

A fitting tribute to a fallen comrade

By Chris Saunderson

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BROTHERS in arms, they stood silently, alone with their thoughts in tribute to one of their own.

It had been five years since they lost a friend, colleague and respected platoon leader.

Corporal Michael Pike, from Huntly, was killed during a firefight with insurgents in Afghanistan in June 2011.

Five of his colleagues made an emotional journey to his home town last Friday to remember him and pay their own poignant tribute at the town's war memorial.

Lance corporal Mark Carter, from Portlethen, organised the gathering and laid a wreath on behalf of colleagues. The five stood in silent tribute for a few minutes as the rain battered down.

He said: "I was 18 when I did my first tour with him. He was kind of a big brother to me. If I did something stupid he would give me a slap and if I did something good he would say 'well done'.

"I have always done my own thing on the anniversary of his death, as have others, and this is the first time we have all come together."

Five travelled to Huntly - Lce Cpl Carter, Cpl Steven Teale (Inverness), Cpl Ross Smith (Edinburgh), Cpl Peter Stewart (Aberdeen) and Captain Robert Grant (London) - however up to 30 serving and former members of the battalion met up 24 hours later in Edinburgh for another chance to pay their respects.

Cpl Smith added: "He was a good bloke and a good soldier. He was all about the boys. If his guys were happy, that made him happy. He was a good commander and leader.

"He would always make the best of a bad situation. If morale was low he would do something to make it a happy place." All

but one of the five have now left the Army but the comradeship never leaves them. Cpl Carter, who now works for a training company in Aberdeen, added: "There is always tradition and the soldier in us. He was one of our own. We will always remember him and every Highlander who has died."

Cpl Pike (26), a father of two, died after an attack on his patrol in the Lashkar Gah District of Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan.

At the time, colleagues from the 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said his quick reactions as he returned fire saved other lives.

Cpl Pike was second in command of 2 platoon, A Company, based at Check Point Pegasus, and was on his second tour of Afghanistan. After his death, a platoon statement said: "He passed away doing the job he loved but he didn't go down without putting up a fight."

And lieutenant Robert Grant, 2 Platoon commander, A Company, one of those who travelled to Huntly, also said at the time: "The loss of corporal Pike, one of the funniest, most life-affirming and professionally diligent men I have ever had the privilege to meet, strikes deep in to the heart and soul of all those who knew him.

"An exceptional soldier and inspirational leader, corporal Pike will be forever missed."

His wife Ida, and children, Joshua and Evelyn, live in Germany. Cpl Pike's mother and sister live in Okehampton in the south west of England.

Cpl Pike was a former pupil of The Gordon Schools in Huntly which has a permanent memorial to him. His name is also on the nearby war memorial.

His five colleagues were given hospitality and a warm welcome at the Royal Oak pub in Huntly where they raised a glass in his memory.



Cpl Ross Smith, Cpl Peter Stewart, Cpl Stevie Teale, Captain Robert Grant and L Cpl Mark Carter remember Cpl Michael Pike (left) who was killed in action five years ago.

