Lance Corporal Richard James Brandon
Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Lance Corporal Richard James Brandon of the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) was killed in Afghanistan on 2 September 2009.

Lance Corporal Richard Brandon

LCpl Brandon was killed south of Gereshk in Helmand province. He was the driver of a Samson repair and recovery vehicle within the A Squadron Fitter Section of The Light Dragoons.

LCpl Brandon's vehicle was carrying out an essential resupply task when it hit an improvised explosive device. The force of the explosion killed LCpl Brandon instantly.

LCpl Brandon was born on 28 November 1984 and was from Kidderminster. He enlisted into the Army on 18 December 2001. After completing his training at the Army Technical Foundation College, he was posted to 215 Signal Squadron where he spent two years as a vehicle mechanic. From there, he was posted to 17 Port and Maritime Regiment. During this posting, he deployed on his first operational tour to Iraq. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in 2006. He went on to complete his Class 1 qualification before being posted to The Light Dragoons in September 2008.

LCpl Brandon leaves behind his parents Anna and Geoff, fiancée Emma-Jayne Webster, his beloved daughter Kaitlin and stepsons Liam and Martyn.

Lieutenant Colonel Gus Fair, Commanding Officer of The Light Dragoons, said:

"LCpl Brandon was deployed as a vehicle mechanic supporting a Reconnaissance Troop. Through a very tough and demanding period of fighting, he worked relentlessly to keep the troop's vehicles fully operational and battle-worthy. He had proved his worth as a professional and dedicated soldier and craftsman in the true spirit of his Corps.

"A quiet and intelligent individual, LCpl Brandon could always be relied upon when given a task to complete it without fuss or complaint; he also had an uncanny ability to always be covered in dust and oil which epitomised his work ethic. He was a devoted individual, always steadfast in the face of adversity, and whose modesty and decorum earned him the respect of the troop which he supported.

"LCpl Brandon had already shown potential as an Artificer in the making with his knowledge, skill, determination and drive. I have no doubt he would have succeeded, such was the quality

of the man. His tragic and untimely death will have a profound effect on all who had the privilege to know and work alongside him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this very difficult time and we share deeply in their grief."

Major James Campbell-Barnard, Officer Commanding A Squadron of The Light Dragoons, said:

"LCpl Brandon was one of the most tenacious and conscientious young soldiers one could hope to have under their command. His dedication and thoroughness to any REME task set to him was legendary and he was often to be found working well into the small hours - entirely of his own volition - in order to get one of his troop's vehicles ready for the next day. Indeed, he is the only soldier I have known who has had to be ordered to depart on his Rest and Recuperation flight, thus leaving a task unfinished which, despite his protestations, could easily have awaited his return.

"Relatively new to the Samson platform on his deployment, it is a testament to his professionalism and ability that he developed expertise so quickly thus proving himself to be absolutely pivotal to his troop over the past four months in Afghanistan.

"He will be sadly missed by both 1st Troop and A Squadron as a whole and all our thoughts are with Emma-Jayne, Kaitlin, Liam, Martyn and his family at this extremely sad time."

Captain Dave Bunker, Officer Commanding the REME Light Aid Detachment of The Light Dragoons, said:

"LCpl Richie Brandon was a great vehicle mechanic, a great soldier and an even greater friend to all of us in The Light Dragoons' Light Aid Detachment.

"He was a superb vehicle mechanic who loved being out on the ground with his squadron and Fitter Section. At the time of his death he was deployed independently with his troop, doing what he did best. He excelled at keeping his vehicles moving; what made him special was that he always did it with a huge smile on his face.

"He was the most incredibly driven man. On one of many late evenings he was working on a Samson gearbox in FOB [Forward Operating Base] Price and, despite telling him to go to bed and allow less fatigued tradesmen to complete the job, he flatly refused and worked until three in the morning despite an early start. It was one of his vehicles and there was nothing that would stop him from fixing it.

"LCpl Brandon was perpetually scruffy, wearing his oil-stained coveralls like a badge of honour and he successfully contrived to lose every clean set that he was ever given. He was a quiet man, with a cheeky sense of fun that never failed to lift our spirits. He had a heart of gold and never had a bad word to say about anything or anyone. We will always remember him as a friend that was always willing to lend a hand, totally committed to his fellow soldiers and deeply proud of his family.

