

1st Battalion Coldstream Guards

Lieutenant Douglas "Dougie" Dalzell joined the Army in 2007, commissioning into the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards in December of that year. After passing the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course in April 2008 he arrived in the Battalion, which had just returned from Operation HERRICK 7. He took over his first Platoon in Number 3 Company and quickly established himself as an extremely capable young officer.

As a Platoon Commander based in Windsor, life is busy with the full spectrum of State Ceremonial occasions and Public Duties. Lieutenant Dalzell rose to the task with a commendably positive attitude; his leadership and drive kept his Platoon motivated and focused on the challenges of the tour in Afghanistan.

He engaged fully in preparing for the multifaceted demands an operational deployment to Afghanistan generates. It was this that really gripped his imagination. With an eye for detail unusual of one so junior, he created training opportunities for his soldiers that stood them all in good stead. To fit this around his duties in London was impressive.

In early 2009 Lieutenant Dalzell moved into Number 1 Company to take command of Number 2 Platoon and it was with them that he deployed to Afghanistan in October 2009. He was devoted to this Platoon and those in it, to him. The rapport and trust quickly gained between him and his men was hugely significant in building a team of professional soldiers eager to deploy to Afghanistan and prove themselves.

Lieutenant Dalzell didn't take his task lightly. He was a professional of the highest standards; a role model for his generation of officers. He led by example and from the front, never asking a soldier to do a job that he hadn't previously done himself. His Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant Amer, was killed on 30 November 2009 and he carried the burden of losing not only a critical professional colleague, but also a close friend, in the most unselfish way. His courage and leadership over the past four months have been nothing short of astonishing and all those around him have been infected by it. To be praised by those that are so notoriously difficult to please is so fitting, for he was liked, trusted and respected by everyone.

Lieutenant Dalzell was killed on his birthday doing a job he loved and commanding a Platoon of which he was hugely fond and to which he was utterly committed. His colleagues have lost the most remarkable and inspiring officer. Those who worked most closely with him say he was undoubtedly destined for great things in the Army; he just had the aura of a success story. However behind this brilliance was the most charming, polite and charismatic young man who was loved by all. To a man the Battle Group is devastated by his loss however that can never compare to what is felt by his family and closest friends, to whom he was so devoted.

Lt Dalzell came from Hamstead Marshall, near Newbury, in Berkshire. He was married. He

leaves his parents Anthony and Colette, brother Angus and sister Olivia.

Lieutenant Dalzell's family paid the following tribute:

"Our darling son and brother to Olivia and Angus, you touched the hearts of so many. You are our world and we love you with all our hearts. You only ever looked for the good in people and kept strong and happy in all you did. You are a true hero and we will miss you forever."

Lieutenant Colonel Toby Gray, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Had I been a platoon commander at the same time as Lieutenant Dougie Dalzell, I would have wished to be like him: assured, confident, utterly professional and hugely popular with his men and held in the highest regard by his seniors. He was the ultimate role model and example for any young officer. Not just a fantastic soldier and leader, he was an exceptional sportsman and he had dashing good looks.

Beyond all this, he was also a bloody good bloke.

"He found most things easy, so rather than simply accepting basic success he strove to excel in all he took on. He really did 'fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run'.

"It was clear to me that he adored his job and his guardsmen in equal measure. He was tragically killed, on his 27th birthday doing the job he loved and leading from the front. The gap he leaves in his Company, the Battalion and Officers' mess is enormous. We all mourn his death and will miss his gentle yet keen sense of humour, but our loss is nothing to that of his family; his parents, his brother, Angus and sister, Liv and many, many friends beyond the Army and Regiment.

"A bright light has gone out in this glorious regiment. In his memory I know all ranks will rise to the challenges of the coming months so that Dougie's sacrifice is not in vain - he would want us to push hard to the end. He did."

Major Toby Till (Toby), Company Commander, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I am immensely proud to have commanded one of the finest Platoon Commanders that I have known during seventeen years of Service in the Coldstream Guards. Dougie had it all; he was first of all an absolute gentleman: eloquent, diligent and he set the standard in his Platoon and the Company. He was also one of the fittest men in the Battalion, a natural rugby player and a born leader.

