

Serjeant Paul McAleese  
2nd Battalion the Rifles

Serjeant McAleese was killed after two explosions while on foot patrol. The patrol was taking place in Sangin District, Helmand Province on the morning of Thursday 20 August 2009.

Serjeant Paul McAleese was born in Hereford on 18th October 1979. He began his Army training in March 1997 and joined the 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets in August. A natural soldier, he rose through the ranks quickly and found his calling in the Sniper Platoon. As a Rifleman he completed the demanding Close Observation Platoon course before going on to complete the Infantry's gruelling Section Commanders' and Platoon Sergeants' Battle Courses with distinction. A keen boxer and rugby player, Serjeant McAleese was fit and unbelievably tough.

After tours of Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Kosovo, he had relished life in Afghanistan and had been outstanding as a Sniper Team Commander in Kajaki. Recently moved to take over as a Rifle Platoon Serjeant following the injury of a colleague, he had excelled on the streets of Wishtan, Sangin and had been at the centre of so many of the incidents of the last few weeks. One of the best of his generation, Serjeant McAleese was destined for truly great things. He died in an IED explosion on 20th August 2009 whilst helping to secure a key thoroughfare in the Sangin area as part of providing security for the elections. Serjeant McAleese leaves his wife, Jo, and his adored young son, Charley, born just a week before he deployed to Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson MBE, Commanding Officer 2 RIFLES Battle Group:

"Serjeant McAleese was one of the 'big men' in 2 Rifles whose military prowess was the envy of the rest of the Battalion. He had a huge rucksack full of talents - everyone looked up to him and wanted to be in his team. Militarily, there was nothing that he wasn't good at. He was fearsomely fit, a talented shot and a man who saw this campaign in its wider perspective. He had been superb in Iraq, our last encounter with the Queen's enemies, and he had stood very tall.

"Here in Afghanistan he has fought in Kajaki and in Sangin and died as a Platoon Serjeant, the job of all jobs, on election day, helping to give democracy a chance in Sangin. He had so much yet to give - he was on the track to greatness and was one of those men who was destined to promote first time, every time. The rest of us mortals could not keep up. His energy levels were unrivalled and he extracted the best out of my Riflemen, especially when sat behind his favourite sniper rifle. In the Serjeants' Mess, he was nothing but delightful and full of appropriately insubordinate mischief - always trying to photograph his fellow Serjeants talking to me. It was immensely satisfying to out-manoeuvre him once (I only did manage it once) and

ensure he was 'snapped' with me.

"We will miss him dreadfully. There is a huge hole in this Battalion now that Mac has gone. And tonight, after a mad day in Sangin, it is taking time to come to terms with his loss. But, Mac, we are back in the fight. In fact we have been in the fight all day - for you as well as for the people of Sangin. Our first prayers now are for Joanne, his adored wife, and Charley, his precious boy of only 4 months, whom he talked about constantly. Be assured, little man, your father was a hero and we will never forget him. We will tell you all about him one day and you will be so proud. "

Major Rupert Follett, Officer Commanding C Company 2 RIFLES Battle Group:

"I only knew Serjeant McAleese for 7 weeks, the length of time I have been in command of C Company. My arrival occurred at the most difficult of times; the day before 5 soldiers had been killed in action and a further 5 wounded, including the previous Company Commander. With over 3 months left of the tour, I required the Senior Non Commissioned Officers of the Company to demonstrate strong leadership through example and explanation in order to carry the Riflemen through. Serjeant McAleese provided all that and more.

"He was a man that every soldier looked up to and was the first person everyone turned to for advice, which was invariably right on the money. Strong in body and in character he had an easy way with Officers and Riflemen alike. His enjoyment of soldiering was infectious and he relished being on operations. He was a natural leader and his Riflemen adored being under his command. There is now a huge gap in C Company that Serjeant McAleese once occupied, and whilst the depths of our sorrow are deep, our thoughts and prayers are with his young family and his friends in these most tragic of times."

