

Lance Corporal Matthew David Smith from the Corps of Royal Engineers. Lance Corporal Smith was killed in action on Friday 10th August 2012. He was part of a Troop tasked to build a new checkpoint next to the Nahr-e-Bughra Canal in the Nad-e Ali District of Helmand Province when he was hit by small arms fire. He received immediate first aid and was evacuated by helicopter but, despite all efforts to save him, he sadly died of his wounds.

Lance Corporal Matthew David Smith was born on 12 March 1986 in Hong Kong. He grew up in Aldershot, going to school in the local area and playing his favourite sport, football, for Hale Football Club. He enlisted in January 2003 and joined the Corps of Royal Engineers in September of the same year. He quickly progressed, and successfully completed a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer cadre in July 2008, promoting three months later.

He continued his passion for football throughout his career. He played numerous times for 26 Engineer Regiment and was part of the team that won the Corps Championship, the Blythe Cup, in 2011. He was a dedicated team member, immensely popular and extremely talented.

Lance Corporal Smith deployed to Afghanistan on 16 March 2012 with 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment. He was based in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand Province where he supported 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment as a section second in command, crane operator and driver. Since arriving, he had been heavily involved with the transition to Afghan-led security, using his specialist skills to assist in the closure and drawdown of International Security Assistance Force bases. As a crane operator, he was involved in the construction of a new bridge allowing the local population of Nad-e Ali to cross the Nahr-e-Bughra canal. In this task, as with everything, he was the epitome of professionalism.

Lance Corporal Smith had been a member of 26 Engineer Regiment for nearly three years. In his time in the Regiment his personality had touched a lot of people. He will be justly remembered as one of the most popular, professional and devoted soldiers by anyone who was lucky enough to work with him. His irrepressible spirit, even in the toughest of situations, was legendary and will be sorely missed by the whole Regiment.

Above everything else, Lance Corporal Smith was devoted to his family. He talked about them endlessly. He leaves behind his father, Kenneth, mother Caroline, fiancée Laura, brother Bradley and four children, Lainie, Ella, Tilli and Jai (aged between one and seven).

Lance Corporal Smith's Mother, Caroline Smith, paid the following tribute:

"A loving father to four beautiful children, who will be dearly missed by his fiancée, mother, father, family and friends. Our Hero R.I.P."

Lieutenant Colonel John Ridge RE, Commanding Officer, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"Lance Corporal Smith embodied everything that is great about the Corps of Royal Engineers. He was incredibly hard working, completely selfless and utterly professional. Killed whilst building a vital checkpoint on the Nahr-e-Bughra Canal, he died at the centre of the task, leading, as always, from the front.

"I last saw Lance Corporal Smith a few weeks ago. He briefed me on what his team were up to, and on the tasks that they had still to do before the end of the tour. He was clearly loving the job, and the experience of leading on operations. After four months of hard physical work, I expected to find his soldiers tired and looking forward to getting home. Instead, they were in high spirits and focussed on what jobs were coming up next. There could be no better proof of his outstanding leadership.

"Lance Corporal Smith joined the Corps of Royal Engineers in 2003, and he was posted to 26 Engineer Regiment in January 2010. Tremendously proud to be a sapper, he reportedly woke his tent mates to a recording or rendition of "Hurrah for the CRE", the Corps song, most mornings. He loved teaching junior soldiers and, as one of our flyers, we were preparing him for a posting to a Training Regiment, where I am certain he would have been in his element.

"We have all been terribly shocked by his death, particularly his mates from 6 Troop. They are a tight knit team, and he was a key player, whether making the early morning brews, or raising a smile when the endless building of patrol base walls finally started eating into morale.

"After Lance Corporal Smith had been shot, and his section had evacuated him to medical assistance, they went straight back to site and finished the job that he had started. After being informed of his death, they prepared to build the next checkpoint. Not through a lack of feeling, but because this is exactly what he would have wanted them to do. This is how we in the Engineer Group will honour his memory.

"Our loss as friends and colleagues is nothing compared to that felt by his family, particularly his fiancée Laura and their four children. He was devoted to all of them, and they will be in our thoughts and prayers during this dreadful period."

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Aston MC, Commanding Officer, Transition Support Unit Nad-e Ali, said:

"Lance Corporal Smith was a standout character: engaging, charismatic, full of life and above all else a proud Sapper and committed family man. In the Nad-e Ali Transition Support Unit of nearly 1350 soldiers he was a shining light to all who knew him. Within his troop he was always the first to offer an opinion and would do so with a charming confidence that made him instantly likeable. An all round decent man, you could not help but be engaged by his banter, intellect and work ethic. It was evident that he was a huge presence amongst his friends who admired his self-belief, great sense of humour and humble approach.

