



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 2 - September 2017

Signals Association 1st Luncheon

The Signals Association celebrates

Signaller of Note

A tribute to Col HILL 'Bert' Howes

Jimmy - the unsung hero

Jimmy receives praise from an unlikely source



Editor's Sitrep

It is with pride that we bring you this 2nd Edition of 'Jimmy's Own'.

In our first issue in May this year we explained "From where the name 'Jimmy's Own' and "From where the name Jimmy" having become attached to the figure of Mercury as the symbol of Signallers in many parts of the world.

In this issue we introduce a 'Signaller of Note', namely Col Bert Howes, and we hope to introduce more prominent Signallers in the issues to come. If anyone knows of a Signaller who has rendered exceptional service to the Corps of Signals and whom will be worthy of being honoured, please e-mail details to chairman@signal-sassociation.org.za

EXECUTIVE 2017



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'Flame of the Signaller' symbol of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION as introduced for the first time at the occasion of the Handing over of Tradition ceremony on 1st May 2016. See article on our 1st Annual Luncheon held on 7 May 2017".



Signals Association 1st Annual Luncheon

The SIGNALS ASSOCIATION hosted its 1ST Annual Luncheon at the Parow Golf Club on Sunday, 7 May 2017.

This follows the 70 year old tradition set by the members of the 3rd Brigade Signals Company reunion Association, which met for the very last time at a glittering occasion hosted by the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION at the Italian Club in Milnerton on Sunday, 1 May 2016 when almost 500 military veterans and friends were present to witness that historic, yet sad, occasion.

75 years ago, on 27 May 1940, some 287 Other Ranks and 7 Officers marched from the Castle past the City Hall and down Adderley Street in Cape Town en route to the station from where they travelled to Potchefstroom, then to Durban, from there they sailed to Mombasa. From there they travelled to Kenya, Abyssinia, Berbera, Egypt, El Alamein just to mention a few, all in support of the 2nd World War. These were all members of the Cape Town based 3 Brigade Signal Company, South African Corps of Signals.

Amongst those members who returned, one by name of Charles Holloway decided to start a Reunion of members to reminisce about their WAR days and to, hopefully, get to-

gether on an annual basis. Quite often, an idea like this is not everlasting and fades away but, thank goodness, not these guys. With their perseverance, they managed to keep the “flame” burning for a round 70 years.

These gentlemen contemplated for some time to end their almost ‘life-long’ tradition, but with the encouragement of 71 Signal Unit, originally 3 Brigade Signal Squadron, established on 1 May 1946, and the Signals’ Association which was established on 2 December 2000 as an initiative by Lieutenant Colonel Robbie Roberts, then officer commanding of 71 Signal Unit, the 3 Brigade Signal Company guys have faithfully continued the tradition established by them in 1946, the only signal unit from amongst 35 signal units serving in the Second World War.

As they are down to only 3 members, they decided to call it a day and, consequently, the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION Management Committee took the decision to say farewell to the last remaining WWII signaller veterans in order to pay proper and justifiable tribute to these fine and brave gentlemen who had so gallantly fought for their



PASSING ON THE FLAME: Charles Holloway passes on the lit Flame of the Signaller to Howard Shagom for onward passing to Robbie Roberts.

country and others. That occasion was on Sunday, 1 May 2016, when they hosted their 70th and last Annual Reunion AGM / Luncheon and when that same person who started the tradition, Major Charles Holloway (now aged 99), Sergeant Syd Ireland (age 97) and Signaller Eddie Mills (Aged 97) were present as last Chairman, Secretary and member, respectively.

As part of that event, the 70 year old tradition was also ‘transferred’ from the 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association to the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION as the next generation of Signallers, by lowering the Flag of 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association for the last time and by hoisting the brand new Flag of

the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION for the very first time.

An important new tradition was the establishment of a ‘Flame of the Signaller / Vlam van die Seiner’ as a tradition of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION.