Major Ion Hill, Officer Commanding I Company 2 RIFLES Battle Group:

"Serjeant McAleese was one of those irreplaceable larger than life characters who epitomize the spirit of I Company. He was a Rifleman to the core; intelligent, energetic and imbued with physical courage. Blessed with an infectious sense of humour he was at ease in any company and would readily converse with generals, wives and Riflemen alike; they were all the same to him! He made regimental soldiering fun and will be greatly missed.

"Serjeant McAleese was an outstanding soldier, always on the front foot and a true leader in the heroic mould. His confidence and dynamism quickly pervaded all those Riflemen in his charge. He was passionate about sniping and the quality of the Battalion Sniper Platoon is a testament to his commitment and professionalism. I sorely missed his contribution to Company operations when he moved to Sangin. But there was also an empathetic, softer side to Serjeant McAleese. He cared deeply about the welfare of his Riflemen and was ever ready to help those in need. It was this selfless side to his character that, without fuss, he graciously accepted the need to move to C Company and take over as 10 Platoon Serjeant from a wounded friend.

"Above all Serjeant McAleese was a strong family man and he was clearly elated to have become a father. Our thoughts at this time are very much with Joanne and Charley."

2nd Lieutenant Rob Hilliard, 10 Platoon Commander:

"Serjeant McAleese assumed the role of Platoon Serjeant in very challenging circumstances, with a new Platoon Commander at the reins, having seen the previous Platoon Commander Killed in Action and the previous Platoon Serjeant wounded.

"Characteristically, 'Mac' brought his boundless enthusiasm, impressive physical strength, infectious energy, glint in the eye intelligence, years of front line and training experience, as well as his ever present grin and cheek to the task of steeling the platoon. Naturally, the Platoon responded well to this potent mix.

"Serjeant McAleese was killed while trying to get to a fellow British soldier who had been hit in an IED strike - fearlessly fulfilling his role as Serjeant, role he had excelled at in recent weeks in the most unimaginable of circumstances.

"Working with 'Mac' was a privilege for a junior officer - his astute mind was critical in the planning stages, while on the ground his natural presence provided an all-pervading sense of calm and control in the most adverse conditions. Around the FOB his sense of humour and endless retinue of stories often saw him holding court around the table or his 'scratcher'.

"Nonetheless, it was when talking about his wife Jo and young baby boy Charley that Mac truly lit up - the aforementioned energy and enthusiasm practically spilling over. 10 Platoon's, and my own, thoughts and prayers are with them."

WO2 (CSM) Simon Thompson, C Company Serjeant Major:

"Sergeant Paul McAleese was a Rifleman through and through. He was keen, fit and well motivated. He said exactly what he thought and he wasn't really fussed if you liked it or not. Invariably there was a well thought out and relevant point to his side of the discussion. He wanted nothing but the best for his Platoon and brought the best out of them.

"He was a Battalion asset and was exceptional as a Sniper, this was where his professional heart was and he took his responsibilities to continue training our Company Snipers very seriously. His medical skill was spot on and I have seen him save lives both here and in Iraq. He brought a lot of combat experience to the Company following a demanding tour of Iraq in 2007. He inspired confidence in his men.

"As the CSM I could not have asked for a more supportive Platoon Serjeant, he gave his support to me and the remainder of Company HQ by the bucket load. He turned what was a very tough task of taking over a badly hit Platoon into a smooth transition which was a credit to him and helped his men through a dark period.

"My heart goes out to his wife Jo, young son Charley and the rest of his family.

"In summary I was glad to have fought with and stood next to Paul in Iraq in 2007 and here in Afghanistan in 2009. He was a bloke that you wanted by your side in a scrap, and he delivered

the goods every time. His ability to command a situation here in Wishtan was astounding; he never hesitated to get involved when it counted. He was Swift and Bold and I, for one, will miss him.

