

Private John Brackpool
Prince of Wales' Company, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards

Private John Brackpool was killed on 9th July 2009 whilst on operations near Char-e-Anjir, just outside Lashkar Gah, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was serving as a rifleman with the Prince of Wales' Company, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards.

John was on sentry duty on a compound that had recently been secured as part of Operation Panther's Claw, when the compound he was in was engaged by enemy fire. One of the rounds struck him, and despite immediate medical attention there was nothing that could be done for him.

John was born on 11th July 1981 in Crawley, West Sussex. He joined the Army and served with the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, during which time he deployed on operations to Kosovo and Iraq. He had left the Regular Army, but volunteered to serve with 1st Battalion Welsh Guards for a 6-month operational tour to Afghanistan.

Although his time with the Welsh Guards was short, he had settled in well and quickly become a popular member of his platoon. He leaves behind his parents, his partner, and his young son. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

His Battle Group Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Doug Chalmers MBE PWRR, said:

"Private Brackpool was a superb soldier who had learnt his trade as a member of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, serving with them in both Kosovo and Iraq. After a number of years he left the 'Pick of the South', as he affectionately referred to them, and entered civilian life. But before long he joined up as a reservist to serve with the Welsh Guards for their tour of duty in Afghanistan. It is a mark of the man that he settled quickly and earned his platoon's respect in a matter of days. He was easy going, hard working and had that kind of water proof smile that kept morale going when things got tough. His loss has been an enormous blow to his many friends in the Welsh Guards and those that remember him in the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. But we are all very conscious that our loss is nothing compared to the one being felt by his family, partner and son. Our hearts go out to them at this extremely distressing time."

His Company Commander, Major Giles Harris, said:

"Private Brackpool joined the Prince of Wales's Company as a Regular Reservist and instantly became popular amongst the Welsh Guardsmen he had volunteered to serve with in Afghanistan. He was an extremely likeable and engaging man. His laid back attitude and tremendous sense of humour - most often at his own expense - made him a hugely valued member of his platoon who quickly came to know him as 'Bracks'. That an Englishman could be

so quickly and genuinely brought into the fold of a Welsh platoon - one which had already seen considerable action before his arrival - was a testament to his remarkable character and good nature. As a soldier he was committed, a team player, and enthusiastic in contact with the enemy. Having already completed two tours of Kosovo and one of Iraq he brought a huge amount of experience with him, yet he was humble, down to earth and took each day as it came. Private Brackpool was with us for only a short time but will leave a lasting impression on all that met him, especially those in his platoon who had the privilege and pleasure of living and fighting alongside this charming, unselfish, friendly and genuine soldier."

His Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Dave Harris, said:

"Private Brackpool joined two months into our tour and made a quick impression upon us all. He had a permanent smile etched across his face and appeared to relish being part of a close knit team despite the austere conditions. He was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour and a truly happy go lucky attitude. All of us in 2 Platoon will remember Private Blackpool as a genuine, compassionate and likeable man who gave his life protecting his comrades. He will not be forgotten by 2 Platoon, who will miss him greatly."

Lance Sergeant Bjegovic, his Section Commander, said:

"Private Brackpool had settled in well, making many new friends in 2 Platoon. There were plenty of times where 'Bracks' would make us all burst out in to tears of laughter. My funniest moment with John was when I told him to get on top of the small roof to give us protection. This didn't last long as he fell through the roof shouting out in his loudest accent "get me out, get me out!" We had to break a wall down to get him out, he then fell through the hole. John and even the CSM were in fits of laughter. When we were in camp Bastion, I remember John wondering what someone would say about him if anything happened in Afghanistan. I would like to say, John Brackpool was a brilliant bloke, he was always smiling and he was happiest when bantering with the boys. We all knew how much John loved his girlfriend as he would not stop smiling when he received a letter or parcel. I and the rest of 2 Platoon will always remember John we will never forget the sacrifice he made in order to protect us. Our thoughts are now with his family and friends."

Guardsman Chris Johnson, another member of the Platoon, said:

"We didn't know John for long as he joined us nearly two months into the tour but he was always the first to volunteer for any task and integrated quickly. He was an honest open character and a keen Arsenal fan yet he took jokes about his beloved team in good spirits. Upon arriving at our current base he found that the locals had left behind a rather unfriendly dog tied to post. In the few days John spent here he was the only one to earn the trust of the dog and even lead it to safety one afternoon under fire. John will not be forgotten by anyone that served with him and our thoughts are with his loved ones."