

Warrant Officer Class 2 Sean Upton  
5th Regiment Royal Artillery

WO2 Upton was killed as a result of an explosion whilst conducting a foot patrol in Sangin district, Helmand province. He was serving as second-in-command of Sangin's Police Mentoring Team.

WO2 Upton was born on 29th November 1973 in Nottinghamshire. He enlisted into the Army in June 1990. A career Royal Artillery weapon locator specialising in RADAR systems, he served operationally in Iraq, Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Bosnia, and previously in Afghanistan. He was a natural leader and intensely professional soldier who rose sharply through the ranks, quickly gaining trust from, and the confidence of, colleagues wherever he served.

At the start of Operation HERRICK 10 he commanded the Counter Fire elements at Kandahar Airfield, protecting it from insurgent rocket and mortar fire. It was the sort of job in which he revelled, needing a sharp technical intellect and a calm and decisive manner he was yet again superbly effective. On transfer to Sangin district, Helmand province he approached his duty with the same energy and intelligent attention to detail that characterised his career.

WO2 Upton was one of the central figures that make 53 (Louisburg) Battery so effective. He was absolutely key to the life and ethos of the unit, whether on Operations or at home. Always approachable, and hugely capable, he inadvertently became a role model to a generation of junior soldiers. His character was self-effacing and generous, and he lived his life through an unimpeachable set of values.

Throughout the build-up to this tour WO2 Upton was always at the heart of training activity; cajoling and encouraging soldiers, and sometimes prodding the junior officers and imparting wisdom in the diplomatic and avuncular manner required; he seemed always to be in exactly the right place. His popularity across the wider Regiment marked him as a man whose company was always fun and who could be relied upon to deliver; he was consequently relied upon heavily, in particular by his Battery Commander and Battery Sergeant Major.

Despite all of his professional achievements, WO2 Upton remained a devoted family man and was hugely proud of his young family; he leaves behind his wife Karen and two children Hollie and Ewan.

Lieutenant Colonel John Musgrave, Commanding Officer 5th Regiment Royal Artillery, said:

"WO2 Sean Upton was a naturally gifted soldier, the complete professional, noted for his light touch in command and dedication to his soldiers. He specialised in the defeat of enemy rockets and mortars - an art he had practiced in the Balkans, Iraq and on both his Afghanistan tours,

always remaining calm under fire, and decisive and effective in his response.

"His rapid progression through the ranks was testimony to what would have been the brightest future in the Army. 5th Regiment has lost a truly dedicated and exemplary soldier and man, who was a role model to all he met and worked with; always living and working to the highest standards, but also always with a smile on his face and a ready laugh, true to his belief that soldiering should be a rewarding way of life.

"He will be sorely missed by the soldiers of 5th Regiment Royal Artillery and by all in the Royal Artillery who had the privilege of knowing him and working alongside him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, particularly his wife Karen and his son, Ewan, and daughter Hollie."

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

"WO2 Upton was one of those outstanding British Army Sergeant Majors who volunteered for everything. It was his way to be in the mix and at the front and it did not matter whether it was work or play. He has been brilliant at mentoring his Afghan comrades and did it with a perfect lightness of touch. He was adored by his Afghan policeman and that is a reflection of his qualities as a man and as a soldier. He is sorely missed and, yet in this dark hour in the Battle Group, our first thoughts and prayers must be with his beloved wife and adored children who have lost their hero."

Major John Catto, Battery Commander 53 (Louisburg) Battery Royal Artillery, said:

"In the frenetic pace of Regimental life, WO2 Upton was the hub that much of the Battery revolved around. With a firm grip on his training role, and all the soldiers who passed through his office, he was unfailingly on top of whatever was thrown at him, no matter how short the notice or obscure the request. He coupled this competence with a broad smile and biting sense of humour that could draw laughs from any situation. When all seemed overwhelming, there was always WO2 Upton to bring his sense of composure and perspective onto events. The Battery's loss, however great, is nothing to that of his family, and he will be sorely missed by all."

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

"In the short time that I knew WO2 Upton he made a remarkable impression. It is a testament to his character and dedication that he volunteered to leave the relative quiet of Kandahar and fill a gap within the Police Mentoring Team in Sangin district, Helmand province. His professionalism as a soldier was evident to all and he rose to the challenge of commanding Afghan soldiers in the infantry role. Yet above all of this he stood out as a particularly human and unassuming Sergeant Major who cared deeply about the welfare of his soldiers. I will remember him for his selfless nature and benevolent sense of humour.

"He developed a deep empathy with the members of the Afghan National Police who he was responsible for mentoring and they immediately warmed to him. A man of genuine integrity he soon won their trust and was responsible in part for the ever-increasing cooperation between

the police and ourselves. They held him in very high regard; so much so that last week they attempted to present him with a young eagle as a token of their respect.

"First and foremost WO2 Upton was a strong family man and he spoke often of them. Tonight his family are very much in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time."

Captain Paul Harris, Operations Officer 53 (Louisburg) Battery Royal Artillery, said:

"WO2 Upton epitomised what it was to be a professional soldier. Fit, dedicated, competent and wearing a constant smile he approached every task with an abundance of energy and rigour that gained him a steadfast reputation throughout the Gunner community. He loved the Army and threw himself fully into every role whether that was the soul of discretion as the Officers' Mess Manager, becoming the Battery Sergeant Major on one day's notice, or single-handedly organising Pre Deployment Training for the Battery's simultaneous deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. WO2 Upton loved only his family more than the Army. His office and room were always adorned with their photos and he would regularly keep us abreast of how his children were doing at school. His thoughts were constantly with his family. His loss is keenly felt by all who knew him."

