

Rifleman Samuel John Bassett

1 Platoon, A Company, 4th Battalion The Rifles

It is with regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Rifleman Samuel John Bassett was killed in Afghanistan on Sunday 8 November 2009.

Rifleman Bassett, from 1 Platoon, A Company, 4th Battalion The Rifles, died in hospital following an Improvised Explosive Device explosion in the area of Sangin, Northern Helmand.

He was serving as part of the 3 RIFLES Battle Group. At the time, his Platoon were conducting routine patrolling in order to provide reassurance and security to the local population.

Rifleman Samuel Bassett was born in Plymouth, Devon, on 27 September 1989. He completed military training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick before joining 4th Battalion The Rifles in Bulford in May this year.

He deployed as a Rifleman with A Company, 4 RIFLES, as part of the 3 RIFLES Battle Group, in October to the area around Northern Sangin.

Rifleman Bassett was a capable, bright and fun loving individual who was regarded as a real character by those with whom he worked. Young, fit and motivated, he undoubtedly had a bright future ahead of him and much to offer his Company and his Regiment.

Rifleman Bassett leaves his mother Coline, father Simon (who lives in Canada) and 18-year-old brother Jack.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"The loss of a Rifleman brimming with so much joie de vivre and potential is a painful blow to the Battle Group. Sam Bassett was indeed such a Rifleman. A man who steps up time and again to clear such dangerous ground for his friends to pass safely is truly one to be honoured.

"Those of us left here to continue in the work that he was doing will be strengthened by his example and shall revere his sacrifice and memory. The thoughts of the Battle Group are firmly with his Battalion, his friends and above all his family and loved ones."

Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Jones, Commanding Officer 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Sam Bassett had so much life ahead of him and has fallen before he had the opportunity to fulfil his true potential. Naturally quiet, he did not find the transition to Army life as easy as some, but he enjoyed his new role from the outset.

"Consistently thoughtful and considerate, he is remembered by those who went through basic training with him for always being there to help others. He was exceptionally proud to have passed out into The Rifles and on arrival in the battalion he quickly found a home in his new Platoon.

"Like so many of the best soldiers, he caused plenty of headaches in camp. Despite being a private man, he was a natural character and his zest for life and fun saw him in more than his share of scrapes, not least after following his passion for motocross, racing around camp in the middle of the day.

"However, over the last month the challenges of operations in Afghanistan had seen a remarkable transformation in him allowing him to grow in stature and mature. His strength of character came to the fore and his fellow Riflemen came to rely on him.

"He regularly volunteered to lead his Section, clearing the ground for others to follow. There is no lonelier job and it takes real character and courage, but Rifleman Bassett showed that he had these traits in spades.

"Rifleman Bassett was a young man and was really just getting into his stride. He was a proud Rifleman and he leaves a large hole in the ranks of his Platoon. His loss will be a devastating blow to his family and our thoughts are with them. The greatest testimony that we can all pay to him is to continue the task on which he died - his brother Riflemen salute him."

Major Richard Streatfeild, Officer Commanding A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Bassett was a young Rifleman. He arrived in A Company after training six months ago. He was a youth about to become a man. I cannot pretend that he found the transition to service life easy.

"The rigours of service discipline were never his strong point. There were times when I wondered whether he had what it takes to soldier in Afghanistan. He proved me wrong. Entirely wrong.

"Over the course of pre-deployment training he became a professional soldier. He discovered a strength of character that he had not realised he possessed. In Afghanistan he transformed into a man before our very eyes.

"In the first week after we took over, in the dead of night, and over two kilometres of ditches and fields he and his platoon supported an Afghan operation to detain a key insurgent leader.

"The operation was extremely successful. He played an integral part in the success of that operation and can take a good deal of credit for making us all a little safer that night. We owe him a debt of gratitude.

"He never lost his sense of fun and his appearance as a 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle' at the company party will be an abiding memory. That and the lopsided grin and his West Country

burr.

"We will feel his loss, we will remember him always, and honour that memory; but we cannot compare our loss to those who knew him best. On behalf of the whole Company and for my part I extend my deepest sympathy to his family and friends whose grief will be untold.

