



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 38 - September 2025

Counting the Cost

Members of the SADF who died on active service

Tech-Mechs & TEVs

Nine months of National Service

A Shared Duty

Aldreman Ian Neilson's speech at the Delville Wood Memorial Parade



Message from the Chairman and Editor

Time is certainly flying past us these days and the end of the year is in sight already. Your Mancom is a hive of activity organising the Signals Association 25th Birthday lunch. As indicated in my warning order diarise 29th November 2025, hope to see you all.

We also had our Annual General Meeting on 21 June 2025. I wish to congratulate and at the same time convey my appreciation to our President and Manco members for their ongoing dedication and support to myself and our Association in general.

I also want to express my appreciation for those members who joined the AGM and who went to the trouble to bring out their votes. Your participation in our activities is appreciated and we value your positive contributions.

The newly appointments and elections are as follows;

Robbie Roberts was re-appointed as President of the Association.

The following were elected to specific positions and to serve on Manco ;

Chairperson	Geoff Laskey
Deputy Chair	Ian Robertson
Secretary General	Maurice Espin
Treasurer	Marina Valentine
PRO	Piet Jordaan
Members	Jeff Marcus
	Tim Reilly
	Ian Fordred
	Adi Fourie
	Matt Tennyson



Congratulations to all those who have been elected and appointed. We are looking forward to another year of productive working relationships with the management team. It should be noted that the co-option of further members to assist Manco in the performance of a specific task(s) or where specific skills and/or knowledge is required, will be considered from time to time by Manco.

My appreciation, once again, also goes to those of our members and readers who regularly extend positive sentiments towards us and what we aim to achieve.

Certa Cito Greetings,
Geoff Laskey

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Alfred De Fries at Annual War Commemoration at Bellville Civic centre on 17 August 2025



Tech-Mechs & TEVs

BILL SMITH recalls his nine months of military training with the South African Corps of Signals.

I was called up for nine months military service from October 1963 to June 1964.

Our initial basic training of three months was at 10 Signal Training Squadron at Voortrekkerhoogte, the next three months was at a newly created training camp at an abandoned second world war Women's Army Auxiliary Force (WAAF) camp near Valhalla.

During that period, we learned our particular mustering, mine being a Tele-Mech (Teleprinter Mechanician) - out of our whole intake there were

only two of us selected in this particular mustering.

Fortunately, my civvy occupation was an apprentice Telecommunications Technician, so I had already acquired some basics of electronics and telecommunications equipment, but teleprinters was an advanced field that I had very little knowledge of.

It was actually impossible to take a young apprentice off the street and expect him to have a knowledge of such sophisticated equipment, but so be it, I was a Tele-Mech.

At 10 Signals there was however no permanent force instructors with any knowledge of teleprinters and associated equipment, so we joined a group of Line-Mechs (Line Mechanics) who had to set up and operate a very basic form of Radio-Relay equipment.

The Radio Relay equipment was housed in a Ford Truck - two x corner reflector type aerials were used, one for transmission and one for reception, it would provide a line of site VHF radio link of approximately 60km.

This equipment was not used for normal radio messages; it was primarily meant to facilitate the use of a multi-channel carrier system for speech plus duplex (Telex).

This in a nutshell meant that a number of simultaneous Voice and Tele-



Creed Printer

printer channels could work over a single radio link

The set up of the radio link was in the form of a drill, and the line-mechs simply followed a pre-set number of actions to get a link up and running.

The most labour-intensive part was erecting the aerial masts and aligning the corner reflectors according to a specific line of sight map reference relating to the location of the opposite end radio relay vehicle.

I may mention that this type of equipment was primarily intended for rear link communication. My last three months was at 11 Brigade Signal Squadron.

We were now supposed to be fully trained and ready to assist and provide communications to the Brigade. I was allocated a second world war Ford 5-ton truck.

It was a unique four-wheel drive vehicle; the accelerator pedal was positioned between the clutch and brake and because the engine was in the cab it meant the gear lever was to the left and slightly behind the driver, it was actually very awkward and difficult to drive.

The truck was marked TEV. I was never told what TEV stood for? I could only guess it meant Teleprinter Equipment Vehicle, or Terminal End Vehicle, who knows.

