



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 25 - December 2022

Parades & Functions

The Signals Association
attended a number
of parades in 2022

Agent Sonya

The remarkable WW II Russian spy

Poppy Day

The Signals Association lends a hand



We have come to the end of 2022, and I wish to thank all members and especially my Management Committee for their unselfish work and dedications towards our esteemed organisation. In the past three years the Covid Pandemic impacted heavily on all our activities across the board, and we experienced a number of challenges to continue with our activities as previously. Through adapting our normal approach and extensive use of technology we somehow succeeded to keep the activities of the Association going and certainly plan to continue, expand, and improve our activities in support of our members in the period ahead.

We experienced a year of some changes in the Association, our Chairperson who served us for 15 years decided to stand down. Robbie Roberts served the Association from its inception as Founder Member and Chairperson from 02 December 2000 to 06 June 2022. I am of the opinion that there is no other Veteran who can equal or better this achievement. He served the Association with enthusiasm and energy which was contagious and motivated the management team and fellow signallers to join and participate in the activities of the Association. His passion for the Corp of Signals and its members is second to none. His outstanding leadership, enthusiasm, vision, and unselfish commitment to the Signals Association, resulted in the sustained development and recognition of the Association all over. Especially over

the past couple of difficult and challenging years where we had a number of restrictions and challenges to overcome, his efforts and motivation is highly appreciated and valued. He certainly deserves the opportunity to sit back and enjoy the break from the typical Association management activities.

Robbie Roberts was also appointed as the first President of the Association. We like to congratulate him and certainly hope that he will continue to support and advise the management team and share his experience in the interest of the Association. We are looking forward to managing and developing the Association further with his support, guidance, and by sharing his extensive experience.

In conclusion, I wish all our Christian members and friends of the Association a Blessed Christmas. Let's remember the reason for the season as we celebrate the many blessings of Christmas. May the true meaning of Christmas bring blessings and salvation to you and yours and may the gift of love, peace and happiness all be yours at Christmas. Finally, may the peace and joy of the holiday season be with you throughout 2023. To our members and friends from other denominations, compliments of the season and may you and your loved ones also experience love, peace and happiness during this time.

Then I would also express my wish that we all endeavour to make 2023 a year to remember by supporting the Association in all its activities. I also appeal to all our readers to submit items or articles for publication in this newsletter. It is only with

the support of all concerned that we could build on what we had achieved thus far and ensure our continued existence.

Let's all make 2023 the best year for our Association. I call upon each one of you to support all or most of the events to be

planned for the year ahead and experience and enjoy the unique "Signals Family Camaraderie" of the Signals Association. Certá Cito (Signals) greetings !

Geoff Laskey

Message from our President

When I announced my stepping down as long-standing chairman of the association just prior to our last AGM held in June 2021, I have to admit, I was a bit concerned that the usual effective and enthusiastic participation of our management team (Manco), may go into a relapse to the detriment of our beloved organisation.

At the same time, however, I felt confident that my then likely successor, Geoff Laskey, him having proven his skills having successfully managed our participation in the Cape Town Cycle Race for more than three years, was the right person to take over from me to ensure the continuation of what had been achieved over the past 21 years of our existence.

My thoughts proved spot-on and I now sit back away from executive responsibilities and witness how Geoff and the "boys (and girl)" have been, and still, are performing.

After having had sight of Geoff's Editor's Note and the various articles he has submitted for publication in this and other issues of 'Jimmy's Own', it is pleasing for me to witness the degree of professionalism within which Geoff and his team is operating for the good of our association.

I now feel a far more relaxed back-seater witnessing others perform well above average.

It will be remiss of me, as President, not to add my congratulations to Geoff and the "manne (en vrou)" for what they had thus far achieved on their own. Our association continues to enjoy the respect of many other military veterans, particularly amongst the Signals community in our country.

Whilst I will remain in the background, I am still available to provide advice and guidance wherever such may be needed by management.

All that remains for me at this end of year publication is to echo the sentiments of our chairman in wishing all our Christian Members and Friends a Blessed and Joyous Christmas. May the goodwill of this season bring happiness and good health to one and all.

As for our non-Christian members and Friends, may you also experience peace and good tidings with your families and loved ones.

I also wish all our members a Happy New Year. May 2023 be a prosperous and safe one for you all and may you furthermore be blessed with general good health.

Certá Cito (Signals) Veteran greetings.
Robbie Roberts



Signals Association Management Committee



Vice Chair
Clive Justus



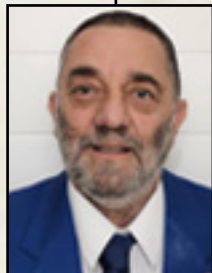
Chair
Geoff Laskey



President
Robbie Roberts



Treasurer
Wilna Bekker



Secretary General
Howard Shagom



Public Relations
Pierre Fourie



Manco Member
Piet Jordaan



Manco Member
Fahmy Rhode



Manco Member
Maurice Espin



Manco Member
Ian Robertson



Manco Member
Jerome Solomon

What's in this issue of Jimmy's Own?

