

CAPTAIN LISA JADE HEAD

321 EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL SQUADRON, 11 EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL REGIMENT

ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS

Captain Lisa Jade Head, 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps died in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham on Tuesday 19th April 2011 as a result of injuries sustained in Afghanistan.

Captain Lisa Jade Head deployed to Afghanistan on 27 March 2011 as an Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEED) (Neutralise) Operator with the Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Task Force. She was based in Patrol Base 4 in the Nahr-e-Saraj District of Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

On 18 April 2011, Captain Head deployed with her team to dispose of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) found by B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment in an alleyway frequently used by Afghans and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops alike. After rendering safe the identified IED, Captain Head was fatally injured while dealing with a second IED.

Captain Head was born on 30 November 1981 in Huddersfield. She studied Human Biology at Huddersfield University before attending the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst from 2004 - 2005. Captain Head commissioned into the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) and initially trained as an Air Transport Liaison Officer, deploying to Iraq in 2006 and Afghanistan in 2007. She was selected to attend the Ammunition Technical Officers (ATO) course, and on passing was posted to 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Regiment RLC. She served with distinction as an ATO in Northern Ireland with 321 EOD Squadron (Sqn), and while there she attended the High Threat Operators Course. After successfully completing the High Threat Course as an IEED (Neutralise) Operator she joined the C-IED Task Force for Op HERRICK 14.

Captain Head was an exemplary member of the Joint Force EOD Group within the C-IED Task Force. She was a popular and respected member of her parent Regiment and Squadron. A gifted Troop Commander she had earned the respect of all ranks.

Captain Head had a bright future ahead of her - her professionalism, leadership and unswerving sense of duty would have carried her far. She will, justly, be remembered among the ranks of the bravest of the brave.

The family of Captain Lisa Head have made the following statement:

"We wish to say that they we are extremely proud of Lisa. Lisa always said that she had the best job in the world and she loved every second of it. Lisa had two families - us and the Army.

Lisa had a fantastic life and lived it to the full. No-one was more loved."

Lieutenant Colonel Adam McRae MBE RLC, Commanding Officer 11 EOD Regiment RLC said:

"Captain Lisa Head will be remembered by the Officers and Soldiers of the Regiment as a passionate, robust and forthright individual who enjoyed life to the full; be it at work, on the sporting field or at the bar. She was totally committed to her profession and rightly proud of being an Ammunition Technical Officer. She took particular pride in achieving the coveted "High Threat" status which set her at the pinnacle of her trade. Lisa deployed to Afghanistan with the full knowledge of the threats she would face. These dangers did not faze her as she was a self-assured, highly effective operator and a well liked leader. Methodical and professional in her work she was always eminently pragmatic and calm under pressure. Having spoken with her prior to deployment she was motivated, enthusiastic and was looking forward to the challenges she would face. Her potential was considerable and she will be an enormous loss to us all.

"The Regiment, her colleagues and friends will miss her infectious smile and dry wit. She sits proudly along side our recent fallen, several of whom were her close friends which I know inspired her to deploy to Afghanistan. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with her family at this tragic moment. We mourn her loss; she is gone but will never be forgotten by her Regiment who I know she was proud to be part of and whom are immensely proud of her. Her sacrifice will inspire others to follow her example."

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Budden MBE RE, Commanding Officer Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Task force said:

"The loss of Captain Lisa Head has rocked the Task Force deeply - my heartfelt condolences go out to Lisa's parents, her sister, family and friends. Lisa was an exceptional officer, who was highly committed to the Task Force and her parent unit, 11 EOD Regiment, RLC.

"I did not know her well - I wish I had known her longer and better. But I did know her well enough to say that she wore her rank and appointment as an IED Disposal Operator lightly. Her dedication in volunteering and passing the most demanding of courses and then deploying as a Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Operator is truly humbling. Her selfless commitment, dealing with the most dangerous of threats in Afghanistan, is a lesson to us all.

"In a dark time, she had a natural energy surrounding her, an energy that provides a light to shine a path for us all. She was someone that people are naturally drawn towards and want to spend time with. It is that memory that I hope provides a very small solace in this most difficult of times. She was a role model to us all.

