



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 30 - December 2023

Comms during the wars

A look at communication during the World Wars

On Parade

Parades and
functions attended
in 2023



Double Celebration

SACS turns 100 and our 23rd Birthday Luncheon

Message from the Chairman and Editor

Time flies, and we've already reached the conclusion of 2023.

As another year draws to a close most of you will be in the midst of preparations for this festive season. This is a very special time of the year as it gives members a break from the hustle and bustle of our everyday activities and schedules. It provides many of us with some time to enjoy the company of family and friends that is all too often missing for the rest of the year.

The year 2023 without a doubt, has been one of the most exciting years for the Signals Association being the centenary year for the South African Corps of Signals. Across the Country celebrations and parades were held and there are still some more to follow in 2024 at Wonderboom at the Signal Formation. I urge all Signallers to reflect on these special moments and savour the relationships that we have tried so hard to cultivate over the years.

At the same time, this year has been one of some sadness as we have lost a number of wonderful members in the Signals family and some dear family and friends are going through some difficult situations within their family environments. Whilst keeping with the spirit of this joyous time, it is equally important to take a few moments and recall these other events and keep these people in our thoughts and our prayers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Management Committee

and members of the Association for their support and efforts throughout the year to ensure that the Association and its members are well looked after. Not known to all there are needs and requests directed at Manco which requires a lot of time, efforts, and patience, but I want to ensure you that your work and time is greatly appreciated.

To all who contribute to the activities of the Association thank you for your willingness and dedication to ensure proper governance of our Association.

Lastly, to all our members, my sincere appreciation for your support of the Association and the pride you demonstrate at being members of the Signals Veteran organisation. You are the source of the strength of our Association.

To our Christian members, may the Christmas spirit bring you peace and joy, as well as everything you desire. To our other members, enjoy the holidays and break from work and just being with your families.

I'm looking forward to another fantastic year of collaboration and teamwork throughout the Country in our efforts to support our members and to foster and encourage the continuation of the "esprit du corps", image and traditions of Signallers.

Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones.

Certa Cito Greetings

Geoff Laskey
Editor/ Chairperson

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Comms during the World Wars

Communication has always played a vital role in the military. This was especially the case during the two World Wars.

As battlefields and armies grew in size, the need for effective long-distance communication became more urgent. Paper messages were carried by human couriers, as well as carrier pigeons and dogs, with varying degrees of reliability.

World War I

Traditional signalling systems such as semaphore, flares, and heliographs were joined on the battlefield by new forms of telegraphy, based on electricity.

Cable telegraphy, which depended on long wires connecting fragile telegraph machines, and wireless telegraphy, which demanded cumbersome hardware, were vulnerable to interception by the enemy.

Notably, the entry of America into the conflict in 1917 was precipitated by the interception of a German telegram.



Semaphore Flags

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin UK
- Type Signaling

The semaphore flag signaling system was developed for use as a way of communicating between ships in the 19th century, and remained in use until rendered obsolete by the introduction of lightweight radios.

A practiced signaler could signal a dozen or more words per minute.



Pigeon message capsule

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin UK
- Type Message dispatch

During the war, thousands of messenger pigeons were used by the British and German armies.

Messages written on rice paper and folded to fit into containers such as this were attached to the birds' legs.



Dog collar

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin UK
- Type Message dispatch

Under some circumstances, usually in areas where it was deemed too dangerous to send a man, trained dogs were used to carry messages, secreted either in harnesses or simple collars.



Heliograph Mk V

- Date 1916
- Origin UK
- Type Signaling

The first practical heliograph - a mirror used for flashing sunlight - was developed in India in the 1860s.

Lightweight, needing no power source, and difficult to intercept, they were extremely useful and remained in service until the 1970s.



Megaphone

- Date 1915
- Origin UK
- Type Signaling

The battlefield can be a noisy environment at the best of times - explosions, rifle and machine gun fire, the screams of the wounded. It was often difficult if not impossible for verbal commands to be heard above the din of battle. This is where the cheap, yet effective, megaphone came into play.

It could amplify the voice, making it easier to hear verbal commands. It was still in use by the Russians in World War II.



Wheatstone telegraph

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin UK
- Type Telegraphy

Based on technology developed by British scientist Charles Wheatstone



Message pad

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin UK
- Type Message dispatch

Officers in the front line were supplied with message pads bound in leather and canvas covers.

in the 1830s, the Wheatstone telegraph used a punch-tape system to transmit up to 100 words per minute.

1. Reader for punched paper tape.
2. Indicator dial displays incoming message character by character.
3. Morse key.



Signalling whistle

- Date 1914
- Origin UK
- Type Signalling

A whistle-blast was the usual signal for pre-planned actions, such as an assault or a machine-gun barrage.



Flare pistol

- Date 1907
- Origin Germany
- Type Signalling

The 27mm calibre flare pistol was of simple steel and wood construction. The firing mechanism consists of a sprung cocking handle, which acted as a firing pin when released by the trigger.