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The Signals Association travels to Franschoek again to collect funds for Poppy Day.

25 By the left, quick laugh

A bit of military humour for our readers this issue.



Front Cover

"Santa Claus is coming to town". So who's to say that Santa wasn't a Jimmy at some stage. For one thing, he knows what *Certa Cito* means.



Association Strategic Planning Session by Manco

The Management Committee (Manco) of the Signals Association held a Strategic planning session at the SA Legion on 10 September 2022.

The Management Committee (Manco) of the Signals Association held a Strategic planning session at SA Legions Rosedale facilities on Saturday, 10 September 2022. Eight Members attended and the Chairperson Geoff Laskey facilitated the session.

The main purpose of the session was to outline the Association's long-term goals and to fulfil the mission, vision and priorities for the next 3 – 5 years. In other words, it was to establish where we currently are, where we want to go to, and what we can do about achieving our goals and objectives.

Matters discussed in detail during the session included the following;

- Status Quo of the Association and Competitors Environment (Self-Assessment);
- Status of Organisational Structure;
- Products, Services and Activities (What do we offer);
- Development Strategy and Implementation.

The group agreed that it is important that members take full ownership for building their own capacity to shape a future for the Association which is beneficial to all members

and for establishing their own governance arrangements and development goals.

In this regard the following subjects were discussed;

- Organisational Structure
- Developmental Approach and Plan
- Marketing Plan
- Financial Planning and Projections
- Management of Association Finance

Implementation Plan

The Chairman stated that an idea is just a dream until it is written down and then becomes a goal. For the implementation plan, it was necessary to identify individuals with skills that are needed.

The Chairman will make a list of skills needed to effectively address the challenges and inadequacies identified for the following;

- Strategy 1 Further Development and populating the approved organisational structure;
- Strategy 2 Apply duties and functions developed for the approved organisational structure;
- Strategy 3 Financial Planning and Management (Ultimate goal to be

financially sustainable)

- Strategy 4 Financial Planning and Management (Accountability);
- Strategy 5 Develop professional and marketing and communication material (Branding);
- Strategy 6 Obtain and develop Association facilities; and
- Strategy 7 Ceremonial and Social activities (Create Signal Family environment).

The Way Forward

Once the skills required have been

identified and discussed, each of the above strategies will be allocated by Manco to a person and/or group of individuals to address the challenges and inadequacies identified during the workshop.

It is Manco's intention to build on the firm based established over the past 20 years and to place the Association in a position to fully support its members and foster and encourage the continuation of the "esprit du corps", image and traditions of Signallers and Signaller Veterans.



BORDER BOYS PARADE: From left to right: Alderman Clive Justus, Alfred de Vries, and Pierre Fourie at the Border Boys Parade held in Bellville.

Parades and Functions

The Signals Association attended a number of parades and functions during 2022.

War Memorial Service (Border Boys Parade) Bellville and Pretoria

War Commemoration Service parade is held on the 3rd Sunday of August annually to commemorate those who gave their lives to the country while in Military Service and Police Service including the Border War from August 1966 to August 1989. At this occasion Veteran Organisations normally lay wreaths.

This year Marina Valentine of our Association laid a wreath at the parade held at the Sound Memory Cottoges in Pretoria. The parade was hosted by the Casa Mia Shellhole on behalf of the Pretoria District Dugout MOTHS.



Marina Valentine at the ceremony in Pretoria

In Cape Town the event was presented at the Bellville Civic Centre and hosted by the Bomb Alley Shellhole of the MOTHS in association with the City of Cape Town, Bellville Sub-council. At this event Alfred De Vries laid a wreath on behalf of the Signals Association and Pierre Fourie accompanied him as a member and Public Relations Officer of the Association. Also in attendance were Alderman Clive Justus of the City of Cape Town also a long-standing member of the Association



Pierre Fourie and Alfred de Vries at the ceremony in Bellville.

The Battle of Square Hill



The Battle of Square Hill took place on the night of 17/18 September 1918. The Cape Corps broke through the Turkish lines during the night capturing 8 Turkish Officers, 160 Turkish soldiers and 181 other Turks.

A Turkish Field Gun was captured. During this battle the Cape Corps soldiers were able to shine as soldiers in their first battle with Turkish soldiers in Palestine during the First World War. This battle was motivated by General Allenby's military strategy to connect with Arab allies to the east of the Dead Sea, a mission that was thwarted by the 'enemy's' control of the Jordan crossing at Jisr-ed-Dameh.

This year the remembrance parade was held on 18 September at the Castle of Good Hope and Fagme Rhode laid a wreath and represented the Signals Association at the event.

22nd Annual Military Kelvin Grove Function

Kelvin Grove Club traditional hosts the military dinner in Cape Town Club. Held on an annual basis, it honours members of the reserve force units (formerly the citizen forces) as well as components of the full-time forces.

After a few years not being able to host the event due pandemic restrictions the function was once more presented on the 6th of October 2022.

