

Captain Rupert William Michael Bowers, of the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), attached to 2nd Battalion The Rifles, operating as an advisor to the Afghan National Army, was killed in Afghanistan on 21st March 2012. Captain Bowers commanded a small team responsible for the training and development of the Afghan National Army based in Forward Operating Base Ouellette in the Mirmandab region of Nahr-e Saraj. On 21st March 2012, he was leading a patrol to clear a position from the threat of insurgents when he was killed by the explosion from an improvised explosive device.

Captain Rupert Bowers was born on 29th July 1987 in Wolverhampton and after studying at The Old Swinford Hospital and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, he commissioned into the 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment in April 2007. After successfully passing the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course in Brecon he joined his regiment in Afghanistan in 2007 where his actions during a complex insurgent ambush resulted in him being 'Mentioned in Dispatches'. Upon return from Afghanistan he deployed on exercises in Jamaica and later to Kenya, as a Fire Support Group Commander after qualifying as a Machine Gun Specialist. He leaves behind his beloved wife, Victoria and his newly-born son Hugo, as well as parents Patrick and Jane and sister Juliet. The thoughts and prayers of the British Army are with Captain Bowers' family at this very difficult time.

Lieutenant Colonel Colin R Marks, Commanding Officer, Combined Force Burma, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said: "Captain Rupert Bowers joined his battalion in Garmsir, Afghanistan in 2007 during Op HERRICK 6. A gifted officer, he excelled in the field and was happiest when leading men in battle. Possessing the heart of a lion, he was Mentioned in Dispatches for gallantry on this, his first of three tours of duty. Returning to Helmand for a second time in 2009, he served as a member of A (Grenadier) Company, 2 MERCIAN, under command of the Light Dragoons Battle Group during Operation HERRICK 10. Already proven in battle, he continued to lead from the front and was wounded in action. During Operation HERRICK 15, he was a natural choice to lead an advisor team embedded within an Afghan National Army Tolay (Company) operating in an area in the North of Nahr-e Saraj heavily contested by insurgents. Although officially attached to the Brigade Advisory Group, he spent his entire tour attached to 2 MERCIAN and was among his closest friends and comrades right to the end. The bravest of the brave, he died as he lived, leading from the front in the face of the enemy. "Full of character, Rupert was fun to be around all the time and I enjoyed his company very much. We talked for hours about his love of piano music and he always made me feel happy because he was such a sincere and fun-loving person. His brother officers loved him dearly and we will remember him for his infectious smile and wicked sense of humour. Married to his beloved Vicky, their son Hugo was born while Rupert was home on leave in February 2011. I know he was looking forward to rejoining his family later this month when his tour was due to finish. As well as Vicky and Hugo, our thoughts and prayers also go out to his father Patrick, mother Jane and sister Juliet. Rest easy brother, your duty is done. You will live in our hearts forever and we will never forget you."

Lieutenant Colonel William S C Wright MBE, Commanding Officer, Brigade Advisory Group, 2nd Battalion The Rifles, said: "Captain Rupert Bowers served with 2 Rifles Brigade Advisory Group for most of the last year, including all of our pre-tour training. His infectious smile, constant good humour and immense dedication to his men made an instant impression on all of us. During the

demanding advisor training, his ability to get on with anyone and his strong soldiering skills marked him out as a young officer with real potential as an Afghan National Army (ANA) Advisor. Not surprisingly, he ended up in one of the toughest areas of Helmand working alongside an independent ANA Tolay Company. He more than rose to the challenge. The ANA warriors as well as his 2 RIFLES Force Protection Team had nothing but the utmost respect for him and would have followed him anywhere. The ANA's success against the Taliban in this demanding area is solely down to his Herculean efforts and dogged determination to lead them by example in everything.

"It was a pleasure to see him at work, smiling amidst his Afghan warriors and always with an amusing story to tell; life was never dull with him around. The whole of 2 RIFLES are deeply saddened by his tragic loss. He was loved and respected by all ranks as one of our own. He was, and will always remain, an honorary Rifleman.

"All our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Victoria and his baby son Hugo, who was born during his R&R."

Major John Skillen, Officer Commanding, D (Fire Support) Company, Combined Force Burma, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said:

"Rupert was a professional, diligent and well-respected officer whom I have had the privilege to command for over a year. Fiercely loyal and willing to go the extra mile to ensure the job was complete, he epitomised the courage and dedication that is expected of today's young Army officer. A gregarious character, Rupert was often found to be at the centre of any prank and had the ability to make people laugh at any time with his keen sense of humour. A true friend, Rupert will be sorely missed by the officers and men of the Fire Support Company. Our thoughts are with his wife and young son at this sad time."

