

Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton
40th Regiment Royal Artillery (The Lowland Gunners)

KILLED IN ACTION, NEAR FORWARD OPERATING BASE JACKSON, SANGIN

Thursday 13th August 2009

Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton was killed in action on Thursday the 13th of August 2009, when he was caught in an IED blast whilst on foot patrol as part of Op GHARTSE KERS 4, providing security for a pre-election shura in the Sangin area of Helmand province. He had suffered injury in an initial blast which had sadly killed Rifleman Wild and, whilst trying to clear an extraction route to the Helicopter Landing Site, was caught in a second blast in which he was fatally wounded.

Lance Bombardier Hatton was born on the 15th June 1986 and was from Easingwold in North Yorkshire. He joined 40th Regiment Royal Artillery (the Lowland Gunners) on 21st January 2004 after completion of his Basic Training at the Army Foundation College Harrogate and Phase 2 Training at Larkhill, Wiltshire. After an initial tour in 49 (Inkerman) Headquarters Battery, he was posted to 6/36 (Arcot 1751) Battery, immediately establishing himself as a highly popular character within a very close knit Tactical Group. Having previously completed operational tours in Iraq and Cyprus, he completed Pre-Deployment Training for Afghanistan and subsequently deployed with the 2 RIFLES Battle Group in March 2009 as an Observation Post Assistant, initially to the Kajaki area of operations and subsequently south, to Sangin where he was bolstering the in place Fire Support Team (FST) when he was tragically killed.

The role of an Observation Post Assistant is a demanding one and requires a special breed of soldier. The job requires initiative, foresight, composure under extreme pressure, clarity of thought, physical and mental robustness and tactical awareness. Lance Bombardier Hatton epitomised these qualities and possessed an enthusiasm for his work which was clear for all to see. He was often to be found in his room at night reading his Operational Procedures (OP) cribs in order to better understand the technical aspects of his profession, much to the amusement of his friends in the Battery, or in the Gym working hard on his fitness in order to ensure that he would be ready in all respects when the time came. He had begun his career in 40th Regiment Royal Artillery as a Battlefield Meteorological System (BMETS) operator, responsible for providing the meteorological data that a Light Gun requires in order to fire accurately. However, it was indicative of his character and desire to be at the forefront of the action so he sought a posting to a Fire Support Team. He was a man who thrived on being at the forefront of everything that his Battery and Regiment were involved in and it was in this spirit that he deployed to Kajaki with his FST and his comrades from the 2 RIFLES Battle Group. In perhaps the most austere and kinetic corner of Helmand Province, his orchestration of Joint Fires was truly exceptional. On his return from Helmand province, it was his wish to attempt the

arduous patrols course and become a member of 4/73 Battery Royal Artillery; further testament to the sheer enjoyment and satisfaction he derived from soldiering, and soldiering well.

A young man with a winning smile and a heart of gold Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton was one of the best of us. The distress of the Regiment is second only to that of his mother Jill, father Philip and his girlfriend Tasha Chehab. Our thoughts are with them.

Lieutenant Colonel Owen Adams, Commanding Officer of 40th Regiment Royal Artillery, said:

"Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton was a man who had found his niche in life. He revelled in the bond that is commonplace amongst soldiers who serve in small teams across the Army and he lived to excel in his chosen profession. Being a member of an FST on operations is a privileged and important role at the very heart of the Company Group. The bonds of camaraderie formed between a Company and its FST are forged through the blood and sweat of endeavour, in pursuit of a common purpose. It is a special bond that only soldiers truly understand; Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton understood it and thrived on it, as did his resolute comrades in 2 RIFLES and I know they will mourn his loss with their own.

"Lance Bombardier Hatton was one of those characters who stood out in a crowd. I was always most struck by his engaging style, cheerfulness and sense of pride. I enjoyed his company on the times we chatted in Barracks or out in the field. He was no shrinking violet and would always engage in conversation with his superiors, peers and subordinates alike; a positive and inspiring young man who I can honestly say was a genuine pleasure to know."