The guest speaker for the evening was Maj Gen (Ret) Roland De Vries SD, SM, MMM his subject was "Cuito Cuanavale the Truth".

The event was attended by 115 guests and the Signals Association was represented by the President Robbie Roberts, The Chairperson Geoff Laskey, Manco Members, Piet Jordaan and Maurice Espin and member Ed Wittert.



From left: Geoff Laskey, Maurice Espin, Robbie Roberts, Piet Jordaan, and Ed Wittert

Day of Remembrance, Red Cross Memorial Children's Hospital

The idea of a children's hospital in Cape Town as a living memorial took hold of South African servicemen who were awaiting demobilisation in Italy after WW2. What is not generally known is that the idea captured their imagination so strongly that many of the servicemen gave two days of their pay towards the ideal, and these funds were held in a trust by the South African Red Cross Society who began to champion its establishment.

At a Red Cross Society Cape Region's annual general meeting in May 1945, it was suggested by Mr Vyvyan Watson that a children's hospital be built as a Red Cross War Memorial – to honour the service of all South Africans who contributed to the Allied victory.

The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa was opened in 1956 through public subscription as a memorial to soldiers lost in the Second World War. The Hospital is the first and only stand-alone tertiary hos-

pital in sub-Saharan Africa dedicated entirely to child healthcare.

From these relatively humble origins the Hospital has gone on to establish an international reputation for excellence in paediatric healthcare, offering a comprehensive range of specialist services to children from South Africa and across the entire continent.

Serving as one of the University of Cape Town Health Sciences Faculty's academic teaching hospitals, it is also considered South Africa's leading centre for postgraduate specialist paediatric medical and surgical training for both doctors and nurses.

Annually the Hospital Management also have a Day of Remembrance on the 11th of November or date nearest to it, this year Manco Member, Maurice Espin laid a wreath on behalf of the Signals Association and the chairperson Geoff Laskey and Manco Member Ian Robertson and Peter Longbottom attended the event.



Left: Geoff Laskey and Ian Robertson
Above: Geoff Laskey and Maurice Espin

Gem Village Annual Remembrance Day Service

In 1984, through the constant efforts of the Gunners' and Sappers' Associations, an assemblage of Units for aged veterans was constructed on the farm Doornkloof, in Irene.

Annually the facility hosts a Remembrance Day Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony. This year the Service was held on Friday 11 November. Marina Valentine our member in the Pretoria area represented the Signals Association and also laid a wreath on behalf of the Association.

Remembrance Day Memorial Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony Cape Town

The Annual Remembrance Day (Armistice Day) Memorial Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony took place on Sunday, 13th November 2022 in honour of those who lost their lives in instances of conflict.

Diplomats, religious leaders, members of the SA National Defence Force,

Remembrance Day (also known as Poppy Day owing to the tradition of wearing a remembrance poppy) is a Memorial Day is observed in many Countries since the end of the First World War to honour armed forces members who have died in the line of duty. In most countries, Remembrance Day is observed on 11 November to recall the end of First World War hostilities. Hostilities formally ended "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month" of 1918.

Military Veteran Organisations and other dignitaries, laid wreaths at the Cenotaph in Adderley Street.

Fahmy Rhode of Our Association laid a wreath on behalf of the Signals Association and Piet Jordaan and Peter Longbottom also represented the Association.



Piet Jordaan and Fahmy Rhode at the Cenotaph in Cape Town.

Agent Sonya's wireless: fact, fiction, fantasy and fable (Part One)

By Brian Austin GOGSF

Two recent articles in *Signal* tell some of the story of the remarkable Soviet agent who plied her trade for almost twenty years, beginning in Shanghai and culminating in her sudden departure from England in 1950.

In between, she operated under various names, familial as determined by her various marriages and her code-name dictated by the secret nature of her work.

For all of what follows, I shall refer to her by that nom de guerre. She was simply Sonya; though Sonia or even Sonja appear too, depending on which source you choose to cite.

Born Ursula Kuczynski in 1907 in Berlin to a wealthy left-wing intellectual family, she espoused the communist cause at an early age. Her older brother Jürgen became an economist of some repute and a prolific author in his field. He was also an active promoter of communist philosophy which he pursued, with vigour, after following his parents to London and a post at the LSE following Hitler's rise to power. In late 1929, Ursula married Rudolf "Rudi" Hamburger, an architect. Work had dried up owing to the worldwide Depression but Rudi was offered a post designing office buildings in Shanghai. The young couple arrived there in July the following



year and, not long afterwards, Ursula joined the Chinese Communist Party. Her active promotion of the revolutionary cause in Berlin soon found an immediate outlet in Shanghai, the home of Chinese communism in a country ripe for revolution. Her career as a spy began when she met Richard Sorge, a German, dubbed by some as the most formidable spy in history. And through Sorge she became aware of the part played by radio communications in the spying business.