As part of the ceremonial ‘hand over’ of tradition which took place on 1 May 2016, the Chairman of 3 Brigade Signals Company Reunion Association, delivered the following message to the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION:

“For seventy years we have maintained the comradeship built up during the war, by meeting regularly, sometimes more than once a year. To quote Mr Churchill, ‘The Battle of Alamein

was the beginning of the end of the German army in North Africa.' I now hope that the Signals' Association in Cape Town will be the beginning, as an example, and not the end of their effort, for the rest of the Signals in the Republic of South Africa to follow. Let them help to keep the 'flame' burning."

During the solemn ceremonial occasion, a torch was lit by 3 Brigade Signal Company Secretary, Mr Syd Ireland, and handed to the Chairman of 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association, Mr Charles Holloway, for handing over to the Chairman of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION, Robbie Roberts, for placing into the outstretched hand of "MERCURIUS", the symbol of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION, as an indication of the enthusiasm with which the members of the latter Association will endeavour to keep that Flame burning for as long as possible, so as never to forget the sacrifices paid by and the tradition set by the members of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company.

The ceremonial Handing Over commenced with the following statement:

"Whereas I, Charles Daniel Holloway, Chairman and Honorary Life President of 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association, on behalf of the said association, hereby declare that the last three remaining members of our Association (being myself, Syd Ireland and Eddie Mills) have unanimously decided to terminate the an-

nual reunion luncheon as of today, Sunday, 1 May 2016, thereby ending the tradition which the association members have kept alive for the past 70 years from 1946 to 2016.

And, whereas the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION has promised to continue the established tradition by hosting further annual reunion luncheons on the first Sunday of May each year, commencing from 2017 it, therefore, gives me much pleasure, first of all, to thank the Signals Association members for their willingness and eagerness to continue the tradition which we, from 3 Brigade Signal Company, have cherished for so long. Secondly, to wish the Chairman, Robbie Roberts, his Management Committee and the members of the Signals Association, both present and future, the strength, encouragement and good health to continue the tradition, hopefully, for at least the next 70 years.

As a symbolic token of this handing over of our tradition, I hand this burning torch to the Secretary of the Signals Association who will shortly pass it to the Chairman of the Signals Association."

The Flag of 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association was then lowered during the sounding of the Last Post, after which the Flag was folded by Brig Gen Denis Jelliman and Lt Col Robbie Roberts and handed to Charles Holloway for preservation, together with 3 Bde Sig Coy Reunion Association Roll of Honour and

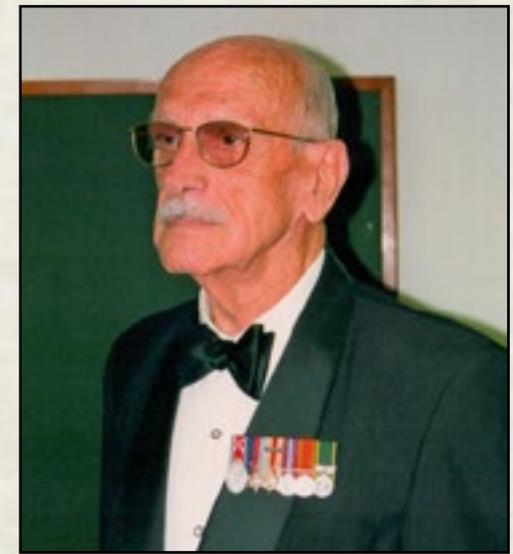
Minute Book.

The ceremonial Taking Over then followed with the following statement:

"Whereas, I, William Alexander (Robbie) Roberts, Chairman of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION, on behalf of the said association, hereby acknowledge that we, as an Association, have undertaken to continue the example set by 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association members by hosting annual luncheons each May for a praiseworthy 70 years from 1946 to 2016 and in so doing, paying tribute to those soldiers of the 3rd Bde Signal Company who so gallantly fought during WWII and them managing to keep the Flame burning between their members throughout all those years.