"Captain Lisa Head will be sorely missed, but always remembered, by all ranks in the Counter IED Task Force."

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Harrison MBE PARA, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, said:

"The loss of Captain Lisa Head is a tragedy at every level. Having just arrived in our area, she immediately took on the task of clearing devices from one of the most dangerous areas in Helmand Province. Lisa had been dealing with a device just before she was fatally wounded and her fortitude in returning to task demonstrates the cool, considered valour that defined her nature. Lisa's sacrifice has further deepened 2 PARA Battlegroup's admiration for the breathtaking courage these very special bomb disposal officers routinely display. Lisa died to make this world a safer place for all. Our thoughts and prayers lie with all her family and friends at this impossibly difficult time.

"All of 6 Platoon, B Company, 2 PARA wish to pass on their deepest sympathies and are sorry to hear that Lisa passed away this morning. 6 Platoon was involved in the operation on which Lisa suffered her injuries and wish to pass on a few messages from men in the platoon."

Major Matt Middleditch QGM RLC, Officer Commanding 321 EOD Sqn, 11 EOD Regiment RLC said:

"'He who would true valour see, let him come hither'

"Lisa was quite simply a joy to have known and a privilege to have commanded. Professionally she was the very best; a natural leader who commanded respect, she led from the front both at work and at play. Her determination and drive to succeed in everything that she did made her stand out from the crowd and it was no surprise to me that she had been selected to assume the appointment of Regimental Operations Officer following her tour in Afghanistan.

"Lisa was the life and soul of any social event and was really the centre of gravity for life in the Sqn and amongst her much wider circle of friends. Anyone who met her will remember her keen wit and sense of fun which would light up any occasion and would know that the world was a better place when she was with you.

"321 EOD Sqn has a deep rooted and proud tradition of Technical Excellence and Selfless Courage. Captain Lisa Head was the very embodiment of that tradition. The thoughts of us all are with Lisa's parents and sister. Lisa was the very best and there is a big hole left without her."

Major Al Brown RE, Officer Commanding the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group, Operation HERRICK 14 said:

"I first met Captain Lisa Head on the flight out to Afghanistan only a few weeks ago. I remember my first impressions were of a smiling, down to earth officer. A strong-willed Yorkshire lass, who displayed an easy confidence about undertaking the most demanding and nerve testing of jobs anywhere in the world.

"Since that first meeting my appreciation has only grown. She was the embodiment of the finest

qualities that the world has come to know of the IED Disposal Operator; hugely professional, utterly selfless in placing herself into danger so that others may be kept safe and yet unassuming about her role.

"Her mix of a cheerful grounded nature, combined with an obvious professionalism also made her an excellent leader, building a team that bonded as the strongest of comrades in arms in an exceptionally short space of time. Forged in the brief but fiercely burning star of Lisa's time here with us, the strength of that team spirit endures and the Counter-IED Task Force will be stronger in this tour because of her work.

"The British Army and the people of Afghanistan have lost an extremely skilled and courageous soldier today, someone dedicated to protecting the lives of others and the world is a poorer place for it.

"Within the EOD community, we are left hollow and saddened by the loss of our friend and comrade. However we know that any sense of loss that we feel, however painful, will only be a shadow of what her family must be feeling and the thoughts of every one of the Counter-IED Task Force are with them."

Major Mark Wilkinson RLC, Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group said:

"I first met Lisa in January 2010, whilst she was an Operator at 321 EOD Sqn, Northern Ireland. I had been out of the business for a few years and she pretty much took me under her wing as I slowly got back into things. I remember the long nights in the Aldergrove Mess in the bar with her - her choice of expensive red wine whenever it was my round and her obsession with eating Maltesers in particular stick in my mind. She spent hours with me going through explosive ordnance procedures and talking through tasks before I passed 'licensing'. I know that without her help and friendship it would have taken me a lot longer to get where I wanted to be.

"I used to delight in winding her up, whether by annoying her at breakfast (she was definitely not a morning person) or constantly using the mug her sister bought her for Christmas. But the thing that I will always remember will be Lisa as a person: a good person, a person who would do anything for anyone, and above all, a friend. I know how proud she was to serve at 321 EOD Sqn, and how proud she was to be an ATO.