"He was respected by everyone and he was loved by his men for his ability to share a moment with them when they were in need which they have been on more than one occasion on this tour. When he arrived back off R and R they were there to cheer him back off the helicopter.

Dougie had already lost his Platoon Sergeant, John Amer, and his Guardsmen had been rocked but through his outstanding leadership in the face of the enemy, coupled with his ability to empathise with their concerns and needs, he has held Number 2 Platoon together during their darkest moments. This can never be easy on a young man experiencing his first operational tour. Dougie has displayed outstanding moral and physical courage and will always remain an example to all of us who have worked with him in the Company. Even the more experienced hands in the Company have been humbled by his professional ability, resolve, spirit and upbeat attitude.

"Having been to the same school as Dougie, we shared an additional bond and his aspirations were similar to mine at this stage of his career. He was being lined up to be an ADC before aspiring to test himself to the full in the years ahead. Whilst we have all lost a great friend and a man we all respected enormously, I know that Anthony and Colette have lost their dear son and Olivia and Angus have lost their brother. My heart and soul goes out to them at this time. I can not begin to imagine your pain and sorrow but ALL of the Company have you in our thoughts. We send our love to you at this difficult time.

"We have as a Company taken a step backwards over the last 36 hours at the loss of a true warrior but we have all become stronger in our hearts and minds; our focus and determination steeled all the more. In our small part of Helmand Province we have made significant progress and this will continue in the remaining months ahead of our tour. The loss of Dougie will never, ever, be forgotten and will not be in vain."

Captain Jamie Russell, Adjutant, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Dougie was possessed of such a unique blend of professionalism and charm. He shone throughout his short career and could always be trusted to do anything exceptionally well. It was deeply humbling to watch from afar how Dougie steered his Platoon always leading from the front. His men responded by giving him their complete trust and they would have followed him anywhere.

"The Regiment will be a darker place without this bright star and we will all miss him dearly. My thoughts are with his family and friends at this most terrible of times."

Captain Frederick Wells, Company Second in Command, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Dougie was a truly exceptional character - adored by his soldiers and respected by all those he met. He was as charming as he was professional, as popular as he was humble. He had a bright future ahead of him which has been cut tragically short. He died leading his men from the front, doing a job at which he excelled and which he loved.

"The Company and Regiment have lost a shining star who will never be forgotten, but our thoughts and prayers are for his family, who have lost an amazing son and brother."

Captain Storm Green, Second in Command, Number 2 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"When I first met Dougie Dalzell his quiet, unassuming character fooled me into thinking he was a completely different character to what it turned out he really was. A fun loving, incredibly charming Officer whose love for soldiering shone through when the going got tough. His calm, measured presence was no doubt a huge reassurance to the men he so enjoyed commanding. Dougie was the Officers' Mess dark horse. His smooth tongue, quick wit and good looks made him the envy of all us less blessed mortals, even despite his vertical shortcomings which one would not normally associate with a Guards Officer.

"But only at your peril would you think that this would make him any less focussed and enthusiastic about his job. Incredibly fit and always thoughtful, his leadership style made it hard for his men and peers alike not to follow him. The loss of Dougie will leave a huge hole in the Battalion that no one will ever be able to fill. But I know the memory of him and the stories of his tragically short career will inspire Coldstream Guardsmen and all soldiers for generations to come. The thoughts and prayers of Number 2 Company are with his family and all his friends.

Lieutenant Jack Greenly, Platoon Commander, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Dougie was a true friend and I could think of no-one else I would rather have spent my time in Afghanistan serving alongside. He was a rock, and always there during the tough times, helping to bring the light at the end of the tunnel ever closer.

"We will all miss a superb Platoon Commander who had the utmost respect from his guys due to his professionalism and irresistibly likeable character. The world will be a darker place without him, but with so many fond memories he will never be forgotten."

Lieutenant Ben Rutt, Platoon Commander, Number 2 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Dougie was a man of enormous kindness, honour and strength and he was a friend and example to everyone he met. He would have done anything for his guardsmen; the pain in his absence will be deeply felt by us all.