It had two small desks each with a creed teleprinter and a central cabinet housing the Speech plus duplex equipment (S+Dx). Basically, it was equipment required to transform the teleprinter coded signal for suitable connection to the radio relay carrier system.

Creed Teleprinters was of the earliest type; they later became obsolete and were replaced by the T100 type teleprinter.

There was apparently only one PF member at the School Of Signals who had any knowledge of these machines.

It so happens that we only had one such TEV vehicle, this meant that in the whole 3 months I never once had an opportunity to connect these teleprinters to work over the radio relay link to another such truck.

So, we simply connected the two teleprinters back - to - back and typed messages from the one teleprinter to the other. It actually became rather monotonous.

And so ended my nine months military training.



IMPROVED VERSION: A later type of Radio Relay vehicle with mast and aerial.

A shared duty to remember

Speech by **ALDERMAN IAN NEILSON** *City of Cape Town, at the Dellville Wood Memorial Parade, Company Gardens, Cape Town, 20 July 2025*

Rear Admiral Mvovo, Members of the SA National Defence Force, Consuls General of France and Belgium, Spokesperson for Defence and Veteran Affairs, Honourable Chris Hatching MP, Veterans, Honoured Guests, Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to everyone on this glorious Cape Town winter's morning.

We gather here today in solemn remembrance - united by reverence, by gratitude, and by a shared duty to remember. Today, we commemorate one of the most harrowing and heroic chapters in South Africa's military history: the Battle of Dellville Wood, fought in the shadowed forests of northern France, in July 1916, during the First World War.

This was a time when the world was engulfed in unimaginable violence and upheaval. The Battle of the Somme, of which Dellville Wood was a part, was a crucible that tested the courage and endurance of millions. But among all the many stories of sacrifice and suffering, one stands out for us with particular poignancy: the story of the 1st South African Infantry Brigade at Dellville Wood—and especially, the brave sons of Cape Town who fought and fell there.

The brigade entered Dellville Wood on the 15th of July 1916, tasked with a near-impossible mission: to seize and

hold the shattered forest at all costs. Over the next six days, they endured relentless artillery bombardment, machine-gun fire, and brutal close-quarters combat. Of the roughly 3,150 South African soldiers who went into the wood, only about 750 emerged unscathed when they were finally relieved. It was a staggering cost in lives - and one that would forever mark the legacy of our nation's contribution to the Great War.

Among these soldiers were many young men from Cape Town—from District Six, from Claremont, from Rondebosch and Salt River, from the docks of Table Bay and the slopes of Table Mountain. Some came from comfortable homes; others from humble beginnings. But in that terrible wood, distinctions disappeared. They were brothers in arms, united by duty and courage.

They were long before our time and none of us present today could have known them personally. But, in a memorial, it is necessary that we go beyond broad generalisations. If we are not to allow their names to be forgotten, we must name them. Of course we cannot name them all in a short parade, but let us name some.

Among the fallen was **Private William Ewart Gladstone Clarke**, aged

just 22, a Capetonian from Sea Point, who had enlisted full of idealism. He fell on the second day of the battle, struck down while carrying ammunition to the forward lines.

We remember **Corporal Frederick Carl Hoets**, of Rondebosch, who wrote home days before the battle that he hoped to make Cape Town proud. He did. He fell defending a captured trench, refusing to abandon his post.

Lance Corporal Harold Victor White, a promising young clerk from the city centre, died under shellfire while trying to evacuate a wounded comrade. His name is etched in the

Menin Gate Memorial, in Ypres, Belgium, and in the hearts of those who remember his sacrifice.

Private James Hendricks, a labourer from District Six, fought side by side with men of all colours, defying the segregated norms of the time through their shared suffering and bravery in Dellville Wood.

Though official recognition was scarce in those days, our remembrance today must be whole and inclusive, acknowledging the sacrifices of all South Africans who served - white, black, coloured, and Indian - often overlooked, but never forgotten.



PAYING HONOURS AND RESPECT: Members attending Dellville Wood Memorial Service Cape Town on 20 July 2025. From left-to-right: Geoff Laskey, Jeff Marcus, Piet Jordaan and Alderman Clive Justus.

These are but a few names among hundreds from Cape Town who fought in that terrible place. Many more lie in foreign fields or have no known grave, their names inscribed in marble and in memory.

Why do we remember? Why do we return to these old stories, to the sorrows of the past?