"In the short period I knew him, I was struck by his energy and love of soldiering which was only surpassed by the love he held for his fiancée and children whom he often talked about. A character like Lance Corporal Smith is impossible to replace – he was one of a kind. His loss

will be felt by all in the Battlegroup, none more so than his friends in 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron. Our thoughts are with his fiancée and family during this, the most difficult of times."

Major Chris Ankers, Officer Commanding 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"Lance Corporal Matthew Smith was a truly outstanding soldier. Full of drive, enthusiasm and wit, he was extremely well liked throughout the Regiment. I still have the most recent entry in my notes which was to commend him for his excellent briefing, delivered in a professional and relaxed manner, to the Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major during one of their visits. I am devastated to not be able to pass on my praise, which I'm sure he would have taken in his usual calm manner with a wry smile.

"I first met Lance Corporal Smith in September 2011 at the start of Mission Specific Training for Operation HERRICK 16. I took an immediate liking to him, he had the charisma to always step forward and brief confidently about how his Section were going to complete whatever was asked of them, but then the ability to achieve it as well. He showed the professionalism and character needed for a long career within the Royal Engineers and when asked, was always confident enough to say his ambition was to one day be a Regimental Sergeant Major. It is a real regret that I will not get to see him promoting through the ranks towards his goal, leaving a lasting positive impression on all those he would meet.

"A strong leader who took all challenges in his stride. Lance Corporal Smith died whilst working to make a difference in Afghanistan, constructing a check point to ensure long term security in Nad-e Ali and a better life for the Afghan people. Confident, dependable and extremely capable, he thoroughly understood and excelled in his role in Afghanistan.

"I am proud to have commanded such an honest and professional soldier and to have met such a decent man. He took great pride in his work and inspired those around him, a true leader of men. My thoughts are with his family and friends during this extremely difficult time. Lance Corporal Smith will be sorely missed."

Captain "Dog" Barclay, Echelon Commander, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"I have had the honour to know Lance Corporal Smith for the last six years. In this time, I have been his Troop Commander and Echelon Commander. On the first day I met him, I knew that I had met a future star of the Corps. His infectious humour and personality, along with his totally professional ethos made him one of the very best Junior Non-Commissioned Officers that I have ever had the privilege to know and call a friend. His selfless commitment to his family and his troop made him stand out from the crowd.

"In barracks almost every Monday morning Smudge would walk in to my office and slowly dissect the tactics of his beloved West Ham United from the weekend's game, he thought of himself as a leading pundit like Alan Hansen but more often he sounded like Alf Garnett. These discussions would sometimes last over an hour but would always end with him talking about his

fiancée, Laura, and their children. Smudge, my thoughts go out to your family at this sad time. The Corps has lost an outstanding soldier and a great friend but they, his family, have lost a perfect father.

"Rest in peace my friend."

Captain Jen Kehoe, 6 Troop Commander, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"One of the hardest working and happiest men in the Troop. Lance Corporal Smith was a thoroughly likeable, genuine person and someone you couldn't help but want to be around. Having transferred into the Troop from 8 Armoured Engineer Squadron, he was well known and liked throughout the Regiment. From his first day, he made an impression as a confident, cheerful character. Even a cold, wet day of tabbing on Salisbury Plain would not dampen his spirits; he always kept the Troop's morale high with his infectious sense of humour. The Troop always recalls a night with seven of them sleeping in a tiny room during a training exercise. He jumped up out of his sleeping bag to serenade everyone with cries of 'Reveille, Reveille, everyone up for Reveille - I love mornings!' He also clearly loved his family very much, he talked about them constantly and they were never far from his thoughts.

"Lance Corporal Smith took immense pride in his work and excelled in everything he did, he was one of the most professional soldiers I have ever had the privilege to command. A knowledgeable combat engineer and an expert instructor, he was clearly dedicated to the Corps, which earned him the fitting nickname of 'Smudge RE'. His death will leave a huge gap in a very close-knit troop that will be impossible to fill. It is a sad, sad day for everyone whose lives have been brightened by knowing Lance Corporal Smith RE."

Staff Sergeant Paddy McDermott, 6 Troop Staff Sergeant, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"I first met Smudge last September, with his tall stature and tiny beret (that I'm sure he'd had since training). Straight away I noticed he was a natural leader and one of the guys I would turn to if I needed a job doing quickly and correctly. His character made him stand out from the crowd. When I asked him once what his name was, he said "Lance Corporal Smith RE, bit of a ledge, done a bit, I'm surprised you haven't heard of me". Smudge was someone who I would always turn to for advice when I needed to know what goes on in the Royal Engineer Motorised Transport world as he was the subject matter expert on everything to do with his trade. All the sappers looked up to him as an inspiration, and his peers would believe every word he said (even though sometimes it meant he had them hook, line and sinker).