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson MBE, Commanding Officer 2 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"Lance Bombardier Hatton was one of an enviably effervescent bunch of Gunners who have made a mark in all corners of the 2 Rifles Battle Group. I got to know Lance Bombardier Hatton because we always seemed to be on the same helicopter. He made an immediate impression - physically striking, he sat and chatted with real insight about his fight at Kajaki and what he hoped to bring to Sangin. He was a master of his art and has dug my Riflemen out of some very hairy moments and I am hugely grateful. He has saved lives, undoubtedly so. I have been struck as I have walked round my Battle Group today by how proud people are to have known 'Hatts' and I count myself firmly in that number of very privileged men and women. He will be sorely missed by us all but we will pause in our FOB to recall a man who lived to the full, brimmed with passion for his job and touched the lives of many here in the Upper Sangin Valley. There is much to celebrate in his life, cut so tragically short.

"Our prayers and thoughts must now be with his beloved family and we pray that somehow they will find the courage and the strength to face this unimaginably awful time."

Major Joe Power, Commanding 6/36 Battery, 40th Regiment Royal Artillery, said:

"In the short time I knew Lance Bombardier Hatton he made a remarkable impression on me. It is a great testament to his character that he so readily volunteered to join the A Company Fire Support Team in Sangin, having spent a considerable period engaged in combat operations in

Kajaki beforehand.

"Full of beans and with huge reserves of energy, he threw himself into his new role as the 'Ack', and quickly made his mark in an already highly competent team. His arrival added impetus and fresh ideas and he just couldn't wait to use his considerable talents to make a difference here in Sangin. He remarked to me just days before his untimely death that soldiering in Sangin was precisely what he joined the Army to do. He was supremely comfortable with his duties as an 'Ack' and a great soldier too. He had an amazing future ahead of him and the Battery has lost one of its rising stars.

"Enormously popular and unfailingly cheerful, even when faced with adversity, his mischievous smile and sense of fun will be sorely missed. He was the epitome of a Fire Support Team soldier and died doing what he loved.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and loved ones at this most difficult of times."

Major Matt Rimmer, former Battery Commander 6/36 Battery, said:

"Lance Bombardier Hatton was one of my rising stars, a real talent for the future. 'Hatts', as we rather predictably called him, was an ox of a man, with shoulders that bore weight and responsibility with equal ease. He was thriving on operations in Northern Helmand, relishing his role in a Fire Support Team and flourishing in a hugely challenging environment. He had been part of a very close-knit team supporting 2 RIFLES Battlegroup and clearly loved the experience. Fitter, stronger and more assured than I have ever known him, he used his technical skill on a daily basis to take the fight to the insurgents. He loved being a soldier, loved being in the mix with his mates and was growing in maturity and confidence before one's eyes.

"Despite an inability to resist spending vast amounts of cash on unnecessary military kit, Hatts was a remarkably level-headed and measured man. Calm, poised and ready to chat, he had an enviable ability to make friends readily - he was the sort of guy who would always make the extra effort to include someone new. He was a gallant and kind man - a genuinely decent bloke.

"Hatts had real intelligence and courage, as his questions and his actions demonstrated. Never afraid to volunteer, he was a front-foot soldier with a positive attitude and a positive influence on those around him. While his friends and family will be suffering hugely at the moment, they should rest assured that he was a man in his element, doing what he loved, doing it superbly and making a difference."

Captain Colin Oliver, Acting Officer Commanding I Company, 2 Rifles, Kajaki, said:

"Lance Bombardier Hatton spent most of his tour at Kajaki, where he was a proud member of a close Fire Support Team that helped I Company, 2 Rifles protect the Kajaki dam. A unique part of Helmand, the FST were in constant use and 'Hatts' was an important part of a team who used Joint Fires on an almost daily basis. Fit, strong and with a larger than life character, he was well known throughout the FOB, and was a popular individual amongst the Riflemen of I

Company. He dealt with the news of his move to Sangin with maturity and enthusiasm for a new challenge. A mark of the man was that he spent his last few days in Kajaki cramming up on his skills and drills, so that he could do the best possible job as an 'Ack' in Sangin.

