

40 COMMANDO ROYAL MARINES

Sergeant Steven William 'Darbs' Darbyshire was 35 years old. He was born in Wigan, and it was there that he lived with his partner Kate and their two young sons Ryan and Callum.

He was a great fan of sports, particularly football and golf, but especially rugby: earlier in his career he represented the Corps as a rugby league player.

Joining the Royal Marines in 1996, he was drafted to 40 Commando Royal Marines on completion of his commando training.

This first draft saw him serve an operational tour in Northern Ireland before choosing to specialise in the Heavy Weapons (Air Defence) branch.

Serving with Air Defence Troop he deployed to Iraq in 2002 on Operation TELIC. He was selected for promotion, passing his Junior Command Course in 2003 and subsequently promoted to corporal.

In 2007 he deployed to Afghanistan with 45 Commando on Operation HERRICK 5. As an experienced corporal, a senior command course quickly followed his tour of Afghanistan and he was promoted to sergeant in 2008.

Rejoining 40 Commando in September 2009 he was initially employed as the Provost Sergeant, before becoming a Rifle Troop Sergeant within Alpha Company. Completing mission specific training for a further operational tour to Afghanistan, he deployed in April 2010 to Sangin with Alpha Company, where he was based at Patrol Base ALMAS.

Alpha Company has conducted daily reassurance and security patrols with Afghan National Security Forces to protect the local Afghans around Patrol Base ALMAS in the Sangin District.

They have improved the lives of hundreds of ordinary Afghans by providing a security bubble which has increased their freedom of movement, led to wider governance in the area and has encouraged economic development.

During a joint patrol with the Afghan National Army, on the morning of 23 June, Alpha Company was conducting a reassurance patrol to the local nationals in Sangin. At approximately 0734 hours local, as the patrol was returning to Patrol Base ALMAS, they came under small arms fire attack from insurgent forces.

Sergeant Darbyshire was struck during the fire-fight and was fatally wounded in the incident.

The family of Sergeant Steven William Darbyshire have made the following statement:

"Being a Royal Marine was Steven's life and growing up it was all he wanted to do.

"He was proud to wear the uniform and served his country as the consummate professional. He died doing the job he so loved.

"He was strong, vibrant, generous, passionate, full of life and he certainly lived life to the full.

"Our World will be a bleaker place without him, his infectious laughter and fantastic sense of humour. Mere words do not begin to convey the deep grief and painful heartbreak his untimely death has brought to his shattered family and friends.

"Steven may have been a 'hoofin' bootneck' to his colleagues but to his beautiful boys, Ryan and Callum he was the very best Daddy in the World. He will live on through his sons and those who love him so much will never forget him and the sacrifice he made.

"Steven leaves behind him his partner Kate, sons Ryan and Callum, parents Barbara, John, Derek and Sue, brother Neil, Nan and the many friends whose lives he touched.

"RIP Sergeant Steven Darbyshire. Fall Out."

Lieutenant Colonel Paul James, Commanding Officer 40 Commando Group, Combined Force Sangin said:

"Sergeant Steven Darbyshire was one of life's great characters. A proper Lancashire Lad, he typically had the wit, the cunning and the tenacity down to a fine art.

"I knew him to be a charismatic, loyal, determined and dedicated Sergeant with an irrepressible and infectious sense of humour.

"The last time I saw him he was covered in thick mud having just fallen into an irrigation ditch, but he gave me a beaming smile and in the manner that only he could deliver, illuminatingly described his misfortune to all.

"He never took life too seriously, but he cared passionately for the lives of others. He was a selfless, honest and extraordinarily courageous leader who thrived in the role of Troop Sergeant.

"He inspired and encouraged, he got the very best from his men, his band of brothers and they loved him for it. He was a proud father, a magnificent leader and definitely a 'Saint'.

"He tragically died on patrol in Southern Sangin doing the job he loved, with the men he so ardently cared for. Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner Kate, his two young sons, his family and his friends.

"He was a great man and will be sorely missed by all in 40 Commando. Sergeant Steven Darbyshire was, and will always be, a Royal Marine Commando."

Major Sean Brady, Officer Commanding Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Sergeant Steven Darbyshire, commonly known as 'Darbs' to all within Alpha Company, was an excellent Troop Sergeant and an outstanding Royal Marine in general.

"He joined Alpha Company in the latter stages of training for our deployment to Afghanistan, taking over the newly formed 3 Troop.

"I was immediately impressed with how he pulled his team together and we all soon came to love his laconic manner and quiet understatement, as even whilst under fire he came across as calm, collected and determined.

"Most tellingly, he had a sharp and well developed sense of humour which, although he sometimes tried to suppress, came through at all times.

