

4TH REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY

Bombardier Stephen Gilbert was 36 years old and joined the Army in August 1999.

He enlisted into the Royal Artillery and was posted to 6/36 Battery, 40th Regiment Royal Artillery (The Lowland Gunners) based in Topcliffe, North Yorkshire.

Bombardier Gilbert started his career in the gun group before re-rolling to become an Observation Post Assistant, working on the front line in a Fire Support Team and deploying to Kosovo in 2001. He then deployed to Iraq in 2003 and again in March 2005 as part of an infantry ground holding multiple.

His vigour, professionalism and dedication shone through and he was selected to become an instructor at the Army Foundation College at Harrogate. Bombardier Gilbert typified the ideal instructor; dynamic, proficient and with an infectious sense of humour which motivated the young recruits.

If ever there was a role model for young soldiers to emulate it was him.

In January 2010, Bombardier Gilbert was posted to 4th Regiment Royal Artillery, which had replaced 40th Regiment Royal Artillery in Topcliffe.

He joined 88 (Arracan) Battery during Mission Specific Training as a Fire Support Team Assistant and deployed to Afghanistan in March 2010 in support of G Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) based in Forward Operating Base Khar Nikah in Nahr-e Saraj (North) operating under the Danish Battlegroup.

Bombardier Gilbert has spent the last three months in the region providing security to the local population, preventing insurgent intimidation and supporting the Afghan National Army.

He was on a joint patrol with the Afghan National Army on the afternoon of 10 June 2010 when he was injured by an explosion.

He was transferred to the New Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, where he sadly died of his wounds on the afternoon of 26 June 2010.

He leaves behind his wife Jackie and sons Connor and Kristian.
Jackie Gilbert has made the following statement:

"We as a family are so proud of Steve and everything he believed in. He was a fantastic father and Connor and Kristian has not only lost their dad but their best friend.

"Steve was a devoted husband and we lived and laughed everyday we shared. I do truly

believe I was lucky enough to find my true soul mate.

"Steve will always be in my heart and will live on through his family and many close friends. Rest in peace my darling; I love you so much."

Lieutenant Colonel Chris Squier, Commanding Officer 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

"Bombardier Stephen Gilbert was a rising star. A fit, robust Scotsman, he was a man of great compassion and moral purpose.

"His family were everything to him. He and his wife Jackie were central to life at our home in Topcliffe.

"His loss has had deep and profound reverberations across the Regiment and our local community.

"As a soldier he was the epitome of the Gunner Fire Support Team Assistant. Knowledgeable enough to teach and mentor his team, strong enough to support his commander, fearless enough to lead them in the fight, courageous enough to lift his head from the ditch and call for fire and compassionate enough to treat his team as his own family; men like him are truly rare.

"He fought for the final days of his life as he had lived; with true passion and spirit. He never woke from the blast that so cruelly took him from us and he sadly passed away with his wife Jackie by his side. My thoughts go to her, their sons Connor and Kristian, his parents Ray and Helen and his brother and sisters.

"Theirs is the true loss we can only imagine; he will remain always, Forever Fourth."

Major Paul Dupuy, Battery Commander, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Bombardier Gilbert was the essence of a 'Gunner' Non-Commissioned Officer and a Fire Support Team Assistant. Bright, dedicated and utterly committed, he was an exceptional soldier and commander.

"He led his soldiers from the front and worked tirelessly to support, educate and look after them. He had only been with the Battery for six months but in that time he had earned the trust and respect of all, including the infantry company to which he was attached.

"He was a key member of the team. He had considerable ability and much potential. He was a kind, loyal and honest man, whom I held in highest regard.

"He personified all that I know and is great about the Battery. It was a privilege to command and serve with him. He will be sorely missed by all of us.

"At this most difficult of times my thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jackie, his two sons Connor and Kristian, his family and friends."

Major Nick Aucott, Officer Commanding G (Tobruk) Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"Bombardier Stephen Gilbert was a highly professional soldier who was a privilege to work alongside.

