IN MEMORY OF

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Emma, from Nottingham, lost her brother, Private James Prosser, a warrior infantry vehicle driver serving in 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, when he was killed as a result of an explosion in Helmand, Afghanistan on September 27th 2009. He was 21.
Growing up, James and I had the typical brother/sister relationship. We fought, but we also played together; in particular, Barbies, which we are doing in this picture (although James would deny it!) We had a happy childhood in Caerphilly, Wales, but our parents separated and when I was fourteen, I went to live in Nottingham with my dad whilst James stayed in Wales with mum. Visiting at weekends, we grew much closer. I’d go back to Wales and go out with James and his mates – I got to see the true James, then: the joker, the life and soul of the party.

James joined the army – the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh – in February 2009. I knew it was inevitable he’d go to Afghanistan and on July 27th 2009, the inevitable happened. I think it was only then that the risks really hit home. I went with Mum and Dad to drop him off at Tidworth: On the way down in the car, we laughed and joked – you don’t want to think about what might happen. But when I hugged him goodbye, it was heart-wrenching, not knowing if I’d see him again and I had to hide the fact I was crying all the way back, because I didn’t want to upset Mum. James called Mum twice whilst he was out there, but he only had certain minutes he was able to use the phone so he didn’t call me directly. But then, on September 25th 2009, he did call. I’d been ill, and he was calling to see how I was, but I was asleep, with my phone on silent and only woke up at the end of the message he was leaving. It just said, “Hi. Hope you’re feeling better. I’ll see you soon.” I am so gutted I missed that call.

Two days later, on September 27th 2009, I’d just got up, when my husband Tom came downstairs, and told me that my brother had been killed in Afghanistan. I slid down the wall, I couldn’t breathe. I didn’t want to believe it, but then, why would he tell me something so horrific if it wasn’t true? I went straight to Wales to be with Mum (it turned out she already knew but couldn’t bear to tell me herself.) On the way, his death was reported on the radio news, on Sara Cox’s show. I couldn’t believe they were talking about my family.

I just wanted James’ body back. I felt because the rest of his comrades were still fighting, that he was out there on his own, and it took ten days for him to be flown home. Loads of his friends were at
his repatriation at RAF Lynham. It was comforting to know how many people loved him but horrendous to see that coffin come off the plane. One of the things I struggled with was, is if he’s gone, where is he? But there was a bright star shining in Lynham, which even his mates commented on, on Facebook. I like to think that was him.

I’m so proud of James and yet angry too. I’m angry at the army, angry at the politicians for sending them there, and angry at myself for not answering that call, but then if I had, I wouldn’t have the message to listen to now, even though it’s painful to.

I got married in 2011 and purposefully chose to do it in the church where James is laid to rest. I took him a buttonhole, because our brothers were ushers and I knew he’d have loved to be. There are so many things he’ll never do, like meet his nephews, my sons Riley and Oliver. He’d have been a lovely uncle.

I miss my little brother: I just miss him being around. It was strange going back to that house in Caerphilly for the photo, because I hadn’t been in fifteen years and everything felt smaller somehow and on the wall behind us are the two, white football posts that were painted on, and that we used to play against when we were little. It made me nostalgic for that time, when life was simple and we’d play Barbies – James with his action man we used as Ken. I think as I get older, I get sadder, I get angrier. I miss him more. But you have to feel like something good is coming of all this, which is why I am focusing on The Soldiers’ Charity which helps Soldiers’ Families, whether their relatives die or come back injured. In 2010 lots of us ran the Cardiff half-marathon to fundraise for the charity and in 2013, myself and my friend Tora ran the London Marathon. It makes me feel better to do something in his memory. I feel as we were getting older, James and I were getting closer, and he was taken, just at the point it was getting good.

To make a donation please go to www.soldierscharity.org
ABOVE
*Before:* “Brotherly and sisterly fun playing Barbies”

RIGHT
*After:* Same location, 07/04/2013.
Before They Were Fallen deals with remembrance. Louis Quail and Katy Regan use the power of photography and testimony together, to link memory, the passing of time and loss to create a body of work which pays tribute to all those British soldiers who gave their lives in the Afghanistan conflict.
BEFORE THEY WERE FALLEN

LOUIS QUAIL

WORDS BY KATY REGAN