

PRIVATE MATTHEW ADAM THORNTON

SUPPORT COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT COMBINED FORCE LASHKAR GAH (THE QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS BATTLE GROUP)

Private Matthew Adam Thornton was a Territorial Army soldier of 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment who deployed to Afghanistan with Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment as an element of Combined Force Lashkar Gah (The Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group) in October 2011. He operated out of Check Point KHOORASHAN in the Babaji area at the northern tip of the Lashkar Gah District. On 9 November 2011, he and another multiple were patrolling to the north of Check Point LOY MANDEH in order to engage with the Afghan people and to develop a better understanding of their area. During the patrol his multiple was engaged by small arms fire and grenades. While he was manoeuvring and returning fire he was caught in the blast of an Improvised Explosive Device and tragically was killed.

Private Thornton was born in Barnsley on 3 November 1983. He was educated at Darton High School prior to joining Fontenay Company, East and West Riding Regiment on 5 Oct 2004, which subsequently became D Company, 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment on 6 June 2006. He left the Territorial Army in 2007, but re-enlisted into D Company in September 2009, eager to deploy to Afghanistan when the opportunity arose. It was with no surprise that he was one of the first to volunteer his services for deployment on Operation HERRICK 15. Away from military life he was employed as a factory worker for a Yorkshire-based company, Premdor, manufacturing door and window frames. He was also an avid snow boarder, a sport in which he was a qualified instructor.

Private Thornton quickly became very popular with those with whom he served in Support Company. During his short time with the Company he showed that he was a gifted, hard working and determined soldier, who epitomised the values and standards of the British Army. With an infectious smile and a keen sense of humour, he will be sorely missed by all who had the honour of serving with him.

He leaves behind his father, Michael, his mother, Susan, his sister, Sarah, and his brother, Nathan. The thoughts and prayers of all those in his Battalion and Combined Force Lashkar Gah are very much with them at this most difficult time.

Tribute from the family of Private Matthew Thornton

Matthew was a dedicated soldier and passionate about the job. He loved what he was doing. He loved life and lived it to the full - in his work, in his role with the Territorial Army and in his leisure time. Matthew will be greatly missed by his family, his TA colleagues and his friends. His death leaves a huge hole in all our lives. We ask that our privacy is respected at this sad time.

Lieutenant Colonel Ian Crowley MC, Commanding Officer, 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

Private Matthew Thornton volunteered for service with the Territorial Army and enlisted in 2004. For various reasons, he left in 2007, but missed the challenge, the comradeship and the banter that service with 4 YORKS gave him and re-engaged in 2009. A stalwart of D Company, he 'tipped up' for everything and was always the first to volunteer and help his Company, professionally and socially.

One of the reasons he re-enlisted was to do his bit and serve on operations in Afghanistan. When the opportunity came to mobilise he was one of the first to put his hand up. There was never a doubt that he would be exactly the right man to deploy. He embraced the training he received, showing a professional attitude throughout some hard training in Wales and Germany. I know that his talent as a soldier, his willingness to assist anybody and his wacky dress sense, combined with strange dance moves ensured that he quickly integrated into his mobilised service with the platoon he joined in 1 YORKS.

Private Matthew Thornton displayed that he had the volunteer ethos in spades. He was a fine soldier and an even finer man. 4 YORKS is a family and we have lost one of our own. He was a true Yorkshire Warrior. Private Matthew Thornton was a son and brother of whom his heartbroken family can feel justly proud. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time. We will remember him.

Lieutenant Colonel Dan Bradbury, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment said:

Private Matthew Thornton joined 1 YORKS in June this year having been mobilised from 4 YORKS - our sister Territorial Army Battalion. He fitted in immediately: his abundant grit, determination, ready wit and smile allowing him to ride out the demanding training and operational circumstances in Afghanistan. He was tragically killed on an operation to improve security in Helmand - a task we shall pursue in the finest traditions of the Yorkshire Regiment. Hugely respected by his comrades and commanders for his readiness to engage with any task he was given, willingly and without complaint, he is already missed. The thoughts of the Battalion are with his family and his close friends in Support Company - who will ensure that his legacy is not forgotten. We will remember him.

