

CHARLIE COMPANY, 40 COMMANDO ROYAL MARINES

Lance Corporal Michael Taylor was 30 years old and lived in Rhyl with his partner Sonia and their three children; Ethan, Wesley and Charlton. A former British Army soldier, he joined the Royal Marines on the 26 April 2004. After passing for duty as a Royal Marines Commando he joined 45 Commando, based in Arbroath, Scotland.

During his first draft he took the opportunity to serve with Naval Party Iraq as part of the Operation TELIC Force Protection Team before returning to 45 Commando in January 2007. A second draft saw him remain in Scotland while he served with Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines until January 2009. On completion of this draft he specialised within the Anti-Tank Branch qualifying as a Heavy Weapons (Class 3) Marine. Returning to 45 Commando he subsequently deployed on Operation HERRICK 9 serving in Kajaki with Victor Company.

From 45 Commando he joined Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines in November 2009, and immediately began Mission Specific Training for Operation HERRICK 12. Quickly promoting to Lance Corporal he deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan in March 2010, where he was based. Charlie Company has been responsible for the security around the Sangin area and has conducted dozens of patrols in support of the local nationals.

Having completed numerous joint clearance operations with Afghan National Security Forces and uncovered many Improvised Explosive Devices, the area has increased freedom of movement and security so that the local population are able to go about their normal daily business.

During the early afternoon of Tuesday 22 June 2010, his patrol base was engaged by accurate small arms fire. At the time Lance Corporal Taylor was providing protection to the camp in one of the security sangars and was fatally wounded in the incident.

Partner Sonia Fleming said:

"Michael you were my soul mate, you were the best loving partner and Dad anyone could have asked for. You lived to be a hero and died a hero. We are all extremely proud of you and always will be. Your legacy will live on through your three wonderful boys who will inspire to be just like you."

Son Ethan Taylor (13) said:

"He was a great Dad and he did everything for us. He was always active and took us to football games, he was one in a million and I love him. Rest in Peace Dad I will be thinking of you all the time, missing you already."

Son Wesley Taylor (11) said:

"He was the best Dad I could have ever wished for and I can never replace him. He did our family proud and deserved everything he achieved in his life.

Parents John And Jackie Taylor said:

"We have lost a brave, one of a kind son. Unselfish, kind and totally devoted to his family and children we are lost for words to describe the hurt and pain that we are all feeling right now."

Grandparents Margaret and Paul Wright said:

"We are devastated. They have broken the mould now this smashing, generous and loving young man is no longer with us."

Brother John Taylor (26) said:

"I have lost the best brother and best friend a bloke could ever ask for. I will never forget him."

Sister Leanne Taylor said:

"My big brother was the greatest, he was always there for everyone, no one can ever take his place."

Lieutenant Colonel Paul James, Commanding Officer 40 Commando Group, Combined Force Sangin said:

"Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was a superb marine; fit, bright, dedicated and incredibly courageous, he thrived on operations. Having served in Kajaki only last year, his experience and professional vigour was invaluable and he was instrumental in the successful preparations of 9 Troop.

"As a Junior Commander he was excellent; he had precisely the right presence and personality to reassure and give confidence to others. I saw in him a conscientious, generous, enthusiastic man with a passion for his job and the many challenges that came with it. He tragically died at his Patrol Base in Sangin protecting the very people, his own band of brothers, who had quickly grown to respect, admire and be inspired by him and his whole approach to life.

"He had the drive and the tenacity, but more importantly the family and the friends to succeed at anything he did. Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner, his three sons, his family and his friends. Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was, and will always remain, a Royal Marine Commando."

Major Ed Moorhouse, Officer Commanding Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I have lost one of my best. Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was exceptional and I shall miss him greatly. He was promoted within weeks of arriving in Charlie Company; it was the most natural thing to do. Mike Taylor was a rare quality: modest, reserved, thoughtful and yet a natural leader of men.

"His leadership had an air of quiet accomplishment; there was no need for excess verbosity with Mike Taylor, his presence and manner alone inspired, mentored and guided those Royal Marines in his charge. In watching this natural demeanour one could not be more humbled; many aspire to it and very few have it, Mike Taylor had it in abundance.

"Mike Taylor was the archetypal Royal Marines Commando; strong, powerful and unquestionable in his professionalism. His back was adorned with a Commando Dagger flanked by two Welsh Dragons; there was no man prouder of his profession or his Country.

"In contemplation, following Mike's death, it seemed only appropriate to recite, in honour of his memory and his life, the iconic lyrics written by William Williams, which are always best heard echoing around the Millennium Stadium, "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer, Pilgrim through this barren land"; I hope that our choral efforts are met with Mike's approval as he looks down upon us.

