

James Philipppson joined the Army in January 2001 and, after his course at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, was commissioned into the Royal Regiment of Artillery later that year. From the outset his sharp intellect, determination, positive attitude and infectious enthusiasm stood out and during his Young Officer training at the Artillery Centre he was selected for a posting to 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery.

He relished the challenges of demanding commando selection and it was quickly apparent that his physical stamina was more than matched by his mental robustness. Not only was he successful but he led the way. Having settled into the Regiment his confident, yet self-effacing, approach had a real impact. His combination of fierce professionalism, a relaxed style of command and sense of fun won him the respect and loyalty of his soldiers and peers. He displayed all of these qualities in the high-pressure operational environment of Iraq but also on exercises in Norway, USA and Cyprus. Moreover, he was always looking to get involved; throwing himself wholeheartedly into his sport and social life with the same passion as his work.

On conclusion of his tour with 29 Commando Regiment, he was keen to undertake the challenge of service with 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery so he volunteered for a six month deployment to the Falkland Islands in order to guarantee the posting.

James Philipppson, or Jim as we all knew him, joined my Regiment in February this year, as we made final preparations to deploy to Afghanistan. One of the tasks we are responsible for is the training and mentoring of a brigade of the new Afghan National Army and it was as a mentor to the personnel officer in the brigade headquarters that I assigned him.

I have to say that Jim was not happy with his Commanding Officer's decision since he had rather hoped to be out on the ground mentoring one of the Afghan infantry company commanders. However, true to character, he put his personal preferences to one side and launched himself into his role with infectious enthusiasm, quickly mastering his brief and putting in place a coherent personnel and pay structure that is a model of clarity.

It isn't very often that a Commanding Officer gets to know his captains as well as I got to know Jim. The realities of operations have meant that we have lived and worked together in very close proximity for the past 3 months, indeed all of the officers occupy a single barrack block room where, as you can imagine, the niceties of privacy and rank are non-existent.

In the work place, or relaxing in his downtime, Jim was never happier than debating a point or detailing an inconsistency. Sharp of mind and quick-witted he was a worthy conversational adversary who kept us all on our toes, whether we liked it or not! Only recently he told me that he was re-reading the Bible in order to argue from a position of knowledge and I know that he had also ordered a translation of the Holy Koran in order to allow him to understand something of the context of the situation in which we all found ourselves in Afghanistan. I suppose what I am saying is that he was a thinking soldier who was unafraid to challenge and probe, fine attributes befitting an officer in a modern army.

As a seasoned traveller he relished the customs and traditions of the many far flung countries that he visited and perhaps it is fitting that he went to Afghanistan to assist directly the international efforts to restore that beautiful country to some form of normality. That he laid down in life in this cause should serve as a tragic but timely

reminder that in the service of our nation there are those of us who must place ourselves in harms way in order to allow others to enjoy the freedoms that so many citizens take for granted.

Jim was the epitome of the just soldier, he believed absolutely in what he was doing and he was adamant that in our own small way we were very much a force for good. When I spoke to him the evening before he was killed he literally begged me to allow him to remain in the forward area for a few more days, in order to participate in the sharp end of operations.

I regret that Jim will not be here to regale us with his Biblical and Koranic anecdotes and that he won't be on hand with his ready and caustic wit and that wonderful sneer that he used to great effect, but I was privileged to have known him and as a Regimental Family we are devastated to have lost a trusted son.