It will take a lot of courage, endurance and hard work to beat that record and, unlike the tradition of 3 Brigade Signal Company Reunion Association members, the Signals Association will not be hosting an Annual General Meeting together with its luncheons during the month of May, but we stand committed to keeping that Flame, which Charles Holloway had now handed over to us, burning for as long as we possibly can.

I, Robbie Roberts, am honoured to, on behalf of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION; receive the lit Flame from Mr Charles Holloway, which I will now place in the stretched hand of "Mercurius", being the adopted Symbol of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION from this



Charles Holloway

day, Sunday, 1st of May 2016, going forward.

It is the intention to light the Flame in the hand of "Mercurius" at all our Annual General Meetings, Annual Reunion Luncheons and other formal association functions, so that the burning flame can remind us of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company members and their traditions. Also, to serve as encouragement for us to enhance the Esprit de Corps within the South African Army Signals Formation and other Signallers/Communicators within the SANDF; either on our own, or, in collaboration or support of any other association with similar objectives. Furthermore, to remind us of our undertaking to keep the Signals Flame burning for all Signallers wherever they may be or originate from."

The Torch was then placed by Robbie into the outstretched hand of Mer-

curius, whilst the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION Flag was hoisted for the very first time during the sounding of Riveille.

Robbie says:

In order to remind us of the sacrifices of the Members of the 3rd Bde Signal Company and its Reunion Association, I think it now appropriate for us all to recite aloud together the well-known part of the MOTH's Prayer. Lets all be upstanding please!!

Robbie says:

The immortal words of the Prayer which was borrowed from Verse 4 of Lawrence Binyon's book "For the Fallen", which was and is repeated at most MOTH ceremonies are: (Lets all say together):

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them.

This historic event consisted of a four course meal and entertainment by Alvon Collison and his two fellow singers. The vent was also attended by 31 members from Rosedale, the retirement home of the SA Legion. The guest speakers at the event were Ms Anroux Marais, Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport in the Western Cape government, Alderman Ian Neilson, Deputy Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town and Maj Gen (Ret'd) Johan Dippenaar, Chairman of the CMVO, who

flew down especially for the occasion. Regrettably the Acting DG of the DMV (Dr Galube at the time) and the President of SANMVA, Mr Thembile Maginxa could not make it despite having indicated their willingness to attend. Very pleasing was the presence of invited representatives from the Transkei and Ciskei Mil Veteran Associations, whilst 15 members of the Cape Corps Mil Veteran Association failed to turn up despite having accepted their invitation. The majority of other military veteran organisations ensured representatives from their organisations attended this important occasion in the history of military veterans in South Africa.

Following that event and in keeping to its promise made at that occasion, the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION presented their 1st Annual Luncheon at the Parow Golf Club on Sunday, 7 May 2017 when the Flame of the Signaller was once again lit, only one of the three WWII Signaller veterans was present, namely Mr Syd Ireland. The other two 3rd Brigade Signal Company veterans were incapacitated and could unfortunately not attend. 98 invited guest attended the luncheon which included member Brig Gen (Ret'd) Denis Jelliman and Lt Col Diederik Kruger who both travelled from Pretoria and Durban, respectively, for the occasion. Gen Jelliman was declared an Honorary member and was presented with his special 'Honorary' lapel badge at the event by the Chairman and Secretary General of the Association. He also

acted as Guest Speaker. Eleven Associate Members were also presented with their special "Friend of the Association" lapel badges at this event. They are:

Bekker, Fanie / Bethke, Rev Tony / Davies, Del / Fourie, Charl / Fourie, Ramona / McCarthy, Roger / Morom, Trunel / Schmidt, Lee-Ann/ Shagom, Amanda / Tennyson, Matt / Webb, Phyllis.

