

Two weeks ago today the news of Jim's heroic and tragic departure was announced. Within two days the nation had heard of Captain Jim Philippson - the brave and devoted soldier, brother, son and friend.

I had the privilege of knowing James since childhood and over the years we developed a strong and lasting friendship, sharing many experiences together: holidays in Devon camping, surfing in Cornwall and Wales, sharing victories and defeats on the rugby field and talking about the complexities of life and last but not least: having some of the best times of our lives socialising across the country, surrounded by the friends he held so close to his heart.

A story that we all feel encapsulates James is as beautiful in its simplicity as it is perfect in example:

Last summer James and I spent a week together surfing in South Wales. One morning we decided to go for a run. We'd been running for a few miles when we reached a steep hill. Jim ran to the top and called down at me from above "Come on Bill, up you come!" So I ran up the hill to meet him. We both sat looking at the waves breaking below, the wind blowing around us. After a short break Jim jogged down to start the hill climb all over again. As I sat there watching him an elderly couple stopped beside me. They smiled, looked up at Jim and said, "Is he in the Army?" and I said, "Yes, he's a Commando!"

What I will remember particularly are phrases that I have heard again and again since Jim's departure: How proud this person was of him and how privileged he or she felt to have known him, feelings I share.

But of course if you are looking for something a bit more exciting there's always the time that James went off into the Canadian wilderness on his own and after 3 days made friends with a Vietnam veteran and spent the night having a drink with him and putting the world to rights under the stars - what an adventure, what an individual.

Jim showed wise self-restraint in speech and behaviour wherever he was, a circumspect man free from ostentation or pretension. An extremely modest person, but utterly engaging.

I will miss his infectious banter and spontaneity, as will all his friends.

In an email sent to Martha, Jim's girlfriend, can be seen Jim's vision and motto, in his own words:

Your life's motto or how you should live: "Live life it's not a rehearsal"
What do you truly believe in: "Always go for what you feel and you'll have no regrets".

Jim, in your 29 years you have inspired more people that you will ever know and we are all here to learn from your example. Sleep well friend, look over us.