Captain Howard Hooper with Sergeant Adrian Meager and Corporal Scott Horn, Operational Co-Ordination Team attached to 2 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"Sergeant Major Upton was our team's ideal Second-in-Command whose humbleness and common-touch reached across all backgrounds, ranks and nationalities; he so very quickly gained a solid rapport with the Afghan National Police and Army whom we worked with, and who were deeply saddened by his death. My hope is that we all continue in his example of mentoring local Afghan security forces with such professionalism, compassion and energy.

"Our team's small size, resulted in a family-like closeness and we have lost a great man whose sense of humour, genuine willingness to help others and loyal friendship was so sad to lose, yet truly admirable.

"Most of all we remember our Sergeant Major as a loving and dedicated husband of Karen and father to Ewan and Hollie whom he regularly spoke of and clearly missed - our team's thoughts and prayers are with them."

Lieutenant Ffreuer Whitaker, Troop Commander 53 (Louisburg) Battery Royal Artillery, said:

"WO2 Sean Upton was everything a Sergeant Major should be; a role model to his subordinates, a firm friend to his peers, and a source of advice and guidance to the junior officers. WO2 Upton embodied loyalty. He genuinely cared for the wellbeing of the soldiers and took a personal interest in ensuring they were trained to the highest standard possible, while always presenting a robust, no nonsense front. He was a steadfast friend to many within the Battery and wider Regiment and could be relied upon, not least professionally, for frank advice, a cup of tea and a chat, or putting the world to rights over a beer. WO2 Upton vested himself wholly in everything and will be missed tremendously in many ways. He spoke of Karen his wife

and their two children frequently, it was profoundly obvious that he loved them deeply as they were never far from the surface of his thoughts; they are at the forefront of ours at this incredibly difficult time."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Pat Jeeves, Troop Sergeant Major 53 (Louisburg) Battery Royal Artillery, said:

"WO2 Sean Upton was an outstanding soldier and a close friend to all. His professionalism and determination shone, never faltering even when the cards seemed against him. He showed all the qualities of a good leader and he was respected by his superiors and peers alike. Sean enjoyed the Army life and grasped challenges and opportunities with both hands. His dedication and loyalty to all those around him was endless and was always there to help others even if it was putting him out. Sean was a truly genuine man making him extremely approachable, the sort of person who you knew you could rely on and would always put others first. Sean was a fit soldier and although not dedicated to a specific sport would give anything a go and always give 100%, again a testimony to his character. Sean was a devoted husband to his wife Karen and the perfect caring father to his two children Ewan and Hollie who he leaves behind. Sean will be missed by all those who knew him and never be forgotten."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Wayne Gower, Troop Sergeant Major 53 (Louisburg) Battery Royal Artillery, said:

"Sean was not just a mate, he was a true friend. In the Army we have lots of mates, but friends can usually be counted on one hand. To be friends with Sean was a massive "prof" - Sean was quality. A quality bloke, quality to be around and a quality dry sense of humour to match. Like me, Sean liked a drink, and like me wasn't very good at it. Also like me, he used to like a crafty cigarette when we were out being rubbish drinkers. It was on these various nights out that it soon became obvious I'd met someone who could match me in my exceptional shyness in actually buying a pack. You didn't need to be around Sean long to realize what a family man he was. He loved 'spinning dits' about what the kids had got up to or what his plans were at the weekend for Karen and the kids. He was a caring guy, not just for his family and friends, but genuinely cared for the lads and lasses and whether they knew it or not, he wanted the best for every single one of them. Sean it was an honour to know you, I will miss you friend. God bless."

Sergeant Adrian Meager, Royal Irish, and Corporal Scott Horn, Royal Anglians, Kajacki Police Mentoring Team, said:

"WO2 Upton was our team's ideal second-in-command whose humbleness and common-touch reached across all backgrounds, ranks and nationalities; he so very quickly gained a solid rapport with the Afghan National Police and Army whom we worked with, and who were deeply saddened by his death. My hope is that we all continue in his example of mentoring local Afghan security forces with such professionalism, compassion and energy. Our team's small size, resulted in a family-like closeness and we have lost a great man whose sense of humour, genuine willingness to help others and loyal friendship was so sad to lose, yet truly admirable. Most of all we remember our Sergeant Major as a loving and dedicated husband of Karen and father to Ewan and Hollie whom he regularly spoke of and clearly missed - our team's thoughts

and prayers are with them."

Sergeant Andy Luckhurst, Brother Gunner from 5 Regiment Royal Artillery and Radar Detachment Commander attached to 2 RIFLES Battle Group:

"It is hard to write about one person and sum up all their qualities when that person had so many. I've had the pleasure of working with Sean Upton for many years and he was respected by his peers and subordinates alike. He had an infectious sense of humour and he was remembered by anybody who was fortunate enough to speak to him.

"More than any other, the word 'selfless' comes to mind when talking about Sean. He was always more concerned about others than he was himself, whether that was his soldiers welfare or their careers. Sean's open door policy offered his soldiers a compassionate and caring leader and will be irreplaceable within 53 Battery and 5 Regiment.

"Sean was dedicated in all that he did, but none more so than spending time with his family. Sean leaves behind his wife Karen, son Ewan and daughter Hollie. All our thoughts are with them."