3RD BATTALION THE RIFLES

Serjeant Steven Campbell was born in Durham on 9 May 1979. He joined the Army on 28 April 1998 at the age of eighteen, completing phase one training in December that year before joining Second Battalion the Light Infantry.

Serjeant Campbell completed the required courses to be promoted through the ranks to corporal before being posted as an instructor to the Army Foundation College in 2003. In 2005 he returned to the Battalion, now based in Edinburgh.

He passed the Platoon Serjeants Battle Course and was promoted to the rank of Serjeant in October 2006. He worked as a Platoon Serjeant in B Company 3 RIFLES after formation, before again being sent to instruct recruits at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick in 2008.

Serjeant Campbell returned to 3 RIFLES during the Battalion's current deployment to Sangin, in Helmand Province. He was originally sent to B Company to assist the Company Headquarters but on 10 March he was sent to A Company to take on the role of Platoon Serjeant.

He leaves behind his wife Lisa, son Brandon, and his parents.

His family have made the following statement:

"Serjeant Steven Campbell was born on 9 May 1979, he lived in Pelton, Chester le Street in Co Durham. He was a loving husband to Lisa and a loving father to Brandon, and he will be missed by all his family and friends."

"Serjeant Steve Campbell was one of the army's rarest treasures. So positive and energetic, it was truly an honour and a pleasure to know him and to have him with this Battle Group."

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer, 3 RIFLES Battle Group said:

"Serjeant Steve Campbell was one of the army's rarest treasures. So positive and energetic, it was truly an honour and a pleasure to know him and to have him with this Battle Group. He returned to the Battalion from Catterick just under two months ago, full of enthusiasm to get stuck in. Initially disappointed with a Headquarters post, he nonetheless happily put his shoulder to the wheel, immediately adding tremendous value.

"When the opportunity arose Serjeant Campbell jumped at the chance to get back out on the ground. A warrior to his core, he was delighted to return to real soldiering, relishing the opportunity to be in the thick of things alongside his fellow Riflemen. It was our good fortune to have such a man to bring his infectious enthusiasm and inspirational leadership to the younger

men of a hard-pressed Platoon on the frontline of this most tough fight.

"His boundless energy, positivity and vivacity reinvigorated his men and it is the cruellest of tragedies that he was taken in his prime. Such was his impact, though, that nothing will erase the indelible mark he had made there in just a few days.

"Serjeant Campbell epitomised selfless commitment and everything it means to be a Rifleman. Nothing was too much trouble for him; his needs always came last. He has been held in the highest regard, his memory remains a beacon of light as we continue building on the success to which he has contributed much. Fit, capable and versatile, he was a Commanding Officer's dream, guaranteed to complete any task in any sphere and to do it to the highest standard. He had such a promising future, it is impossible to quantify what this Regiment has lost. He will be sorely missed by us all.

"We take comfort from the fact that he died doing a job he loved, with people who cared deeply for him. He thought of nothing but the welfare of his men, the success of our mission and a better future for this troubled land. His loss is a devastating blow but we shall steel ourselves all the more, remaining true to his exemplary energy and determination. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to his wife and son, but also to his wider family, friends and loved ones."

Major James Richardson, Officer Commanding, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Serjeant 'Stevie' Campbell arrived with B Company straight from Catterick, where he had been a Platoon Serjeant. He took over as Company Intelligence Officer, a role that many thought he would not enjoy or be suited for. However, such was his professionalism and enthusiasm that within minutes of talking to him it was clear that he would put everything into it and he was just delighted to be involved in operations with B Company again.

"He was dedicated to the Army and he joked about the Army coming a close second to Newcastle United, with his family in third. When I asked about how his wife and son felt about this, he merely said, with his gap-toothed grin, that she knew what she was getting into. As I got to know how much he loved his family, it gave me some idea of what soldiering meant to him too.

"His enthusiasm was infectious and he brought a buzz to Company Headquarters, giving as good as he got in the daily 'O groups' and breathing new life into the Intelligence community at a critical point in the tour. You would never have known that he did not enjoy the role, such was the energy he put into it.

"Sorry as I was to see him go to A Company, he couldn't have been happier when the opportunity came to be a Platoon Serjeant again and it came as no surprise that he had an instant effect, bringing the same levels of enthusiasm and professionalism to that job. He was loving life with A Company, his catch phrase was often heard whenever someone bumped into him or heard about how he was doing.

"His death is a cruel blow. The Army has lost a very bright and capable SNCO. The Regiment

has lost someone who has influenced so positively, a whole generation of young Riflemen at Catterick. B Company has lost an old ally.

"Many of the Battalion will feel they have lost a friend because he was such an inclusive man. His new colleagues in A Company will be feeling his loss extremely keenly. But it is all as nothing compared with a wife and son who have lost the centre of their existence and who are foremost in our thoughts. It was a joy to have worked with him."