If any aspect of espionage has been misunderstood and misrepresented,

sometimes egregiously so, it is probably the use of radio or wireless communications to pass messages between spies and their headquarters or, equally, in the opposite direction. Why this should be so is not hard to fathom. To most people, including most professional historians, the transmission of messages 'through the air' without the intervention of wires is, at best, mysterious and, at worst, is something of a black art. Its technicalities are not understood at all and the technology to accomplish it requires, apparently, nothing more than a transmitter. That the author should have such a cynical view is, perhaps, best illustrated by the recent book written by Ben Macintyre. The fact that it was a best-seller is certainly testament to Macintyre's skill as a story-teller with his proven ability to write for a mass audience seeking titillation as well as a good yarn. This book certainly contains both. But it falls down badly when it comes to the technology of wireless communications. And it is this aspect that I intend to concentrate on here. All the other intriguing details, and there are many, of the 'spying game' will be left to the ever-expanding literature on the subject.

"On the nights she transmitted to Moscow ..."

Clandestine communication is a science as well as an art. Sonya herself was trained in Moscow. At the instigation of Sorge, she attended the

Radio Training Laboratory there in 1933 where she learnt the art of espionage and some of the technicalities of wireless. She was bright and was an excellent student because her heart was undoubtedly in it. She also displayed an above-average ability as a Morse code operator. Loyalty to her Soviet masters, and to their cause, had to be absolute and she signed up to it all with fervour. But it wasn't a solitary activity; Sonya had assistance and assistants: all men. Her husband "Rudi" Hamburger, though, was never more than a lukewarm communist and so she kept him in the dark. Sorge was the dominant figure and his radio expert was Max Clausen and Sonya absorbed much from him. There were others too and among them was a man called Johann Patra who was to have a significant influence on her clandestine life and it's at this point that the fantasy begins. Patra was highly intelligent but wholly uneducated, according to Sonya. He also struggled to read in any language, though Macintyre informs us a while later that he was struggling to read Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Remarkable, to say the least. More mundanely, he soon went "shopping for valves, rectifiers and wiring" with which to build a transmitter. How he went about selecting these components and their very important specific types, given his apparent lack of familiarity with the written word (except Hegelian), is not explained. One has to assume that Macintyre

was quoting Sonya herself, now writing under the nom de plume of Ruth Werner, since he clearly makes liberal use of her memoir published as Sonjas Rapport, in German, in 1977 and then, as Sonya's Report in 1991 [6]. And she published more too, in German, on this unfolding saga as listed among the references in.

Sonya and Patra went to Mukden in Manchuria, as instructed by the 'Centre', their headquarters in the Soviet capital. Mukden was occupied by the Japanese and their function was to be the point of contact between the Chinese communist partisans and Moscow. It was Patra's job to assemble the radio equipment from the components he had recently acquired. From we learnt what the strange "Hartley transmitter three-point switch", as described by Sonya in her 1977 book, actually was. However, Macintyre, without providing such technical niceties, called it a transmitter-receiver whereas the circuit diagram in shows nothing more than a simple one-valve Hartley oscillator which would have functioned quite adequately as a QRP transmitter but it was certainly not a receiver. Of course, any transmitter without an antenna is useless and so Sonya climbed onto the roof of the house she'd found in Mukden to erect what she called a Fuchs aerial. This was a half wavelength of wire which was end-fed, hence presenting a high impedance at that point and thus necessitating some form of impedance

transformation to a lower impedance transmission line, assuming such were used. Macintyre, needless to say, went into no such detail. But what is particularly important is that this is the only time in his book when any detail at all is provided about an antenna. Where he (and presumably she) mentioned it again it was simply a length of wire suspended from the roof of a house to a pole in the garden or secreted behind the panelling of a wooden wall. The assumption clearly being made is that an antenna is simply a length of wire whose dimensions are of no consequence.

While in Mukden, Sonya only transmitted at night to the GRU (Russian Military Intelligence) receiving station in Vladivostok, a distance of around 700 km. Both those facts are important because they involved the ionosphere, a subject never aired by Macintyre (and perhaps not by Sonya herself in her multi-volume tomes). None of her radio activities was every arbitrary: she will only have acted on instructions. But how they were conveyed to her wasn't revealed anywhere. As we know, such long-distance transmissions depend entirely on the ionosphere and particularly on its critical frequency and height at a given time and geographical location. Those features change diurnally, with the seasons and particularly over the approximate 11-year period of the sunspot cycle. We are informed that she used one of two agreed wave-

lengths, though it is far more useful, as we will see, to define them by their appropriate frequencies. Again, this underscores the need for detailed operating instructions in order to "keep her skeds", as they are referred to in the radio operating trade. Such trivia are not mentioned in Macintyre's best-seller.

We are led to believe that Sonya was busy at her radio at least twice a week and always in the early hours. Messages consisted of information about partisan morale, Japanese counter-insurgency measures as well as political and military intelligence. What never emerges is what radio receiver she used to make all this possible. Brief, almost glib, comments about constructing transmitters – as simple as they were – were never accompanied by any details of the receiver. Once again, the impression is gained that Macintyre never appreciated the significance of the receiver even though he frequently mentions her taking down "the fastest incoming signals without making a mistake". Again, as with the antenna, such things were apparently mundane since every home had a radio receiver and, in those days, they required the inevitable piece of wire to a pole outside. Need anything more be said? Well, yes. The receiver is by far the more complex piece of apparatus when compared with the simple transmitters she and Patra constructed. Even had it been as simple as a regenerative detector followed by

a single stage of audio amplification, the circuitry to achieve that and the method of yielding optimum performance, were far from trivial yet such details are simply ignored. And then there's the matter of operating both transmitter and receiver on the correct frequency.

