

Sergeant Simon Valentine
2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Sergeant Simon Valentine of 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers was killed in Afghanistan on Saturday 15 August 2009.

Sergeant Simon Valentine

Sergeant Valentine died as a result of injuries sustained in an explosion that happened while on a foot patrol near Sangin, northern Helmand province.

Sergeant Simon Valentine, or 'Val' to his mates, was born in April 1980 in Bedworth. He joined the Army in May 1997 and started Phase 1 training in Bassingbourn before completing his Infantry training at ITC Catterick and joining the Second Battalion in Celle, Germany, which was an Armoured Infantry unit at the time.

Shortly after arriving in A Company, he completed numerous exercises in Poland and Canada and was hand picked from the battalion to deploy to Kosovo with the RHF in 1999. On his return from Kosovo he passed a demanding JNCO cadre and promoted to Lance Corporal. Subsequently he moved to C Company and redeployed with them to Kosovo in March 2000, before returning and passing the sniper course.

After Kosovo the Battalion re-rolled to a Light Role Infantry Battalion, and moved to North Luffenham in England, where he completed the Close Observation Platoon (COP) course. From Luffenham he deployed on a six month operational tour of Northern Ireland, based in South Armagh. After a short time off, the Battalion redeployed to Northern Ireland, this time to Belfast for public order operations during marching season. In 2002 Val married Gemma, whom he had known since they were at school together. During his time in North Luffenham Val was also involved in covering the Fire Strikes as well as being prepared as part of the Spearhead Battalion to move at short notice.

The next post for the Battalion was Palace Barracks in Belfast, where the Battalion moved in 2003. Here Val joined COP and took part in various target specific anti-terrorist operations. From Northern Ireland Val deployed to Iraq with C Company and on his return was selected to attend the Section Commanders Battle Course which he passed with ease and soon promoted on his return to battalion.

The unit moved again in late 2005, this time to Cyprus, based at Alexander Barracks in Dhekelia. After taking part in Exercise Saffron Sands in Jordan, Val deployed straight from the desert to southern Iraq for three months as part of the Theatre Reserve Battalion commitment.

A short Christmas leave followed, and then he deployed to Sangin Afghanistan, as an attachment to C Company from Fire Support Company, where he was part of Drums Platoon. After the tour of Sangin, Val completed the demanding Platoon Sergeants Battle Course in Brecon in late 2007.

In March 2008 the Battalion moved again, to Cavalry Barracks in Hounslow, where they are still based. Here Val was an integral part of Drums Platoon and completed an intensive period of public duties, performing duties at Buckingham Palace, Windsor and the Tower of London. Val returned to A Company and took over as Platoon Sergeant of 2 Platoon at the beginning of November 2008. He trained with the Platoon to prepare them for Operation Herrick 10 from November until deployment in April 2009. A Company Group was attached to the 2 Rifles Battlegroup for this deployment and Val was based with his Platoon near Sangin, where he was tragically taken from us by an explosion on the 15th August 2009.

His Commanding Officer 2 RRF, Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Calder, said:

"Sergeant Valentine was quite simply an outstanding platoon sergeant. He achieved what needed to be done with a light touch when in camp, and when on the ground he gave enormous confidence to all the Fusiliers with him by his meticulously professional approach.

"He will be remembered for being a central figure in the Corps of Drums, proud to represent the Fusiliers on the forecourt of Buckingham Palace. First and foremost he was a great family man, and it is to Gemma and his two daughters, Chantelle and Niamh, that the Battalion sends its heartfelt condolences."

"He was one of those contagious men whose talent for soldiering reassured everyone in the chain of command up and down. Fusiliers adored him; officers relished his field skills, his fun and his outstanding company."

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson, Commanding Officer 2 Rifles Battlegroup Commanding Officer 2 Rifles Battlegroup, Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson said:

"Gritty, indomitable and with a rucksack full of charm is how I will remember Sergeant Valentine, one of my Fusilier heroes. I met Sergeant V. first in Hounslow and he was infectiously upbeat - about everything.

"He was one of those contagious men whose talent for soldiering reassured everyone in the chain of command up and down. Fusiliers adored him; officers relished his field skills, his fun and his outstanding company.

"We will miss him desperately but we know that our loss is nothing compared to that being endured by his adored wife and daughters. They are firmly at the heart of our prayers tonight and for a very long time to come."

His Company Commander A Company Group 2RRF, Major Jo Butterfill said:

"Sergeant Valentine was the sort of Platoon Sergeant that all Company Commanders want. A totally professional, meticulous soldier, whose personal focus and drive masked a genuinely compassionate nature, a wonderful sense of humour and the keenest of eyes for the wellbeing of his men.

"Hugely operationally experienced, he had excelled during this tour, helping to mould an outstandingly capable rifle platoon through example, strength of personality and sheer hard work. We served together for about a year, and I very quickly learned to trust his judgement and honesty; I always felt that if I was talking, and Val was nodding, I was on roughly the right track.