"Stand Down Paul, RIP"

WO2 (CSM) Jock Wark, I Company Serjeant Major:

"Mac was an infectious professional soldier in everything he did. He lived by the Rifles motto of Swift and Bold and was full of life, racing around putting the effort in for his "Geezers", always wanting them to be the best they could be in everything they did in life. Mac, would never take no for an answer and would always argue his point where his "Geezers" were concerned. He would always speak his mind, and with his infectious cheeky grin, he would generally get his way.

"Mac was the protective Platoon Serjeant you always want. He was brave,courageous in leading his men, and would not expect them to do anything he hadn't done himself. He was always trying to improve in everything he did, whether it was training for peace-keeping or for war. He would always have his Riflemen in the forefront of his mind and would prepare them well for all that was to come.

"I had so much time for Mac. He would be in my office for a laugh and a joke, seeking advice or trying to grab a brew. His sense of humour had me in stitches at times and he would always be there to lighten the mood when things were getting a little grim. In the Serjeants' Mess we would put the world to right's over a cold beer with the rest of the Seniors from I Company...and then Mac's grin would appear and it would be Mess Rugby time, game on! That was the time for me to get on the Chesterfield sofa and let Mac with Terry, Al, Stu, and the others crack on, and see who made it through to first parade without injury.

"Mac will be sorely missed by all who knew him, especially his "Geezers" in the Sniper Platoon, and all of I Company and 2 RIFLES. He was the model professional, a proud loving father to Charley, a dedicated husband to Jo, and a great friend.

"Swift and Bold."

WO2 (CSM) Pete Burney, A Company Serjeant Major:

"You will meet many people in your life but very few people will stand out and have a lasting impression. Paul was one of the few who did so with his physical presence, cheeky wit and smile and professional manner. Others looked to Paul as an example to follow, young Riflemen are inspired by him and these will be his legacy, as they grow through their careers, having him as their foundation. Paul, so long, you will always be missed, but never forgotten.

"Celer et audax."

Colour Serjeant Stu Chamberlain, B Company Quarter Master Serjeant :

"I have lost a true friend. A man with such great presence and a massive heart. A mate that was always there for a good bit of banter and to chew the fat about sniping, both our passion, which I will miss dearly. A massive void has been made by your loss mate and it will always be there. I will not forget you mate, you were such a good friend to me, Kel and the kids. Gone, but never forgotten. RIP."

Colour Serjeant Dave Bell, B Company FSG Second in Command:

"A hole has been left in our lives with the departure of our brother Rifleman Paul. A true friend, who always had the time of day for anyone. Always at the front, whether being at work or at play. Quick witted, always up for the banter, even if you were on the receiving end. Tea and toast won't be the same without you, mate, your big presence and laughter filling the Mess. The Battalion has lost one of its most professional soldiers. Paul lived and breathed sniping - it was his passion. Our hearts go out to his beloved wife, Jo, and their son, Charley, who Paul spent so many hours talking about. Looking at his photos from R&R, you could see his son, Charley, meant everything to him. Paul, I'll miss you mate, you're gone, but not forgotten. Rest in Peace."

Colour Serjeant Danny Leicester, I Company Quarter Master Serjeant:

"Mac was an infectious man, he knew what he wanted in life and was determined to achieve the highest levels in everything he did. An example of this is when he decided to take up golf and was sure he would master the game in just a few holes. This was not to be, as the people who had the great privilege to know him, his, shall we say, fiery temper got the better of him. Needless to say he didn't and just smashed the remaining balls into trees and rough alike.

"I said at the beginning, Mac was infectious and he was. He would be the heart and soul of functions, Tea and Toast, in fact if you were lucky enough to be in his company, you would be sure to laugh for the entirety of the conversation.

"RIP. Our thoughts go out to Jo, his wife, and son, Charley. What we feel now is nothing in comparison to their pain. Charley will grow up knowing his Dad, Mac, was and always will be a legend.

"RIP Mac. Brother."