"At the time he sustained his injuries he was conducting a mobile patrol with soldiers from the 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) on the edge of the Green Zone, tasked with disrupting an insurgent check point that was inhibiting the freedom of movement of the local farmers from Khar Nikah to Gereshk.

"As a dour Scotsman, his dry wit and gentle nature ensured that he was exceptionally popular with the Gurkha, British and Afghan soldiers he was working alongside.

"It is never easy to integrate into a company as an attachment, and that Bombardier Gilbert did this so successfully is a testament to his personable nature and the professionalism with which he approached his job.

"Bombardier Gilbert was a true character and wonderful company; he will be greatly missed. My thoughts and prayers are now with his family during this difficult time."

Major Kevin Young, Regimental Welfare Officer, 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

"I have known Bombardier Gilbert for a number of years. He was a huge character and professionally one of the best Bombardiers I have come across.

"He was a vibrant individual with a wicked sense of humour and always willing to lead from the front.

"Although enlisted into the Army at a late age, he certainly had a fruitful and inspiring career ahead of him.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jackie, sons Connor and Kristian at this unimaginably distressing time."

Captain Martin Wells, Fire Support Team Commander, 88 (Arracan) Battery on behalf of Bombardier Gilbert's Fire Support Team said:

"Bombardier Stephen Gilbert was a soldier whose strength of character and consummate professionalism marked him apart from his peers.

"He always demonstrated a courage and calmness when on patrol, and composure in the face of adversity that ensured, on more than one occasion, the safe return of his fellow soldiers.

"He possessed a sense of humour remarkably similar to my own through which we connected and developed a rapport that never diminished.

"He was immensely devoted to his family and we both took great pleasure in sharing stories and photos from home.

"He was a father figure to the younger members of the Fire Support Team, a shoulder of

support for them and their welfare became his priority.

"I have had the pleasure to work with him and the honour to call him my friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. He will be sorely missed."

Captain Duncan McDonald, Fire Support Team Commander, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"I worked with Bombardier Gilbert for only a short time but he made a big impression. During the pre-deployment training he worked as my Fire Support Team Assistant on what can only be described as a tough and very cold exercise where he was deployed forward with the lead callsigns for a period of 50 hours.

"As it was only supposed to be a short patrol, you could not have blamed him for showing some sort of ill feeling, however in his extremely professional nature he cracked on with absolutely no complaint whatsoever.

"His ability to get along with everyone was an absolute credit to him and his good nature and respect for everyone made him an extremely popular member of the Battery.

"We shall miss him dearly and our thoughts are with his wife Jackie, his children Connor and Kristian and the rest of his family."

Captain Katie Palastanga, Fire Support Team Commander, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Bombardier Gilbert came to 4th Regiment Royal Artillery in January after a stint away instructing and immediately fitted into the Battery.

"His professional and conscientious attitude meant that respecting him came easily, and his quiet and thoughtful nature meant that he was a pleasure to be around.

"He was one of the most motivated soldiers I have met, always managing to see a silver lining to any situation and his enthusiasm was infectious.

"To the more junior soldiers and officers he was a great mentor and role model, he was exactly what a good Non-Commissioned Officer should be, balancing his wealth of knowledge and experience with humility and good nature.

"I feel privileged to have served alongside such a fine soldier. Our thoughts and prayers are with his friends and family. Gone but not forgotten."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Paddy Prout, Battery Sergeant Major, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"From the moment Steve arrived in the Battery I knew we had struck gold; of him it really was true to say "he was the best" and "utterly professional".

"Steve joined the Battery during Mission Specific Training, hit the ground running and impressed right from the very start.

"As the Battery Sergeant Major I knew that the job would not only get completed but to the highest standard because that was the sort of bloke he was.

"He took the reigns of the Troop within days and ran it along with the Troop Commander as if he had been in the Battery for years. Everyone in the Gun Troop at Patrol Base 2 is feeling the loss of our friend and comrade and our thoughts and prayers are with Jackie, Connor, Kristian and all Steve's family and friends at this most difficult of times.

