



Lance Corporal David Leslie Kirkness
3 RIFLES Reconnaissance Platoon

It is with great regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Lance Corporal David Leslie Kirkness from the 3 RIFLES Reconnaissance Platoon, was killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday 15 December 2009.

He was killed following a suicide improvised explosive device blast on a route into central Sangin, northern Helmand, Afghanistan. At the time his platoon was manning a vehicle checkpoint alongside an Afghan National Army section in order to provide reassurance and security to the local population.

Lance Corporal Kirkness was born in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, on 11 December 1985.

He was an air conditioning engineer before joining the Army and following training at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick, he joined 3 RIFLES in Edinburgh in March 2004. He attended the Junior Non Commissioned Officers' Cadre in 2005 and was promoted Lance Corporal in March 2006.

He completed a Close Protection course in 2008 and, earlier this year, a two month course to learn Pashtu, the native tongue in much of Helmand Province.

He completed the highly demanding two month sniper course before deploying to Afghanistan with the 3 RIFLES Battle Group in October and has since been a key part of the numerous patrols and operations that are bringing security and prosperity to the population of Sangin.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES Battle Group said:
"Lance Corporal Kirkness was a Rifleman of the highest standard, talented, highly motivated

and with boundless energy. He was a first class leader, one who put the thoughts and needs of his men first.

"To the younger Riflemen he gave inspiration and guidance, earning their respect and instilling in them the confidence and understanding to guide them through their current challenges. He balanced courage and grit with compassion and consideration, winning trust, admiration and friendship wherever he went.

"Tragic as his loss is, we take comfort and pride from the fact that he and the soldiers who died with him, both Afghan and British, averted a much larger tragedy.

"Their sacrifice prevented two suicide bombers from reaching their intended target, the bustling and ever more prosperous Sangin Bazaar, packed with local Afghans going about their daily business.

"The Battle Group has lost a talented young leader at the heart of the fight and we of The Rifles have lost a brother. He died doing a job for which he was the keenest of volunteers; a job he loved and for which he was made.

"His memory, commitment and selflessness will be for ever revered. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends; we all have much of which we can be truly proud."

Major James Richardson, Officer Commanding B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"The death of Lance Corporal Kirkness is a terrible blow to our Company Group and to the Recce Platoon in particular.

"He was a multi-talented Rifleman - recce soldier, badged sniper, Pashtu speaker - typical of the flexibility and quality we seek in our best people. He was a core member of the tight-knit gang that the Recce platoon is.

"He featured strongly in the future plans of the platoon because he was integral to the way the platoon ran and operated - quietly professional, undoubtedly capable, experienced, level-headed and driven by a desire to see things done properly rather than through any ambition.

"He was always at the centre of things, not because he craved attention or the limelight, but because people naturally gathered around him such was his warmth. I suspect he was something of a father figure to some of the Riflemen.

"He had a massive heart which was all too often worn on his sleeve and, perhaps unusually for someone in his profession, was never afraid to show his emotions.

"His death has hit us all hard, for the hole that his personality has left cannot truly be filled. That said; our thoughts are with his family who will feel his loss even more keenly than we do."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Paul Kelly, Company Serjeant Major B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I have known Lance Corporal 'Kirky' Kirkness ever since he joined the battalion nearly seven years ago. He was a trained sniper and a Pashto speaker and held a vital role within his section. He was a professional young man with a clear career path in which he would have excelled.

"His love for rugby and football was a source of banter within his platoon, and he always struck me as a larger than life character. He will be irreplaceable among his peers and his mates. Kirky was not only a Rifleman but a son, brother and father and at this difficult time our thoughts are with his family."

Colour Serjeant Paul Lucke, Recce Platoon Commander 3 RIFLES said:

"Lance Corporal Kirkness (Kirky) to everyone who knew him, was one of my Section 2ICs but, more importantly, I truly counted him as a friend, someone even I would seek advice from. People talk about someone being the life and soul of a party. Well Kirky was the life and soul of Recce platoon.

"Also a qualified sniper he excelled during his time here, hoping to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. He even volunteered to complete a three-month language course just so he could interact with the local population and talk freely to them, which he did every hour of every day.

"You could not ask more from anyone within the platoon, he delivered. My thoughts remain with his family at this difficult time. There is always a standing joke with the Rifle Platoons that the Reconnaissance symbol is a Christmas tree, well if this is true Kirky would be the star on top, shining bright forever."

Serjeant Slater, Recce Platoon Serjeant said:

"Kirky was a soldier of excellence, a future star of the Battalion, a practical joker in the best possible sense. You were the life and soul of the party.

"He made Recce Platoon the Platoon it is today, he was a vital member of the Platoon; loved by all. Kirky was professional at all times. You were also a friend which I could talk to any time. A hole in our hearts will never be filled. Best Friend."

Corporal Richard Green, 1 Section Commander said:

"A true friend and a hero is how I remember Kirky. A born joker one minute, but the most serious and diligent soldier I have had the honour to serve with. Nothing would be too much for him, from patrolling the areas of Afghanistan to relaxing with a beer back in Edinburgh.

"A natural character he belonged in Recce 'it was the way he did business' he used to say. He will be sorely missed by us all, more so me. My thoughts go out to his family especially his younger brother at this difficult time."

Lance Corporal Cove, 2 Section Commander, said:

"Lance Corporal Kirkness was a true friend to the platoon and to me. It will not be the same without him, he was a really funny lad and the life and soul of the platoon, he loved his job so much - it was one of the things he would always say: he was the man who you would look up to

as he was so good at what he did and just seemed to know everything about the Army.

"I know that he will never be forgotten. He loved his family and Recce Platoon so much, as we all did him and always will. My thoughts are now with all of his family. Goodbye mate. True to the platoon motto - 'We lead, you follow'."

Lance Corporal Cook, Recce Platoon, said:

"David, Kirky, or known in the PI as the BUSH-PIG for his outrageous snoring, was a close mate and was liked by everyone who met him. I've worked with him since he joined Battalion, first B Coy, then Recce PI.

"In all his work, and everything he put his mind to, he did it with diligence and complete determination. Even when he commanded his men he always led by example and from the front.

"He was the practical joker and always had the lads in hysterics and laughter. Within the platoon, there is now a gap, as there is in my heart where he will never be forgotten! My thoughts go out to his family, mum, dad, brother, girlfriend and daughter. Good bye mate: 'We lead, you follow'."

Rifleman Humphrey-Lomberg, Recce Platoon said:

"Kirky, as he was known, was a good commander and a friend. I had the privilege of working with him since I have been in Recce. He was liked by everyone in the Platoon and throughout the Battalion.

"He always had time for people and if he could help he would. Always helping new lads fitting in anyway he could. There is no other way I can say this: you will be missed like mad.

"My thoughts go out to your family. For family and friends the ones we care about and the ones we lose. 'We lead you follow'. Goodbye mate - missing you already."