

Ranger McCormick (22) came from Coleraine in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland. On completion of his recruit training, he joined 1st Battalion the Royal Irish Regiment at Tern Hill, Shropshire, in January 2008.

Ranger McCormick was posted to A Company, where he served with distinction for two-and-a-half years. His professionalism, selflessness and enthusiasm were well known across the Company and the Battalion. Aaron had served once before in Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 8, and was quickly identified as a quality soldier. Voluntarily, he took on the responsibility as the lead Vallon (mine detection) man. He would be the first man on any patrol, showing the strength of character and courage that he would come to be known for.

Faugh-A-Ballagh! ('Clear the way!'), is the Regiment's motto, and Ranger McCormick was a man who truly cleared the way.

Despite a relatively short time in the Army he was able to offer guidance and advice to the newest members of his unit, often over a brew and having a chat about 'Star Wars'; he was a huge fan.

Ranger McCormick was very well educated and had aspirations to complete a degree in education in the future, a career to which he would have been well suited.

Always ready with a smile, Ranger McCormick was always at the centre of the 'craic' and he will be sorely missed by all members of The Royal Irish Regiment. He leaves behind his mother Margaret, his father Lesley, his sisters Callie-Ann and Tammy, his brother Michael and his girlfriend Becky. Our thoughts are with his family at this difficult time.

Lieutenant Colonel Colin Weir MBE, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"Ranger Aaron McCormick was the epitome of the Irish Infantry soldier: tough; selfless; good-humoured and full of compassion. Today, there is a gap in our ranks which no ordinary man could fill. He was the best of his country and we mourn his loss. Today, we have a heavy heart. Tomorrow, in his honour and because it is right, his brother Rangers will steel themselves once again, will step out on patrol, and will face down the enemy. This place is already better for Aaron having been here; we will now build on his good work with renewed determination to win.

"At 22, Ranger McCormick was something of an Afghan 'old-hand', looked up to by the more junior Rangers and relied upon by his commanders. In his many battles he was unfailingly brave, and perhaps more tellingly, he was brave even when the adrenaline was not flowing. In full knowledge of the danger, he was determined that he would be the front man on every patrol,

and the first man out of the gate of the checkpoint. He died as a result of an operation to confirm the presence of an IED; a vital first step to clearing it and protecting the lives of local civilians and soldiers alike.

"Ranger Aaron McCormick was a son, brother and companion of whom his heartbroken family and friends can feel intensely proud. This Regiment does not forget, and we will continue to pray for him and his loved ones.

"Faugh A Ballagh"

Major Jamie Humphreys, Commander of A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I had the privilege of commanding Ranger Aaron McCormick since May 2010. At only 22 years of age he was already an experienced soldier with a bright future. Very popular within the Company he was very much a soldier's Ranger. He was a shining example of all that is great about commanding Irish soldiers; strong willed, good humoured, faithful and as brave as they come. His experience from his previous tour in Afghanistan was well known and he was forever passing on his knowledge to the more junior members of the Company.

"He had demonstrated throughout our pre-deployment training that he was totally committed to his job as the point Vallon man for his multiple, and it was in fulfilling this role that he was so tragically killed in action. He was a vital member of his rifle platoon, based in a particularly challenging area of Southern Nad-e Ali. It was typical of Ranger McCormick to have insisted on being the Vallon man, as he believed he was the best man for the task and wanted to ensure that the soldiers with whom he patrolled were as safe as he could possibly make them. A qualified infantry assault pioneer, he was well aware of the dangers he faced. He chose this role when he could have avoided being so close to the action and this was characteristic of the dogged determination he displayed. This willingness to do the hard graft and share danger was his hallmark, and the courage that he displayed on a daily basis will never be forgotten. He was a fine example of a Royal Irish soldier.

"The death of Ranger Aaron McCormick is a massive blow to the Company but it can not compare to the grief now felt by his family, girlfriend and friends. He was a credit to his family and a first class Ranger in A Company 1 R IRISH. He will be sorely missed and our thoughts and prayers here in A Company are with his loved ones at this most difficult of times.

"Rest in Peace young Ranger, your fellow Rangers in Afghanistan will drive on even harder now, as we know this is what you would want.

"Faugh A Ballagh!"

Captain Dougie Beattie MC, Battle Captain, A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I had the privilege to serve alongside Ranger McCormick in Southern Nad-e Ali and it was with

a sense of shock that I heard he had been killed. We had worked closely together on many patrols over the last two months and I was very impressed with his professionalism, compassion, humour and above all courage. He was a larger than life character, a giant amongst men and he sacrificed his life to ensure the safety of his colleagues and the local Afghan population. Although he will be sorely missed by his many friends and colleagues, none of this will compare to the sense of loss felt by his family. Our thoughts are with them as we continue the work Mac was so passionate about and gave his life for.

Captain Toby Whitmarsh, Second in Command, A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I first met Ranger McCormick when I joined A Company as a new subaltern. Confident, battle hardened and immensely capable he was a daily reminder of what a privilege it is to command in this battalion.

"From the moment his platoon touched down at the Checkpoint they were effectively under siege. Surrounded by hostile compounds on all sides they took the fight to the insurgents from the start, driving them away from the population and further and further into the shadows. Ranger McCormick was central to this effort and will be sorely missed."

WO2 Nicky Roberts, Ex Company Sergeant Major, A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"It was November 2008 when I first met Ranger Aaron McCormick on taking over A Company as the Company Sergeant Major. The Company had just returned from Afghanistan on Operation Herrick 8. He was a quiet young man and a popular member of the Company who had a great confidence and a maturity about him for someone so young. He was extremely experienced from his tour of Afghanistan having served with 9 Platoon Ranger Company in Sangin in 2008 and was always ready share his experience throughout the Company on return.

