



Sergeant John Amer
1st Battalion Coldstream Guards

It is with great regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death in Afghanistan, on Monday 30 November 2009, of Acting Sergeant John Paxton Amer, of 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards.

Acting Sergeant Amer died from wounds sustained as a result of an explosion that happened in the Babaji area, in central Helmand Province.

Sergeant John Amer was an excellent soldier. His profession was ingrained in him and from the start of his career, he showed nothing short of enormous promise.

A Sunderland man, he enlisted on 17 October 1996 and after training joined Number 2 Company based at that time in Munster, Germany as part of an Armoured Infantry Battlegroup.

After cutting his teeth in the Armoured world he moved with the Battalion back to Windsor in 1998 to experience his first of many State Ceremonial occasions and Public Duties.

At the end of the year he deployed with his Company to the Falkland Islands to conduct a four-month tour. The tempo of life was fast and he learnt quickly. At such an early stage of his career he quickly marked out his plot as a future Non-Commissioned Officer.

A tour of Northern Ireland preceded promotion and he deployed to South Armagh on the Millennium Tour over the winter of 1999/2000. This was a busy tour for the Battalion and Sgt Amer conducted himself in an exemplary fashion.

Shortly after returning to Windsor he passed the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer cadre and set his career on the rails of success.

Whilst more Public Duties followed, the Battalion was soon preparing for operations once again, this time for a two-year residential tour to Londonderry in Number 1 Company.

This tour saw Sergeant Amer in his element and after a very short period as a Lance Corporal he attended the challenging Section Commanders' Battle Course in Brecon, a course he passed with ease.

On completion of the tour in Londonderry Sergeant Amer was promoted to Lance Sergeant and his presence in the Sergeants' Mess has been huge ever since.

He was posted to train recruits in Pirbright and after returning from there he passed the Platoon Sergeants' Battle Course before taking over his Platoon, once again in Number 1 Company. It was with this Platoon that he deployed to Afghanistan in early October 2009.

Sergeant Amer was a huge personality and a natural soldier. He was loved by his men, respected by his seniors and cherished by all.

Whether on parade at Buckingham Palace, teaching recruits in training, socialising in the Mess or, most recently, training his Platoon and leading his Multiple on complex counter-insurgency operations, Sgt Amer was the consummate professional.

He was the epitome of a modern, caring, intelligent and hugely courageous Senior Non Commissioned Officer and he was forever a Coldstreamer.

It was fitting that Sergeant Amer died saving the life of one of his men, for it was for them that he served. Sergeant Amer will be missed forever and remembered for the many happy times.

The loss of his comrades is huge but nothing in comparison to his beloved wife Sue and his daughter Lisa, who are now coming to terms with their loss at this incredibly sensitive and difficult time.

Lieutenant Colonel Toby Gray, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said: "There was only one thing bigger than Sgt Amer's nose and that was his enormous heart. He was loved by his men, cherished by his friends and respected by his seniors.

"I have known him for 13 years and I have had the privilege of serving with him, as he progressed from Guardsman to Platoon Sergeant. He lived by the maxim 'work hard, play hard'.

"I last spoke and chatted with him last week. As ever, he was the at the centre of maintaining the morale of the guardsmen in his platoon; whether ensuring they were fully prepared and briefed for the next patrol, checking on their welfare or just bantering with them.

"His grip and tenderness were keenly on display. He was like the benevolent uncle, respected and loved by them all. His soldiers were happy and proud to serve with a man with integrity, honour and one of the keenest senses of humour in the Battalion.

"We have lost one of the very finest soldiers in the regiment. He died saving a comrade and doing the job he both loved and excelled at. To the last, he was thinking of others.

"As a brother in arms, there was no-one better. He leaves a gap in our hearts never to be filled. The thoughts and prayers of everyone in the Coldstream Battlegroup are with his wife Sue and his daughter Lisa at this most difficult of times."

Major Toby Till, Officer Commanding, Number 1 Company 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, said:

"I have had the privilege of knowing Sergeant John Amer since I was his Platoon Commander at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick back in 1996, whilst he was under training as a Trainee Guardsman.

"Once you have commanded someone during this pivotal time in their life there is a special bond between you that can never be broken, despite the years.

"He stood out in training, not necessarily because he was one of the best, but because he was an immense character, a joker, and someone that the other trainees could rely on during the harder days of training to brighten their day.

"I was lucky again to have worked closely with Sergeant Amer when he was a young Guardsman during a four month tour of the Falkland Islands in 1998; he was again always the centre of attention.

