

Corporal Stephen Walker from 40 Commando Royal Marines, serving as part of Combined Force Sangin, was killed on Friday 21 May 2010 in an explosion that happened near Patrol Base Almas, in Sangin, Helmand province.

He was conducting a joint foot patrol with the Afghan National Army to reassure and improve the security for the local population in the area when the incident took place.

Corporal Stephen Walker was born in Lisburn, Northern Ireland on 5 April 1968. He lived in Exmouth with his wife Leona and their daughter Greer; and was also a proud father to his son Samuel.

He originally joined the Royal Navy on 19 May 1986, qualifying as a cook and serving at HMS Raleigh, HMS Cochrane and on board HMS Cleopatra.

He subsequently transferred to the Royal Marines, entering Recruit Training at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines on 12 March 1990, passing for duty on 7 November 1990. During his 20 year career he served across the broad spectrum of Royal Marine Units including; Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines, 40 and 45 Commando Royal Marines and the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines as a Recruit Troop Instructor.

He had a widespread background of instructional expertise in areas such as Mortars, Platoon Weapons and Jungle Warfare. He also had considerable operational experience in theatres such as Northern Ireland, Southern Turkey and Northern Iraq and, most recently, Afghanistan. In 2005, he excelled in his Junior Command Training at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, placing in the top three

students on his course.

This much deserved promotion gave him the opportunity to pass on his wealth of knowledge and experience to his young marines, something for which he felt extremely passionate about.

Joining 40 Commando Royal Marines in July 2009, he immediately conducted Mission Specific Training for deployment to Afghanistan.

In April 2010, he deployed with Alpha Company, 40 Commando to Op HERRICK 12, employed as a Section Commander based out of Patrol Base ALMAS. His Company had been responsible for providing security, thereby increasing their freedom of movement, to the people of Sangin during his time in Afghanistan.

On the morning of Friday 21 May 2010, Alpha Company was conducting a reassurance patrol, alongside the Afghanistan National Army, near Patrol Base ALMAS. At approximately 0850 hours local, north

of the Patrol Base an explosion occurred. Tragically Cpl Walker was killed in action as a result of the blast.

Corporal Walker's wife Leona said:

"Steve was passionate, loyal and determined. He enjoyed the role he had in the Marines but he was a family man at heart.

"He was a fantastic Dad to Greer and he was the perfect soul mate to me.

"Although this is a very sad time, Steve would want us to be positive. Remember the good times, the happy times.

"A lot of people's lives will be deeply affected by Steve's all-to-early departure.

"Life goes on, but it will never be the same for us."

Leona x

Lieutenant Colonel Paul James, Commanding Officer 40 Commando Group, Combined Force Sangin said:

"Corporal Stephen 'Whisky' Walker, an ex-navy chef turned Royal Marine Commando, was one of the most professionally astute men I have ever met. Brave, loyal, utterly dedicated and absolutely selfless, he died leading his section on patrol in southern Sangin. Having served twenty years in the Royal Marines, he was my most experienced and probably my best Corporal. I valued his counsel greatly and despite being his Commanding Officer, he taught me tactics.

"I often joined his section during our pre-deployment training. He was a natural leader who cared passionately for his men; he trained, he operated, he lived and he died at the front. He is a man who will be sorely missed by everyone in 40 Commando. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Leona, daughter Greer, son Samuel, his family and friends. Corporal 'Whisky' Walker was, and will always be, the consummate Commando."

Major Sean Brady, Officer Commanding Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Cpl Walker, known to all in the Company and the Unit as 'Whisky', was probably the most professional Marine I have had the pleasure of serving with during my career. With an eye for detail, he was never willing to sacrifice standards or cut corners in order to find easier ways of doing things; moreover, he was never willing to allow others to do so either.

"During the Confirmation Exercise (CFX) in the build-up training for the deployment to Afghanistan, his performance was highlighted by the exercise directing staff as exceptional, and they observed that during a building search that he was in charge of they had never seen the task completed so well, in fact it was more or less the perfect solution.