"The most important pillar in Mike's trio of passions was his family. Our thoughts and prayers are with his partner, Sonia and their sons Ethan, Wesley and Charlton. He was a Royal Marines Commando, a Charlie Company Spartan and a fine leader of men and this is his legacy. Mike Taylor may you Rest in Peace."

Lieutenant John Lynch, Officer Commanding 9 Troop Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I had the pleasure of working with Mike ever since I took over command of 9 Troop late last year. We completed our pre deployment training together on Salisbury Plain and snowy Otterburn. During these exercises Mike distinguished himself as an extremely capable marine and commander.

"Subsequently, he was promoted and became a Section Second-in-Command. His big personality and strong character helped forge 3 Section into a well oiled machine.

"He had previous operational experience which he passed onto those new marines straight from training. This gave them the confidence to soldier in the hostile environment of Sangin.

"It is a credit to his likeable nature that his marines respected him and emulated him so that they could become great soldiers like him. As an Anti-tank specialist his professional knowledge of the number of weapon systems he could operate was unrivalled. He was a composed character and would stay calm whilst under contact, making sure his marines were doing the right thing.

"Around the Patrol Base, Mike was a bit of a DIY legend. He was a real handyman and helped

construct a toilet and shower area, a chill out zone, and a 'hoofing' pull up bar to help us get massive. His unselfishness and camaraderie around the Patrol Base made it a much more comfortable and enjoyable place to live.

"I enjoyed talking to Mike about his family, past tour experiences and runs ashore in Liverpool as we were both from the North West."

"Mike will always be remembered in 9 Troop as both a lion hearted Commando and a great friend. Our thoughts are with his family, partner and children. Rest in Peace Mike: gone but not forgotten."

Sergeant Al Grant, 9 Troop Sergeant, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Words cannot describe the sadness I feel for the loss of Mike. He was someone I admired and a true friend without a fault. You don't meet many people in your life like Mike, men who have these attributes.

"Mike was a true Welshman to the core and a Bootneck through and through. With his two distinctive large Red Welsh Dragons on each shoulder and the Commando Dagger in the middle, these were his dual love and passion: work and country.

"He was a pillar of strength to the Section and the Troop, and the trust I had in him was paid back ten- fold. Mike wanted more and more responsibility showing he was up to the task, proving what a vital individual he was to the safety of the young lads in the Section.

"His DIY skills were second to none and would amaze me. It was like watching a 60 minute makeover; he would be able to build anything around the Patrol Base to make life easier and more comfortable. This was the selfless nature of Mike.

"Mike was a family man who loved his partner, Sonia and their three boys. We would talk about them telling stories of each others' families. I will miss those times greatly. The Troop's thoughts are with his family at this difficult time. You will be missed, but you will always be in our minds."

Corporal 'Scoffs' Schofield, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Big Mike - Ever the professional, ever the gent. Since you joined the Troop I have always felt the younger lads and myself would have a lot to do to reach your high standards of soldiering. Your knowledge of all things military was outstanding and never failed to impress.

"A true family man, a very funny man, I loved our banter, always trying to outdo one another. Iron Mike, a pillar of strength to all, a very proud Welshman and father. Always doing DIY in the Patrol Base and even managing to cut through a 6x6 block of wood with his trusty leatherman. Ever the team player and a shoulder to go to for advice. Never forgotten Big Mike Taylor."

Lance Corporal Joe Leborgne, 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Mike joined 9 Troop, Charlie Company in November 2009 and moved into our Flat in Corporate Lines at Norton Manor Camp, Taunton. Before he joined the grot the oldest lad was 21 and we had a reputation of being called the 'ASBO Grot'. Although Mike was a bit older than us it did not stop him playing 'Call of Duty', going to the Gym, watching rubbish films and having a laugh with the rest of us.

"Mike was a mature and calm guy who gave us a lot of guidance on how we could better ourselves and our careers. Being more experienced and having been to Iraq and Afghanistan before, Mike was able to reassure us of any doubts or grey areas we had in coming out here.

"He was the model Bootneck, proud, kind, generous and responsible. He was someone we looked up to. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends at this tragic time. It was a pleasure to know you Mike. Rest in Peace mate."

"I always saw Mike as a sort of father figure for the Troop, with his wealth of experience both in life and within the Corps. He was always keen to help out the lads whether it was with military skills, coaching on the boxing pads or using his carpentry skills to improve life in the Patrol Base."

