

Lance Corporal Dane Elson
1st Battalion Welsh Guards

Lance Corporal Elson was born on 28 September 1986 in Harare, Zimbabwe. His family now lives in Bridgend in Wales. Having joined the Army, he completed his training in Guards Training Company, Catterick, in 2004 and joined the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards when they were based at RAF St Athan, near Cardiff.

He served in Iraq in 2004/05, and in Bosnia in 2006/07. He passed a promotion course and was promoted to Lance Corporal during the pre-deployment training for Afghanistan.

Lance Corporal Elson was a keen rugby player and he lived for the mates he had around him in the Welsh Guards. He had a very bright future ahead of him, and stood out as a Guardsman destined for the higher ranks of the battalion.

Lieutenant Colonel Gus Fair, Commanding Officer, The Light Dragoons Battle Group, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was part of a small band of Welsh Guards attached to the Battle Group. Despite being small in number, they have made a huge impact with their professionalism, drive and determination to take the fight to the enemy. Lance Corporal Elson was one of the best of these. It is typical of the man that he died while providing cover to the rest of his platoon. Though Lance Corporal Elson is no longer with us, his fellow Welsh Guardsmen, and the Battle Group, will remember this talented and popular soldier."

His Battalion Second-in-Command, Major Andrew Speed MBE, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was a dedicated and loyal Welsh Guardsman who had been with the battalion for five years. He was promoted shortly before his deployment to Afghanistan and was looking forward to an undoubtedly bright future.

"Lance Corporal Elson was a Javelin operator with one of the fire support groups, a job he relished. He was extremely fit and was mentally very tough. Prior to deployment, Lance Corporal Elson broke his wrist while learning to drive a quad bike. This meant that his deployment would be delayed. So keen was he to deploy with his fellow Welsh Guardsmen that he suggested to his Section Commander that he should cut off his plaster and pretend that his wrist was fine. To his disappointment, he was forced to wait for his wrist to heal.

"With Lance Corporal Elson's belated deployment came his characteristic energy and enthusiasm, which made an immediate impact on his friends and fellow Welsh Guardsmen serving in the small contingent of Guardsmen attached to The Light Dragoons. He was soon in his element, and could not have been a more effective Team Commander on operations - he

galvanised his team and was the fully rounded article. It was so typical of Lance Corporal Elson to have been providing cover and looking out for his mates when he died, he lived his life with a very selfless ethos which inspired others.

"Outside of the Army he was a man whose company others would seek. His friends describe him as being as sociable as a young Guardsman can be; he was universally regarded as being reliably good for morale. For Lance Corporal Elson's friends, no night out was complete without his presence.

"In the same manner that we have dealt with our previous tragic losses, the Welsh Guards will bear this loss with fortitude and determination. In the knowledge that our fallen will have wanted nothing more than for us to continue with even greater determination and stoicism, we will continue undaunted by our losses."

His Company Commander from the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, Major Austen Salusbury, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was a first class soldier who crammed a lot into the five years he spent with 1st Battalion Welsh Guards. He had shone as a Guardsman and had been recently promoted before deploying to Afghanistan, a deployment he relished and which caused him to be so disappointed when he could not deploy at the same time as the rest of his Fire Support Group due to an injury.

"When he did deploy, he proved as expected to be a very strong Team Commander in the demanding operational environment of Afghanistan. His belated deployment from the UK brought significant impact; his characteristic drive and determination were an example to his comrades in the small and tightly-knit band of Guardsmen serving with The Light Dragoons Battle Group.

"Lance Corporal Elson's unassuming character belied a quiet determination and confidence which was reassuring to all. With a diligence in all that he did, his Platoon Commander could not have asked for a better man to command one of his fire support group teams.

"Extremely sociable and universally popular, his loss will be felt by all of the friends he had in the Anti-Tank Platoon and his Fire Support Group, in Support Company as a whole, and by the wider Welsh Guards family."

His Platoon Commander, Captain Phil Durham, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was recently promoted because he embodied all the qualities of the most promising of junior leaders: outstanding fitness, calmness under pressure and an intense reliability. He was immensely popular and had a great sense of humour. No matter the size of the task ahead of him, he would take it in his stride with the same wry grin. All this made him an outstanding Welsh Guardsman and Junior Non-Commissioned Officer. His passing has left a void in the platoon which cannot be filled."

Sergeant Grant Lewis, his Platoon Sergeant, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was an awesome leader. He was always first to volunteer, no matter what the job. He loved soldiering and was a constant inspiration to those around him. Our platoon was attached to B Company, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment, and he was immediately a highly respected and well-liked member of the Company Group."

Lance Sergeant Dan Collins, another member of the platoon, said:

"Lance Corporal Elson was a true friend and comrade. He always had a smile on his face. He was a cracking soldier and will not be forgotten."