Colour Serjeant Terry Rafferty, A Company Quarter Master Serjeant

"I have had the pleasure to know Paul McAleese for over a decade in which time we became very close friends. Both socially and at work, we have always been with each other. As a young soldier he was full of life and always confident in his own ability both at work and with his friends away from the Army. Forever the jack-the-lad, I noticed a life-changing maturity in him when he met his wife, Jo, to the point where me and the lads would rip him for being 'under the thumb'. His big ambition was to complete SAS selection and serve at Hereford like his father did before him. After he and Jo had planned to start a family I said his outlook on life would change and when he deployed to Kajaki one of the first things he told me was that his family was the most

important thing in his life. I fought alongside Paul in the back streets of Basra where he served with distinction as a Section Commander in my Platoon. He looked forward to the challenge of this tour as the Sniper Platoon Commander, although when he was informed in Kajaki that he was going to C Company in Wishtan to become the Platoon Serjeant that had already lost their Platoon Commander and a young Rifleman, he set about his task with the utmost professionalism and he died protecting the Riflemen that he guarded over like a father.

"I miss you Paul, everyone who was fortunate enough to know you will miss you.

"Swift and Bold."

Colour Serjeant Paul Conville, C Company FSG Commander:

"Mac, where do I start? What shall I say? Paul, when I arrived at The Rifles you were one of the first people I met and it was a pleasure. Those days were short but I shall always remember them. In the short time I spent working with you I met a strong willed man who wasn't afraid to say what was right and what he thought, which I always admired. Again we met and a friendship was formed, words cannot explain what I want to say. My last memory is of a thinking Rifleman, leading from the front, fearless and helping others whatever the cost. Til we meet again.

"Celer et Audax"

Serjeant Rob Grimes, Fellow Platoon Serjeant:

"Since rejoining the Army, I got to know Paul during our time in Iraq and during our time in Ballykinler, as each day passed we became friends and then mates, to the extent that he was one of a few that I classed as a brother. We used to spend hours taking the mick out of each other, training in Thai Boxing everyday beating the hell out of each other, meeting for Tea and Toast in the Mess, or in Paul's case, a loaf of toast and a gallon of tea, and giggling like kids at night watching films and videos and playing Xbox.

"During the years we knew each other, he proved what a determined person and soldier he was. He wanted to do Special Forces Selection at every opportunity and he wanted nothing more than to be the best he could for himself and those under his command during Herrick 10. During this time he constantly talked about Jo, his wife, whom he loved with every beat his heart gave, and the promise of fatherhood took Paul to another level - he craved the challenge of being the best husband to Jo and father to Charley and, when we met up again in Sangin, before he took over his new platoon, he made me sit through hours of pictures of him and his new son whom he adored with all he had.

"When I heard the news, I was devastated to know that I had lost my friend but also a brother and I will always remember you. Paul, you're a true hero, a word that is used too often, but you are and I will always remember you for that. I will never forget you and I promise to be there for you, Jo and Charley, as you would for me. Take care my friend, may you rest in peace!

"Only the dead have seen the end of war, but the rest of us will continue the fight. Swift and

Bold".

Serjeant Tony Norton, Fellow Platoon Serjeant:

"When you join the Army, people always talk about meeting friends for life. Well, Paul would have been one of mine.

"Paul had too many nicknames to mention but most were about him resembling Wayne Rooney or Shrek. Paul was famous for taking the mick out of people when they messed up but, true to his personality, he could never quite take it on the chin when he messed up himself.

"I know Paul's passions in life were soldiering or, more to the point, sniping and his family. He loved sniping and enjoyed every aspect of the job, no matter whether it was in camp, teaching it or on ops, where he thrived on taking it to the enemy.

"But, the most important thing in his life was his new family. Paul leaves behind his wife, Joanne and his very young baby boy, Charley - who I know was Paul's world.

"Paul was a natural leader also, Paul was an asset to the Sniper Platoon first, then to C Company and his Platoon there, and he will be sorely missed within the Battalion and the Serjeants' Mess.

