

1ST BATTALION THE ROYAL WELSH

Fusilier Jonathan Burgess was born in Swansea, South Wales, on 9 July 1989. He was brought up in Townhill where he attended the local Primary School and Bishop Gore Comprehensive. After school he studied catering and worked in a restaurant.

On completion of the Combat Infantryman Course at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, he joined the 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh in May 2008. He was initially posted to Episkopi Garrison, Cyprus.

Since joining the Battalion he has conducted a demanding overseas exercise to Kenya and also the pre-deployment training package, prior to deploying on Op HERRICK 11. During his 4 months in Afghanistan Fusilier Burgess had been a key member of 3 Platoon and had conducted both aviation assault and ground holding operations.

Fusilier Burgess was engaged to be married to Kelly Forrest. He leaves behind father Royston, mother Susan, sisters Tracy and Suzanne, and brothers David, Christopher and Ashley.

The family of Fusilier Jonathan Burgess, and his fiancée Kelly Forrest, paid the following tribute:

"Jonathan was a loving and caring man who enjoyed life to full. He had an infectious smile that would brighten up anyone's day. We were all very lucky to have had such a wonderful person in our lives. He was a much loved son, brother, friend and fiancé and would have been an amazing father to his baby girl. He will be greatly missed by us all. He will always be our hero."

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Lock, Commanding Officer 1 ROYAL WELSH Battle Group, said:

"Fusilier Jon Burgess was the epitome of a Welsh infantry soldier; fiercely proud of being a Royal Welshman and of the job that he was doing in Afghanistan. A real character in both his Platoon and Company he could always be relied upon to lift the spirits of his mates. He had already shown himself to be a natural leader, stepping up to command when required; he was marked out for early promotion.

"He had come into his own in Afghanistan, growing in confidence throughout our time here rising to the many challenges that operations threw at him. He was a tough and dependable field soldier who would always be there for his mates. Jon had been working with his Multiple in the Showal area since the start of Operation Moshtarak. They have all made a real difference to the lives of the people in the area, keeping the insurgents at bay and ensuring that the people can live their lives in peace. Jon was killed in a fire fight with insurgents, fighting alongside his comrades as he always did with a cool head and immense courage.

"All members of the Battle Group are truly shocked by the news of Jon's death. Our thoughts

and prayers are with his family, friends and especially his fiancée Kelly, who is expecting their daughter. They can be justly proud of their Welsh Warrior, greatly missed, but never forgotten."

Major Shôn Hackney, Officer Commanding Alpha Company, said:

"Fusilier Jon Burgess was one of those soldiers who once you met him you would never forget him. He was the epitome of a cocky, confident and capable young soldier. Always the centre of attention, Fusilier Burgess had an answer for everything and everybody.

"Fusilier Burgess had performed excellently throughout our tour in Afghanistan. As a fairly junior soldier he came of age during Op HERRICK 11. His true abilities came to the fore and it was obvious that he had a bright future in the Battalion. As such he was selected to attend a Junior Non Commissioned Officer's Cadre on return to the UK. He had proved himself on numerous occasions during our various missions. Courageous, strong, fit and cunning, Fusilier Burgess was everything a commander could want of an infantry soldier. He was without doubt an asset to his platoon and the company as a whole.

"I consider it a privilege to have known and worked with Fusilier Burgess. My condolences and those of all of the Company Group go out to his family. Whilst we grieve here in Afghanistan, we can only guess at the pain and anguish felt by his family and friends. In particular our thoughts are with his fiancée and their unborn daughter. What I can say with confidence is that Fusilier Burgess was a credit to his family, to the Regiment and to his country. He died fighting alongside his mates. Together, they had made a difference in one small part of Afghanistan. He had helped create the conditions which will allow children to once again play freely and to go to school; conditions where local people can go about their daily lives without the spectre of brutal insurgent control. In his short life Fusilier Burgess has given everything, he has made a difference and we will always remember him."

Lieutenant James Dott, Officer Commanding 3 Platoon, said:

"I know it's a clichéd thing to say but like most Infantry soldiers Fusilier Jonathan Burgess was a 'loveable rogue'. If there was one word which summed him up it would be 'morale'. He was always at the centre of platoon banter and during periods of downtime I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Fusilier Burgess's tales of weekend mischief from his hometown of Townhill in Swansea. He was definitely one of the characters in my platoon and was liked and respected by all the boys. He was a highly valued member of my platoon and one of the senior Fusiliers, a responsibility to which he rose admirably. It was for this reason he had been selected to attend a JNCO cadre on returning from Op HERRICK.