After the 'Flame of the Signaller' was extinguished in the hand of Mercury, Dr Elina Tagar, delivered a special poem titled "Wait for Me", written by a Russian Soldier Konstantin Simonov, in July 1941 and translated into English by Alexander Piltecin from Vancouver in June 2011. Dr Tagar is involved with Russian military veterans, with special emphasis of those who fought during the Angolan WAR. The Poem, titled "Wait for Me" is copied below so as to share with other veterans:

"Wait for my, and I'll be back. Should you wait me strong.

Wait for me when sky is black And the Sun has gone.

Wait for me when it is cold, And when it is hot.

Wait for me when others don't, 'Cause they just forgot.

Wait in case you don't receive Letters from the front

Wait and I will outlive, If you really want.

Wait for me and I'll be back Don't you talk to those



Syd Ireland

Gluing me a dead men tag. That's a wrong suppose.

Let my mother, son believe That I am the past,

Let my friends forget and give Funeral repast.

They will drink a glass of wine For the peace of soul...

You just wait and don't make a time, Do not raise a bowl.

Wait for me, and I'll be back, Disregard the fate,

In the morning with my bag, Should you only wait.

They will hardly understand, How I could survive.

Waiting me from foreign land, You have saved my life.

Let them say that it's too late What your feeling tells?

I'll be back, because you wait Like nobody else."

Thus ended this historic occasion in the history of Signals in South Africa.

A Tribute to Col H L L 'Bert' Howes SACS

By Brian Austin

Colonel Bert Howes was born in Cape Town on 17th October 1915. At the age of 16 he joined the 'Dukes' (the Duke of Edinburgh's Own), a voluntary rifle corps and one of South Africa's oldest military units. Though a top-class shot with the .303 and an accomplished Vickers machine gunner it was his skill with Morse code and his ability to make wireless work that brought him to the attention of 'Signals' and a transfer to the South African Corps of Signals (SACS) soon followed.

Bert Howes first came to the attention of the upper echelons of wireless affairs in South Africa in 1936 when he operated aeronautical mobile (illegally) from the cockpit of a Puss Moth biplane. The occasion was the South African Grand Prix, always held in Cape Town in those days, and by taking himself and his homemade 50 MHz transmitter and receiver aloft – and thereby being able to communicate easily with two of amateur friends at the extreme ends of the circuit, ZS1AL, as he was then, solved a pressing communications problem for the event's organisers.

The pilot of the aeroplane, Maj. C W Meredith, happened to be the Chief of Staff of Cape Command who subsequently became an Air Vice-Marshal in Rhodesia and he was most im-



Colonel Bert Howes

pressed by Bert's feat.

No doubt his very favourable report on what he'd witnessed, and the interest it aroused at headquarters of the South African Air Force (SAAF) which had no air-to-ground communications at that time, helped to mollify the PMG who was about to throw the book at Howes for operating 'beyond the terms of his licence'!

In 1938 Bert Howes was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in 3 Bde Sigs Coy having recently attended a course at the Military College in Pretoria where he encountered the newly acquired WS No 1. But he wasn't im-

pressed with its inner workings when compared with own homebrew apparatus that had already won its spurs.

Soon, with indications of war on the horizon, the South African army was showing signs of mobilising and Signals training was stepped up. The young Howes was right in the thick of it having been transferred to 10 Infantry Bde Sigs Coy when South Africa declared war on Germany just three days after Britain had done so. His first action came as wireless officer with 10 Mobile Field Force in Abyssinia as the combined British and South African forces pushed Mussolini out of the country and handed it back to Emperor Haile Selassie. Howes then went north and fought through the north African campaigns culminating in the battle of El Alamein in late 1942.

He then returned home to the Union where for two years he was heavily involved in training the signallers about to accompany the 6th SA Armd Div as it moved into Italy as part of the US 5th Army under Gen Mark Clark. By now acting major, Bert Howes served throughout the Italian campaign in command of 17 Armd Bde Sig Sqn and at the war's end he had earned himself a Mention in Despatches.