Lieutenant Matt Burrows, Platoon Commander, Number 3 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Dougie was a truly unique character in the Officers' Mess. A friend of everyone, there was never a dull moment working alongside him in the Battalion. Having been in the same Platoon at Sandhurst and serving as a Platoon Commander with him in No 3 Company before Afghanistan, I will never forget his cracking sense of humour that enlivened even the most mundane of days. He was admired by his soldiers and fellow Officers and excelled in all aspects of military life. His tragic death has hit us all hard and he will be sorely missed. He will be remembered forever."

Lieutenant Lisa Keevash, AGC Detachment Commander, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I have known Dougie for just over three years. I was lucky enough to be in the same Company as him at Sandhurst. I was delighted to find out I was going to be posted to the Coldstream Guards with Dougie and the other cadets who joined the Coldstreamers. Knowing that on my first posting I would be surrounded by such friends made it less daunting.

"We were like the naughty school kids in the Mess and would often banter over the table firing quotes of favourite films at each other when the Mess conversation got a little too deep or political for our liking.

"Dougie was one of those guys that you should have really hated. He was good at everything, from his dashing good looks, his performance on PT and starring role on the rugby pitch, there was nothing he didn't excel at. However, you couldn't help falling in love with Dougie's charm and charisma. He was the perfect officer; a perfect gentleman.

"Dougie had a cheeky smile that could light up any room and a wicked sense of humour that never failed to make those around him smile. He was one of my closest friends in the Battalion and he confided in me on a recent trip to Patrol Base 4. He told me how proud he was to command Number 2 Platoon and that their courage and strength was immeasurable. He felt more like a father figure to his Guardsmen and I know they will all miss him sorely.

"His tragic loss has left a huge gap in the Officers' Mess, Number 1 Company and the Battalion as a whole, that can never be replaced. It has left a gap so huge that words could never describe. I feel so lucky and privileged to be able to call Dougie my friend and I will take with me such fond memories of our time serving together in Battalion. My thoughts and prayers are with his family at this tragic and extremely difficult time. Dougie, rest in peace, we will never forget you."

Warrant Officer Class 2 S Taylor, Company Sergeant Major, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

Lieutenant Dalzell was a very likable, professional and diligent Platoon Commander and as the Company Sergeant Major I will miss him terribly. Mr Dalzell settled into the Company straight away with his relaxed nature and his thirst for getting the best from the men he commanded. I can honestly say that he led from the front through fitness, leadership and his indisputable infectious and positive foresight. He has led his Platoon through many tough and often traumatic experiences and he always came out smiling.

A large hole has been left not just within the Company but also the Regiment; Mr Dalzell was one for the future for sure. To say that Mr Dalzell strived to be the best, can be described in that fact that he is the only Platoon Commander that I have seen in 18 years of experience, that can really carry off a tour moustache; it was truly a fantastic moustache. God speed Mr Dalzell, you will never be forgotten.

Sergeant P Baines, Sniper Platoon Sergeant Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I can only attempt to write something that will give Mr Dalzell the true respect he is due. Mr Dalzell was a pure professional, an outstanding soldier and born leader of men. You often hear the cliché 'follow till the end' but never has truer statement been made in reference to such an outstanding man. His integrity and judgement were inspiring to all who had the pleasure to work and fight next to him. Mr DD, you have left a big gap in our lives that will never be filled, 'Nulli Secundus'."

Colour Sergeant W Wilson, attached to Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Mr D always saw the cup half full, someone who could be counted on when it mattered, and was respected and liked by all who knew and worked with him. A gap is now left that will never be filled - an awesome man."

Sergeant C Hunter, Platoon Sergeant Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I first met Lieutenant Dougie Dalzell when he turned up at the Battalion as a new draft one star platoon commander and took over Number 9 Platoon in Number 3 Company, of which I was the senior section commander. A new platoon commander looks towards his section commanders for tactical advice, which developed a strong bond between Mr Dalzell and myself and straight away I could tell he was a top bloke. He excelled professionally at his job and mastered his trade as a platoon commander exceptionally.