"She established a good connection on a frequency of 6.1182 MHz ..."

This intriguing gem of information pops up almost in the middle of Macintyre's account when Sonya was sitting up in bed and just about to press her transmitter into service to communicate with Moscow. What could be more convivial? But we need to get there first because this happened when she was in Poland and with yet a few more transmitter-construction projects behind her.

The mission in Mukden ended suddenly. The Japanese had penetrated Sonya's network. Centre ordered her to pack up and leave as soon as possible for Peking. So, they dug a hole and buried the radio. No more no less. On reaching Peking, Patra, as is the pattern in this racy saga, "gathered parts to build another radio" and the first message from Moscow told them to hide the transmitter and take four weeks leave. One can only presume that any technical details are but background noise to the average reader of these fast-paced works of fact-based fiction. But to those of us who actually have an interest in the technology they

are frustrating and infuriating because what is really important is reduced to the level of the almost banal. After this period of holiday bliss “they reassembled the radio” and, again, the first message from the Centre ordered Sonya to make for Shanghai while Patra was to remain where he was. The fact that she was pregnant with his child (though she never told him) was of no interest to Moscow but it added much flesh to the evolving life story of Macintyre’s heroine.

Reunited with Rudi Hamburger, Sonya was informed by her masters in Moscow that she and Rudi, now evidently a committed communist himself, were soon to leave for Poland. Their role there would be to provide the radio communications links between the Polish Communist Party, now driven underground, and Centre. The journey to Poland involved a detour to England to be reunited with the Kuczynski family whom she’d not seen for years. They were now well-established in London’s communist circles. MI5 were aware of Sonya’s arrival in England, though to them she was merely Ursula Hamburger née Kuczynski of interest because of those family connections. Her skill as a radio constructor-cum-operator had not reached them. In view of her German passport, her length of stay was to be brief.

In January 1936 the Hamburgers reached Warsaw but were then sent on to Danzig. There she built a trans-

mitter-receiver, no less. A revelation indeed but details about its electronic components and such trivia were clearly immaterial. This time the transmitter was hidden inside a gramophone but the companion receiver escaped mention. And, needless to say, the bothersome piece of wire going somewhere did too. An element of reality, however, did crop up when one of her neighbours asked Sonya if she received interference on her radio – the one that everyone possessed. That sent a chill down the Hamburger spine because, according to the neighbour, it happened at night and her husband thought it may have been caused by someone transmitting nearby. Sonya had been in contact with Moscow the night before. A new location was urgently needed and, once found, the transmitter came back to life. Inevitably, after many nights of transmitting and receiving, Moscow’s next instruction was to tell her to move back to Poland (the reader will be aware of the changeable geography in that part of the world occasioned by Nazi and Soviet machinations). At this point, Sonya confessed to her Soviet controller that she felt inexperienced and did not know enough about advanced techniques in radio construction. She requested further training. In the same technical compound in Moscow where she’d been trained previously, she began her course during which she operated a “sophisticated push-pull transmitter” as described in. On com-

pletion she was informed that her next destination would be Switzerland.

Switzerland and further fables

Neutral Switzerland, with its long common border with Germany, was the ideal place to gather intelligence on Hitler’s military build-up. Sonya’s task was to set herself up near Geneva, then make contact with the existing Soviet-sponsored intelligence network in the country and, of course, construct another transmitter. She was also on her own: none of those ultra-masculine companions from her days in China or her recent convert-to-communism husband, who joined her in Poland, would be with her. Switzerland was to be Sonya’s solo performance. Following yet another brief detour via England, Sonya left Dover in September 1938 for Switzerland via France.

She set herself up in a village overlooking Lake Geneva. Macintyre then informs us that “[A]t night, when everyone was asleep, Ursula constructed her transmitter-receiver from parts bought at hardware shops in Geneva, Vevey and Lausanne”. The parts he mentions are indeed curious: a keypad (he surely means a Morse key since keypads are of our modern age on laptops), an antenna with banana plugs(!) plus two heavy batteries “each the size of a dictionary”. No mention at all of all the components that go to make up transmitters and receivers or, indeed, transmitter-receivers. How

