

Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Charles Henry Wood from 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC (Royal Logistic Corps), serving with the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Task Force, was killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday 28 December 2010.

WO2 Charles 'Charlie' Wood deployed on Operation HERRICK 13 on 6th November 2010 as an Advanced Search Advisor. Trained to coordinate all aspects of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detection, he was assigned to lead the clearance of a route through the Khushdal Kalay area of the Helmand River Valley to increase the freedom of movement and safety of the local population. In the early afternoon of 28 December 2010, with the task nearing completion, Warrant Officer Class 2 Wood was caught in the blast from an IED and killed.

WO2 Charles Henry Wood

WO2 Charles Wood, aged 34, joined the Army in August 1994 and moved to 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, then part of the Queen's Division. His leadership abilities were recognised early and he gained rapid promotion and subsequent postings to the more prestigious and demanding jobs in his field. Operationally experienced, he completed deployments to Iraq in 2003 and Bosnia in 2007. He was posted from the Army Training Regiment Pirbright to 518 Pioneer Squadron as Sergeant Major in June 2009, and volunteered to lead his Squadron through their search training and on to their deployment to Afghanistan. A talented and successful Warrant Officer with masses of potential, he had Late Entry commissioning firmly in his sight.

An ardent supporter of his home town football club, Middlesbrough, he also represented his Regimental team on numerous occasions both on the pitch and, more recently, behind the scenes as trainer and manager. He was a successful fundraiser and raised many thousands of pounds for forces charities. He leaves behind his wife, Heather, his mother, Barbara, his father, John, and his sisters, Samantha and Amanda.

Charlie's wife, Heather Wood, said:

"The family have lost a son, a brother and an uncle and I have lost my loving husband who was also my best friend. Charlie had an infectious personality who made a positive effect on everyone he met; he had a heart of gold and endeared himself to everyone. He will be sorely missed by those who had the good fortune to have met and known him.

"He will be forever in our thoughts for the rest of our lives."

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Davis GM RLC, Commanding Officer Counter-IED Task Force, said of him:

"The death of WO2 Wood has rocked the Counter-IED Task Force; it has taken us all by surprise and the corresponding sense of loss is massive. He was a huge character – a complete live wire – a man who never rested. He was always on the go, constantly thinking

ahead, planning the next stage and working out how best to achieve the mission. And who did he do this for? Certainly not for himself; he did it for his men. His Pioneers looked up to him with the utmost respect; he was the archetypal Sergeant Major – firm but always impeccably fair and his 'kids', as he termed the soldiers, all loved him. He was completely selfless and led others as he expected to be led himself, a future RSM if ever I saw one.

"I find it difficult to accept that this fine man has been taken from us; it only seems like yesterday that we sat together in a Forward Operating Base, drinking coffee while he spoke to me of his pride in being one of the first Pioneers to become a Search Advisor and telling me how he couldn't wait to get out onto the ground to complete his first task – he loved what he was undertaking and died in the process of doing his bit to bring normality to Afghanistan.

"It is not I that say this of the Searchers, 'they are exceptional and they display a special type of bravery', they are the words of those they support and those who respect them for the unique and dangerous challenge they face on a daily basis. Our hearts, thoughts and prayers, at this most difficult of times, go out to his adored wife Heather, his parents Barbara and John, his sisters Samantha and Amanda and to his two nieces who he deeply cared for."

Lieutenant Colonel Dom Fletcher RLC, Commanding Officer 23 Pioneer Regiment, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Charles Henry Wood was a soldier, leader, husband and a man I am proud to call my friend. A truly inspirational character, he had an irrepressible enthusiasm, an infectious and at times hilarious sense of humour and a true zest for life. He had the epitome of a 'glass half full' attitude to life. His lively and outgoing personality had a palpably positive effect on all he worked with; he was loved and admired by the Officers and all ranks, of our close knit Regiment.

"The consummate professional, he always strived to lead from the front and by example. He would never expect his soldiers to do any task that he was not prepared to do himself. This was never more so, than in his role as an Advanced Search Advisor with the C-IED Task Force. He volunteered for this demanding job, along with fellow soldiers from his Squadron, in full knowledge of the potential risks. As always, he threw himself 'heart and soul' into this new challenge, with his usual energy and vitality. He led with boundless energy, endless encouragement and his typically light touch. He was, with every fibre of his being, a role model to his soldiers and a man of the very highest calibre.

"Today his Squadron, 518 Pioneer Squadron, are without a Sergeant Major, but we have also

lost a man passionate about his Pioneer trade and about his Regiment. He immortalised the adage 'ask not what your Regiment can do for you, but what you can do for your Regiment'.

"His tragic death leaves a huge void amongst our ranks; but his memory will live on in all of us.