"She was driven to pass her High Threat IEDD Course and I also know how proud she was to become a High Threat Operator in Afghanistan. But Lisa was also my friend, and the gap her death will leave in my life and many other people's lives will be huge. I cannot comprehend the fact that I will never see her again, never speak to her again and never hear her laugh again. But she has been a part of my life, and she will always be in my mind. I will never, ever forget her.

"Goodbye Lisa and may God bless you."

Captain Mike Kennedy RE, Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group said:

"Lisa was the bravest and most courageous woman I have ever met. She typified the spirit of the Ammunition Technical Officer, making the long and lonely walk into the face of danger and adversity for the sake of others. I had the great privilege of serving alongside her in 321 EOD Sqn, as she raced from job to job throughout Northern Ireland. She would have had it no other way, she loved her job and she loved the soldiers that she commanded.

"Lisa and I both attended the same High Threat course, a course that few women have ever completed but Lisa was determined in her usual way. She wanted to pass and operate in Afghanistan alongside her friends, we all did. Lisa was a fantastic operator, technical and resolute, truly irreplaceable. In the close knit community in which we work the respect that she held is tantamount to none.

"To her family I know there are no words that I can give that will make the pain of losing such a magnificent daughter any less painful, I can not even comprehend your grief. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I know she is now in a better place."

Captain Head's IED Disposal Team, Corporal Adam Tucker, Lance Corporal Chris Barrett and Marine Cai Adamson said:

"It was a pleasure to work with you for the short time we had together, you certainly are a northern girl with your strong will and ability to put us lads in our place when needed.

"Thank you for the skills and drills you have gave us as a team, we will be sure to utilise these for the rest of our tour and beyond. Our thoughts are with Lisa's family and friends at this very hard time.

"We will all miss you sincerely."

Captain Head's Royal Engineer Search Team, Sergeant Michael Williams, Corporal Arfon Jones, Lance Corporal Steve Doyle, Sapper Vasilis Tzanetis, Sapper Ian Scott, Sapper Phillip Bayliss, Sapper Bruce Todd and Private Kerry Edkins said:

"Working with Lisa was an honour. In the short space of time we worked together there was a very strong working relationship and bond.

"She was a very strong character and a great northern lass who could put up with a Royal Engineers Search Team humour and banter. She will be dearly missed and our thoughts are with her family and friends."

Lance Corporal Michelle Arnott, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron said:

"Lisa was the best boss I have worked under. She had a fantastic sense of humour and drive. You could always go straight to her for anything, whether it be work related or not. I worked with Lisa in Northern Ireland. We were on a team together for a few months and it was always our team that got a call out at 2am. She used to call us the 'Night Owls.' She never complained and was always raring to go. She was always someone that you could look up to and rely on."

Corporal Brian Stevenson, Medic, 6 Platoon, B Company said:

"My deepest sympathies. I didn't know Lisa well but worked with her on the day she sustained her injuries, it was clear to see that she was a fighter with a strong heart. My deepest condolences go out to her family and friends."

Captain Rob Warrington RE, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron said:

"I met Lisa back in the UK just as she was finishing her High Threat Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Course. My first impressions of her were that she was a strong minded individual with a solid leadership style and a sharp sense of humour.

"Though our time knowing each other in Afghanistan was short, I will never forget her professionalism, motivated attitude and our mutual love of banter. Most of all, I will never forget her ability to raise spirits with her smile.

"The loss of Lisa has left a hole in our hearts in the Counter IED Task Force and she is greatly missed. Our thoughts go out to her family and friends during this very difficult time."

Warrant Officer Class 1 (Squadron Sergeant Major) Stephen Parker QGM RLC, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"I only met Capt Head a couple of weeks before the tragic incident that took her life and I feel privileged to have had the chance to know her. From the moment she arrived at the Squadron she made an impact on me and all those around her. Her lively and no-nonsense approach to everything I saw her do commanded the respect and admiration of those lucky enough to have worked with her and for her.

"She was a first-class officer who led her bomb disposal team with vigour and the utmost professionalism in the most testing of circumstances. She will be sorely missed. My thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends at this difficult time.