Because remembrance is not only about mourning the dead - it is about honouring their legacy and understanding what they stood for. The men of Dellville Wood stood for service, for sacrifice, and for an ideal greater than themselves. They fought not for conquest, but because they believed in duty. Because they believed that their actions mattered.

And perhaps most movingly of all - they believed in each other.

Let us remember the conditions they faced: Dellville Wood was reduced to a tangle of shattered trees and churned mud. Shells rained down without cease. Food and water were scarce. And yet

the South Africans held on, day after day, under unimaginable pressure. They showed the world what South Africans were made of. They showed a bravery and resilience that helped forge a national identity, even in a time when our own society was deeply divided.

It is no coincidence that Dellville Wood has become hallowed ground. It is the site of the South African National Memorial in France - not just a monument to the dead, but a reminder of who we are as a people when we are at our best: united in adversity, courageous in battle, loyal to one another.

The pain of that war echoes across generations. Many families in Cape Town lost brothers, fathers, sons. Some still keep faded photographs, medals, or letters - fragments of a story that shaped their lives.

And so, today, we do more than remember. We recommit.

We recommit to telling these stories to our children and grandchildren. We recommit to pre-

serving the peace that was so dearly bought. We recommit to unity—across the lines of race, language, and history. For if the men of Dellville Wood could stand together in that inferno, then we can surely stand together in our peaceful democracy.

We must also reflect on the hidden histories - those brave black and coloured South Africans who served as stretcher bearers, labourers, drivers, and porters. Though barred from combat roles and denied recognition at the time, they endured the same hardships and contributed with equal courage.

As we lay wreaths and bow our heads today, let us not treat this ceremony as mere tradition. Let us feel it - deeply. Let the sacrifice of those young men in the distant woods of France awaken in us a sense of duty: to one another, to our nation, to peace.

In Cape Town, the memory of Dellville Wood lives on - in this memori-

al before us and in the stories passed down through generations. But it also lives on in our values - when we act with courage, when we work together, when we remember that the cost of freedom is never free.

Let me end with the words of one survivor of the battle, written decades later: "We were boys when we marched into that wood. We came out men—those of us who came out at all. But some never came out, and they are forever part of that place. Their ghosts walk under the trees. Their memory is our responsibility."

So today, let us shoulder that responsibility. Let us honour them - not only with words, but with lives worthy of their sacrifice.

To the men of Dellville Wood, and especially to the brave sons of Cape Town - we remember you. We thank you. We honour you.

Thank you very much.



Counting the cost

According to official records, 2,573 members of the SADF died while on active service. Yet less than a third of them were killed in action. How did the rest die?

In 1957 the New Defence Act, Act No.44 of 1957 was passed, merging the former Union Defence Force (including Reserves), the Citizen Force, Commandos and South African Permanent Force into the South African Defence Force (SADF), head quartered in Pretoria.

The SADF consisted of a permanent Force, a Citizen Force and Commandos. The three arms of the SADF were the Army, Air Force and the Navy. Lat-

er a fourth arm, the South African Medical Services, was formed.

In 1968 conscription was introduced when it was decided that all white South African males would be required to do a period of compulsory military service.

Note carefully the use of the word compulsory. It was not a request, it was an instruction and it was backed up by an act of parliament.

Every white male who was a South Africa citizen or had permanent residence was required to register with the South African Defence Force in the year that he turned sixteen.

Conscription was better known as 'National Service'. At first it was for a period of nine months and was then extended to a period of 12 months. In 1978 national service was increased to 24 months. In 1989 national service was reduced back to one year.

The SADF was disbanded in 1994 and absorbed into the new South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

While the SADF was never involved

in any declared war, they were involved in combat in South West Africa (now Namibia), Angola, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Mozambique, and Zambia.

The undeclared war in South West Africa and Angola became known as the 'Border War'. It lasted from 26 August 1966 to 21 March 1990. A total of 23 years, six months, three weeks and two days. The SADF took part in no fewer than 52 major operations.

In the 37 years that it existed, a total of 2,573 members of the SADF died while on active service.

Considering the fact that the SADF was involved in a 'war' for 23 years, this is not a high figure. Especially when you compare it to the American casualty figures during the Vietnam War, another undeclared war.

The Americans were involved in Vietnam for 20 years. During that time they suffered 58,318 dead and more than 300,000 wounded.

