

Lance Corporal Michael Pritchard

4th Regiment, Royal Military Police

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that Lance Corporal Michael David Pritchard of the 4th Regiment, Royal Military Police, was killed as a result of small arms fire in the Sangin area, in central Helmand Province of Afghanistan, on the evening of 20 December 2009.

The possibility that he died as a result of friendly fire is being investigated in Afghanistan but no firm conclusion will be reached until the coroner's inquest.

Lance Corporal Michael David Pritchard, 22, was born in Maidstone, Kent on January 11 1987, but lived in Eastbourne, East Sussex, from the age of one and went to school there.

After leaving school and college, he enlisted into the Adjutant General's Corps (Royal Military Police) in July 2007 and on completion of Phase 1 and 2 Training was posted to 160 Provost Company, 4th Regiment Royal Military Police, in Aldershot as a General Police Duties Junior Non-Commissioned Officer.

Shortly after this, he deployed to Kenya as part of the training for Op HERRICK 11. He arrived in Afghanistan in October attached to 4th Battalion The Rifles.

His comrades said Mike "Pritch" Pritchard loved to laugh and joke and this is how he should always be remembered.

Lieutenant Colonel Debbie Poneskis, Commanding Officer, 4th Regiment, Royal Military Police said:

"Lance Corporal Pritchard had only been in the Royal Military Police since July 2007 but he very quickly made a huge impact on all of us. It is tragic that we have been robbed of such a promising Junior Non-Commissioned Officer and one who was everything you would want in a Military Policeman.

"He was a professional and robust soldier and one who was both physically and morally courageous. He was absolutely committed to providing policing advice where it mattered most, alongside his Infantry colleagues on patrol and as part of the team.

"A cheeky chap, whose laughter was infectious, and whose sincerity and generous spirit touched the lives of many, Lance Corporal Pritchard made us smile every day and we will miss him very much.

"He was never afraid to speak his mind, even if that sometimes got him into trouble, but he was one of those soldiers you could never really be cross with for long; he had the broadest smile and the most wonderful personality.

"I can't begin to imagine the pain felt by his parents and sisters, and his wider family and close friends. My thoughts and prayers are with them now, throughout this Christmas period and then as they come to terms with their loss. I do know that they should be extremely proud of their son and brother; he was a very special young man, strong, courageous and a real team player.

"I also know that Lance Corporal Pritchard's death has hit us as a Regiment very hard, at a time when we thought we had already suffered unbearable pain and grief.

"We will continue with our mission here with resolute determination and grit, not just because that is what Lance Corporal Pritchard would do but also because we do not give up and we are making a difference."

Major Phil Hacker, Officer Commanding 160 Provost Company, said:

"Lance Corporal Pritchard was a gregarious, outgoing and hardworking soldier. His enthusiasm was matched only by his superb sense of humour. He truly was one of the central characters of the Company. Utterly professional and wholly dependable this much-loved soldier will be missed by us all."

Major Richard Streatfeild Officer Commanding, A Company, 4th Battalion The Rifles, said:

"I first met Lance Corporal Pritchard or "Pritch" as he was universally known by A Company in July when he joined us for training in UK. Pritch managed to break down barriers between Riflemen and the RMP. He was a consummate soldier and policeman.

"During operations through shared success, hardship and danger those attached to the Company from other Regiments and Corps become brothers in arms. Pritch was a brother. He won the respect of all ranks for his willingness to go everywhere with us.

"He was a volunteer for the most demanding tasks. Most recently he has been attached to a Platoon in a small patrol base and they feel his loss most keenly. We grieve for a comrade but our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends who have known him longer than us.

"It was a great privilege to have served with him, he was a star who burned brightly, if all too briefly, in our firmament."

Captain Dave Cooke Adjutant General's Corps (Royal Military Police), 11 Brigade Provost Officer said:

"Lance Corporal Mike "Pritch" Pritchard was an energetic, zealous Non-Commissioned Officer who dealt with his job, personal life, sports and social activities in the same manner.

"Always able to inject humour, he was stalwart amongst the Junior Non-Commissioned Officers. During his time in the Royal Military Police he submerged himself in our ethos and camaraderie and encapsulated the composure and professionalism required to conduct his role during peacetime and in the current operating environment.

"Pritch was an honest, gentle and personable lad who was respected and adored by his peers and hierarchy alike. There will be a hole in the hearts of those he served with and knew, and he will be remembered as an infectiously happy, confident and effective man whose memory will serve as inspiration to many."