"23 Pioneer Regiment has lost one of its finest; the Regiment is a darker and less colourful place without him. Our deepest sympathies go out to his wife Heather and his family at this most difficult of times."

"Charlie had an infectious personality who made a positive effect on everyone he met; he had a heart of gold and endeared himself to everyone."

Heather Wood

Major Dickie Hawkins RE, Officer Commanding the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron, said of him:

"I have found Charlie Wood's reputation for professionalism and effort truly overwhelming. He was swept into a challenging, technical and unfamiliar role that he made his own and in doing so reflected true Pioneer spirit. Few members of my Squadron could I have so unquestioningly relied on for leadership, objective advice and ultimately, success.

"A first rate advocate for his Corps he rolled with the many and varied challenges both pre-deployment training and operational service threw at him. At every stage he kept a wary eye on the welfare of his men, ensuring their continued safety and comfort regardless of the austerity and remoteness of their location. Within the Squadron his team will bear the most acute sense of loss as they have directly benefited from Charlie's devoted attention since their arrival in November. I have also witnessed the wider inflow of condolence as the true extent of this remarkable man's standing becomes clear.

"Charlie has left a lasting impression on the Squadron and a man of his unique abilities will be impossible to replace. However, the loss felt by us in Afghanistan cannot match that of his family and my most heartfelt sympathy goes out to his wife Heather and his wider family at this most distressing of times.

Major Piers Strudwick, Officer Commanding C Company 2 SCOTS, said of him:

"WO2 Charlie Wood has been serving with Charlie Company 2 SCOTS in PB NAHIDULLAH for the last month. Charlie Wood has had a hugely positive influence on every person in this company; he was a professional soldier who led by personal example and set an extremely high standard. He deployed with his HERRICK Search Team and ATO to clear many IEDs within this area of Babaji. The improved security within many of the Kalays has been enhanced by the clearance of IEDs and resulted in the return of many previously displaced local Afghans to their compounds.

"A friendly and helpful approach to life marked Charlie out as someone who others would turn to for assistance. He organised the Christmas celebrations within PB NAHIDULLAH and ensured

that we all had an enjoyable day despite being away from our loved ones. The delivery of a hot Christmas dinner to every soldier in the numerous Check Points here was planned by Charlie and stands out as an example of how he cared foremost for the welfare of soldiers. On Christmas Day Charlie facilitated the arrival of Father Christmas, the giving of a present to every soldier in "Santa's Grotto", the clearance of a 20kg IED on a nearby road and the serving of Christmas Dinner to nearly 150 soldiers. Charlie will be deeply missed by his Search Team and the Jocks alike - he was a soldier's soldier."

Captain Adam Galloway RLC, IEDD(N) Operator Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron said of him:

"WO2 Charlie Wood was a real pleasure to work with and an inspiration to everyone around him. He was the embodiment of 'Sergeant Major', and represented everything which is good and right about the Army. An utter professional."

Captain Rob McAllister RLC, Squadron Second in Command 518 Squadron, said of him:

"Sergeant Major Charlie Wood was a soldiers' soldier, who thought nothing of putting others before him. He was incalculably proud of being a Pioneer. His steely resolve and high standards ensured he rapidly rose to the rank of WO2, assuming the role of Squadron Sergeant Major 518 Pioneer Squadron, 23 Pioneer Regiment.

"In the two years he was Sergeant Major, he established himself as one of the top WO2s in the Regiment and the Corps. Heavily involved with charitable endeavours, in the last year alone, he led both a 24 hour rowing challenge, raising £5,500 for Help for Heroes, as well as running 1km for every soldier killed in Afghanistan, in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund. SSM Wood strived to set the best possible example to men under his command, and was found on countless occasions volunteering for events and endeavours for the benefit of others. A keen sportsman SSM Wood was at the forefront of the regimental football team and was a member of the Nordic Ski team.

"23 Pioneer Regiment have lost one of their finest. SSM Wood was an inspiration to all he met. He will be sorely missed."

Captain Ed Rosevink RLC, former Troop Commander at 23 Pioneer Regiment, said of him:

"WO2 Charlie Wood was proud to be a Pioneer and proud of the role he was doing in Afghanistan. Charlie always had a beaming smile and enthusiasm to match. He was an approachable and friendly man with a great amount of professional knowledge which he was keen to share.

"I am deeply sorry that this has happened."

"He was the archetypal Sergeant Major – firm but always impeccably fair and his 'kids', as he termed the soldiers, all loved him."