The US had more soldiers killed in action (KIA) in a single year than the SADF had in 23 years.

Even a short war such as the 1982 Falklands War between the United Kingdom and Argentina resulted in the death of 255 British troops and 633 Argentinian troops. And this was in a war that lasted just over two months.

Yet the figure of 2,573 SADF deaths is a misleading one. It would be easy to assume that these people died during the Border War. This, however, is not the case.

In fact only 791 members of the

SADF were killed in action or died as a direct result of combat. That is only 30.7 %. So what happened to the remaining 69.3%? How did they die?

The shocking, and sad, fact is that the highest cause of death in the SADF was as a result of motor vehicle accidents.

A total of 844 members of the SADF lost their lives in accidents involving vehicles, both military and civilian. This equates to 32.8 %.

Many troops were killed driving home on a weekend pass, or while returning to their base after a pass.

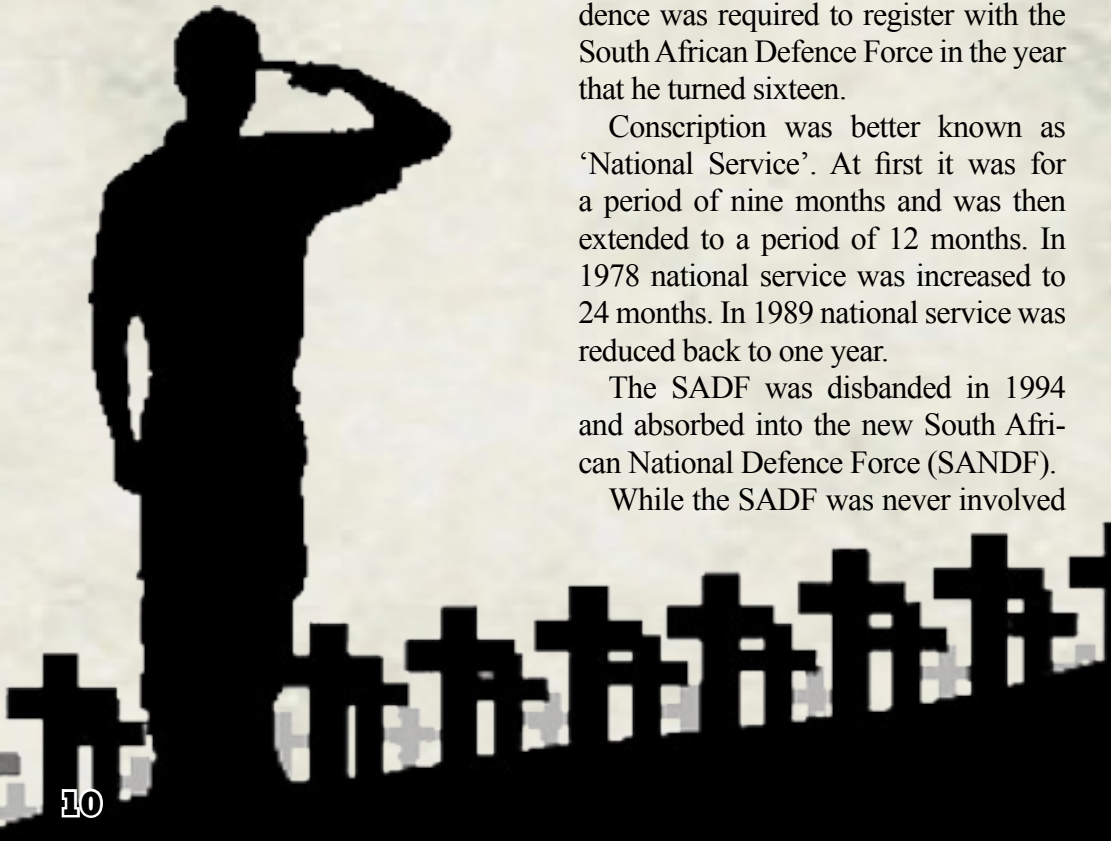
The driver of a Buffel APC would lose control of the vehicle and it would roll. It was a standing order that troops travelling in the back of the vehicle had to be wearing their seatbelts. Of course some didn't and they would pay the consequences.

The next highest cause of death was as a result of aircraft accidents. These were not as a result of damage to aircraft during combat, but accidents. Many of these accidents took place during pilot training. 241 people died in aircraft accidents.