"Nothing was a chore to Ranger McCormick and he was always keen to help out; whether it be for a duty or to take a place on a patrol. He leaned in to every task put to him with professionalism and a sense of humour.

"The death of Ranger McCormick is intensely sad and will be felt Battalion wide. He will be remembered by all and is testament to both A Company's motto "Spectamur Agendo" (Judge us by our deeds) and the Regimental motto "Faugh A Ballagh" (Clear the Way). Thoughts go out from the Battlegroup and we are thinking of his family and girlfriend during this testing time."

WO2 William Roy, Company Sergeant Major, A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I first met Ranger Aaron McCormick in May 2010 as the Company were undergoing pre-deployment training for this deployment . Ranger McCormick had been away attending an assault pioneer course and his return was the first opportunity I had to get to know this promising young soldier. Despite his young age, he demonstrated a maturity beyond his 22

years and this was commented upon by the instructors at the School of Engineering. He was able to utilise these pioneer skills to enhance the remainder of the Company pre-deployment training.

"His enthusiasm and dedication for his chosen profession earmarked him for the job of point Vallon man. As such he was responsible for clearing a safe route on patrol for his fellow soldiers, a responsibility he readily accepted. It was during the conduct of these duties that Ranger McCormick tragically fell in action on the morning of 14th November 2010.

"The death of Ranger Aaron McCormick leaves a massive void within the Company; the courage he displayed on patrol on a daily basis is an example to us all. He was a credit to both his family and his home town of Coleraine. He will be sorely missed by all who met him and A Company is the better for having known this remarkable young man."

Lance Corporal Christopher Griffiths and Ranger Stephen McEntaggart who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"Words cannot describe him - you have to have known him. Good soldier and great friend, he will be a huge loss to A Company. He will be truly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. 'Spectamur Agendo'."

Lance Corporal William Hull, who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I had the honour of knowing Ranger Aaron McCormick and working with him since I arrived in A Company. Me, Aaron and Ranger Graham were told to attend the assault pioneer course and Aaron was looking forward to it. It was something he told me that he always wanted to do and when we went down to the course and you could tell that he wanted to do well. As the course went on, Aaron stood out and he was always stepping to the front to go first on all the tasks. The instructors could tell that he was keen and he was popular among all the people on the course. I will not only remember the good times we had at work, we also had some good nights out that were very memorable. He finished very high on the course and was a credit to all of us in the R IRISH. All my thoughts go out to you, his family and partner at this darkest of times.

"Rest In peace mate, you will never be forgotten."

Ranger David Callaghan who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"We were in the same section in Kenya for some of our training, and had good times in the desert. In camp we both watched every Star Trek film from the first one to most recent one, even though he preferred Star Wars he would always be willing to watch 'Trek for us! Last time I saw him was in Check Point TANOOR and he had just received fiive parcels. He was ecstatic and showed me pictures of his family and girlfriend, Becky. Aaron was a great friend and someone I could always rely on. He will be greatly missed by all of his friends and family and

will never be forgotten."

Ranger Daniel Jackson who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment

"Aaron went by many names, but to his friends he was "Jedi". He was a great friend who will be missed by all close to him. He was always around for you if you had any problems (as long as you provided mug and brew). I, along with his family and friends, will never forget Aaron. My thoughts are with his friends and family."

Ranger Neil McClory, who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I first met Aaron on the first Sunday I arrived at the Battalion in 2008. He had just returned from his leave after his first deployment to Afghanistan, and instantly made all of us new lads feel welcome. Over the last 2 years we have had many good times together, whether it was spending a weekend in camp or heading out to the town and cities around Tern Hill. He will always be remembered within the Company as "the Jedi" for his love of Star Wars films. He will be remembered by all of the Company as a close friend that would always stop and take the time to talk to you. He will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him and I know everyone in the Company is thinking of his family and girlfriend back home during this difficult time.

"Rest in peace."

Ranger Ian McKernan, who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"I had the privilege of working with Ranger Aaron McCormick in everything he did throughout his army career. He was a good and determined soldier and these qualities showed from a very early stage in basic training which we completed together. His first thought was always about the remainder of the troops and if they were happy he was happy; and this made him a model Ranger's Ranger.

"This was not his first tour of Afghanistan, on 25th March 2008 Ranger McCormick and I deployed as part of 9 Platoon Ranger Company. We were the two junior Rangers within this platoon and it didn't take long for Aaron's qualities as a lead Platoon man to shine as he took the whole responsibility of clearing the safe lane solely upon his shoulders. He was the best man for this job and I always felt safe in the knowledge that he cleared the way.

"Rest in peace mate."

Ranger Thomas Smyth who served alongside Ranger McCormick in A Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, said:

"Aaron was a close friend and it was a privilege to know him and share a room with him. I will never forget his humour and remember his bed-space at Tern Hill being surrounded with

pictures of his family and friends. He will be missed by all who knew him and will be fondly remembered."

The soldiers who served alongside Ranger McCormick in Checkpoint TANOOR, said:

"It was a great shock and with great sadness we had to say goodbye to a great friend and colleague. He was a real friend, always professional and a great soldier. He died ensuring the safety of his fellow Rangers. Our hearts go out to his family and friends, their sense of loss must be unimaginable. Mac was a respected and integral part of our call-sign. He will be missed and never forgotten.

"May we continue the fight to ensure his death was not in vain and his memory, through us, will live forever as we remember him as a true Irish Ranger and a hero in all our minds."