"Just as he found the strength of mind and body to soldier in Afghanistan, so we will honour his memory through our determination to complete the task before us."

Lieutenant Michael Holden, 1 Platoon Commander, said:

"Rifleman Bassett was a true Rifleman; in camp a nightmare, always up to no good. However in Afghanistan, a real professional, a master of his trade. When Rfn Bassett first joined the platoon in May of this year, he was thrown straight into pre-deployment training.

"It is full on with very little time to relax, and it is taxing on a young Rifleman and causes a lot of stress and hardship on family and friends. Throughout pre-deployment training he always gave us reasons for concern, he seemed to have the ability to be in the wrong place at the wrong time with, most certainly, the wrong kit.

"He became a unique test of his Platoon Serjeant's patience. Outside of work he definitely enjoyed his play, at home in Torpoint; either surfing or motocross, there was always something to amuse him.

"Rfn Bassett really came out of his shell, he was proud of his job and a true team player. He worked hard, continually developing his skills, thinking on his feet and taking on the task of clearing routes for the rest of his section and platoon.

"This takes immense skill, patience and most of all courage. Rfn Bassett had a great sense of humour always quick to try and outwit his fellow Riflemen. Every day in Afghanistan, Riflemen are asked to do things that require a lot of nerve.

"Rfn Bassett always stepped up to the challenge without a second thought. Through the ups and downs it has been my absolute privilege to have known him as well as command his platoon. My thoughts go out to his family and friends in this difficult time. He will always be in 1 platoon's hearts and mind, and he will be truly missed."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Pat Hyde, Company Serjeant Major A Company 4 Rifles, said:

"Always on the fringes of trouble within the Company just the way a Rifleman should be. Just before we deployed I received a phone call from an RSM: 'Why do I have a Rifleman Bassett from your company, riding a dirt bike at speed past the Brigade Commander's Office without a helmet or licence?' I had no answer, but just knew that Rfn Bassett was living life to the full. Rfn Bassett was one of the characters of the Company and will be missed by all that knew him."

Serjeant Ross Jones, Platoon Serjeant 1 Platoon said:

"I've known Rfn Bassett for just over six months and looking back now it is remarkable how much he had changed in such a short space of time.

"Rfn Bassett came to the platoon a very quiet and shy boy, but through his pre-deployment training and being with the close-knit platoon on operations in Afghanistan, he had transformed into a decent young man with a lot of character.

"Although it was still early days in his career and he wasn't perfect, he was always able to acknowledge his mistakes and learnt from them.

"His time in Afghanistan really changed him and he started to come into his own. He loved his section, his job and the demands that came with it.

"He volunteered on countless occasions to be point man with the mine detector, which is a very stressful and demanding position within the section and carries with it a lot of responsibility, not only because he wanted to be more proficient with it, but because he wanted to take his share of risk with the rest of his section.

"I will always remember Rfn Bassett as a quiet guy that gave me a few grey hairs at the beginning but he was a character and he leaves many friends within the platoon and within A Company, he will be sorely missed. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family, friends and loved ones at this difficult time."

Lance Corporal Craig Knight said:

"Rfn Bassett was shining out here in Afghanistan and he was enjoying his job. In his own words: 'I am in my element out here, I love it'. He was very focused on his job. He developed a new hobby 'Op Massive'.

"He was going to the gym frequently; he was looking forward to going home to see his father in Canada. Rfn Bassett was a good soldier and played a vital role in the Section. He will be dearly missed; our thoughts are with his loved ones at home. Love from your second family."

Rifleman Charlie Foley said:

"Sam was a humble guy with a bubbly personality. He seemed to make everything a joke and cracked on. In the last few weeks our section has got close and we will be missing you and our thoughts are with your friends and family. He's now gone to a better place."

Rifleman Tom Spencer said:

"Sam Bassett was brilliant at his job over here, really professional and dedicated to his task. His sense of humour was really seen since deploying, he was a good bloke, an awesome bloke to have in our section. He had the mentality of work hard play hard, that every Rifleman should have. I am very proud to have been a Rifleman alongside him in 2 Section."