did she obtain the resistors, the capacitors, the valves, the RF chokes, the switches and the myriad other bits and pieces needed for even the simplest transmitter and its companion, though clearly much compromised, receiver? And, most importantly of all – a component never mentioned by Macintyre – where or how did she acquire the quartz crystals which determined the frequency on which her transmitter operated? Surely not in a hardware shop no matter how sophisticated such places may have been in pre-war Switzerland. Credibility is put under some strain here. Macintyre only ever mentioned the frequency on which she operated, a very precise value of 6.1182 MHz, in a single sentence in his book. Such significant detail was clearly not of concern to him whereas it would have been vital to her and to the Centre. As is well known, achieving such frequency precision would have been impossible with a variable LC-oscillator unless Sonya had available to her accurate means of measuring frequency and unless she had also taken considerable care in constructing such an oscillator in order to render it ultra-stable. At this point I should mention that we learnt previously, but only in passing, that she had constructed frequency meters on one of her courses in Moscow but we were not enlightened as to how she went about calibrating such a thing. And, finally, electronic hardware has to be housed in some suitable box or

other container. That requires metal-work, or at least woodwork, both of which need tools – a workshop even – and, of course, connecting all those components together means soldering. There's ne'er a mention of any such oddities by Macintyre and, presumably, not by Sonya herself when she came to write her life story many years later.

On the woodworking front we learn that Sonya hid her assembled equipment in a built-in wardrobe behind a wooden panel held in place by screws. She drilled two small holes in the panel through which she passed the leads (to and from what is not revealed). This, we are informed, enabled her to use the transmitter without removing it from the cupboard. Surely the mysterious receiver must also have been nearby with its vitally important headphones since having a loudspeaker blaring out Morse code was probably not a good idea. But she did conceal those two drilled holes with plugs made to resemble knots in the wood. So, all bases were well covered and, as noted above, she could sit up in bed while communicating with Moscow. Following the necessary call signs, the messages consisted of groups of five numbers each of which she had enciphered earlier.

Then we have to contend with a fascinating flight of fancy. Remember all this is taking place in September 1938. Sonya was "flooded with relief" at having successfully passed the infor-

mation to the Centre and, being "too pumped with adrenaline to sleep" she reached out and turned on her transistor (my italics) radio in order to listen to the BBC news bulletin. Since the transistor was only invented at the Bell Telephone Laboratory in New Jersey in 1947 one can only assume that our heroine, or her 21st century biographer, were blissfully unaware of that fact but it made for a good story, particularly as the news bulletin focused entirely on the signing by Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, of the Munich Agreement. Peace with Germany was in the air. This was a horrifying prospect for all right-thinking communists. But, as we know, it wasn't to last.

The International Brigade and Sonya

Yet another man of much interest, especially to the British security services, entered Sonya's world of wireless, espionage and much else early in 1939. He was a former member of the International Brigade of volunteers who had enlisted to fight against General Franco's forces in Spain. Len Beurton had been instructed to make contact with her by "Mrs Lewis" of Hampstead in London. Mrs Lewis happened to be Sonya's younger sister who was an avowed apologist for and active supporter of the communist movement wherever it happened to be. Beurton's background was mysterious but should not detain us here. It would, however, perplex both MI5

and MI6 as the years unfolded. His function, as Sonya explained it to him, was to undertake dangerous work in Germany. Beurton's face evidently lit up at this. He was also smitten by Sonya.

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in August 1939 detonated a bomb under Sonya's spying operation against Germany: Allies don't spy on each other; well, not usually. But she still had a useful role to play in the interim while her future was being planned for her in Moscow. She should train Beurton and another former fighter in Spain, one Alexander Allan Foote, codenamed Jim, as radio operators. Foote, also an Englishman, followed a similar route to Beurton's, though a short while before, in order to reach Sonya. It was the same Mrs Lewis who had interviewed him and then instructed him on what he was to do. Quite simply, he was to attend a designated meeting place in Geneva, at a very specific time, while holding the correct object in his hand and then responding to a particular question, asked by a mysterious woman, with a very specific answer. All good spy-craft, of course. Foote was also told to "read up about wireless technology". He clearly read well for, in no time, we're informed that he was building transmitters. And he took over all Sonya's clandestine duties in Geneva, becoming the Centre's chief radio operator when the time came for her

to leave for her new destination: England.

Readers must excuse the detour here in order to expose some of Sonya's private life. She and Hamburger were divorced late in 1939 based on perjurious evidence provided willingly by Foote. In February 1940, she married Beurton but not before she'd proposed to Foote. She needed a British passport if she was to be able to live in England – as was Centre's intention – and to get one she needed a British husband, however contrived. But Foote backed out for reasons we won't go into, so she turned to Beurton. He agreed. And soon thereafter he excavated a hole in the garden into which they buried Sonya's transmitter as the attention of the Swiss authorities became ever closer.