Soldiering clearly appealed to him and he decided to make his career in the Union Defence Force. His all round technical competence and his attendance at many courses meant that he rose rapidly through the Signals ranks. In 1959 he became OC of the

School of Signals and then, in 1963 as Colonel Howes, he was appointed Signal Officer in Chief (Army) and then Director of Signals when the name changed. He served in this important post until 1968 during which time the South African Army was undergoing considerable modernisation – much of it technical – and Col Howes was at the forefront of everything to do with electronics and radio communications.

In 1959 he published, in the Army's official magazine, a most forward-looking article on where military communications would be many years hence. Looked at today one is quite staggered by its prescience: troposcatter, high-precision frequency control, electro-optics and even the ubiquitous unmanned 'drones', or UAVs, were all there.

Bert Howes finally retired from the army in 1980 having served out his last years as 2 I/C of one of the South African Defence Force's largest military bases in Johannesburg. Though now far removed from the detail of military communications he never lost touch with modern communications technology because, throughout his life, he was an avid radio amateur especially on VHF and above.

As ZS6HS in Johannesburg he established many long-distance communications records on VHF and UHF and was regarded as the doyen of the DXers on those bands.

Bert Howes passed away in 2011 at the age of 96. It would not be over-



CONGRATULATIONS: In the photograph above (taken around about 1968 because the Sam Browne belts were still being worn), Col Bert Howes, DSigs, on the left, presented Cmdt (later Col) Jack de Klerk with a long-service medal at a medal ceremony.

stating anything at all to say that with his passing the world of military radio communications had lost one of its pioneers. At the same time, amateur radio mourned the silencing of one of its most famous keys.

Get Well Soon - Mossie Mostert!

Our thoughts are with our dear member in Pretoria who suffered a heart attack whilst testing new generation military radios for Reutech in KZN on 23 August.

Mossie was transferred by Netcare 911 from KZN to Pretoria where he is currently strengthening very nicely at the Zuid-Afrikaanse Hospital. He is soon to be discharged to be home within the next week or so.

A special medal has to go to his wife Wilma who has been by his bedside day in and night out. Wilma jy is 'n Ster!

Mossie is a devoted member of our Association and we wish him a speedy and full recovery to his good old former self. Hang in daar ou Mossie. Ons hier onder in die Kaap dink en bid vir jou!

Chairman, Manco and Members of the SIGNALS ASSOCIATION.

Jimmy - the unsung hero

Jimmy receives high praise from the most unlikely of sources.



Speak to any South African that served as a member of the South African Infantry Corps and they will be happy to explain to you how the infantry were not only the backbone of the SADF but how the infantry were the best corps in the SADF.

Then again, speak to someone that was in the armour, artillery or any other corps and they will tell you the same thing.

So it comes as a bit of a surprise to hear two members of the infantry corps singing the praises of the South African Corps of Signals.

Mike did his national service with 4 South African Infantry Corps during 1978 and 1979. He takes up the story.

In the second half of 1978 our unit was sent to do border duty. Our headquarters were based at Ngongo in Owamboland. I was with Delta Company and our base was at a place called Okalongo.

The base was nothing to brag about. It consisted of holes dug into the ground that were covered by the roof of an army tent. We had a field kitchen and a mess that were also tents, as well as our pub. There was a dartboard and a rather shabby snooker table. Besides that we had a toilet that consisted of a go-kart

and lilies surrounded by hessian.

There was also the ops room that was also dug in. The roof was covered with corrugated iron and sandbags.

Our company commander, a captain, used the ops room as his "office" and he had his clerk with him. Also in the ops room was the signaller with his radios.

Our sections would rotate. We would go out on patrol for eight days then spend four days back in base.

When we were in base we would do stand-to at first light and at last light and in the mornings we would have a short parade. Otherwise we were allowed to relax. We had a volley ball and net, the dart board, and the snooker table for recreation. The only other thing to do was read or sleep.

When out on patrol there was always the possibility of hitting a contact with the enemy. When this happened the first thing that you did was key the microphone on your radio and report, "Contact, contact, contact!"