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Davis GM RLC

Lieutenant Dave Slater RLC, Troop Commander 518 Pioneer Squadron and fellow Search Advisor, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) Wood was killed in action whilst deployed in a dangerous and unforgiving role. Taking on a task that is new to our Regiment, he dedicated himself fully to mastering his craft as an Advanced Search Advisor and member of the Counter-IED Task Force. He always led from the front and was a true Pioneer through and through. He was devoted to the lads that formed his team, 23 Pioneer Regiment and especially to 518 Squadron which he was the proud Sergeant Major of. He will be dearly missed as my Sergeant Major and equally as a friend. My thoughts go to his wife Heather and his family back in the UK."

Lieutenant Michael Lowry RLC, Troop Commander 518 Pioneer Squadron and fellow Search Advisor, said of him:

"I count Squadron Sergeant Major Charles Henry Wood as one of the finest individuals I have ever had the pleasure of knowing and working with. He was the type of Sergeant Major that every young Officer would want and needs. His door was always open and he was never too busy to help when I had questions, problems or just needed someone to talk to. He was an asset to his search team and the type of person who always put his soldiers first. Never one to sit by and watch while others worked, Sergeant Major Wood led from the front at every opportunity regardless of the task at hand. His dedication and diligence in every aspect of his life was an example to all those who knew him. I am proud to say that I counted Sergeant Major Wood among my good friends and he will be profoundly missed."

Warrant Officer Class 1 Stuart Taylor RE, Regimental Sergeant Major, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force, said of him:

"Having met Charlie Wood on the Counter-IED Task Force Mission Rehearsal Exercise in June, training hard and driving his team forward in preparation for Operations on HERRICK 13. As an Advanced Search Advisor and as a Warrant Officer he stood out as a professional soldier, a fine leader who set an exemplary standard for all to follow.

"Charlie is and always will be a part of 23 Pioneer Regiment where he served as a soldier through the ranks and most recently as Sergeant Major of 518 Squadron, he led from the front and we are proud to have had him serve in the Counter-IED Task Force.

"The role of a Search Advisor is that which is hardest to capture on paper and can only be expressed by those who have been led by, reassured by, guided by and redeemed by one.

"Charlie Wood will be remembered by all the members of the Counter-IED Task Force and his team. My thoughts are with his wife Heather and his wider family and friends at this time."

Warrant Officer Class 1 Craig Johnstone, RLC Regimental Sergeant Major, 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, said of him:

"Today our Corps has lost a great leader in the form of Warrant Officer (Class 2) Squadron

Sergeant Major Charles Henry Wood RLC. Charlie was an extremely motivated Sergeant Major who was fiercely loyal and utterly dependable no matter what the situation was. He was a complete stalwart within his Squadron and more so within the Regiment.

"His passion and professionalism at work was an inspiration to all. He always led from the front in all that he did. He was a strong and caring Sergeant Major that always got the best from his troops. The Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess has lost one of its great characters.

"An outstanding soldier and a great friend, WO2 (SSM) Charles Henry Wood RLC will be sadly missed in all aspects of Regimental life.

"Our deepest sympathies and thoughts are with his wife Heather and family at this difficult time."

SSgt Steven Henry, 518 Pioneer Squadron 23 Pioneer Regiment, said of him:

"Charles Henry Wood was the epitome of a Pioneer soldier. One of the most popular men the Regiment has ever seen. As Squadron Sergeant Major he was firm but always fair, outside of work he was a friend to all. He loved Squadron functions and enjoyed a beer or two with his young toms. In the mess he could always be relied upon to organise functions that had people talking for weeks afterwards.

"My thoughts go out to his wonderful wife, Heather, who was also a friend to the Squadron. Words can not describe the void that Charlie's departure will leave in the hearts of every man in the Regiment.

"Charles Henry Wood was a dear friend and he will never be forgotten. Rest in peace Charlie.

"Labore Omnia Vincit."

"Charlie has left a lasting impression on the Squadron and a man of his unique abilities will be impossible to replace."

Major Dickie Hawkins RE

Staff Sergeant James Belcher-Marks, Operations Senior Non Commissioned Officer 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, said of him:

"WO2 Charlie Henry Wood was a keen sportsman who had a true passion and flare for football. He was an avid football fan he cherished his beloved Middlesbrough. Full of life, Charlie's positive outlook on life was infectious, 'the glass was most definitely half full in his eyes'. A perfectionist in everything he undertook, Charlie set the standard for his peers.

"He will be sorely missed by the Regiment."

Corporal Jamie Hewitson, Team Comd of WO2 Wood's Search Team, said of him:

"WO2 SSM Charlie Wood was one the boys who knew how to have a laugh and how to get the

job done, he was an exceptional leader who strived to achieve the highest in every task that he carried out on operations and at his peace time location. A Squadron Sergeant Major who was well-liked throughout 23 Pioneer Regiment and who will be truly missed by all. My thoughts go out to his family and my deepest sympathy to his wife Heather, we will never forget him and his memory will live on."

