

Lieutenant Mark Evison

Platoon Commander 1st Battalion Welsh Guards

Lieutenant Mark Evison died after sustaining injuries whilst on patrol outside Check Point Haji Alem in Helmand province, Afghanistan, where he was serving as a Platoon Commander in 1st Battalion Welsh Guards.

Lt Evison was the Officer Commanding Number 7 Platoon, which was part of the Number 2 Company Group operating in the south of Nad e-Ali. The company has four patrol bases or check points, one of which - Haji Alem - was occupied by Lt Evison and his platoon.

In addition to defending the check point they were responsible for patrolling the local area in order to deter insurgent activity and improve security for the local population.

On 9 May 2009, Lt Evison was leading such a patrol when they came under enemy fire. He was hit in the shoulder by a single round, and was evacuated back to the hospital in Camp Bastion.

Despite the best medical treatment available, he was showing no sign of recovering, and he was flown back to Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham. His family were with him when he died.

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Lt Evison was born on 17 July 1982, was educated at Charterhouse School and later read Land Economy at Oxford Brookes University after which he went to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and was commissioned into the Welsh Guards on 14 December 2007.

Following the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course he joined Number 3 Company, commanding Number 7 Platoon on ceremonial duties in London. Subsequently he commanded his platoon with distinction on overseas exercises in Canada and Germany. Following the re-rolling of his company, his platoon was attached to Number 2 Company, with whom he trained his men for the deployment to Afghanistan.

Lt Evison was an outstanding young officer. He was intelligent, charming, tactically astute, and he cared deeply for the men under his command and was well-liked and respected both by the soldiers under his command and his fellow officers. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

The family of Lt Evison said:

"Mark led a charmed life in many ways, because of who he was: he was charismatic, caring,

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optimistic, and always happy, and he drew to himself a wide circle of friends from all walks of life.

"He was devoted to his family. He loved music and, from Dulwich College, won a music scholarship at age 16 to Charterhouse School, Godalming, playing the cello and the piano.

"He was a natural sportsman and excelled at all sports; at age 17 running the London Marathon in 3 hours 14 minutes. At age 18, he worked as a jackaroo on a 300,000-acre sheep farm in Hay, Australia, for 11 months, and endeared himself to the Australian outback lads, which in a way was an apprenticeship for the active caring life with his lads in the Army.

"He loved the Army and its comradeship, care, adventure, respect and courtesy, and was described in a report from his company commander just before his death as 'an exceptionally impressive young officer who combines real talent with great humility and charm (and who) displays more potential than any officer with whom I have worked'.

"He lit up so many lives in his 26 years, and will be profoundly missed. Everyone who knew him loved him."

His Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe MBE, said:

"Lieutenant Mark Evison was one of the finest young officers of his generation and a truly remarkable young man.

"He was a natural leader - tactically astute, clear-sighted and cool and decisive under pressure. His platoon gave him the affectionate nickname '007' - a testament to their high regard for his capability, style and charisma.

"They would have followed him anywhere. On top of this, Mark demonstrated great humility, modesty and innate decency in his dealings with others. He took great care to look out for the welfare of his soldiers and he was ever generous and patient with those less able than himself.

"There was also much more to him than the Army. He was a very talented musician, with a great sense of fun, and a huge circle of friends.

"He was one of the most accomplished young officers I have worked with and a loyal and highly respected Welsh Guardsman."

Major Henry Bettinson

"I suspect that his life, tragically cut short, would have gone on to shape history. It would certainly have continued to inspire those around him.

"His death has been a huge shock to us all, but we are painfully aware that our loss is as nothing compared with that which has been suffered by his family. Our hearts go out to them at this enormously difficult time."

His Company Commander, Major Henry Bettinson, said:

"Lt Evison embodied all the attributes of a fine soldier; he was mentally and physically robust, compassionate, intelligent and confident, but without being overly so. He deployed to Afghanistan to help bring stability to the region of southern Nad e-Ali.

"His devotion to his men was unquestioned. Despite austere surroundings, he ensured they remained focused on their tasks with an upbeat, relaxed outlook that rubbed off on them. The tremendous esprit de corps that he helped to generate remains with his men who are determined to continue their mission as he would have wished.

"He was an extremely capable leader, one who truly inspired others to give their best. His was the standard that others strove to emulate. He led with imagination, a lightness of touch and some style. I will remember him for his loyalty, trustworthiness, reliability and mischievous sense of fun.

"He was one of the most accomplished young officers I have worked with and a loyal and highly respected Welsh Guardsman. He will not be forgotten."

"Every inch the 'bloody bloke' - with a sense of humour and love of banter that were infectious, there was never a dull moment when Mark was around."

Lt David Harris, a fellow Platoon Commander, said:

"We have all lost a great friend, son, brother and colleague. Mark was blessed with a lust for life that inspired all around him and which saw us through many grueling Sandhurst exercises, freezing nights in Brecon and evenings in London night spots.

"In every situation, social or professional, he had a real presence and an infectious enthusiasm that lightened up even the darkest moments.

"His confidence, fitness and professional ability was unrivalled as a fellow Platoon Commander. While Mark was acutely aware of why we were fighting, his motivation wasn't as much for Queen and Country as for his men, with whom he shared a great rapport.

"His loyalty to them was absolute and this was reflected in their respect and admiration for him.

"I am enormously proud to have served with Mark and I am honoured to have been his friend. His loss has left a massive gap in all our lives and he will be truly missed, but not forgotten.

"We will continue to remember him through all the great moments we shared and are determined to do him proud out here in Afghanistan. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family."

Lt Owen James, another Platoon Commander, said:

"Mark was the finest friend and brother officer that one could wish for. Ever willing to help others, Mark would move mountains to help those in need, be it a friend or one of his soldiers.

"Every inch the 'bloody bloke' - with a sense of humour and love of banter that were infectious, there was never a dull moment when Mark was around. Life will be much the poorer without him, but much the richer for having known him."

"Mr Evison was the best Platoon Commander any of us can remember. His love for the boys and the job we did together was unrivalled."

Lance Sergeant Leon Peek, from 7 Platoon, said:

"Mr Evison was the best Platoon Commander any of us can remember. His love for the boys and the job we did together was unrivalled. He truly was a great soldier and a close friend to us all."

Guardsmen Gareth Lucas, also from 7 Platoon, said:

"Mr Evison was a great soldier and a true gentleman. A fine role model for us all. He loved his boys and his boys loved him."

Secretary of State for Defence, John Hutton, said:

"This is a tragic loss not only for the Welsh Guards, but for the wider family of the Armed Forces.

"Lt Mark Evison was an officer who demonstrated all the qualities of someone set for high things. His personality was loved by all who met him, and it is clear that his loyalty and dedication to his men, at home and in Afghanistan, was unshakable.

"A talented all-rounder, Lt Evison brought much to Army life and his approach and standards are an example to all. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends at this devastating time."