"He led by example, and he was a man in whom you could find great confidence and comfort even at the hardest of times. He was at the heart of 3 Troop, the perfect foil to his Troop Commander, providing wisdom and balance to all of the marines in his Patrol Base.

"He was a true Bootneck; he loved and protected his men; he courageously took the lead and he always knew how to get the best out of people.

"Loyal, is an oft used term to describe men; however, in Darbs' case it explains everything you need to know about the man. He died a soldier's death, doing the job he loved and with the men he loved.

"Alpha Company has lost a true warrior, a man that I can say I have had the honour to have commanded and served with. We now look to the future, to repay our debt to him and to take his memory forward; he will forever be an 'Alpha Saint'.

"At this time our thoughts and prayers are with his partner Kate and with his children Ryan and Callum."

Captain Dan Sawyers Royal Marines, Officer Commanding 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Sergeant Darbs Darbyshire was an outstanding Royal Marines Sergeant who it was a privilege to have worked with. Behind his laid back northern exterior, was an extremely experienced and professional Sergeant.

"He was unfazed by the constant danger we faced, able to draw on years of experience and a great sense of humour to reassure all those around him.

"A true Bootneck and selfless individual, he died making sure that every last man of his Troop was back in from patrol. Having spent many hours in the ops room, often late into the evening reflecting on the day's activities and those that lay ahead or watching films, I had someone I could rely on, someone I could talk to, and someone I could laugh with.

"He had the respect of the whole Troop and he was someone we all looked up to. He was a great friend and will be sorely missed. A proud and loving father, he never stopped talking about his two little boys, Ryan and Callum.

"All our thoughts and prayers go out to his partner Kate, and their two young children."

Captain Chris Moore, Officer Commanding Fire Support Group Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I first met Darbs 7 months ago when he arrived to take over the newly formed 3 Troop with Captain Sawyers. He was one of those blokes who you couldn't help but like and instantly form a rapport with.

"He was about as honest as a man could be; telling it like it was and not fearing the consequences. This he always did with the welfare of his lads in mind, willing to do anything to make their lives easier. I will never forget his broad northern accent which always made me smile

"He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. My deepest sympathies go out to his family and friends. Rest in Peace Darbs."

Warrant Officer Class 1 Marty Pelling, Regimental Sergeant Major, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"When Darbs joined 40 Commando he was initially employed as my Provost Sergeant. A role that his direct manner left me in no doubt that he was less than impressed with. Despite this, his professional work ethic ensured that he engaged with all aspects of this new role, and his brusque no nonsense northern manner actually made him the ideal man as the unit 'Sherriff'.

"However, the reorganisation of the unit for our deployment to Afghanistan identified a requirement for an extra Troop Sergeant in Alpha Company and Darbs was absolutely delighted to be given this role.

"A role that he ultimately aspired to, and one that his considerable experience made him the perfect candidate for. It was with a very happy heart that Darbs joined his new Troop, ready to begin forging them into the proud, brave, tight knit group of men that they have become.

"As a Sergeants' Mess orphan, (he lived in Wigan so stayed on board during the week) Darbs was always happy to spend his evenings in the mess watching either football or rugby in our sports bar.

"A passionate Rugby League supporter, especially when his beloved Wigan Warriors were playing. His presence in the mess was always that of a man happily content to share a pint with his fellow Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, while passing his often critical, but wry judgement, onto whichever unfortunate team was playing on the sports channel.

"They would never be quite good enough!

"Darbs was a charismatic individual, whose wonderfully dour Lancashire carapace belied a man of great humour, warmth and camaraderie.

"He often spoke of his partner Kate, and their two boys Ryan and Callum, and when he did so his voice was always full of pride and love.

"On behalf of all members of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess of 40 Commando Royal Marines, and from all the Senior Non-Commissioned Officers of the Corps, may I offer our deepest sympathies to Kate, Ryan, Callum, his family and friends.

"They are very much at the forefront of our thoughts and prayers at this most difficult of times. Farewell Darbs, it was a privilege to serve with you, we will save you a place at the bar."

Warrant Officer Class 2 'Bobby' Ball, Company Sergeant Major, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Sergeant Steven 'Darbs' Darbyshire was the all inspiring leader for the men of 3 Troop to look up to and the ever stable crutch for the ranks in Company Headquarters to lean on.

"He was dependable and incredibly loyal, never mincing his words. I can never remember seeing Darbs upset or disgruntled. He was and remains a thoroughbred, a true Bootneck, a pleasure to have as a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer in the Company and a friend in the Mess.

"To know that the men in 3 Troop were looked after by such a diligent marine was comforting beyond words. Darbs never shared his problems; he took each hurdle one at a time and selflessly drove through any obstacle.