Lieutenant Colonel Ian Mortimer, Commanding Officer, Combined Force Lashkar Gah (The Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group) said:

We in Combined Force Lashkar Gah are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Private Matt Thornton. From the onset he made a lasting and deep impression on all those who knew him. Utterly professional, he was hugely committed to his job, and to his friends and comrades. Fit, robust and determined, he thrived on the daily challenges that he faced here in Afghanistan. He was determined to make a difference. He always went that extra mile and out of his way to help others. With bags of charisma and an infectious sense of humour, he carried those around him,

especially during the more difficult times. This is what marked him out as a human being. We have lost an outstanding comrade, a fine young man, and a true soldier. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this most difficult and tragic time. We will remember him.

Major Craig Powers, Officer Commanding Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

I have had only had the pleasure and honour of knowing Private Matt Thornton since he arrived in Germany with Support Company in mid June 2011 after volunteering to serve with 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (1 YORKS) on operations in Afghanistan. As a member of 4 YORKS, he was exceptionally motivated, keen and enthusiastic to share this opportunity and experience with his sister Battalion. It was clear he was determined to get the most out of his time with the regulars and fitted in with the Company ethos from the outset. Dedicated and ever the consummate professional, he also had a dry sense of humour which won him many friends throughout the ranks. His attitude and approach complimented his posting into the Fire Support Group as a rifleman where he excelled on pre-deployment training exercises.

Private Thornton's multiple is operating out of a small check point where camaraderie is essential. It was apparent from my visits and his commander's feedback that he was contributing significantly to the maintenance of morale and was a popular and reliable team player. The whole Company are shocked and deeply saddened at this tragic loss of life. We have all been deprived of a kind, capable and extremely talented colleague who will be dearly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are firmly with his parents, brother, and sister at this difficult time.

Captain Stephen Jones, Plans Officer, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

Having worked with and known Private Matt Thornton from the start of our pre-deployment training and all the way through mobilisation, it was with great shock and sadness that I heard of his death. It has been my privilege to serve with such a capable, hard-working, selfless and fun-loving soldier. He will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues here in Support Company and by all those back home in 4 YORKS. My thoughts are with his family and friends and all those who had the honour of knowing him.

Captain Steve Dando, Platoon Commander, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

Private Matt Thornton epitomised everything a commander could want from a soldier in his platoon. He was energetic, vibrant, enthusiastic about soldiering and thoroughly embraced his life in the Army. Pte Thornton was a very popular member of the platoon. My thoughts and prayers and those of my platoon go out to his family and friends at this time.

Sergeant Anthony Brown, Platoon Sergeant, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

It's hard to describe Thorney, he was a funny character. He was very happy, he was always smiling and asking if you wanted a brew. He was always there for you if you felt a bit down. He was a very good soldier and I was very lucky to have him in my Check Point. He was trusted with some of the more complex jobs and never moaned; he just got on with what he had to do. And even took on the load for others. Never showing any form of selfishness I was very lucky to have met Matt. It has been a pleasure to command him as he just got on with it, no matter how bad the day had been. I miss him, not just as a soldier but as a friend and as a genuinely nice bloke to have around and know. My thoughts go straight to his family and friends at home. We are feeling a loss here so I cannot imagine what they must be feeling at home. Matt you will be missed.

Private Jeremy Robbins, C Company, 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, serving with Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

Matthew Thornton was a most friendly and caring person who took great pride in being a Yorkshireman from Barnsley. A soldier of the Yorkshire Regiment, having always wanted to serve on tour in Afghanistan, he worked hard throughout his mobilisation and pre-deployment training with 1 YORKS in Germany. We worked together from the start both on patrol and at our checkpoint where he would always have a laugh with the lads and be counting down the days to his R&R when he could be home again with his family. Matt had just turned 28 a few days ago and he celebrated in the best way he could with no stag and a birthday cake his mother had sent which had arrived in one piece. He was loved by everyone and will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues in both 1 YORKS and 4 YORKS.

All the Soldiers of Check Point KHOORASHAN, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, Combined Force Lashkar Gah, said:

We haven't known Thorney for very long, but in the short time we have spent with him he has become a good friend to all of us, with his smile and sarcastic comments that cheered the group up when morale was low. All we can say is that Private Matthew Thornton was a very keen soldier, loyal to his job and an all round gleaming lad. We send all of our respects to his family and friends. It was easy to say that he was a good soldier but an even better human being with a kindness of heart and most of all he was willing to help in and out of his job. God bless his soul and keep him safe until we see him again on the other side.