Major Tim Harris, Officer Commanding, A Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I regret not having had the pleasure of knowing Serjeant Campbell for long. He came to A Company at short notice to fill a gap, and he came with glowing recommendations. In the tragically short time he was with me, I could see that his reputation was entirely justified.

"I would be lying if I said that 2 Platoon have had an easy tour: he knew he was taking on a difficult and dangerous job, but he relished the challenge. He recognised that the job was vital to the continuing success we are enjoying in providing a secure environment in southern Sangin. I sat with him for an hour or so, trying to get the measure of the man – and it did not take long before I knew that he was precisely the right man for the task.

"He was up for it, brimming with confidence and positive energy, and determined to make a difference to his Platoon. He was such a positive man; I would imagine he was one of those blokes who never wasted a single day of his all too short life.

"I distinctly remember being impressed by his professionalism – although he had worked in another Company's area of operations, he was already familiar with my area and had read extensively into everything that had happened here. He did not do this because he knew he would be coming to me, but because he was dedicated and had a voracious appetite for operations.

"I gave him a couple of days to settle in before I visited his Patrol Base, and when I did I realised just how fortunate I had been to have a man like him on my team. He had already made such an impact that I doubt any of the men of 2 Platoon will ever forget him.

"He encouraged them to be better, and he filled them with courage, and in the evenings he filled them with good food. He made them feel ten feet tall – all within days of his arrival. Most of all, he possessed an infectious smile that lifted us all, no matter what the situation. He was a proud family man, and I remember him speaking with pride of the love he had for his wife Lisa, and son Brandon. My thoughts and prayers are with them at this terribly difficult time.

"His loss is felt widely – he was one of those characters who just seem to make the Battalion a happy and productive place to be. He leaves friends in all of the companies, who will miss him dearly. Serjeant Campbell was proof that good people do not need a long time to leave a lasting impression on others. A born leader, we will follow in his footsteps and finish the race that is set before us."

Captain Alex Kealy, 3 RIFLES said:

"I have had the privilege of knowing Serjeant Campbell for my whole Army career. Fresh out of Sandhurst, I did not quite know what to make of the grinning, gap-toothed Geordie standing in front of me – the Section Commander who everyone simply referred to as "Stevie".

"He was already something of a legend in the Company, respected and admired by the Riflemen and chain of command alike for his professionalism, energy, love of his job and his men, and perpetual good mood. I thought he must be either the product of a scientific experiment to lock the entire energy of the Sun into a human body and watch it try to get out, or simply high on life.

"One could not help being dragged along in this torrent of positivity, uplifted by his mere presence. We got on particularly well as the youngest guys in the company with prematurely receding hairlines, much to the amusement of the Riflemen who would "twin" us at every opportunity.

"With promotion and time came wisdom, but no drop in pace. As a Platoon Serjeant Stevie was everything and more that any Platoon Commander could ask for: professional, diligent, utterly motivated and dynamic.

"A more honest and loyal man you will never meet. His lads meant everything to him – there is nothing he wouldn't do for the men under his care, including gripping them when he needed to. He would back his Platoon Commander to the hilt - even if he made a bad decision - and would follow the Platoon through hell and back, but given half a chance he would lead them from the front all the way. Above all, he was always happy, always smiling, positive to the end, and made soldiering fun for everyone around him.

"Like most keen soldiers, he was a keen football supporter. He was constantly updating me on how Newcastle were getting on in the league, which had recently started to dent his relentless good mood, while dishing out as many jobs as he could to all the Sunderland supporters in the Platoon. Done with humour and good nature, this typified his bond with his men.

"The more I got to know Stevie, the greater my respect for the man grew. He balanced his military career with spending as much time as possible with his beloved wife and son in Newcastle.

"The biggest smile I ever saw on his already permanently grinning boyish face was while his son Brandon, aged five with cam cream smeared all over him, fired a GPMG balanced on the back of Stevie's fellow Platoon Serjeant at a demonstration day. The same passion and dedication which he showed at work was a fraction of that which he felt for his family.

"If I could sum him up I would describe him as the family Labrador. He was full of boundless energy and fun, mischievous if he could get away with it, totally honest, adored being around those close to him, utterly loyal and truly a man's best friend.

"I will treasure many memories of this great man, as will all who knew him. His cruel loss is huge for his Company, our Battlegroup and The RIFLES. But our loss is nothing compared to that of his family, his wife Lisa, and son Brandon. My thoughts and prayers are with them at this most difficult of times."

Captain Chris Dadd, Operations Officer, 3 RIFLES said:

"When looking for a word to describe Serjeant Stevie Campbell many came to mind – brave, genuine, determined and inspiring but I think indomitable describes him best.