Corporal Lee Jeapes, 518 Pioneer Squadron and Search Team Commander, said of him:

"I have known Sergeant Major Wood since we went through training together and although we haven't always seen eye to eye, I have the utmost respect for him. Many of the younger lads rightly saw him as a role model and he has achieved a massive amount in his 16 years of service. I have not known a fairer, more approachable SSM and his death will leave a massive hole in the Squadron and the Regiment.

"My thoughts go out to his wife and family at this terrible time."

Corporal Martin, friend, 518 Pioneer Squadron and Search Team Commander, said of him:

"I remember Squadron Sergeant Major Wood as a kind, approachable man who would go out of his way to help anyone who needed it. He would call me up nearly 2-3 times a week to drive a mini bus for him and he would always say the same thing when I would complain "favours for favours sheep's teeth". In my eyes he was one of the best Squadron Sergeant Majors I've ever had the pleasure to know. His example of taking pride in everything he did will remain with me as an example for me to follow. His death is a massive loss to the Regiment and his family. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Heather."

Lance Corporal Ray Payne, 2IC (Second in Command) of WO2 Wood's Search Team, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Wood was a true leader of men and a good inspiration to myself and the rest of the Brimstone call sign he commanded, we all looked up to him in the good times and bad. Charlie was a very funny man but never messed around when it came down to doing our job. It is a dangerous job which he took control of and made every man feel good in what they were doing. My thoughts are with his family. His memory will never be forgotten."

Lance Corporal Neil Thomas, 518 Pioneer Squadron and Search Team 2IC, said of him:

"I will always remember the time when I was called to Squadron Sergeant Major Wood's office first thing one morning. I was trying to think of what I had done wrong. When I got to his office I marched in and stood to attention in front of his desk. He said "Cpl Thomas, do you like skiing?" I replied that I had done a bit of downhill when at school and badly broke my leg. His reply was simple "Well good, you're now on the Nordic ski team, briefing upstairs in 5 minutes." He was always making sure that his soldiers participated in everything possible. He was by far the best SSM I have worked for. He was very professional, firm but fair, but one of the lads. My thoughts and prayers are with Heather and his loved ones."

Private Yeboah Asuamah, Searcher in WO2 Wood's Search Team, said of him:

"On the path of route Ayrshire, there stood a noble man, Mr Charlie Wood, a man who would always compromise his personal benefit and joy for the work he loved doing most. A man who has for a year taught me true sacrifice - I will always remember your leadership skills, your beliefs and most importantly how to be true Pioneer. May your soul rest in perfect peace."

Private Liam Cockfield, Searcher in WO2 Wood's Search Team, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Charlie Wood was a Sergeant Major second to none. He always led from the front and was an inspiration. He was a brave legend in my eyes and will be missed everyday."

Private Jon Fairhurst, Searcher in WO2 Wood's Search Team, said of him:

"The perfect example of a leader who was a perfectionist doing a difficult job in Afghanistan. I will remember him as a man to look up to, a father figure even. He was a proper gaffer who we all thought was a legend throughout the Regiment. I will never forget you Charlie."

Private Adam Tidmus, 518 Pioneer Squadron and High Assurance Searcher, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Wood was the type of person who always thought about the lads before thinking about himself. As a young soldier in the Regiment the Squadron Sergeant Major's love for the Regiment was a good example to me. As far as I'm concerned he was a real good bloke."

Private Lewis Rooke, 518 Pioneer Squadron and High Assurance Searcher, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Wood was a great character and the perfect role model for any young soldier. He will be missed by me and all Pioneer soldiers."

"Charlie was an extremely motivated Sergeant Major who was fiercely loyal and utterly dependable no matter what the situation was."

WO1 Craig Johnstone

Private Jean-Marie Bounougou, 518 Pioneer Squadron and High Assurance Searcher, said of him:

"Although I have only been in the Regiment and 518 Squadron for a short time, I can say that Squadron Sergeant Major Wood was my first example of what a Pioneer soldier is and should be. He was full of energy and had a love for his job and 23 Pioneer Regiment. He was always approachable and always tried to stay close to the junior soldiers. His example has left a lasting impression on me and his loss has left a massive gap in 23 Pioneer Regiment and 518 Squadron. All my prayers go to his family, may God have mercy on his soul and may he rest in peace."

Private Alexander Stringer, 518 Pioneer Squadron and High Assurance Searcher, said of him:

"Squadron Sergeant Major Wood was the type of person who would stay and help out with the crap jobs and always made those jobs seem a little bit better whether it be by getting the brews in for the lads or by telling endless jokes and stories. He was a brilliant leader while remembering to be one of the lads."