Warrant Officer Class 2 (Squadron Sergeant Major) Dave Wakelin RE, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron said:

"I have had the privilege of knowing Captain Lisa Head for only a very short time during our deployment on Operation HERRICK 14. Captain Head was extremely professional and epitomised the perception the world has of a High Threat Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Operator.

"I have no doubt that the Royal Logistic Corps and particularly the Explosive Ordnance Disposal fraternity will be a lesser place without her.

"My thoughts are with Lisa's family at what is undoubtedly a very difficult time."

Warrant Officer Class 2 (Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant) Tony Lamb RLC, Counter

Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"I knew of Lisa long before I met her. Within the ammunition technician fraternity she had already begun to make a name for herself, establishing a reputation as one of the trades upcoming ATOs. I recall meeting Lisa for the first time in Didcot the night before we flew to Afghanistan together. I was immediately struck by her friendly demeanour and sense of fun. I knew that she was the kind of officer I would enjoy working with. Whenever Lisa took time out for a meal or a cigarette she was always surrounded by her colleagues who loved her forthright Yorkshire take on life. Lisa was an officer that could command respect, and yet one always felt that as well as an officer she was also a friend. Lisa, as an ATO you will remain part of a very special group of people and will be remembered always. My thoughts are with you and your family at this most difficult time."

Warrant Officer Class 2 (Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant) Aide Myatt RLC, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"I'll never forget the first time I met Lisa. It was a mild spring evening on the 26 March 2011, the night we were to deploy on Op Herrick 14. She arrived in the car park with all her kit, but in a bit of a flap, she'd left her ID card at home. I thought to myself 'here we go, another young officer who thinks admin is a small town in China.' How wrong could I have been?! Lisa was meticulous in everything she did, the utmost professional. She made numerous visits to my office demanding extra equipment prior to going out on the ground and she wanted to make sure she had every eventuality covered.

"There was also another side to Lisa, she had an infectious personality. For the most part she always had a smile on her face and was happiest sat talking shop, cigarette in hand, outside the welfare tent. Lisa was one of the groups always willing to lend an ear and share a joke.

"I didn't know you for long Lisa, but you have left a lasting impression on me as an Officer, a leader and a friend. My thoughts and sympathy are with your family and friends, at what is a terrible time. Lisa you're gone but you will never be forgotten.

Corporal Justin Crotch, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"I only got to know Captain Lisa Head for a short while but in the time that I shared with her I found her to be a well organised and methodical officer with an excellent dry sense of humour to match. Our thoughts go out to her family during this dreadful time. She will be greatly missed by all."

Lance Corporal Emma Graham, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"I knew Lisa from our training courses at Kineton and only wish that I had got to know her better. She had a strong personality and really liked to have a laugh and enjoy a joke with the 'lads'. She wasn't afraid to go for anything and would even keep us all behind on course asking questions to the instructor until she was happy that she understood everything!

"We shared the same tent here in Bastion and if I needed anything she was very quick to help and was very generous with her things. She enjoyed making us laugh and would even make a fool of herself with silly clothing to do just that.

"She is an inspiration for her unique character and her strength and determination. She would never be beaten and would persevere until she got exactly what she set out for.

"I can safely speak for everyone who knew her when I say she'll always be remembered and our thoughts go out to all of her family and friends."

Lance Corporal Sarah Drury and Lance Corporal Alexis Wort, Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force said:

"We are both privileged to have met Lisa on deployment to Afghanistan on 26th March. Having never served together before, 'us girls' were accommodated together in the same tent. Lisa was our senior and mentor. Her strong will and sense of humour was infectious - never one to suffer fools lightly she always had something to say mainly about her being an ATO and being immensely proud of the fact.

"She was generous in the fact that when she wanted to smoke we had to attend - well bribed by her as she purchased the cigarettes and we followed her want. She was generous and gracious and would do anything for the girls. Lisa's rants were common place often at the expense of our ears; she ranted at the laundry for messing up her clothing, her PJs were all creased up - all light hearted banter of course which caused us to all laugh out loud. We think that she was really a blonde underneath.

"We will both miss Lisa not only for her sense of humour but her infectious personality, her friendship and her undoubted passion for her job.

"Our thoughts are with her immediate family and close friends at this saddest of times; we will remember her and she will live on in our memories for forever."