"It was this level of commitment which led me to move him from 1 Troop to the newly formed 3 Troop so that he could quickly raise it up to the level required to deploy. Whisky was initially not happy, and in his usual style he explained to me in no uncertain terms how hard he had worked in getting his original section to the standard he required.

"However, as was typical with him, he quickly set about moulding his new section and bringing them up to his impeccably high standard. It would be fair to say that 3 Troop quickly embodied the 'Whisky' way of doing things. Once in Afghanistan I went out on patrol with him on a number of occasions and I was immensely impressed with how he led and protected the marines under his command.

"On one occasion I vividly remember him physically stopping the lead man of his patrol with a wise hand on the shoulder just as the lead man was about to move through a trip wire. His actions undoubtedly saved the lives of the marines in the patrol and this event just enhanced his already legendary reputation.

"In Cpl Walker I had someone who was always ready with some useful advice and he was confident enough in his own abilities not to be afraid of passing this on, regardless of rank. Most importantly however, he was loyal to his men and he died at the front of the patrol where he was best placed to lead and protect his men.

"The Royal Marines have lost a great leader; however, if he were here now to give us some advice, the consummate professional in him would tell us to "crack on" and get the job done. So we will. Our thoughts and prayers are now with his wife, daughter and son at this difficult time."

Capt Dan Sawyers, Officer Commanding, 3 Troop, Alpha Company said:

"Cpl 'Whisky' Walker was an outstanding Royal Marine and Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, he was a privilege to have commanded. On OP HERRICK 12 he led 7 Sect, 3 Troop, from our Patrol Base, PB ALMAS, on ground patrols in the Green Zone. He has always led from the front, and provided constant support to both myself and the Marines in the Troop.

"He set impeccably high standards, and was a constant reminder of the very qualities that are instilled in every Royal Marine during training. He loved his job and the Royal Marines, and his enthusiasm was infectious throughout the Troop. No one, from Marine to Troop Commander was safe from a daily reminder about the standards we should be striving to achieve. He had a great sense of humour that never faltered whatever the situation.

"Everyone in the Troop looked up to Cpl Walker; his experience and knowledge could never be ignored. He was also a father figure to the Troop, waking up an hour before everyone else to ensure that the porridge was ready, whilst at night he would oversee the evening meal. He was always approachable, and always willing to offer assistance at any level. Our days here at PB ALMAS will be a lot quieter; 'Whisky' will be deeply missed by the whole Troop at PB ALMAS, especially his Section.

"To them, the gift of leadership and the ability to inspire complete devotion and loyalty were his to an exceptional degree. He was the consummate professional, and a true friend to all that knew him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Leona, daughter Greer, and son Samuel, who he spoke so dearly of throughout his time in Afghanistan."

Sergeant 'Darbs' Darbyshire, 3 Troop Sergeant, Alpha Company said:

"Cpl 'Whisky' Walker was a man who I had the pleasure of getting to know during my time in 3 Troop. I had only worked with him for the last 6 months, and it was a privilege to have done so. He was and still is one of the most professional Royal Marines I have ever met.

"With his unselfish nature and knowledge of the job, it was often hard to rein his enthusiasm in. You would sometimes think that he had just passed out of training, and had not been in the Corps for some 20 years, with the passion and drive he displayed in everything he did.

"He was always the one to lead from the front and always keen to pass on his experience to the rest of the Troop. He was a larger than life character, who will be deeply missed by everyone who knew him. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his loving family, especially his wife and children. We will always miss you Whisky, but never forget you."

Sergeant 'Dinger' Bell, 1 Troop Sergeant, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Cpl Stephen 'Whisky' Walker, a proud and loving father and husband, a true Bootneck legend, a leader of men who always led from the front. He inspired all those around him and his values, standards and professionalism were second to none.