The saga of her passport caused consternation in England – well, in MI5 at least. Beurton had already attracted their attention and was on a black list of communist sympathisers where his name appeared as Fenton. Now, his actual name was to be linked to a former Kuczynski and her world of London's communists. However, MI5's bureaucratic bungling failed to stop Sonya acquiring the prized document and she duly arrived, in Liverpool, with her two children (but without her new husband) in February 1941. Her immediate destination was Oxford because her parents had recently moved there from London. But it's at this point that the conspir-

acy theorists begin to have a field day and none more so than another well-known writer of the spy genre, the late Chapman Pincher. In his sizeable 1984 book *Too Secret Too Long* Pincher asserts categorically that MI5's Director General between 1956 and 1965, Sir Roger Hollis, was a Soviet agent. During the war it so happened that Hollis was based close to Oxford at Blenheim Palace and lived within half a mile of Sonya's father. Pincher went into overdrive and concocted what to some was a very believable story that Hollis was not only a Soviet mole but that his collaborator was Sonya. Needless to say, when such accusations were made many years later, they (and Hollis himself) were subjected to intensive investigation. The finding was that there was no evidence to support the allegation against Hollis but individuals such as the notorious Peter Wright of *Spycatcher* fame dined out on it.

Oxford, Fuchs, Sonya and wireless

Sonya and her two children moved four times in four months after reaching Oxford. Her radio operating activities came to a halt, but not permanently. In April 1941 she moved into a furnished house in Kidlington, five miles from the city. MI5 was watching her and intercepting her post. She made regular trips to London and waited on a particular street corner for her expected contact with her Soviet masters. Eventually, after a number of false starts one appeared. His name

was Aptekar, whose cover was to act as chauffeur for an attaché at the Soviet Embassy. But to Sonya he was simply Sergei. He asked when she could bring her transmitter back to life. She said in twenty-four hours. Despite her life having seemingly turned upside down over the previous few months, she was apparently able to make contact with Moscow quite effortlessly by the very next day. Such remarkable insouciance, technical and otherwise, is staggering but it was happily accepted by Macintyre.

With the Soviets now fighting for survival against Hitler, Sonya's "intelligence", gleaned from among the communist community in London, proved to be important and it soon took on quite earth-shattering significance when she was introduced to Klaus Fuchs by her brother Jürgen.

I shall not recount the Fuchs life story here. It resides among the literature and, indeed, the folk-lore of the atom bomb and its consequences for the world. Where Fuchs is important in this saga is that Sonya became his courier and go-between with Moscow. They first met in the centre of Birmingham in the late summer of 1942. As they parted Fuchs handed her a file of some 85 pages of documents: the secrets of the development of the atom bomb. Her task was to get them to Moscow. Since they contained pages of mathematical equations and diagrams, as well as reams of text, there was no way such information could

be sent by Morse code irrespective of the skill of the operator. Sonya used Sergei as the link man to the Soviet Embassy and from there the regular diplomatic pouch service did the rest. She and Fuchs continued to meet in rather more secluded surroundings in the fields and forests near Banbury. There, while maintaining their anonymity, one to another, for reasons of ultra-security, they walked hand-in-hand to add an element of normality to their country stroll and along the way Fuchs would hand Sonya yet more information. She then used a 'dead drop' among the roots of a tree some way off the road to get them to Sergei. Much mythology seems to have been attached to this story and again I shall leave it to others to tell. On one of their regular encounters, Sergei handed Sonya a miniature camera with which to make microdot photographs. He also gave her "a small but powerful transmitter measuring just 6 by 8 inches", so she told us. This borders on the ridiculous. Small and powerful are simply contradictory in this context. And, yet again, the vitally important radio receiver, as well as the means of powering them both, escaped a mention. Between them Sonya and Macintyre, her trusting scribe, take most of their readers for granted, at the very least, because such technical details can so easily be ignored but those of us with an interest in such things do bridle!

However, we must assume that

Sonya didn't invent this story, she just attenuated it. The Soviets did have a miniature transmitter and it had its companion receiver and they were both powered by a third unit containing the necessary transformer, rectifier and smoothing circuitry. It went by the name of Tensor or Tenzor (and came into service in 1942, so Sonya may well have been one of its first satisfied customers. The Tensor Mk1 was actually designed in the USA (hence its collection of readily identifiable valves) but it was also manufactured near Moscow, no doubt an example of early American lend-lease? Judging by the available photographs, each of those three separate units was of the size mentioned by Sonya so yes, she may well have had a miniature transmitter but it was not powerful since it used a single 6L6 as its class C amplifier and, as we all know, that would have produced an output of 10 watts or so across the lower HF frequencies. According to the Tensor specification, it operated between 3.7 and 14.3 MHz, under either VFO or crystal-control. The magical quartz crystal eventually makes its appearance but no thanks to our scribes.

Read the second and final part of this article in The March 2023 issue of Jimmy's Own.

Signals Association Poppy Day collection Franschhoek

The Signals Association travels to Franschhoek again to collect funds for Poppy Day.

The South African Legion holds a street collection to raise funds to assist in the welfare work among military veterans, it takes place on the Saturday nearest to Remembrance Day (11th of November).

When one buys a poppy on Poppy Day one pays tribute to those who died, and one is helping those who are left and bear the scars of war.

The members and friends of the Signals Association traditionally travels to the beautiful town of Franschhoek to collect throughout the town. This

year the collection took place on Saturday 12th November 2022. We had a team of nine members and friends to assist with the collection. With the funds collected we were able to contribute and support the SA Legion in addressing the growing needs of Military Veterans and their families in our Country.