Marine Carl Galvin

Lance Corporal Seb Rolland, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I used to call Mike 'Iron Mike' and that nickname summed him up to a tee. A strong character that commanded respect as easily as he earned it, his high level of professionalism was an inspiration to all around him as was his strength.

"Unwavering courage and a relentless sense of humour he was a proud man, a proud father and a proud Bootneck. I am proud to have known you proud to have worked with you and very proud to call you my friend."

Lance Corporal Lloyd 'Taff' John, Sniper Section, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Mike you will be sadly missed but never forgotten, you were the ultimate professional, the most dedicated Bootneck I have ever met. You were always busy making life easier for everyone here. Will never forget you mate, it is a pleasure to call you my mate. My thoughts are with your family and children. Rest in Peace mate."

Marine 'Charlie' Charlesworth, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was one of the most professional marines to have graced the Corps, fierce and loyal he led from the front, always there for the lads. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten. God Bless Lance Corporal Mike Taylor, I will miss the card games and his poker face."

Marine Harry McGill, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was one of the most professional and inspirational Bootnecks I'd

met, always there at the forefront. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten."

Marine 'Bear' Handley, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Lance Corporal Mike Taylor was a loyal courageous man who was always digging out blind to ensure the lads were always squared away and ensuring they were okay. His inspirational leadership and strong character will never be forgotten and his friendship sorely missed. I will always remember him."

Marine 'Sully' O'Sullivan, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I have known Mike for seven months and in that time he became one of my best friends. I could talk to Mike about anything as he was a good listener and gave me the best advice to any problem I had in my time in the Corps.

"I have never come across a more switched on, fearless, unselfish and brave Bootneck. He has taught me so much, for which I am very grateful. I will never forget you Mike or as long as I live."

Marine Carl Galvin, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I always saw Mike as a sort of father figure for the Troop, with his wealth of experience both in life and within the Corps. He was always keen to help out the lads whether it was with military skills, coaching on the boxing pads or using his carpentry skills to improve life in the Patrol Base.

"But above all he was a good friend and a fantastic junior leader. I will always remember you Mike and I am truly grateful to have known and worked along side you."

Marine Daz Tedstone, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"The first time I met Mike was at the Careers Office in Wrexham as we were both about to join the Corps; straight away I knew he had something special about him. 5 years later we both found ourselves in 9 Troop and I saw Mike as a natural leader and an inspiration to all the lads.

"I could always look to Mike to make me smile as he had a wicked sense of humour and a smile that was infectious. He was a really outstanding marine and the proudest man I ever had the privilege of knowing, it was an honour to work with Mike and an even bigger honour to call him my friend.

"My heart goes out to all your family at this devastating time. There is a massive hole left in 9 Troop without you Mike. Rest in Peace Royal, you will be immensely missed."

Marine Rob Leigh, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Mike Taylor was a man I very much admired and respected. He was always striving to do all he could for the men in the Troop. On the ground he was sharp, professional, tactically astute and conscientious. In the face of the enemy he was determined, brave and calming to those around him which inspired courage.

"Though I will miss Mike for his immense talent as a Bootneck, I will miss the man more. Working closely together we had become friends, something I am very proud of, Mike's respect was hard earned and highly prized. My heart goes out to his family of whom he was so proud and devoted to. RIP Royal you will not be forgotten."

Marine Jo 'Fritz' Phillips, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Mike, The short time I knew you it was a pleasure that I shall never forget. You were a rock at all times to those who needed you, always cool under pressure and never phased when those around you needed you most.

"Always trying to make life easier for those around you and never asking for anything in return. A true gentleman and a true Bootneck. You will be missed by all then knew you. Rest in Peace mate."

Marine Nick Peats, 9 Troop, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Mike, like a father to the Troop, not just because you were one of the oldest, but because of the way people looked up to you, not forgetting your DIY skills around the Patrol Base. You will be sorely missed, it was a pleasure to know you. Rest in Peace Mike."

Marine 'Tucks' Tucker, Sniper Section, Charlie Company 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I feel so privileged to have known and worked alongside Mike. I find it hard to truly describe how great a loss he is to this Troop and the Corps. He was an extraordinary character. Mike was a key figure, a role model, a leader and a friend and I am so honoured to call him an oppo.

"Mike's strengths didn't just lie with his soldiering and people skills, his love for his family seemed infectious as he spoke of his young lads every time we spoke. Mike was intelligent and wise and was undoubtedly one of the most professional Bootnecks I have had the pleasure of working with. I will never forget you Royal, you really were the best."