"I was therefore delighted, that when I took command of Number One Company, Sgt Amer was one of my Platoon Sergeants. The seamless trust that is built over these years and especially over the last 15 months can never be replaced.

"Sergeant Amer stood out in the Company and was quite unique, always the man to get the last word in and to deliver the last line, but always happy to laugh at his own expense.

"Despite being a Platoon Sergeant and in a position of authority it would be fair to say that he did not have a bad bone in his body, caring of his Guardsmen and empathising with them during this demanding operational tour.

"We have a hole in the Company that will never be replaced but more importantly he was a husband to Sue and a father to Lisa and our thoughts are with them at this tragic and difficult time and always in the future.

"We have all lost a true friend, one of life's honest good blokes, who will never be forgotten."

Lieutenant Douglas Dalzell, Platoon Commander, Number 2 Platoon, said:

"From the perspective of a Platoon Commander the role of a Platoon Sergeant is of immeasurable importance. In addition to taking the lead on Platoon administration and discipline, he is of paramount importance in terms of providing an abundant source of knowledge and experience.

"Through a calm temperament and a mischievous sense of humour Sergeant Amer knew exactly how to steer me in the right direction without belittling my confidence or questioning my authority.

"For this I owe him a debt of gratitude I could never re-pay. Aside from his beloved family, Sergeant Amer's reason for being was the Platoon.

"Having an inspirational approach to leadership enabled him to always bring out the best in all those who worked with him, regardless of rank. What was most endearing about Sergeant Amer though and what the boys will remember him most for was his razor sharp wit.

"Never with malice and often at his own expense, his sense of humour led to the Guardsman seeing him as an approachable figure who they could confide in about anything. "

Warrant Officer Class 2 Stephen Taylor, Company Sergeant Major, Number 1 Company, said: "I am proud, humbled and honoured to have known Sergeant John Amer personally and professionally over many years of serving together in the Regiment.

"John's modern day style of leadership and day to day man management always got the best from his Platoon and his infectious humour and presence in the Sergeants' Mess is something I will never forget.

"I think back to when I knew Sergeant Amer was to join the Company as one of my Platoon Sergeants; boy that was a good day. His leadership and comradeship throughout this operational tour has been truly second to none, and I will never forget the support he has given to me throughout all the difficult times.

"My heart goes out to his wife Sue and daughter Lisa and I would just like to say John's actions that day would have made you both so very proud. John, I will miss you my friend."

Sergeant Mathew Nichol, Platoon Sergeant, Number 1 Company, said:

"I consider myself one of the luckiest men alive to have known and worked alongside Sergeant John Amer for 13 years. No amount of words could ever do a man of his calibre justice.

"From the first moment we met all those years ago on the way to Germany to join the Battalion, I knew I had a best friend for life. John really was one of a kind and left a lasting impression on anyone that knew him.

"The word 'legend' is used far too often but for my friend John it describes him perfectly. A completely selfless man who would do anything for his blokes and would never put himself before them, he was loved by all.

"Sergeant John Amer, Sergeant Al Kama and I will remain the greatest of friends and although we mourn the loss of our brother, we are so thankful for the lifetime of memories we have together.

"My heart goes out to Sue and Lisa and my thoughts and prayers are with you both. The world is now a darker place without one of its shining lights. I miss you so much my friend, forever in our hearts."

Lance Corporal Kristoffer Boyer, Section Second in Command, Number 2 Platoon, said:
"John was not only my Platoon Sergeant but also one of my best friends. He never took anything too seriously and approached everything with a sense of humour.

"He got any task given to him and completed it to the highest standard. He took great pride in his job and it was a real pleasure to be part of his team and an even greater pleasure to be his friend.

"He was loved and respected by all who knew him and I know I speak for all who met him when I say he will be greatly missed. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family. He was a truly incredible man."

Guardsmen Lance Jackson, 2 Platoon Rifleman, said:

"Sergeant Amer was more like a friend than a Platoon Sergeant; a father figure, a leader and a very good one at that. He had a cheeky schoolboy sense of humour which always made me laugh.

"He was the most selfless, kind-hearted person who always put his men first. We were lucky to have him and will miss him dearly."

Guardsmen Carl Marriner, 2 Platoon 60mm Mortarman, said:

"Sergeant Amer was an inspiration to all that knew him. He was a man who could see the best in everyone and would know how to get the best out of you.

"I will miss him as a friend and a leader. My thoughts go to all his family who, like us are devastated to have lost such an exceptional man. Everything we do will be for him as I know he is proud of us all."