"He was a man of true soldiering talent and real future promise; it was both a pleasure and a privilege to have known and worked with him. His tragic death leaves a void in A Company and the wider Battalion that I know we will find impossible to completely fill. I also know that he would now want - and expect - us to drive on with the job at hand, and to do so in a manner of which he could be proud.

"We will return to work with immense sadness, and in the certain knowledge that our grief is dwarfed by that of his loving wife Gemma, his two young daughters and his wider family. They are foremost in all our thoughts at this terrible time."

His Platoon Commander Lieutenant Chris Danby, OC 2 Platoon A Company said:

"The empty space left by the huge personality that was Val is not something that any of us in 2 Platoon will be able to avoid. As Platoon Sergeant he was outstanding, and he had worked tirelessly over the last four months of this difficult tour to bring the guys home safely at the end of it. It breaks my heart that he will not be one of them. He was every bit the family man, he absolutely adored his wife Gemma and their two young girls Niamh and Chantelle and wouldn't stop talking about them.

"Val had three main obsessions which you would notice every day in the FOB; Superheroes (particularly Superman, going as far as painting a big 'S' sign on the wall, and hanging another one above the door of our room, even putting it on the front of the quad for a patrol on one occasion), keeping things clean and tidy (not one of my strong points) and a twice daily trip to the gym for Op Massive.

"I will miss his cheeky sense of humour, I will miss him telling me he was "awesome" on a practically daily basis, but I will especially miss having him around to talk to at the end of the day. The world is a poorer place without Val, all of us in 2 Platoon will remember and honour him as we see the rest of this tour through. At this awful time my thoughts and prayers are with his family whom he loved so dearly."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Company Sergeant Major (CSM) A Company Wayne Caffrey said:

"It is difficult to put into words how we all feel about Sergeant Valentine. He was an exceptional Platoon Sergeant, a superb example of a soldier, keen, fit and always immaculately turned out. He had a fantastic rapport with his entire Platoon and they all idolised him. He could brighten up

any room with his big smile. Sergeant Valentine had an odd fixation with the Marvel comic super heroes and he loved all of that stuff. To us he will always be a super hero. We will miss him so much. Our hearts and prayers go to his wife Gemma and their daughters. God Bless."

Colour Sergeant John McCowliff, OC A Company Fire Support Group said:

"I have known Sergeant Valentine for 12 years during our time in the Battalion. He was a remarkable, outstanding, strong, professional soldier who always seemed to see the positive side to everything he did. He was always willing to give advice to the younger members of the Company and went out his way to ensure his men were well equipped and prepared prior for every patrol.

"Sergeant Valentine was very much a true leader of men, a man every soldier should aspire to be. He was highly respected within the Battalion and will be a huge loss to the front line club.

"Simon it has been an absolute honour to have known you and worked alongside you on operations. you will go down in my book as a legend and good friend who showed no fear just like a true "SUPER HERO". Our thoughts and prayers within the FSG go to his wife and girls at this devastating time."

Sergeant Paul Greenhalgh 3 Platoon, A Company, 2 RRF a close friend and colleague said:

"If you could say that Val was your friend then you were truly blessed. To me he was my best friend never asking for anything in return no matter how much he put himself out. I will never forget you mate. Chantelle and Niamh your daddy will always be looking down on you from the brightest star in the sky."

Sergeant Darren Hanrahan 1 Platoon, A Company, 2 RRF a close friend said:

"Having the pleasure to know Si for many years I could say he has always been a kind hearted family man. This quality was shown in his work; he treated his Platoon like they were a part of his family. He looked after his men and would always put them first at work. Val was a devoted husband and father who always talked about his wife Gemma and his girls. He would always refer to himself as Superman; he had all the memorabilia and had even decorated his Platoon house with the Superman emblem, even taking it on patrol with him. He was a super friend to me and this is how I will always remember him."

Sergeant Carl Harris C Company 2 RRF a close friend said:

"I would like to pass on my condolences over the tragic death of Simon. As a close colleague and someone from the same hometown, he was a real friend who will be sorely missed. It was only just over a year ago we were in the same Platoon on PSBC where he was an inspiration to myself and the rest of the course. Other memories include his heroic efforts on HERRICK 6 where we served together in the defence of Sangin DC, and on the TEZ EX Druids Dance where he received the title of best Section Commander in the Company ahead of stiff competition from 8 other quality Section Commanders.

"On a social level we both shared the same love for Coventry City FC and Leicester Tigers RFC. My heart goes out to all of his friends and family back home in particularly his wife and children. Everyone here shares your pain. He will never be forgotten."

Corporal Richie Manton a close friend recalled their time diving together:

"Above all, I remember Sergeant Simon Valentine as a man who adored his family. His wife Gemma and his two children Niamh and Chantelle meant the world to him. His desire to progress in his career and the Battalion was driven to provide his family with the life they deserve. I've known Simon for nearly ten years and served with him in both B Company and C Company. He always stood out as a soldier that would achieve great things within the Battalion. He always put his soldiers first and this was the case on his R&R when he gave up nearly a week of his leave so his soldiers could get on the last available helicopter to avoid missing any of their leave. A true testament to the kind of man he was.

