

THE ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS

VIKING GROUP, D (THE GREEN HORSE) SQUADRON

Trooper Ashley Smith was 21 years old. Born and raised in York, he enlisted into the Army on 17 March 2008 and attended Phase 1 training at the Army Training Regiment (Winchester) before moving to the Armour Centre in Dorset to train as a Challenger 2 Gunner. He passed out from Phase 2 training in November 2008 and moved straight to Catterick to join The Royal Dragoon Guards. He was posted to D (The Green Horse) Squadron, equipped with Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks.

He participated in low level exercises around Catterick and then deployed to Canada as part of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards Battle Group on Exercise Medicine Man 2, where he was employed as the Troop Leader's Gunner. On return from Canada, Trooper Smith's Squadron was selected to become the Viking Group for Operation HERRICK 12.

Trooper Smith completed all the Mission Specific Training for Op HERRICK 12 with D Squadron, including qualifying as a Viking Driver and Commander. He deployed to Camp Bastion in early June 2010, where the Viking Group are based.

As an independent Brigade sub-unit, one of the roles of the Viking Group is to support Operations across Central Helmand. On 15 June 2010, 4th Troop D Squadron was tasked to provide mobility support to Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (South) in the vicinity of Patrol Base 1. This is an area with a high threat from insurgent activity. On Friday 18 June 2010, 4th Troop was tasked to provide protection on foot for a patrol that was conducting a clearance operation in order to increase security to the local population in the vicinity of Check Point KINGSHILL. At 1307 hours on 18 June 2010 an explosion occurred and Trooper Smith was killed in action.

Trooper Smith's parents Sandra and Dave Smith said:

Trooper Ashley Smith was the youngest of a very close family and doted on his parents. He worked hard and was passionate about what he was doing and proud of all he had achieved. He cared deeply about his family

and the many friends he had in the Army and in his home city of York. Everyone that knew Ashley loved him and he was the best son any mother and father could have wished for and a loving brother to his brothers

and sisters.

Ashley will be sorely missed and we are immensely proud of our son.

Lieutenant Colonel James Carr-Smith, Commanding Officer The Royal Dragoon Guards said:

Trooper Ashley Smith was a highly impressive young man; he was full of energy, very popular and tremendously good company. He was a Yorkshireman who decided to join his local Regiment after a short spell as a civilian working in York. He arrived in Catterick, North Yorkshire at about the same time that I took command of the Regiment. He loved the camaraderie that the Regiment offered and he loved soldiering. But he had other passions, chief of which were his family and basketball. In his teens he played basketball for the York Vikings and a promising career beckoned, but in the end he opted for service in his local Cavalry Regiment. His other great passion was his family and friends. He often said that his family was the most important part of his life.

Trooper Ashley Smith died on patrol in southern Nahr-e Saraj, Helmand Province doing the job he loved, alongside his mates. Our thoughts and prayers are with his parents, brothers, sisters and girlfriend whom he

loved dearly. He will be missed by us all and his sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Major Denis James, Officer Commanding Viking Group, D (The Green Horse)

Squadron, The Royal Dragoon Guards said:

Trooper Smith, Ash or Smithy as he was originally nicknamed, was a friend to anyone who got to know him. He was a quiet, unassuming individual with a winning smile and that is how he will be remembered, laughing and smiling with his friends in 4th Troop. He was a resolute, principled and above all a kind man.

Although his admin could go amusingly awry, he threw himself into the demanding training that was undertaken in preparation for his deployment to Afghanistan. He was utterly dependable, completely professional and a joy to know. He was the perfect mate with whom to share a pint, yet utterly dependable in a crisis. Ash was very proud of his Yorkshire roots and the fact he was serving in Yorkshire's Cavalry Regiment.

The most fitting epitaph for Trooper Smith is that he died a brave death. He volunteered to join a team clearing a location known to be sown with Improvised Explosive Devices. We feel for his family at this

difficult time; however, we in the Viking Group will mourn him when we return home. Until then, his sacrifice will inspire us. It has stiffened our resolve to defeat the insurgency and to help the people of

Helmand. We will remember him.

Lieutenant Nicholas Chew, 4th Troop Leader, Viking Group, D (The Green Horse) Squadron said:

Ashley was the first soldier I ever got to know. We arrived at the Regiment on almost the same day and subsequently always ended up together. It started when, as a new Officer in the Regiment, I went on a trip to a memorial service to Cruelly in Normandy and Trooper Smith accompanied me. He and I got to know each other in the very emotional setting of the D-Day landings. It was here that I got my first understanding of his good natured heart. As we stood to attention at the various services, he always had a tear in his eye as they read out the names of our Regimental heroes from 60 years ago.

Again we found ourselves together and were part of the same Tank crew in Canada. We then endured the tough pre-deployment training for Afghanistan.

Therefore, I have always held a particular bias for Trooper Smith and his death has hit me hard. Ash was one of those people whom you knew was kind of heart and always well-meaning. He was a sensitive guy that

would never wish ill on anyone. However, the most delightful thing about Trooper Smith was how he found interest and enchantment in the smallest pleasures in life. Things that most of us would brush past without a

second glance, he could immerse himself in for an age.

He always wanted to do the extraordinary things because he had an outlook on life that said it is 'not worth being unhappy over'. He wanted to do all the interesting jobs from play basketball professionally to being a fireman to becoming a military dog handler.

It is only now that I understand the true meaning of the word courage; Ash never complained and just kept smiling.

Sergeant Richie Wales, 4th Troop Sergeant, Viking Group, D (The Green Horse) Squadron said:

I knew Ash from when he joined the Troop in Canada last year. Like all the Troopers he was one of my mates. I remember Ash well as I was always pleasantly surprised that nothing ever got him down. He was one of the most positive characters I've ever met and, as a new Troop Sergeant that type of soldier is worth his weight in gold. He was one of the good guys.

Ash was exactly the type of soldier I wanted in my Troop on Operations. Proactive and always with a smile on his face, he represented the best of the Regiment. His death has shocked us all but we will pull together

as a Troop to get through this awful time. The best therapy is remembering the positives, of which there are so many.

Ash was overwhelmingly a family man and our thoughts go out to his parents, brothers and sisters, and his girlfriend Sarah. He was a real D Squadron man; brave, cheerful and determined not to let down his mates

when times got tough. We won't forget you Ash; go well, wherever you are.

Trooper Graham Tingley, 4th Troop, Viking Group, D (The Green Horse)

Squadron said:

Ash Smith was a very popular person. He was a good friend to many people and would do anything for anyone. You would never see anything other than a smile on his face even when times got hard, he would still

be able to make you laugh.

Ash was a supremely talented sportsman but he especially enjoyed playing basketball. He always loved to show you new tricks with a basketball and then enjoy watching us try and generally fail at them. He could

give and take banter and was always quick with a comeback. He will be missed by us all but never forgotten.

Trooper Michael Noonan, 4th Troop, Viking Group, D (The Green Horse)

Squadron said:

Ash was a good mate to all who came into contact with him. His natural talent as a sportsman and his great sense of humour made sure he had plenty of friends within the Squadron. He loved to laugh, even when the

going got tough, but he was dedicated to the Troop and wanted to be in Afghanistan with the boys.

Ash was madly in love with his girlfriend Sarah and my thoughts go out to her and Ash's family. He was a true hero, gone now, but remembered forever.