"Steve you will always be one of us, you will always be a REDNECK."

Staff Sergeant Mark Wilde, Joint Fires Cell Senior Non-Commissioned Officer, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Gilly was one of the most dedicated and professional men I have ever met.

"He was kind and generous and always put others, especially his team, before himself.

"To work with him was a pleasure. Everything had a positive side and the job was never finished until it was done right.

"I was always put at ease by Gilly, he always wanted to do what was right and never faltered under pressure.

"He was a shining example to all who had the privilege to know and work with him. My deepest sympathies go to his wife and family."

Staff Sergeant 'Reggie' Perren, Joint Fires Cell Commander, 129 (Dragon) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"I first met Gilly about 10 years ago back in 40 Regiment Royal Artillery. The first time I met him I thought what a good lad, a true and honest man, a hard working soldier who wanted to get the most out of Army life.

"Gilly was a guy who was up for a laugh both in and out of work. I'd often see Gilly walking around, or should I say getting dragged around, the shops by Jackie doing pretty much the same as me, looking for the drinks aisle. My thoughts go out to Jackie and the family.

"Gilly mate you will never be forgotten, you will be always in my thoughts, good night mate sleep tight."

Colour Sergeant Wayne Glynn, G (Tobruk) Company Fire Support Group, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"Bombardier Gilbert or 'Gilly' as he was known by his friends and colleagues, first started working with our multiple in April, as part of the Fire Support Team.

"He quickly proved himself to be very dependable and professional at his job. When out on patrol, we felt that much safer for his presence, knowing that fire support was always in his very capable hands. H

"He was tested several times whilst on patrol, and thrived and shone in the challenging environment, calling supporting fire down within seconds, when needed.

"Always focused on the job in hand, he gave us the reassurance we required to leave the Forward Operating Base on task.

"On a personal note, we quickly became firm friends, as is often the case when you rely on someone day in, day out, and sharing stories about home, family and the job we do, over late night cups of tea.

"He had a cracking sense of humour, often lifting our spirits when we were feeling low, and was much respected and well liked by the lads who knew him.

"We are devastated by his death, and it was an honour to work with such a selfless, committed and thoroughly likeable man."

"From the moment Steve arrived in the Battery I knew we had struck gold; of him it really was true to say "he was the best" and "utterly professional".

Warrant Officer Class 2 Paddy Prout

Sergeant Lee Moye, Forward Air Controller, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"It is hard to put into words the loss of Bombardier Gilbert, 'Gilly' as everyone knew him in 4th Regiment Royal Artillery.

"I first met Gilly back in Germany whilst serving with 40th Regiment Royal Artillery, he was a member of 6/36 Battery and I was a member of 137 Battery.

"Although we were in different Batteries we had the usual rival banter between the Observation Post crews on the countless competitions we all took part in up and down the country.

"Gilly was an inspirational character who always looked on the bright side of what some would call a bad situation. He showed such a passion for the job, more than any soldier I know.

"He would always go out of his way to help out the junior soldiers by passing on the vast knowledge that he had built up over the years.

"Gilly you are a dear friend and will be sorely missed, our hearts go out to your family at this tragic time. "We will always remember you, dear friend.""

Corporal John Hough, Section Commander, C Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshires) said:

"Gilly was like an older brother to me, always guiding and advising and showing me the right road to go down.

"He was always on hand to guide me back onto this road whenever I got lost, in the way that only Gilly could.

"He was an absolute one in a million, generous, kind and consoling whenever a friend was in need. He was a tough and resolute soldier but deep down I know he was a big softie with his one true love his wife Jackie and his boys.

"This love was never-ending and evident for everyone to see. Gilly will be sorely missed but never forgotten and I will always love and remember him as the brother I never had and a true friend.