"In Cyprus we did a scuba diving course together and one moment that always sticks in my head was when he had to go to the surface because he felt sick. While I was on the bottom carrying out my drills with the instructor, we suddenly noticed a school of fish all around us eating on what looked like chunks! When we surfaced we found Si puking up chunks and all the fish were feeding on his sick all around us. He quickly went back to the shore to recover.

"At this time my heart goes out to his family and my thoughts are with his wife and children at this difficult time. Rest in peace pal. You will never be forgotten!"

Corporal Ian Pascall, 2 Platoon, A Company Group said:

"There are no words that I can think of to explain how myself and the rest of 2 Platoon felt about Val. He inspired confidence throughout the Platoon even when times were hard, he made us feel safe and confident just by his mere presence. His sense of humour was infectious. I looked up to him as a truly professional soldier and a man and a very close friend. My heart and thoughts go out to his wife and daughters who he loved dearly and always spoke about. He will be missed but never forgotten."

Lance Corporal Callum Davies and Fusilier Andrew Evans, 3 Platoon, who served with Sergeant Valentine during their time in 2 Platoon:

"Sergeant Valentine wasn't just a Platoon Sergeant he was a person that everyone would look up to. He put the troops before himself every time, everyone who knew him looked up to him and admired his professionalism and the way he did things. Every time he was given a task or job to do he would put 100% into it. He was at his happiest when the soldiers below him were happy. He was always up for a bit of banter! His work throughout his career was recognised and respected by the Battalion. He always led from the front although he respected the ranks below him and trusted them to carry out their responsibilities without interfering. It was just the way Val was; a true leader of men.

"He has many friends at home, within Battalion and throughout the army that will miss him. Our

thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, children and family. He will always be in our hearts and I know he will be watching over us. He will never be forgotten."

Fusiliers Lawrie Stevenson, Adam Gregg, Ryan Hyndman, Ricky Wright, Michael Boyce, 2 Platoon, A Company Group:

"Val was without doubt the Soldier to look up to. Top Cracks' - we all aspired to be like him one day.

"In this tough operational environment Val's positive attitude kept us wanting to soldier. His Platoon was always welcoming, and his leadership made all of us feel safer and confident about going on patrol. He was inspirational, and without him morale would not have been nearly so high.

"We always trusted his sound judgement, particularly while the chips were down. It seemed that even in the worst of situations Val would always be able to make light of it. He could always see the funny side to everything. Any Platoon would have been lucky to have a Sergeant like Val. It has been an honour to work alongside him; we could not have wished to work for a better bloke. At this time we are all thinking of his wife and two daughters who he loved so much."

Fusilier James Allen, 2 Platoon, A Company Group:

"Sergeant Valentine was one in a million, a true leader and friend. A loving husband and father he was someone you could turn to when you needed help or support. Our thoughts go to his wife Gemma and Chantelle and Niamh."

"He will be missed so much but he will always be a superhero to us all."

Drummer Andrew Miles, A Company Fire Support Group, Drums Platoon said:

"On behalf of the Drums Platoon Sergeant "Val" Valentine was a very big part of Drums Platoon even though he left earlier this year to take up the role of Platoon Sergeant.

"During his time in Drums he was such a respected colleague and friend. You could always count on him having a big grin on his face giggling away regardless of where we were unless the Hulk was released. You could count on him to do anything for you even if it wasn't work related; all you had to do was ask. He would always go out his way to help his friends and get the job done professionally.

"Even though he left the Platoon it was as if he was always there, popping in every now and then to see how the lads were doing. I can speak for the lads when I say a big place has been left in the Platoon, especially in his leopard skin. It's going to take some big shoulders to fill it.

"Sergeant Val you will be very deeply missed by all of us as a colleague, but more importantly as a very good friend. All our thoughts go out to his wife and two daughters during this very sad time. You will always be remembered and never forgotten."

Fusilier Jamie Green-Morris 2 Platoon, A Company, 2 RRF said:

"Sergeant Valentine was one of those people who touched everyone around him and for that he will be greatly missed. He always looked out for 2 Platoon and always did his best to make sure that each and everyone of us were looked after.

"There are not many more words in which to describe how great a man he was and how he will be missed by everyone who had the pleasure to work with him. I don't think that any of us will forget the passion he had for Superman. His family will always have the love and support from 2 Platoon along with the rest of the Fusiliers."

Fusilier Darren Rushton 2 Platoon, A Company, 2 RRF said:

"Sergeant Valentine or Val as he was known was my Platoon Sergeant and a friend. Val is someone I admire and someone I look up to. He always had a smile on his face and when he was around the Platoon house with the lads. When he was around we were happy and morale was always high. Whenever the Platoon was down he would always find a way of making everyone happy even if it meant going out of his way to make it happen then he would. His smile and laugh was infectious and he would often stay up late with the other lads playing Trivial Pursuits which I wasn't very good at and actually neither was he. Val loved his Super Heroes and in my eyes he was a true super hero. My heart goes out to his wife and children who I know he absolutely adored and loved dearly. I will never forget Val and he will be sorely missed. The hole left in 2 Platoon could never be filled."