We thank all for their efforts and hard work, in collecting, handing out of information material and making people generally aware of the significance of Remembrance Day.



POPPY DAY: The team Jess Marcus, Katherine Hart-Davi, Jeff Marcus, Lisa Ann Marcus, Geoff Laskey, Howard Shagom, Joseph Zegal and Fahmy Rhode. Absent Adi Fourie.

I HAVE BEEN

A poem by military poet and writer Clive Saunders. (Reproduced with the kind permission of Clive Saunders as submitted by Robbie Roberts)

I have been to many places,
Where I never thought I'd go.
I have mixed with famous people,
Who I never thought I'd know.
I have earned amazing lessons,
From some men I thought the best,
And as proof I have some medals,
Proudly worn upon my chest.

I was trained to be a soldier,
And I'm proud I stood my ground.
If ever I was frightened,
I had brave comrades all around.
If I ever needed heroes,
They stood beside me, row on row,
And they gave me all the courage,
To go where heroes only go.

I am so proud I was a soldier,
And share respect with those I knew.
We looked after one another,
So we could pull our comrades through.
But now, though we are older,
We still share memories when we meet,
Then argue like all brothers do,
With friends we're glad to greet.



Points to ponder

- The truth is that you always know the right thing to do. The tough part is doing it. – General Norman Schwarzkopf
- The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, whether on a football field, in an army, or in an office. – Dwight Eisenhower
- Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. – Unknown
- The world is dangerous, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing. – Albert Einstein
- “Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here. This is the war room.” - Unknown
- “I used to sell furniture for a living. The trouble was it was my own.”—Les Dawson
- “Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it most never use it.”—Anonymous
- “Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves?” —Robin Williams
- “Doing nothing is very hard to do. You never know when you’re finished.” —Leslie Nielsen
- Faith and purity are inadequate substitutes for Kevlar and good cover - Unknown
- “Most armies are in fact run by their sergeants - the officers are there just to give things a bit of tone and prevent warfare becoming a mere lower-class brawl.” - Terry Pratchett
- All warfare is based on deception - Sun Tzu
- “Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.” - Napoleon Bonaparte
- “The military don’t start wars. Politicians start wars.” - William C. Westmoreland
- “Lead me, follow me, or get the hell out of my way.” - General George S. Patton
- “Do you know what a soldier is...? He’s the chap who makes it possible for civilized folk to despise war.” - Allan Massie “Tell them of us and say, For their tomorrow, We gave our today.” - The Kohima Epitaph

Leadership

1. We must be silent before we can listen
2. We must listen before we can learn
3. We must learn before we can prepare.
4. We must prepare before we can serve
5. We must serve before we can lead

By the left, quick laugh

A bit of military humour to brighten your day.

The General said to the troops “we are not retreating - we are advancing in another direction”.

Why do navy divers fall backwards out of their boat? If they fell forwards, they would still be in the boat.

Did you know navy bases are known as temples of the sea, ...They are a place of warship.

Why couldn’t the sailors play cards?.....The captain was sitting on the deck.

In the Military Hospital operating theatre, the patient was lying on the table when there was a scream. The surgeon looked and snapped; “Nurse, I told you to remove his SPECTACLES”

Did you hear about the doctor who does circumcisions on commission?.... He works for tips

My buddy in the Air Force got injured in the war...He fell off his chair.

There was a guy named Will who decided that he never wanted to be a soldier. It was because he heard them say, “fire at will!”

What do you call a bunch of squid joining the military?.....The kalim-army.

Why did the coffee call the police so early in the morning? ...He called because he had been mugged!

Just got a new job collecting litter..... When I asked about training, they said “You’ll pick it up as you go along.”

A karate expert joined the army. The first time he saluted, he broke his leg.

What is the best way to refer to a military private who completely exposed his position to the enemy? It no longer is private but is now public!

Why do the parachute packers have the easiest jobs? Because even if their parachutes don’t work, they seldom have troops returning to complain.

What’s the main difference between the army and the boy scouts? The boy scouts have adult supervision.



Happy Birthday!

The Chairperson and Management Committee wishes you a happy birthday may you have a wonderful year ahead

DECEMBER

1st - Desmond de Beer
4th - Hendrik van Staden
5th - Louw Cornelissen
5th - Dirk Hagendoorn
11th - Johan Johnson
11th - Pierre Fourie
20th - Ian Robertson
21st - Netlam Robinson
25th - Irvin Muskett-Yetts
27th - Robert House

JANUARY

3rd - Antonio De Pentieiros
17th - Trevor Moller
24th - Geoffrey Laskey
29th - Margaret du Toit

FEBRUARY

1st - Yolandi Lot
3rd - Peter Lindsay Steyn
13th - Zikhona Moloinyana
16th - William Roberts
18th - Henri Stofberg
19th - Geruvia Naidoo
22nd - Veon Esau
23rd - Kurt Coetzee

**From the Chairperson and
Management Committee of
the Signals Association, we
wish all our Christian
members, their families, and
our readers a very blessed
Christmas and a peaceful
New Year.**