"I am deeply sorry that I will not be able to be with you all at this time, however, I know Gillie would understand and my thoughts and prayers are with his family at this tough time."
Bombardier Ian Davies, Forward Air Controller, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Unfortunately I only knew Gilly for a short time but due to his dry humour and infectious laugh and proper 'naff tats' which he thought were brilliant, you could do nothing but like the man.

"Whilst working with him before, during and after Pre-Deployment Training I used to always try and snap him but in good old Gilly fashion you just got that look he gave and calmly got told where to go with a little smirk in a strong Scottish accent.

"All Gilly ever spoke about was his wife and how he couldn't wait to get home and smash a few bottles of wine.

"Gilly was the most kind-hearted and calming person I've ever met and am absolutely devastated at his death.

"My thoughts and prayers go to his wife Jackie, his kids Connor and Kris, who I know he loved dearly and his extended family through these terrible times.
Corporal 'Baz' Chambers, 88 Battery Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers Fitter Section said:

"When I heard Gilly had been posted to 4th Regiment Royal Artillery I was happy that an old friend was back.

"I first met Gilly in 2002 at 40th Regiment Royal Artillery and served in his platoon on Op TELIC and on Op FRESCO before that.

"He was a role model for all the junior soldiers; many aspired to be like him. Gilly was happiest when passing on his knowledge of his trade to all the Gunners that worked in his detachment.

"Gilly was always the practical joker, with a wicked sense of humour and infectious laugh.

"He was a dedicated husband, father and soldier. During this tough time my thoughts go out to Jackie, Connor and Kristian and with all of his friends from 40th Regiment Royal Artillery and 88 (Arracan) Battery.

"Bombardier Stephen "Gilly" Gilbert, you will always be a true Braveheart."

Bombardier 'Fitzy' Ficetola, Gun Coverer, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Quite simply – a true gentleman. I first served with Gilly as instructors at the Army Foundation College (Harrogate) where he was extremely popular and well respected by all.

"A man with a good heart who was always there for you when you needed a friend.

"Gilly, an individual who stood out from the crowd, was always willing to help others and would do anything for you.

"A true friend who will be sorely missed. RIP mate."

Corporal Waine Bolger, Mortar Platoon, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"Bombardier Stephen 'Gilly' Gilbert first started working with Mortar Platoon on an exercise in January 2010, where he quickly became a well-liked and respected member of the Platoon, showing his enthusiasm to learn new things and his great sense of humour.

"Even though we had worked together for only a short amount of time, Stephen quickly earned the trust and respect of all the members within the Mortar Platoon.

"He would often come to where the Mortars were to have a cup of tea and chat, passing the time by talking of home and memories we had, and what we looked forward to most upon return to England.

"Whilst in Afghanistan, people would feel safe on patrol knowing that they could rely on Stephen, and if the situation arose he would react with great speed and accuracy.

"Stephen's death has come as a shock to the members of the Platoon and he will be sadly missed by all.

"All the members of the Platoon who had the pleasure of meeting Stephen will hold a dear and long lasting memory of him.

"Personally it has been a privilege and honour to have worked with Stephen and he will be sadly missed."

Lance Bombardier Ian Callaghan, Fire Support Team Assistant, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"Since he arrived in January, Gilly showed straight away a relaxed and easy going nature towards the lads.

"He was knowledgeable and good at his job but never afraid to ask questions, even to the more Junior Non-Commissioned Officers of the Troop.

"I remember him always talking about his two sons and worrying when his eldest learnt to drive.

"Joining in on any banter, he was one of the best. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends, it was my privilege to know him."

Gunner Joe Bootland, Fire Support Team Signaller, 88 (Arracan) Battery Royal Artillery said:

"I've known Gilly just under a year, but in that short time I came to admire him as a soldier and as a friend.

"He would always do what he could for the lads, be that getting us knocked off early or giving advice to the younger soldier such as myself.

"He will be deeply missed within the Troop, Battery and Regiment. My heart goes out to his family at this hard time.

"Gilly, you will be remembered always and never forgotten."