Picture: Lyn MacDonald. Image No. 033991

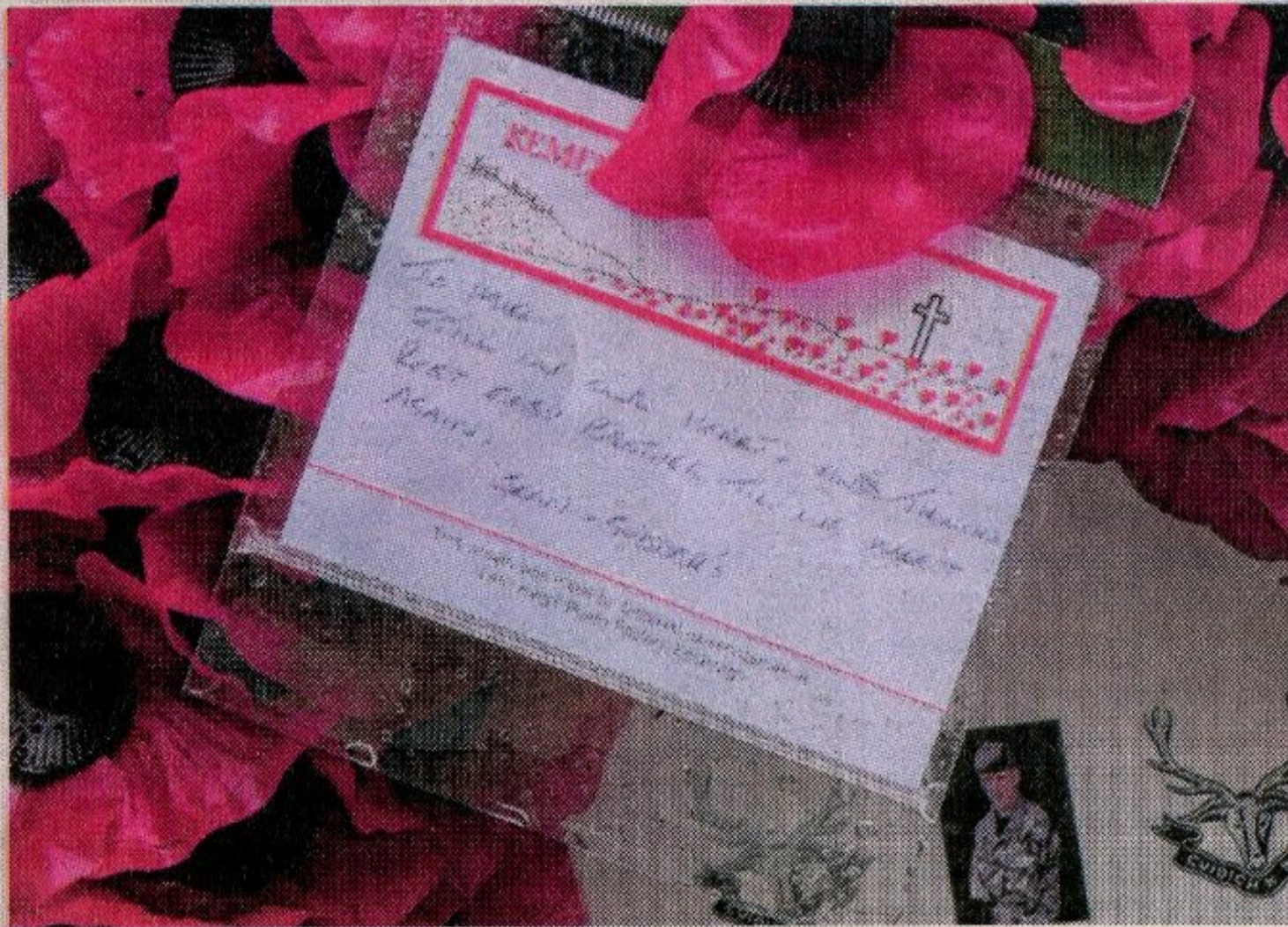
■ Another picture from the poignant fifth anniversary wreath laying tribute to Corporal Michael Pike appears on page 2.

Brave corporal remembered



In a fitting tribute to Corporal Michael Pike, on the fifth anniversary of his death, friends made the journey to Huntly to lay a wreath at the war memorial which bears the name of the young soldier who died in action in Afghanistan. Mark Carter lays the wreath for his friend and fellow soldier watched by other members of the group.

Picture of the week



In a poignant ceremony last Friday, colleagues of Corporal Michael Pike gathered at Huntly's war memorial to mark the fifth anniversary of the young soldier's death while on patrol in Afghanistan. Proud of the young man's bravery as he returned fire to save the lives of others, Huntly added his name to the war memorial where tributes, including the one featured above, were laid in pouring rain.

Picture: Lyn MacDonald. Image No. 033991