"I developed a close bond with Mr Dalzell outside of work and he was always up for a good bit of banter, or on hand for a bit of advice when needed. When I found out that I was to become the platoon sergeant for Mr Dalzell's platoon I was very happy that I was able to work for him again and honoured that he requested me specifically. There is not another job in the Army that I would rather do. Mr Dalzell was an inspirational leader amongst his men and a much-loved character of the platoon. My time serving alongside him will be a memory that I will cherish forever.

"A true warrior has been laid to rest. Today I have lost a Platoon Commander, a training partner, and a true friendship has been cruelly taken, but will never be forgotten."

Lance Sergeant D Hughes, Regimental Signal Detachment Commander, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"It was an absolute pleasure to have known Lieutenant Dalzell. He was respected by all who knew and served with him. I'll miss our conversations about rugby and our families. Number 1 Company has lost a great soldier. My thoughts at this time go to his family. Later, Double D."

Lance Sergeant J Clough, Section Commander Number 2 Platoon, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Lieutenant Dougie Dalzell was a friendly but very professional soldier who put all of his soldiers before himself. He always liked to sit and have a chat with his lads and would be there for us any time. He liked his practical jokes and banter. He was not just my Platoon Commander, he was also a friend who will be sorely missed by all who served with or knew him.

"My condolences go out to his family at this very difficult time. Mr Dalzell died doing a job he believed in and truly loved."

Lance Corporal D Dowd, Section Second in Command, Number 2 Platoon, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"A true leader and a true gentleman who I will never forget. I feel grateful and honoured to have known and worked with such a bloke. If it wasn't for his quick humour and strong personality I would have missed a true lesson in life. He was a bloke who led by example and could always bring the best out in anyone. The world has been cruel by taking away an inspirational man but all who knew him will never forget him. A part of Mr Dalzell will always remain with us and inspire us to go forward."

Lance Corporal K Boyer, Section 2IC, Number 2 Platoon, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I have not known Mr Dalzell for a long time, but I have known him long enough to say, he was one of the most professional soldiers I have ever met and no matter what the circumstances he always knew how to put a smile back on your face. He was a commander when he had to be and a friend to talk to when you needed him to be. My thoughts are with his family. Mr D you are greatly missed."

Lance Corporal L Rowley, Number 1 Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I have only worked with Mr D a few times and every time I did, he did his job to the highest standard and with total professionalism. Mr D was truly 'Second to None'."

Guardsmen Robert Cox, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Mr Dalzell was one of a kind; he was a great role model, always putting the blokes before himself and, no matter what, always got the job done. Mr Dalzell was by far one of the best Platoon Commanders we ever had the privilege of working with. If he wasn't giving me tips in the gym, he was helping me on the ground. Lastly I just want to say Mr Dalzell was one of a kind and an inspiration to the whole platoon."

Guardsmen Juran Guscott, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Mr D was a strong man, he always knew what he wanted and always knew what he was doing - an excellent decision maker and always looking after the platoon. He was the man. I will deeply miss him. RIP Mr D."

Guardsman Andrew Legge, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Since I first met Mr Dalzell he always had a smile on his face; in camp and while he was on tour he was the kindest, most polite gentleman I had ever met - always there when you needed someone to talk to and there when you needed something. He was just like one of the other Guardsmen, always having a laugh with us and cheering people up when they needed it the most.

"It is a very sad loss, not just to the Platoon but to the Company. All my love goes to Mr Dalzell's family and friends at this very sad time."

Guardsman Glen Clarke, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"From the short time since I joined him in Afghanistan, I saw his overwhelming sense of professionalism and pride - he had a massive influence on his platoon. I can only describe him as 'the man who had everything'. His loss is a massive blow to the platoon."

Guardsman David Collier, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"This is just a few words about Lieutenant Dalzell. He was all for the boys - I could chat about things I did not want to talk about to anyone else. We have lost a great man who I will never forget and I feel for his family."

Drummer Christian Blackie, Number 2 Platoon, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"Mr Dalzell was a greatly loved man. Not only was he an amazing man, he was also one of the finest commanders a soldier could ask for. Our hearts go out to his family and he will be greatly missed."