

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that Captain Richard Holloway, of The Royal Engineers, was killed in action on 23 December 2013 after being engaged by enemy fire whilst on operations east of Kabul.

Captain Holloway, of County Durham, was 29. He leaves behind parents Jaquie and Neil, brother Luke and girlfriend Sandy. The family have paid the following tribute: "Our son Richard was an exceptional young man, a perfectionist in everything he did and a loyal brother and friend, who embraced life to the full. He was a dedicated and totally committed member of the Armed Forces, relishing the excitement and challenge but always serious and reflective about his duties and responsibilities to those with whom he served.

"The sense of adventure he experienced with the Royal Engineers was echoed in his love of travel to faraway places and physical activity including surfing, kayaking, canoeing, mountain-biking and climbing. Wherever the action was, he wanted to be part of it – and that is where our beloved son, of whom we are so very proud, lost his life."

Captain Holloway's Commanding Officer said:

Captain Rich Holloway died as a result of direct enemy fire whilst on operations in Eastern Afghanistan, leading from the front. He was one of the best; a natural leader. His tactical ability commanded wide respect; his judgement was un-erring, his enthusiasm was infectious and his standards never dropped. He had a humble self-confidence that instinctively drew people to him. His own brand of selflessness and professionalism marked him out as a soldier, but it was the warmth of his personality that set him out as a popular and effective leader.

It is hard to track, but at some point in the process Rich established himself not just as a highly respected troop commander, but one of the principal characters within the Unit. In doing a difficult job in Afghanistan, he displayed a rare empathy and cultural understanding that ensured he was highly valued and revered by the Afghans whom he mentored tirelessly, as well as his colleagues. He will be sorely missed by all those who had the privilege to work alongside him, but his memory will never be allowed to fade.

A caring and loving son whose loss cannot be portrayed in words. We have lost a brother, they have lost their world.

Editor's note : A tribute of this nature, from an unnamed commander, is usually indicative that the deceased was serving with Special Forces.

Captain Ed Martin, Royal Engineers, said:

There was never a second wasted with Rich, he always had a plan and made the most of every day. He lived life to the full and was an inspiration to others to do the same. I have never met a more trustworthy, loyal or dedicated friend, he had humility in spades and I would have followed him anywhere.

I am very lucky to have known him and feel exceptionally fortunate to have had him as the best man at my wedding earlier this year, he will be dearly missed. But my loss is only minor compared to that of his parents Jaquie and Neil, his brother Luke and girlfriend Sandy, my thoughts are with them all at this incredibly difficult time. Rest in peace.

Captain Andy Brett, Royal Engineers, said:

It was a privilege to know Rich. He set the highest standards and achieved professional excellence; he always inspired me to do better! He taught me to enjoy life and make the most of every adventure. He will be remembered.