Captain Andrew Bell, Reconnaissance Platoon Commander, Combined Force Burma, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said:

"When Rupert arrived in the battalion during HERRICK 6 he was met by me, a slightly more senior Second Lieutenant, and immediately set about his own particular style of command. We both stayed with A Coy for HERRICK 10, and I then followed him to D Company; it seemed we were destined to be Platoon Commanders forever. He will be remembered for spirited discussions, whether in the office or in the Officers' Mess, happy to argue black was white if he could tempt someone to bite. He will be remembered for the close bond he formed with his men and his peers.

"His confident and bold exterior was reflected in his style of command, but he proved to be a different man when it came to his wife and newborn child, whom I am grateful he got to see, even if only once.

"Our thoughts are with his wife Vicky and his family at this tragic time."

Captain Duncan Hadland, Afghan National Security Forces Development Officer, Combined Force Burma, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said:

"Ever since Rupert and I commissioned we have been together as brother officers. From the leafy jungles of Brunei or the happy sands of Ocho Rios in Jamaica to the harsh times in Afghanistan, we have been side by side as officers of A (Grenadier) Coy and later D (Fire Support Coy). I have seen this man grow from a young Platoon Commander to one of the British Army's most tactically aware and committed officers - he is a future company commander lost to us. I will miss him more than anyone reading this will understand and I will never forget him. My loss is nothing though, compared to that of Vicky and Hugo. My fellow officers and I will be there for them, wherever they need us. Goodbye my friend - I will never forget you."

Lieutenant Paul Seligman, Advisor Commander, Brigade Advisory Group, 3 SCOTS, said: "Rupert was one of my peers as an Advisor working with the Afghan National Army and I have never met a man as bursting with life as him. Life seemed to leap out of Rupert at every turn: his loud voice always ready with cutting banter, his arms flailing to express his surging emotions. ♦ He truly experienced the world in a way that we lesser men cannot imagine. ♦ He was a warrior, as brave as any; I can scarcely believe that anything could bring him to a halt and the world is a lesser place without him. I remember his pride and excitement at the news that Hugo, his first born, was on his way. He would have been a father to make us all jealous, just as he was a devoted and doting husband. Rupert, you enriched the lives of all who knew you. ♦ You are a towering figure in our memories. ♦ I shall never forget your wit and your sheer vitality. ♦ Rest well, my friend."

WO1 (Regimental Sergeant Major) Martyn Chatterley, Combined Force Burma, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said: "Captain Rupert Bowers was a larger than life character with an immense personality that impressed the soldiers and officers who served alongside him, always there with a quick-witted one-liner that brought a smile to everyone's face. "Despite being young, his leadership and command presence was impressive. ♦ Never one to sit back and wait, he was a professional who was brave to the end. ♦ Capt Bowers died amongst friends doing what he loved to do. My sincere condolences and thoughts are with his wife and family at this difficult time. "He will be sorely missed by all in 2 MERCIAN but will never be forgotten. ♦ 'Stand Firm and Strike Hard'." Lance Corporal Matthew Moore, Team Second-in-Command, Advisor 34, Brigade Advisory Group, 2nd Battalion The Rifles, said: "Captain Bowers was the best boss I have ever worked with. ♦ He was very good at his job, and always there for the blokes. ♦ I know he wouldn't think twice about putting his neck on the line for his men. "Boss, it was an honour serving under your command. Rest in Peace." Rifleman Charlie Cohen, Team Member, Advisor 34, Brigade Advisory Group, 2nd Battalion The Rifles, said: "It was a true honour to serve my first tour of Afghanistan under his command. He gave me and the other blokes motivation and courage when we needed it most. ♦ He also had us all laughing our heads off with his famous one liners! ♦ He was fearless and full of bravery, an inspiration to me and my fellow Riflemen. Sir, Rest in Peace." Rifleman Paul Shaw, Team Member, Advisor 34, Brigade Advisory Group, 2nd Battalion The Rifles, said: "When I first met Captain Bowers I knew me and the boys were in good hands. ♦ The last six months have been filled with endless banter about our green jackets and him with his red coat but Capt Bowers is by far the finest officer I have had the pleasure of working for. ♦ We have lost a great boss, but my thoughts and prayers are with his wife, new son and family at this sad time. I hope they find the strength they need for the future."