Lieutenant Rich Evans Adjutant General's Corps (Royal Military Police), his Platoon Commander, said:

"A larger than life character, Lance Corporal Pritchard was a popular individual and a sure source of morale within the Company. He had a good sense of humour and was always in the middle of any banter.

"His antics were often comical, though not always intended as such, and I would always eventually find out the daft things he had been up to; Pritch would make me laugh on a regular basis.

"Pritch was a very professional soldier and a fantastic Military Policeman with the potential to go far. He was always in the thick of things, gaining valuable experience and often learning hard lessons - he was an asset to my Platoon.

"He was never far away from his sidekick Lance Corporal Cooper; the two of them would often be found in the gym thinking up new and interesting ways to test each other, before taking the time to pose in front of the mirror and admire themselves.

"Pritch was an enthusiastic young man, always asking questions and keen to learn. A remarkably fit and robust individual, he was always someone I could rely on during field exercises. If a message needed passing, Pritch was there.

"If a scenario required someone to run up a hill carrying another soldier's kit (as well as his own) Pritch was there. If I needed someone to exploit a crime scene after having just slogged our way across a training area, Pritch was there.

"It was a privilege to command a soldier of Lance Corporal Pritchard's calibre. He will be sorely missed and has left a gap in my Platoon that no one will be able to fill. He sadly died doing a job he loved and for which he had trained hard. He set a fantastic example for others to follow."

2nd Lieutenant Tom Foulkes-Arnold, Platoon Commander, 3 Platoon, said:

"Pritch has spent a good deal of time with 3 Platoon through Pre Deployment Training to the Upper Sangin Valley. As such he was an obvious choice to join us as we set up a new patrol base.

"He showed a fantastic ability to blend in with the Platoon and from day one he was not simply "an Attachment". Pritch was utterly professional in all aspects of his work and was an excellent embodiment of both a Royal Military Policeman and a Rifleman.

"A constantly cheerful upbeat and motivated individual, Pritch showed an eagerness to get stuck in that set a great example to all. Pritch became a genuine character within the platoon and calls for him to transfer and become a Rifleman were heartfelt and genuine.

"A true testament to his ability and character and the strength of feeling towards him in the platoon. Commanding Lance Corporal Pritchard was a pleasure and we will truly miss a great asset to the Platoon. Our thoughts go to his family and his girlfriend Leanne."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Jon Barnett, Adjutant General's Corps (Royal Military Police) Company Sergeant Major said:

"Lance Corporal Pritchard had only been in the unit for a short period of time but he has most definitely left a lasting impression on all who were lucky enough to have known him.

"Lance Corporal Pritchard was larger than life; you knew when he was around because of his infectious and instant morale-boosting laughter. He had a fixed cheeky grin, which always made me wonder what mischief or prank he was up to next.

"Nothing was ever too much bother for Lance Corporal Pritchard; he was an excellent soldier and Military Policeman who would be the first to volunteer or offer his assistance. He had the lot; the Company will miss him more than words can describe."

Serjeant Jimmy Houston, Platoon Serjeant, 3 Platoon, said:

"Lance Corporal Pritchard was exactly the type of individual that any Serjeant would be glad to have in his platoon, hard working and diligent with an appropriate sense of humour he fitted seamlessly into a group of men he had not met previously.

"The bond of friendship which, by sheer force of personality, he had created with 3 Platoon was demonstrated by the heroic efforts of his new comrades to save his life and by the enormous grief felt by the whole platoon on hearing the news of his death.

"With his professional attitude winning smile and cheeky sense of humour Pritch forged a lot of strong friendships in 3 Platoon and we will never forget him. He joined us as a Redcap and left us as a Rifleman."

Corporal Michael "Cat" Felix said:

"All he wanted to do was be here and come on patrol. He was never going to be happy a Royal Military Policeman sat behind a desk; he wanted to get out on the ground. He talked of joining the infantry and his girlfriend Leanne.

"He was happy when we moved to a Patrol Base; he preferred to be amongst it especially the day he fired his first round. He just enjoyed being with the lads."

Rifleman "Topsy" Turvey said:

"Lance Corporal Pritchard was a great lad. I only got to know him out here but he became a really good mate of mine. We had some good laughs and he was a really nice bloke, I will miss him."

Rifleman "Stan" Stanley said:

"He joined the Company during Pre Deployment Training and immediately got on with the Platoon and was accepted as one of the lads.