"He will be greatly missed, both by his very close knit FST and by those Riflemen with whom he served in Kajaki. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this difficult time, of whom he talked about so often."

Sergeant Lee Wotherspoon, Team Commander, said:

"I first met Lance Bombardier Hatton as a fresh faced sixteen year old when I was his section commander at AFC Harrogate. Straight away I was struck by his boundless energy and willingness to learn and try new experiences. This never changed throughout his career and he always threw himself into every situation with an enthusiasm that was an inspiration to the younger members of the team. As a colleague and a friend he was always a joy to be around with his ready wit and all too ready smile. He was, to the end, a constant professional; he was never happier than when he was doing his job, in which he took great pride.

"Hatts, you were a joy to be around and inspired all who knew you. It saddens me that you are gone and the world will be a much duller place without you in it. Our thoughts go out to your family at this most difficult of times. You were one of the best and will never be replaced."

Sergeant Mike Oldfield, JTAC in Kajaki, said:

"Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton was an excellent Junior Non Commissioned Officer. He was an immensely strong soldier and could Tab along for hours on end in the heat without moaning. His input to our team in daily FOB life will be missed immensely. Although his bread baking skills left a lot to be desired he would always try again the next day which just summed up his character.

"He was a man who wouldn't give up on something once he'd set his mind to do it; a great soldier and a great bloke. May you now rest in peace."

Bombardier Simon Chambers, FST Ack in Wishtan, said:

"It has only been a couple of years since 'Hatts' joined our Tac Group, bringing with him huge amounts of enthusiasm and surplus amounts of kit. He spent the majority of his pay on 'ally-ness' when on occasion he didn't even know what it was for! It may even be true that he had more kit than the BQMS.

"Hatts, your keenness, love of the FST and the Regiment, will be greatly missed; it saddens us to know that you will not be around to brighten our lives. Our thoughts and prayers go out to your family and friends at this time."

Bombardier Ryan Brown, FST Ack in Kajaki, said:

"Matthew, or "Hatts" as he was known to many, was as keen as they come. I grew to know Hatts on a personal and professional level as we have always seemed to end up on the same courses ever since I joined the Regiment. He always wanted to be in a Fire Support Team and sure enough, he transferred Batteries and ended up a member of 6/36 (Arcot 1751) Battery RA. Having completed our Observation Post Assistant Level 3 course together we found out we would be "Going to War" (as we called it) together as Witchcraft 23. Hatts was a vital member of the team and although I was the "Ack" he was the "Ack's Ack", a joke we had amongst us. Having served 5 months with us in Kajaki he was in his element fighting the fight and getting to show his skills as the teams "Ray Mears".

"When he got the chance to go to Sangin, he grinned like a Cheshire Cat! That will be the lasting memory I will always have of him, as he got on that flight to go down river and do what he was itching to do. I know he had a huge impact once he arrived and he told me he was having the

time of his life.

"Hatts - you will be missed but never forgotten.

"Our thoughts are with the Hatton Family circle at this difficult time."

Gunner Lee Davies, Kajaki FST, said:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" - Matthew 11:28

"Lance Bombardier Hatton was a true soldier and very close friend. I knew Hatts for 2 years and it was the second year when we really go close, when we were in the same FST. These past 5 months will always stick with me, especially all the good laughs Matthew and I had.

"To all the Hatton family and friends, my heart goes out to you all."

"You will never be forgotten Big Man."

Gunner Toby Allen, Kajaki FST, said:

"Hatts", was such a great guy for the time I knew him. He lived for the Army; he always wanted to get into the action and do a bit of the fighting. Since being on tour and exercise with Hatts, he has taught me so much and made the Army better for me.

"I will never forget you "Hatts"; you were such a good friend and an awesome soldier.

"May you sleep in peace."

Lance Bombardier John Cottle, said:

"Matthew's true qualities shone through from the moment I met him. He was a quiet but

confident soldier who loved his job. He had a heart of gold and would always be willing to help others. He was a dedicated family man who was always at the forefront of any practical jokes played on his fellow colleagues. Matthew will be missed by all. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and many friends at this difficult time."