"We have been privileged to have such a talented and dedicated man in the Light Aid

Detachment; his loss has been felt keenly by his many friends in theatre. Our hearts go out to his family at this tragic time; his parents Anne and Geoff, brother Kevin and sisters Denise and Kathy. Our thoughts are especially with his much loved fiancée Emma-Jayne, their daughter Kaitlin and her children Liam and Martyn. God rest Richie, you will never be forgotten."

Second Lieutenant Harry Amos, 1st Troop Leader, A Squadron, The Light Dragoons, said:

"LCpl Brandon was an outstanding individual with an extremely likeable character. Very much one of the 1st Troop lads he was knowledgeable, conscientious, utterly professional and always keen to muscle in on any job that needed doing. He had great banter and I never saw him complain about anything. He was most definitely a glass half-full man. Richie would always give everything his full attention and wouldn't do a job because he had necessarily been told to it but because he just knew it needed to be done. He was a pleasure to work with and a pleasure to have known.

"He'll be sorely missed by both myself and the whole troop."

Warrant Officer Class 1 McLennan, Artificer Sergeant Major of The Light Dragoons, said:

"LCpl Brandon was the kind of man that you would want in your Fitter Section. He was a talented vehicle mechanic who pushed himself to the absolute limits to keep his squadron moving. He did all of this with a grin on his face. No matter what time of day or night, he was up to his elbows in oil and grease. You knew when you approached a vehicle with the decks off that his would be the face to pop up to answer your questions, knowing he would soon have it motoring on.

"LCpl Brandon epitomises all that is good about our Corps. He was a grafter, a true artisan and a good friend to those who had the pleasure and good fortune to work alongside him. He will be sorely missed by all members of The Light Dragoons family and especially those of the Light Aid Detachment. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this tragic time. Arte et Marte."

Corporal Rob Lord, a close friend from The Light Dragoons' Light Aid Detachment, said:

"LCpl Richie Brandon, where do I start? First and foremost he was a devoted family man and everything he did was to make a better life for his family. Every penny he earned was spent on his new family home and he was excited by every bit of work he did on it. Richie was a quiet and reserved character but would always be there to help if anyone needed it. He was a quality vehicle mechanic who would just work and work until the job was done.

"Richie was my driver of the Samson CVR(T) [Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked)] recovery vehicle and to be honest, he wasn't the best driver in the world, bless him. When I said 'turn left' he would turn right and when I said 'stop' he tried throwing me out the turret with his club foot. He would rev the nuts off the engine so much that he could hardly ever hear me! I would always say to him 'Richie, I swear there are more than three gears on this wagon', knowing full well that it had seven!

"There was one time at FOB Price when we pulled in for refurbishment and I was reversing him back, I told him to stop and he kept going. I ended up shouting through the headset and over the sound of the engine 'just stop!'. He eventually stopped and everyone on the tank park just looked and laughed!

"He had his own unique scruffy look. He would always be wearing stained T-shirts and combat trousers with a fag hanging out of his mouth! When I went on R and R [Rest and Recuperation] he gave me a list of things to do for him: I had to send him 1,000 fags, forward his mail out to him, go into his comfy box and send his collection of books out. Definitely not forgetting his flip-flops! I found a new pair of combats in there so sent them as well and I'm telling you now, they are still nice and clean in the bottom of his Bergen.

"Richie would always have a massive smile on his face; every picture I have looked through he is constantly smiling! He never ever moaned; he said to me 'Lordy, if I could, I would stay out here until 23 December and then be back for Christmas with my family'. He was even going to volunteer to come out here next year and do a winter tour! What a loon! I also want to thank him for being a great pal, he was the best listener ever. I bored the hell out of him every day about my girlfriend, but he would just listen and advise me on what to write in blueys to her.

"One of the funniest moments I remember of Richie was when we were on our CVR(T) conversion course in Catterick. He had a flat tyre and he was quoted £44 for a new one! Then bang, he kicked right off about it. I even offered to pay £4 towards it. I'm sure he is a secret millionaire! And, by the way, you still owe me for the fags!

"I knew his life story, he would bore me about his family, and he showed me all the pictures of his kids and told me about how he was getting married next year for under a grand! Richie was engaged to Emma-Jayne and had a beautiful daughter called Kaitlin; he also had two stepsons, Liam and Martyn, who he was so proud of. Our thoughts also go out to them and his mum and dad, Anne and Geoff, at this devastating time.

"Richie you were an amazing friend. You will be greatly missed by all and you will never ever be forgotten! Rest in peace mate! Love ya pal!"