we were all thinking. A rueful comment and a smile would often get the message across when a plan needed experience to turn into reality. He was of a generation of Warrant Officers who knew what right looked like and he was always willing to tell me he was right.

"He was proud about being a Welsh Guardsman and always had a story to tell; I'm certain he is blue-red-blue to the core. He was grateful to the Royal Signals, who gave him the opportunity

for further service and he volunteered to come to Afghanistan to make a difference.

"He was strongly supported by his partner Rachel and his family. With Rachel he indulged his other great passions: mountaineering and climbing. He spent the winter prior to deploying in Norway Ice Climbing with Rachel and mid-tour leave in the Lake District. He lived a full life.

"His values shone through in everything he did. A good man, consummate professional and true gentlemen, he was someone I am proud to have called a friend."

"Pez will be sadly missed by all those that had the pleasure to meet him and my thoughts and prayers are with all his family and friends at this sad time." Warrant Officer Class 2 Jason Suller

Captain Jamie Woodfine, Influence Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh, said:

"Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas believed passionately in being a professional soldier. His years spent in the Welsh Guards showed in all he did and he set himself high standards. While widely and affectionately known as the 'Grump' of the HQ he covered a keen and ever-present sense of humour and a dedication to the ideals of the Military Stabilisation Support Group. He never faltered in his efforts to try and help the Afghan people.

"Pez was a good friend, a good man, and a great soldier. I will miss his grumpiness and I will miss his humour, but I will also miss his approach to our work and the experience he brought with him, which greatly assisted me throughout. He enjoyed a long and varied career in the army and remembered it all with great fondness. As a member of the TA he applied for this tour because he wanted to continue to make a real difference, and I believe that the realisation of the projects and initiatives he started will do just that.

"My thoughts are with his partner, Rachel, and his family at this tragic time."

Captain Darren Pridmore, Regimental Careers Management Officer, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, said:

"I have known Pez for over 20 years and I am proud to have called him a friend. He joined the Welsh Guards after transferring from the Coldstream Guards, during another operational tour in Northern Ireland and he was an instant hit.

"He was wacky, a little odd with a wicked sense of humour and fitted in immediately. This was not only because of his funny side, and that his father had been a Welsh Guardsman before him, but because of his consummate professionalism. Having served in the First Gulf War and in the Close Observation Platoon in Northern Ireland several times, there was little he didn't know about reconnaissance. He was an outstanding climber and introduced me to the sport many years ago; we climbed together only a few months before he deployed and we were arranging our next trip for his return, we sadly won't make that climb now.

"He will be sadly missed by those that served with him and my thoughts are now with his partner and family. I can only imagine the pain they are feeling. He was a great man who taught

me so much and it will not be the same without him."

Captain Anna Crossley, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, Female Engagement Officer, Combined Force Burma, said:

"Mr Thomas was a soldier with years of experience as an Infanteer in the Welsh Guards. He had seen and done it all but behind his gruff sarcastic exterior was a man who would quietly offer information on the inner workings of the Infantry and support to those such as me with far less experience. His years in the military had taught him the need for patience and in this respect stood him in good stead in his work.

"Despite regular frustrations within his role he was a realist and hoped the slow careful progress he made with the local population would eventually take effect. The regular moments in the smoking shed and the sharing of memories of former years soldiering knitted us together as a team, as did our attempts to bring Afghans into closer contact with their Government.

"I will miss his company in the back of many armoured vehicles and the waiting for locals with a cup of tea. My thoughts are with his partner, Rachel, and his family."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Jack Harrison, Royal Navy, Second-in-Command, Military Stabilisation Support Team, Nahr-e Saraj (North), said:

"Pez Thomas was an outstanding soldier and friend and I am honoured to have served with him. He was the embodiment of his Welsh Guards, Reconnaissance Platoon and Brigade Reconnaissance Force background. Professional, precise and clear thinking; he was not one to suffer fools. Having completed a chest full of operational tours his experience and skills were second to none and he was always willing to give advice to those around him, albeit with a layer of his sarcastic grumbling humour included.

"His long suffering work on the present tour highlighted his professionalism and fortitude with long hours of work spent on slow moving projects which took time to show their rewards. He never despaired and kept grafting toward the long term goals. His experience, combined with his readiness to give his opinions at all levels were a godsend to his team and his humorous moans will long be remembered. His loss will be deeply felt by all within the team and our thoughts are with his family and his girlfriend, Rachel."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Jason Suller, Operations Warrant Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh, said:

"I have known Pez for only six months, however it felt like I have known him all my career. He was a genuine guy who was passionate about everything he did - from mountain biking to shopping on Amazon (I still don't know why he bought those cowboy boots). He was a proud guy, always reminding me of his Infantry background and was so chuffed that he was able to work with his old Regiment the Welsh Guards, saying he was very tempted to dust off his old beret. Most nights we would sit with a brew and have a good whinge and chat about what we were going to get up to at the end of the tour.

"Pez will be sadly missed by all those that had the pleasure to meet him and my thoughts and prayers are with all his family and friends at this sad time. RIP mucka."