A total of 236 SADF members lost their lives in shooting accidents. It was not uncommon for there to be accidental discharges (AD). In the majority of cases no-one would be injured.

This was not, however, always the case. Troops shot either themselves or someone else as a result of an AD.

Naturally other accidents occurred on a frequent basis. People would be electrocuted, struck by vehicles, fatally



injured in falls. More than a few died in parachute accidents. 151 people died as a result of accidents.

Another cause of death was drowning. This could have been as a result of trying to cross a river, being caught in a flash flood, or even drowning in the base swimming pool. 97 people died from drowning.

Accidents with explosives resulted in 89 deaths. A mortar bomb falling short during a live fire exercise, troops playing with a hand grenade - these were just some of the causes.

A total of 85 people died as a result of disease or natural causes. These included heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks and so on.

According to the official records, 24 members of the SADF committed suicide while on active service.

Finally, 15 members of the SADF were killed by wild animals. These included crocodiles, hippo, and elephant.

The unit that suffered the most casualties as a result of being killed in action was not an SADF unit. It was in fact a police unit.

The South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Wing: Ops-K Division, better known as Koevoet, lost 127 men killed in action.

The SADF unit with the most killed in action was 32 Battalion. They lost 100 men in battle.

101 Battalion (SWATF) suffered 75 killed in action while 202 Battalion lost 44.

61 Mechanised Battalion Group, bet-

ter known as 61 Mech, took part in numerous cross-border operations during the Border War. They lost 37 men killed in action.

Another unit that lost 37 men was 4 South African Infantry Battalion (4 SAI).

5 Reconnaissance Commando (later 5 Reconnaissance Regiment) lost 33 men.

Below are other units that lost 10 or more men killed in action.

- 5 South African Infantry Battalion (5 SAI) - 22
- 201 Battalion - 22
- 1 Parachute Battalion - 21
- 1 Special Services Battalion (1 SSB) - 21
- 102 Battalion - 21
- 1 Reconnaissance Commando/Regiment - 20
- 6 South African Infantry Battalion (6 SAI) - 16
- 8 South African Infantry Battalion (8 SAI) - 16
- 1 South African Infantry Battalion (1 SAI) - 14
- 3 South African Infantry Battalion (3 SAI) - 12
- 2 South African Infantry Battalion (2 SAI) - 10
- Group 34 - 10

**Authors note: Please note that the figures used in this article are taken from the official figures given. The total number of deaths may have been higher. It also does not take into consideration those wounded, disfigured or permanently disabled. Nor those that suffered from psychological effects.*

The International Day of Peace : September 21st

The International Day of Peace, observed annually on September 21st, is a global event dedicated to promoting peace and non-violence. Established by the United Nations, it encourages individuals, organizations, and nations to reflect on and strengthen the ideals of peace, both within and between all countries and peoples.

The day serves as a reminder to cease hostilities and promote a global ceasefire, inviting everyone to contribute to building a culture of peace.

Established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to peace above all differences and to contribute to building a "Culture of Peace".

The International Day of Peace celebrates the power of global solidarity for building a peaceful and sustainable world. This has never been so important at a time of unprecedented challenges.

The symbol of the International Day of Peace is the dove and olive branch which was used symbolically by early Christians and then eventually became a secular peace symbol, popularized by a Dove lithograph by Pablo Picasso after World War II.

In South Africa International Day of Peace, is commemorated through various activities focused on promoting peace, non-violence, and reconciliation. These activities often include moments of silence, community discussions, and



events that encourage reflection on the importance of peace within the nation and globally.

In essence, South Africa's observance of International Day of Peace reflects a commitment to building a more peaceful and just society, both within its borders and in the broader global context.

September is designated as "Heritage Month" in South Africa

Possibly not generally known that September is Heritage Month. Military veterans should be remembered globally for their service and sacrifices, September is also designated as Heritage Month in South Africa, recognising the contributions of all citizens, including military veterans.

Military veterans are integral to the nation's history. The ultimate respect a nation can give veterans is to ensure they have the support they need when they return home and grow old, and that they

have the tools to enjoy a stable life.

We should remember that the second-last Sunday in September is dedicated to remembering South Africa's fallen soldiers. Veterans Day is largely intended to thank LIVING veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served – not only those

who died – have sacrificed and done their duty.