Immediately you would receive the reply, "Send over." That calm voice at the other end of the radio was the signaller back at our base. That voice was our lifeline, reassuring as that we were not alone.

That if we needed a casevac or help,



JIMMY ON DUTY: A typical ops rooms at a base on the border. These would be manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

he would take care of it. We had two signallers at our base. Like me they were both national servicemen. They were both “Jimmys” from the South African Corps of Signals.

I’m ashamed to confess that I can’t remember their names, but one thing I will never forget was their contribution.

The two of them had to man the radios twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. One of them would work from six in the morning to six in the evening. Then the other one would take over and do the shift from six in

the evening until six the next morning.

And they would do this seven days a week. They never received any time off. I remember when one of them went on his seven day pass they didn’t bother to send anyone to relieve him. He was away for eleven days (his seven days plus travelling time). The other signaller spent that entire eleven days in the ops room.

The only time he ever left the ops room was to go to the toilet or to have a quick wash. He would then ask the ops clerk to man the radios and shout if anything happened. He would even

eat his meals in the ops room.

At night he would put his head on the desk and catch a bit of sleep. But I can promise you that if that radio made the slightest sound he was wide awake. I don’t know how they coped.

We had a generator that provided power at our base. I think it was a 750 Kva generator. It would be switched on in the morning and then switched off at about 10 at night. The signallers were responsible for the generator as well. They would keep it fueled and switch it on and off.

If anything went wrong with the generator our captain would go mad. He would scream at them to fix it. And somehow they always did.

And when we finished our stint on the border and went back to the States they stayed behind. They would take over as the signallers for the next unit that came to relieve us.

I don’t think those signallers ever got the credit they deserved. But I for one would like to thank them.

Bruce was a member of the permanent force and an officer in the South African Infantry Corps. He was stationed at 101 Task Force in Grootfontein and he had a soft spot for the signallers.

I worked in the headquarters at 101 Task Force. As anyone that ever went to Grootfontein will remember, it was a massive base.

The signallers were responsible for running the communication centre or

‘comcen’. All the telexes that went to and from the entire operational area went through that comcen.

The had telex machines to and from Pretoria, to and from Windhoek, to and from Oshakati, to and from Rundu, and to and from Katima. They also had a large radio room. There was communication traffic passing through there twenty four hours a day.

The signallers, most of them young national service troops, worked in two shifts. For six days of the week they would work either from six in the morning to six in the evening, or vice versa.

And don’t think that they got the seventh day off. On that day, a Saturday, they would change over from day shift to night shift. The day shift would come in and six in the morning and then work until noon. Then they would come back at six in the evening and work until six the next morning.

In so doing they would then be on night shift for the following week. So they actually worked 18 hours that day.

In other words they worked a 90 hour week. Most of them spent 18 months doing that. And the worst of the lot is that at that stage people in Grootfontein never received danger pay.

All I can say is respect to you guys. Your role in the war was vital and don’t let anyone ever tell you otherwise.

Upcoming Birthdays

September 2017

15th Jeanne Pienaar (New Zealand member)
28th Carl Schmidt (Manco Member)

Davies (Del is from Rosedale Service Centre)

30th Johan Smuts
31st Andrea Andrews

October 2017

4th Chris Richter and Jeffrey Marcus
13th Willem Lubbe
20th Willie Snyders and Del

November 2017

10th Fahmy Rhode (Manco Member)
15th Adi Fourie
29th Gideon (Mossie) Mostert



BORDER BOYS (left): The Association participated for the second time in the Bomb Alley Moth Shellhole Border Boys Memorial Parade in Bellville on Sunday 20 August, 2017, where they laid a wreath. From left to right Alfred de Vries, Robbie Roberts and Pierre Fourie.

PHOTO: REGGIE LORD

THE CHAMP (right):

Pierre Fourie has regained his Signals Association 10-Pin Bowling champion of the world title!!!

Here he is with his team mates who represented our Association at an extremely enjoyable occasion.