"I first met Serjeant Campbell when he returned from a posting training recruits in AFC Harrogate, he was full of life and his eagerness to pass on his knowledge was only surpassed by his desire to learn and be better at his job, his genuine nature ensured that he was well liked and respected by all who met him.

"His enthusiasm was a theme that ran through his career, as a Platoon Serjeant in Iraq his dedication to both his men and the mission was unrivalled, so obviously revelling in the challenges laid before him. He returned to 3 RIFLES having completed a posting as a Platoon Serjeant training Infantry recruits at ITC Catterick where he had once again imparted his knowledge and enthusiasm for soldiering to another grateful generation of Riflemen.

"Upon his arrival he initially worked with B Company HQ in FOB JACKSON, Sangin. It was a pleasure to see that he had not lost any of his enthusiasm which had motivated so many in the past. Whilst on a Company operation in the complex green zone north of Sangin he immediately threw himself into the thick of the action with his usual dynamism.

"I saw him the day he was leaving to take up another challenge as a Platoon Serjeant with A Company in the southern Green Zone, supporting the security of the locals to the south west of Sangin. He was undaunted by the challenge he faced; in reality, quite the opposite, as he spoke about how he relished the opportunity. Unsurprisingly upon his arrival his contagious enthusiasm and commitment raised the spirits of the whole patrol base, his commitment to doing things right and doing them well will be his legacy.

"We are poorer for the loss of a great friend and Rifleman but our loss is nothing compared to that of his family. Serjeant Campbell was a truly dedicated family man and all of our thoughts are with his wife Lisa and his son Brandon of whom he would speak so often."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Paul Kelly, Company Serjeant Major, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I've have known Serjeant "Stevie" Campbell since he joined the Battalion. His standards and professionalism were unquestionable. He was enthusiastic, diligent and also ways looked to improve and develop in any way he could.

"With his military prowess, infectious personality and his great sense of humour, Stevie was bound for the very top without doubt; he excelled on every course that he did and wasn't shy in telling people, such was his confidence. He was a fierce 'Toon' fan and even defended their

horrible away shirt they wore this season.

"A very proud and loving husband and father, we talked sometimes about family life and how lucky we both were to have such supportive families. Stevie was definitely 'chosen to be swift and bold' and the void that he has left will never be filled.

"This is a very dark day for us all, but it won't compare to the pain his family will be feeling at this crushing time. I hope they can take a little solace in the knowledge that he died doing what he loved and what he did best. Our thoughts are with his family now. Rest in peace mate. "SWIFT AND BOLD""

Colour Serjeant Gavin Paton, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I have had the pleasure of serving with Steve for the last 10 years. My fondest memories of which were as Platoon Serjeants together in B Company, 2LI. Steve was a great leader, had a fantastic way with military banter and broke the mould with everything that a Rifleman should be. But more importantly, Steve was a loyal friend, a loving husband and a caring father.

"When I returned to Brize Norton from R and R, feeling sorry for myself, I was checking my bags in, when I heard this infectious Geordie tone. "Alreet Pyat" was the way that he had always greeted me.

"It was a total surprise to look up and see Steve there with his big grin and even bigger gap where he was clearly missing a tooth. It was our first meeting in over two years. We sat together on the plane on the way back to Afghanistan and he was telling tales of his Platoons at ITC, family, and plans to get a new dog. However, he made the most of how excited he was to be getting back with the Battalion on Operations.

"Initially crushed with the Intelligence job he was given within the Company, Steve took to it like a dog with a burst ball and injected life and substance. He did a cracking job and I am sure that the Company and the Battle Group had certainly benefited from his dedication, professionalism and ability to give as good as he got when it came to banter.

"Then the news came he was to go to Patrol Base ALMAS as the Platoon Serjeant, he was like a kid at Christmas, bouncing off of all the walls. "'It is what I came here to do' was the common phrase. He was euphoric.

"His leaving the Company for PB Almas had left a big hole. It just wasn't the same, but we knew he would be back, to see him in Edinburgh and to have a beer and chew the fat.

"The news this morning has been devastating for us all, on so many levels. My thoughts have to go to his wife and son of whom he always spoke so fondly. I hope that they can take some comfort in knowing that Steve was an outstanding soldier and died doing what he was the very best at, being a Rifleman. Steve, life has dealt you a cruel card, but you will never be forgotten mate."

Serjeant Rob Williams, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"It has been a pleasure working alongside such a distinguished member of 3 Rifles. Serjeant "Stevie" Campbell was a mate, a colleague and above all a true professional in all he did. Since joining the Battalion he quickly made a lot of friends through his humour and the way he conducted himself.

"I met up with Stevie again in Brize Norton having not seen him for two years. He was typically enthusiastic about coming to Afghanistan. We also spoke about our beloved club Newcastle FC, which we were planning to go and watch together on leaving Afghanistan. My condolences go out to his wife and son and all the members of his family. We will all remember him. "