"Whilst on tour he was exceptional and was well known for his keenness for the job and his hard work, he was seen as a fellow rifleman by the Platoon and his good sense of humour and cheekiness will be missed by everyone.

"Pritch will be sorely missed he was an amazing person and soldier. RIP mate."

Corporal Hayley Wright said:

"I only knew Pritch for a couple of months but it felt like longer, he was a bubbly lad and always had something to say or laugh about.

"The last thing Pritch said to me was 'I'm going to the Patrol Base, I can't wait to show them all that I'm not just a Monkey'. He will be sadly missed, gone too soon mate. Sleep well."

Lance Corporal Craig Knight said:

"The first time I met Pritch was the first week in Inkerman in the Gym. He was listening to some music on his laptop and the music was familiar to where we live so I asked him where he was from and from then on we went to the gym and trained together, he wanted to get massive.

"Pritch was a good soldier, he didn't mind coming on patrol but sometimes found it hard to get out of bed, he always said he couldn't wait to get home to see his girlfriend. Our thoughts are now with his loved ones."

Rifleman Martin Kingett said:

"Rifleman Pritch, as we started to call him, was always good morale for the troops. He was always smiling and cracking jokes and was all together a joy to be around. When he got the first load of parcels delivered, he was sent some Long Johns and he gave me a pair.

"I wouldn't take them unless he had something of mine so I gave him some cookies that he shared with the lads. He was a hard worker and a good mate. I'm sure if we had longer together, we would have become good mates, if not best mates. I'm going to miss him and I feel for his family."

Rifleman Wayne "Sarge" Sargeant said:

"For the short time I knew Lance Corporal Pritchard, he always showed a great level of professionalism to the platoon, always bringing morale and smiles.

"It's a great loss to the platoon because he was a vital part of the team. I give all my condolences to his family. We will remember you."

Rifleman Tommy Townsend said:

"Pritch was an awesome lad who came to 3 Section as a Royal Military Policeman, but became one of the boys. His sense of humour and willingness to help in every situation saw him evolve as a soldier and a person.

"He was dedicated to his girlfriend and family and always talked about them and his plans. We are going to miss you Lance Corporal Pritchard. Travel well mate."

Rifleman Mark Bridgewater said:

"In the short time that I knew Lance Corporal Pritchard, I found that he was a genuine character and full of life. Outgoing and humorous from the start, it was almost guaranteed that he'd have something funny to say.

"Sharing a moment once, talking of home, girlfriends, loved ones and cracking jokes is a fond memory I hold of a man whose loss is truly tragic for all who knew him. Lance Corporal Pritchard will be deeply missed by all who he passed in life, and will never be forgotten."

Rifleman Dickie Sheldon said:

"The first time I met Pritch was on Pre-Deployment Training. Since being deployed here in Afghanistan, Pritch and I had numerous chats over a brew and a smoke, normally when we were supposed to be working.

"These chats normally consisted of what we were going to do upon returning to the UK as well as winding his colleague, Corporal Churchill up. I'm pretty sure this was one of his favourite pastimes.

"Pritch was a good bloke to be around and always seemed to be smiling. He will be sorely missed and it was an honour to have served beside him. Although he wasn't quite a Rifleman, he still became one of the chosen men, swift and bold. May his soul rest in peace."

Lance Corporal Joe "Coops" Cooper Adjutant General's Corps (Royal Military Police), his closest friend in the unit, said:

"Pritch was as loyal a friend as anyone could ever wish for. He was a 'jack the lad' and a 'cat among pigeons' - that is how I believe he would like to be remembered.

"I'm absolutely gutted about losing such a good friend. Some would have criticised a lot of

things about him but I say to them 'don't point out the splinter in his eye until you've taken the plank out of your own.'

"He wasn't without faults but I believe he had it sussed in a lot of ways. He didn't care as much about trivia as the things which might actually make a difference in people's lives. Many people could have learned a lot from him.

"He lived his life to the full, enjoyed himself and remained one of the most professional soldiers in our Company. Despite learning the Army's Core Values in training, I could tell Pritch already had these qualities in him when I first met him.

"He would put his friends before himself every time without a second thought and it is not often you meet someone that loyal.

"I pray he goes to heaven and I think God will let him in but he might have some more rules to live by up there. As he would say 'It's not gonna be the same in the gym without you mate!' I'll miss you forever."