"Lance Corporal Smith's professionalism was unquestionable and his dedication to his work outstanding. The only thing he put in front of work was his family and friends. We sat down and spoke about our partners and children. From the moment he woke up in the morning to the second when he closed his eyes at night he was happy about life. He was one of the cogs that kept morale high. When he was tired he would say "Staff, I feel as old as you look!" It has been a privilege and honour to have served with 'Lance Corporal Smith RE, a total ledge and done

more than his bit'."

Corporal Matt Copping, 6 Troop Section Commander, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"I hadn't known Lance Corporal 'Smudge' Smith very long, maybe only a year. In that year I shared some great times with him. No matter how down the Section or I became, Smudge was always there to make light of any situation. Lance Corporal Smith is the only person I have met who gave himself a nickname and got it to stick - 'Smudge RE-bit of a ledge-done a bit'. Tour t-shirt printing always cost more due to Smudge and his nickname. At the Corporals' Mess function, my partner Rachel had the best introduction to Smudge. He just walked up to her and informed her that he was "Smudge RE-bit of a ledge-done a bit". Just the normal Smudge at work.

"Even though Smudge was known as a character throughout the Troop, the Squadron and the Regiment, he was also known as a great soldier. With Lance Corporal Smith as my second in command my job was easy. Professional at all times, he was always smart as a carrot and twice as crunchy. Smudge would be my choice of second in command every time; in his words, he was a 'do-er'. He got things done.

"Lance Corporal Smith leaves behind three beautiful girls and a young boy. He was always proud of his children and showed me new pictures as soon as he got them. Smudge also leaves behind his fiancée Laura, who he adored. He loved his family with all his heart and couldn't wait for his Rest and Recuperation leave, giving me a daily countdown. Lance Corporal Smith's family have lost a major part of their life and my thoughts are constantly with them. I was proud to have known and worked with Smudge; it was a privilege. Not only have I lost a great colleague, but a great mate. I'll end this the way I think Smudge would have wanted:

"Smudge RE-bit of a ledge-done a bit, you've done your bit."

"Rest easy mate, out."

Lance Corporal Kev Engstrom, Section Second in Command, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"Lance Corporal Smith (bit of a ledge-done a bit-Smudge RE). The title suited him well and he made sure everyone knew it. I first met Smudge on a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre in 2007. In fact he was the first person I met and the only person I could hear. He stated he was 'a bit of a ledge' and when the final exercise was upon us, he proved he was (a bit), as he completed the final log run with an injured knee and only two of them carrying the log. We became friends and were over the moon when our paths crossed again in 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, The Mighty 6 Troop.

"He was loved by the Troop, the Squadron and the Regiment. A very big character within the Troop, he easily lifted morale with his sense of humour. He was someone you always wanted to be around - during tasks, downtime and away from work. He always shared stories about his

family, which were his pride and joy. He will be greatly missed and leaves a massive empty space in our Troop. Loved by everyone who knew him; a one-in-a-million colleague, soldier, Dad and friend.

'Smudge RE-bit of a ledge-done a bit', you will be sorely missed."

Lance Corporal Scott Charles, Section Second in Command, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, Said:

"I've known Smudge RE for eight months and as soon as we met our friendship hit off. This could be due to the fact he was a hardworking, witty and loved to graft or because he had 'done a bit' and was a 'bit of a ledge.'

"He was the keenest bloke I had ever met and if he heard of a new bit of kit that could make him look 'ally' it would be his by the next morning. Smudge was a dedicated West Ham fan and his love for 'The Hammers' was unexplainable.

"I am truly gutted to know that I will never see that massive grin first thing in the morning and will never have to wake up to his 'freshen up for reveille' song. My thoughts are with his fiancée Laura and his four children.

"You will be missed Smudge RE and you definitely were 'A ledge'."

Sapper Gareth Jenkins, Section Sapper, 30 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 26 Engineer Regiment, said:

"I haven't known Smudge very long, being new to the Troop, but from the first time I met him, I could see that he was larger than life and the heart and soul of the Troop. I will never forget building a sangar with him on our first checkpoint upgrade. He managed somehow to get the local children to learn his name so that every one of them would be asking for 'Smudge RE' and asking whether he had the ball he said he'd give them. As always, he delivered and somehow he acquired a ball for them. Even more impressively, he acquired five bottles of cold orangeade for the lads by trading a few broken pickets. As always, he knew how to keep up the morale of the lads and I'll never forget the cool refreshing taste of that orangeade. I will always remember Smudge RE as one of our fearless leaders who always looked out for the lads, who loved his family and for his love of West Ham United. He was and still is 'a bit of a ledge' and I will always think of him when I check the football scores and West Ham come up. Rest in peace my friend."

Secretary of State for Defence, Philip Hammond, said:

"I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Lance Corporal David Smith. By all accounts he was a committed and professional soldier, who served his country with bravery and courage. His loss will be felt keenly by all. My heartfelt condolences go out to his family and my thoughts are with them."