"He was a charismatic man who had a presence whenever you were near him. He never suffered fools gladly, but he strived to bring everyone up to his level and he would never let you down. He was never above you, he was never below you; he was always by your side. Goodbye brother."

Corporal Ash Morris, 1 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Never has a kinder man walked the planet. Whisky was a man who never failed to speak his mind for the benefit of others, even if this would get him into trouble. All that mattered to him were the things closest

to his heart; his family and his loyal section of Marines. Proud of his heritage he would regularly be seen educating the English boys on the Scottish/Celtic ways of the past.

"However, it was his professionalism that made Whisky the figure he was. Operational service in Northern Ireland and Iraq gave him the qualities of an outstanding Royal Marines Commando. Whisky was a man who will always be loved, missed, and remembered by all who knew him."

Corporal 'Geese' Ghessen, Fire Support Group, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines

said:

"Whisky was a larger than life character who brought humour to everyone he met, and a man that everyone looked up to. He was a proud family man who was also a proud brother of our Corps. He was always ready to speak his mind to better us all.

"When Whisky was around there was never a dull moment as he was the life and soul of any party. As a leader you could not have asked for a better NCO, always leading from the front and at hand to share his knowledge and experiences to anyone who would listen. All of the Commando qualities are personified in Whisky who was proud to be a Royal Marine. He was a man that was always ready to stand up for his marines and because of this he was admired by us all.

"As a father figure to many, he will be missed by Alpha Company and the Corps as a whole. Whisky was a "True Bootneck".

Corporal Darren Davis, 8 Section Commander, 3 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Cpl 'Whisky' Walker was such a huge character in the Troop; words cannot do him justice. He oozed every quality that a Bootneck should have - the complete package. I only met Whisky in December, but those five months felt like I had known him for five years, that's the kind of bloke he was. One of his qualities I personally admired was the way he spoke his mind, it didn't matter whether you were a young Marine or an old and bold Major, you would listen to him - admittedly you would not have a choice in the matter.

"He was always straight down the line and to the point. His Section was a credit to him; he had moulded them into a very professional team, which will leave them in good stead for the rest of the tour. He is going to be sorely missed by everybody at Patrol Base ALMAS, but his voice will echo around the walls here throughout the rest of our tour. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, who he adored and couldn't wait to get back to."

Corporal Andrew Lock, 9 Section Commander, 3 Troop, Alpha Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Whisky was the sort of man that typified the perfect example of a Royal Marine; he was the ideal role model. How anyone manages to spend the best part of 20 years in the Corps and stay as enthusiastic as he was, is unbelievable.

"He was a professional Corporal, who demanded high standards, which he got because of his kind, unselfish and enthusiastic nature. Everything was about the lads to Whisky and making sure they were okay. He was never afraid to speak out in defence of them, even if it did land him in trouble.

"His experience and professionalism was admired by all in our Troop, regardless of rank. He was a good family man, and I know that his life outside the Corps was devoted to his wife,

son and daughter.

"I do not know where we all go from here as a Troop; the man was a father figure to all of us. Our hearts go out to his family, especially his wife and children. The professional standards that he set the Troop will remain with all of us for the rest of our lives. The man was a warrior and should be honoured by everyone. We loved him."

Marine Ryan O'Regan, 1 Troop, Alpha Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"In the brief time that I knew Whisky I came to realise just how little I knew of my job. He knew everything there was to know about soldiering, and he was never shy of 'offering' his advice. The lads learnt so much from Whisky and I know they were very grateful for this. He was also one of the kindest men I'd ever met and he would always strive to look out for the lads and make sure they were never 'seen off'.

"He was a fountain of knowledge and had a passion for the job, the lads and his family. Whisky was truly one of the kindest 'larger than life' blokes the lads in A Coy had ever met. He will be sorely missed by all, especially the young Marines who most definitely looked upon Whisky as a true Bootneck... A true Royal Marine Commando."