"I will miss him as a mate, I will miss him as a battle buddy, I will miss him as a drinking partner. He leaves a massive hole in all our hearts.

"Swift and Bold. Gone but never forgotten"

Serjeant Tony "Pez" Perry, Attached C Company 2 RIFLES Battle Group:

"Some people are born to be led whilst others are born to lead. Few, however, are followed without question. Every so often you'll meet someone who you know possesses that 'special something'; you can't quite put your finger on it but you know. Sjt Paul McAleese was such a man.

"He was an individual who inspired, not just through his words and not just by his actions, an individual who stood tall amongst his peers simply by being himself, a soldier through and through. Professional, strong, dependable, honest and forthright, he was a Commanding Officer's rock if ever there was one.

"Paul was not just a proud Rifleman, he was a devoted husband and father. I know that clearly after spending many a late night listening to him speaking with love and pride of his adoring wife Jo and their beautiful baby boy Charley.

"Never a man to sit on the sidelines, he led from the front, and was taken from us because of it.

"You will never be forgotten, my friend, your memory will live strong. You will be sadly missed

by all that had the honour to know you. Your warrior spirit grows inside us all.

"Sleep well brother. We'll see you in Valhalla."

Serjeant Jaime Moncho, 9 Platoon Serjeant:

"Paul was an outstanding soldier and an even better friend. Intelligent, fit and determined, he was just simply the best. His character is unsurpassed in any circle he walked in. A true giant of a man in body and in stature, his quick wit and sense of fun is legendary within the Mess and Battalion. He is the only man I know within the Company who had the patience to finish a crossword.

"My thoughts are now fixed onto his new baby boy, Charley, and his wife, Jo, whom he adored and constantly talked about.

"You will never be forgotten. Rest in Peace Brother."

Corporal Edwards, Sniper Section Commander:

"Paul, you were by far the best soldier I ever worked with. From the first day to the last day, you were always a top bloke. The Sniper Platoon and the Battalion will never be the same. I know that, if you were here, you wouldn't want us to go on too much about you, and to get on with the job, but we can't. You had an impact on so many of us and you deserve the biggest send-off possible.

"I wish your son Charley got the chance to know you more, as we all know you. You would have made a great Dad and seeing you each day, we knew that he was your pride and joy.

"Goodbye mate, you will never be forgotten."

Corporal Sean Kirkham, Section Commander:

"'Paul Mac' one of a kind! Such a shame and waste to lose such a big character and much loved friend. When Mac came to us, halfway through the tour, 10 Platoon were in a bad way, after the loss of Rifleman Thatcher and Lieutenant Mervis, and the injuries sustained to our Platoon Serjeant. 10 Platoon were looking for inspiration, we found it within Serjeant Mac. I felt a weight had been lifted as I knew what a top soldier and bloke he was and how much he loved his job.

"At the start of the tour Paul became a Dad, for the first time, to Charley. His family is all he would talk about and what he had planned to do on his return with Charley and his wife, Jo.

"Hopefully Charley will hear stories of his Dad as he grows up, I'm sure there will be plenty, of how strong his father was, and selfless and brave. Mac died trying to save another which is just typical of the man, in selflessly risking himself for another.



"Sad to see you go my friend. Now you're up in heaven with all of our other Chosen Men.

"Rest in Peace my brother."

Lance Corporal Mark Farragher, Sniper Section Commander:

"Serjeant Paul McAleese was a close friend and larger than life character within the Battalion, well liked and respected within 2 RIFLES. Mac was a fearsome soldier who excelled in everything he did, one of the toughest men you would ever meet in work, yet outside of work with his wife Joanne and newborn son, Charley, he was soft as they come. He will be sorely missed in Snipers and the rest of the Battalion except maybe what he called his "as issue leg shakers " or his "li'l shin burners" as he called his tabs (loaded marches), he leaves behind a loving wife,Joanne, and 4-month-old son Charley. God rest your soul in peace.

"You will not be forgotten Mac. Swift and Bold."