Veterans Day is a time to honour and celebrate the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting our country. Their sacrifices, whether on the battlefield or in service to their communities, deserve our deepest appreciation.

Warning Order



August Women's Month

Lieutenant (Ret) Marina Valentine addressed the inaugural Women in Uniform and Women Military Veterans Memorial Service at the New Military Cemetery in Thaba Tshwane.

In commemoration of Women's Month which is observed every year across the country, the Pretoria Branch of the South African Legion, in association with the South African National Defence Force, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Council of Military Veteran Organizations South Africa and the Pretoria Memorial Services Council, on 9th August 2025, hosted the inaugural women in uniform and women military veterans memorial service at the Thaba Tshwane New Military Cemetery, Pretoria.

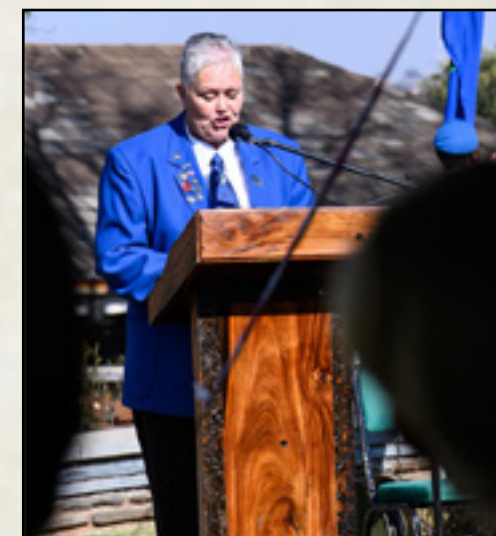
The service brought together women in uniform both veterans and servicemen to honour those women who dared to take a different path above their normal duties as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters. Women who chose to serve their country.

Delivering the keynote address, Veteran Lieutenant (Ret), Marina Valentine, Manco Member of the Signals Association, highlighted the important role female soldiers play in building a better society and safeguarding the nation. While she acknowledged the progress made by the South African National Defence Force to advance the role of women in the military, she noted that more can still be done improve

the many challenges facing women.

"For too long, the female soldiers have been confronted by internal battles such as sexual harassment, systematic discrimination and doubts over physical fitness. These are not just operational challenges, they are violations of dignity and obstacles to equality" she said.

The service concluded with the laying of wreaths and other items in front of the central cross. Veteran Lieutenant (Ret) Marina Valentine announced that the service will become an annual tradition every August, and military personnel both servicemen and veterans are encouraged to attend pay tribute to the legacy and sacrifices of women in uniform.



Parades and Functions



AGM: Manco members attending AGM 21 June 2025 Fltr Jeff Marcus, Ian Robertson, Geoff Laskey, Tim Reilly, Maurice Aspin, Adi Fourie, Piet Jordaan.

DELVILLE WOOD: Members attending Dellville Wood Memorial Service Cape Town on 20/07/2025, Fltr Geoff Laskey, Jeff Marcus, Piet Jordaan and Alderman Clive Justus.



WAR COMMEMORATION: Alfred De Fries at Annual War Commemoration at Bellville Civic centre on 17 August 2025



STEAK LUNCH: Members attending WCRSU Steak Lunch Fltr Kevin Wistler, Johan Johnson, Jeff Marcus, Jeff Laskey, Piet Jordaan, Carl Schmidt, Adi Fourie.



Happy Birthday!

The Signals Association's President, Chairperson and Manco members wish all the members below on their birthdays in the next quarter.

We wish you a very special birthday and a wonderful year ahead! We hope your birthday is full of sunshine, rainbows, love, and laughter!

The Association sends you many good wishes on your special day.

September 2025

Andre Roux	17th
Robin Cross	24th
Carl Schmidt	28th

October 2025

Jeffrey Marcus	4th
Arend Keulder	5th
Johan de Villiers	8th
Willem Lubbe	13th
Adri Brits	13th
Del Davies	20th
Walter Volker	26th
Hendrik van Staden (Jnr)	27th
Michael Roman	28th
Johan Smuts	30th
Maurice Espin	30th

November 2025

Bill Smith	3rd
Fahmy Rhode	10th
Adi Fourie	15th
Clifford Shields	20th
Denis Jelliman	21st
Gideon Mostert	29th