"Throughout the tour Fusilier Burgess's performance has been first class, always rising to the challenge and fulfilling any task to the best of his ability. Without prompting he would undertake the role of a JNCO and he would never moan or gripe. I am so proud of the progress Fusilier Burgess has made since joining the Battalion and his potential was really beginning to shine, proving he had a lot to offer. I am truly devastated by the death of Fusilier Burgess and his loss will be felt across the Battalion. I will never forget him and it was an honour to serve and fight alongside him. My condolences go out to his fiancée Kelly and his family and friends."

Sergeant Steven Cowap, Platoon Sergeant 3 Platoon, said:

"Fusilier Burgess was a very good soldier and a highly respected member of the Platoon. When it came to work he was one that worked hard till the task was complete. He was a fit individual and matured every day whilst he conducted pre-deployment training, and more so whilst deployed on Op HERRICK 11. Due to his efforts and hard work Fusilier Burgess was selected to attend a JNCO Cadre on our return. During this tour Fusilier Burgess was a GPMG Gunner and never shied away from a patrol, never moaned, he just got on with the task in hand and completed it to the best of his ability. If there was a prank or a joke to be had within the Platoon Fusilier Burgess was never far away from the centre of it. Fusilier Burgess will be missed by all from the Royal Welsh, but will never be forgotten. My condolences go to his family and fiancée who is expecting his child in May."

His friends in his Multiple, Wizard 13A said:

"Jon Burgess, a friend, a colleague and a brother in arms. Jon was a key personality in our multiple and also within A Company. He brought us all laughter and joy and was always keen to get stuck in to any challenge. On patrol he always had the GPMG and as much ammunition as he could carry. Even when told he should give it to someone else to carry, he always refused.

"When all the lads were sat down talking about their plans, Jon's main topic was going home and being there for Kelly when she gives birth to their daughter, Abigail; and how he was focused on being the best father and family man he could be. A focus which was unusual for Jon as he was a field soldier and would often find himself in the Adjutant's office in camp for some misdemeanour or another. Out here in Afghanistan Jon Burgess has stood out within the multiple so much that he was put forward for the next JNCO Cadre.

"We are all sat here devastated that we will never see Jon again. We cannot even imagine the pain his family and girlfriend Kelly are feeling. We are such a close multiple and today we have lost a brother. The Army has lost one of its finest Welsh Warriors and he was, truly, one of the finest.

"Our deepest thoughts are with his fiancée Kelly, his family back in Swansea and his unborn daughter Abigail. Rest in peace mate, we will miss you brother, love from all the boys in W13A"

His friend Fusilier Robert Slaney said:

"Jon Burgess was a brilliant soldier and an excellent friend. He was full of laughter and a really funny guy. Burgess and I were the multiple GPMG gunners, so there was always a bit of competition between us. Not least with me being a 'North Walian alien' and him being a 'Southy'. We were brilliant basher buddies and he would always lift my morale when I was feeling low. He was a very kind and friendly person who would go out of his way to help you. We shared everything, including my flip flops!

"We would always talk about what we were going to do when we got home. He was a father to

be and was really determined to get home and be there for his fiancée Kelly and for the birth of their daughter, Abigail. His other aim was to complete the next JNCO Cadre.

"Jon will be sorely missed and losing a good friend has torn us apart as a multiple. I cannot imagine what his fiancée and family are going through right now, but I know my memories of Jon will be the greatest and my heart goes out to all his loved ones. Rest in peace South Walian alien, I'll miss you.

His friend Fusilier Georgie Ullah said:

"I will always remember being sat around the table in the Check Point. Burgess always had some comment to make and you'd literally be in tears of laughter. He had an infectious personality and he really grew on me in Afghanistan. I found that as I got to know him that he had the weight of the world on his shoulders. He was desperate to get home and prove to Kelly that he could be a good Dad and partner.

"Burgess listened a lot to a song called Travelling Soldier. I think it meant something to him, given his circumstances. I am going to miss you big lad, your family will be proud of you I am sure."