"He was passionate about his men, their training and welfare, always looking to improve their capabilities and morale.

"It is and always will be an honour to have known and served with such an exceptional man and Royal Marine Commando. Sergeant Darbs Darbyshire, a Saint if there ever was one.

"Our thoughts and prayers are now with his partner Kate and two young boys, Ryan and Callum. You will never be forgotten."

Sergeant Danny Pea, Troop Sergeant, 2 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Darbs, I had only known you for 7 months but what a time we had together. Even though it was the build up to the Afghan tour, you and I spent a lot of time hanging around in the office late into the evenings, completing nominal roll after nominal roll for deployment.

"Nothing could phase you out mate, it didn't matter if you had just won the lottery or been on the worst exercise in NATO, your attitude was the same, dry and non-emotional, with the attitude of 'lets just get on with it'. And I can guarantee that whilst saying this you would have

had a cigarette hanging out of your mouth.

"Your northern accent though did make you stand out in the Company but I think you definitely used to play on it, even more so than myself! Your attitude and dedication towards the Corps, the lads and your family was second to none, there was never a time when you would not put them first.

"The Corps has lost an awesome and professional Sergeant and you will be in my thoughts forever. My thoughts go out to your family, partner and children. Never forget, 'Once a Saint always a Saint'."

Sergeant Dinger Bell, Troop Sergeant, 2 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Sergeant Darbs Derbyshire what can you say! I have had the honour and privilege of being your friend since the mid 1990s; a typical Bootneck. Sarcastic, funny, intelligent and highly professional, Darbs would never let you down; he was a constant source of entertainment. Darbs, the father figure of his Troop, he had a calming influence on his lads, always putting them first.

"He was a very loving father and husband who adored his family. My heartfelt condolences go out to his family and friends, a true Bootneck who will be sorely missed. Rest in Peace brother."

Corporal Ash Morris, Section Commander, 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I first met Darbs when I was a fresh faced marine in Bravo Company 10 years ago, he was the same then, as he is now, constantly smiling and always dripping about the price of beer!

"I have only spent a short time at Patrol Base ALMAS with Darbs but I have learnt a lot about how a Troop Sergeant should be, truly professional, running a tight ship, whilst at the same time being horizontally relaxed with humour being at the forefront of every word spoken.

"The Troop will miss Darbs greatly. He was a truly professional Marine and Bootneck. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends at this tragic time."

Corporal Daz Davis, Section Commander, 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"What can be said about Darbs. He was a hoofing bloke and a hoofing Bootneck, who the whole Troop looked up to. I certainly haven't come across a more chilled out and professional Troop Sergeant.

"I have certainly learnt a lot over the past few months from working with him. Welfare for the lads was always his primary concern and he would always do his upmost to square us away. Darbs' sense of humour was cracking and he had me chuckling daily, normally over those hoofing phantom resupplies. Well at least you won't have to suffer any more of those.

"Darbs you've left a big hole in Patrol Base ALMAS mate, and you will be sorely missed, but never forgotten. My thoughts and prayers go out to your family."

Lance Corporal Ratcliffe, Company Medic, 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Darbs was a Royal Marines Sergeant who I looked up to immensely. Always being behind him in the patrol I learnt a lot from him, that I will remember for my whole career.

"I have lost count of the amount of times I have laughed with Darbs on patrol; I remember when he fell over in an irrigation ditch I couldn't stop laughing, but then neither could he and that was the kind of guy Darbs was.

"A Northern lad like myself, we got on well, I will miss my smoking partner.

"He never stopped talking about his two beautiful little boys Ryan and Callum. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his partner Kate, and their two young children.

"Darbs, it was a pleasure and an honour to have served with you and I would just like to thank you for everything. I will miss you and you will never be forgotten."

Marine Ryan Cherry, 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"For the time I have known Sergeant Darbs Derbyshire, the one thing that surprised me most, was how chilled out he was, especially for a Sergeant in the Royal Marines.

"He always spoke to you as a friend, whether it was in a difficult situation or out on a run ashore. This is one of the qualities that earned him the utmost respect from everyone that knew him, especially the lads in 3 Troop.

"We all used to laugh that Darbs never had the heart to get really angry at the Troop, and would always tell us off in a polite way, usually with a joke thrown in at the end for good measure. But that was his way, and it worked, and none of us wanted to let him down.

"During this difficult time on operations I could not have wished for a more professional Bootneck to look after our Troop.

"His death is a great loss to the Royal Marines; he will be greatly missed by all, especially the lads of 3 Troop. My condolences go out to his family. Goodbye my friend."