



Hullavington Based Soldier Died in Fire at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan

Military firefighters were unable to save two sleeping soldiers whose tent at Camp Bastion had been engulfed by flames, an inquest into their deaths heard today.

The bodies of Privates Dean Hutchinson, 23, who was based in Hullavington, and Rob Wood, 28, were recovered from the remains of the fire-ravaged tent.

They were killed when intense flames swept through a logistical centre at the Helmand province HQ in the early hours of February 14, 2011.

Privates Wood and Hutchinson, who served with The Royal Logistic Corps, were sleeping in the tented Transport Troop office so they could respond more quickly when vital supplies arrived at Camp Bastion.

Eyewitnesses have described smelling smoke coming from the area housing a 32-inch flat screen TV, boiler and fridge and seeing flames coming from cabling leading to the air conditioning unit.

The inquest in Salisbury, which is due to last until next week, heard evidence from one firefighter who was on duty that night.

Michael Coulson, who has since left the Royal Air Force, said his team arrived at the scene five minutes after receiving the emergency call.

"We were told the location and that there was a tent fire. I believe that's all the information we had at the time," he told the hearing.

"In my notes I recorded arriving in five minutes and it certainly was not longer."

"We couldn't go particularly fast because all the roads are heavily potholed. There are drainage ditches either side of the road, so there is no room for error. We made as best haste as we could."

"As we approached we could see a lot of smoke from the road, so we knew it was not a small fire."

"Initially when arriving the entire area was ablaze and after we extinguished the fire there was very little left of the tent."

"I remember there being some tent poles."

Mr. Coulson, a former corporal, said the fire was put out within three minutes."

"It was very quick to extinguish the fire," he said.

"I remember being told that a fire had started by big sparks. I proceeded to ask if there was anything in the tents or containers nearby that would cause problems as I knew it was a logistical area."

"After the fire was extinguished we were told there were two individuals missing."

"We tackled the fire very quickly, whether there was people reported or not."

Mr. Coulson said that the bodies of Privates Wood and Hutchinson were located towards the centre of the 18ft by 24ft canvas tent.

The inquest has previously heard there were delays in alerting the fire brigade because soldiers at the scene did not know the emergency 222 number and struggled to find it.

Private. Wood, known as "Woody", had become a father to a boy, Noah, shortly before he died. He was a driver port operator, posted to 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, and lived in Marchwood, Hampshire.

Private. Hutchinson, from Spennymoor, County Durham, was a driver and had seven years' service with the Army.

The inquest continues.

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