Field telephone

- Date 1914–1918
- Origin Germany
- Type Telephony

Field telephones were used extensively throughout World War I, mostly to allow front-line units to communicate with headquarters to the rear.

However, they relied on cables that were extremely fragile and had to be repaired frequently.

World War II

Between World War I and World War II great strides were made in both wired and wireless communications technology, the latter reaching a point at which it was possible to build reliable transmitter/receiver sets (transceivers) that would fit into a small suitcase.

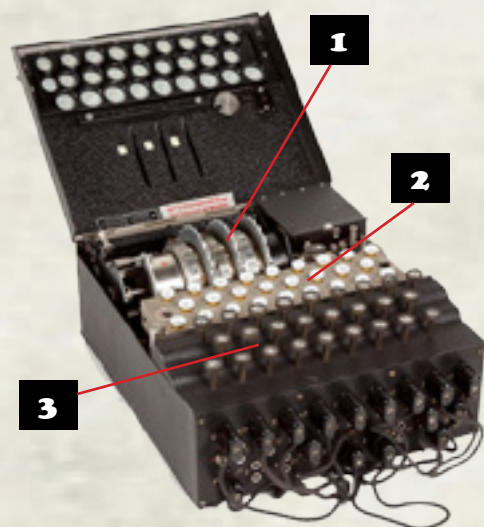
By 1939, mechanical calculators were commonplace in the business world, and the technology they employed was increasingly used to mechanize the encoding of messages, making them very difficult to decipher if intercepted.

During World War II, these two apparently disparate disciplines joined forces to create the first electromechanical (and later electronic) computers, which were developed specifically as aids to code-breaking.

The Enigma code was first broken by the Poles, under the leadership of mathematician Marian Rejewski, in the early 1930s.

In 1939, with the growing likelihood of a German invasion, the Poles turned their information over to the British, who set up a secret code-breaking group known as Ultra, un-

der mathematician Alan M. Turing. Because the Germans shared their encryption device with the Japanese, Ultra also contributed to Allied victories in the Pacific.



Enigma

- Date 1926–1950s
- Origin Germany
- Type Encoding/decoding device

The operator turned Enigma's rotors to a random setting and typed the message to be encoded using the keys below - each keystroke advancing the rotors so that repeating the same keystroke gave a different result each time. Decoding reversed this process.

1. Setting rotors.
2. Illuminated indicators showed encoded character.
3. Input keyboard.



WS18

- Date 1939
- Origin UK
- Type Radio transceiver

Described as being “for short range telephony in forward areas,” the Wireless Set 18 had an effective transmission range of 5 miles (8km).

It was issued in 1939, and was the first “man-pack” radio transceiver put into series production for the British Army.



Paraset suitcase radio receiver

- Date 1940
- Origin UK
- Type Radio transceiver

The first miniature radio transceiver for clandestine use, the Whaddon Mk

VII Paraset was the absolute minimum needed to set up two-way communication over distances of up to 500 miles (800km).

It included a built-in Morse key that was almost silent in operation.



Kryha

- Date 1920s–1940s
- Origin Germany
- Type Encoding/decoding device

Simpler in character than Enigma, Kryha was considerably less secure - a 1,135 characters-long test message was successfully broken by an American team within three hours.

This purely mechanical device, however, had the advantage of being much smaller and lighter than the Enigma.

This meant that it was ideal for units on the move and was suited to the rapid advancements during the initial stages of the German attacks on the Western and Eastern Fronts.



M209B

- Date 1940–1955
- Origin US
- Type Encoding/decoding device

A purely mechanical encryption device, the M209 employed six alphabetic wheels to set up the initial key.

The message was then entered one character at a time via the wheel on the left.

The result was printed on paper tape, and the rotor settings advanced. Reversing the procedure permitted decoding. M209's output was decoded by German code-breakers by early 1943.



Type A Mk III Suitcase radio transceiver

- Date 1944
- Origin UK
- Type Radio transceiver

This was the most widely used of the British “spy radios,” and technically the best of them.

It had a transmission range of over 500 miles (800km).

Packed into a suitcase just 10cm deep, along with spares and accessories, it weighed only 4kg in total.

It was used almost exclusively by agents of the British SOE (Special Operations Executive) when operating behind enemy lines or in occupied Europe.



Type EE-8-B US Army Field Telephone

- Date 1944
- Origin US
- Type Field telephone set

For security reasons, battlefield communication during the war, especially between rear-echelon command posts and front-line units, was still carried out by means of land lines rather than by radio wherever possible.

This was to avoid the need for time-consuming encoding and decoding.

The problem was that the wires would often be cut by shell fire. It was more often than not the job of the signaller to go out and find and repair the broken line. This made them a prime target for any snipers operating in the area.



Field telephone Model 92

- Date 1932
- Origin Japan
- Type Field telephone set

Developed in peacetime by the Oki Electric Co, this field telephone was manufactured to a very high standard.

The wooden case housed a generator, the headset, batteries, and spares.

The Japanese employed the “ground return” system, which was both less secure and less reliable than using twin cables.

Many American-born Japanese served with the US Armed Forces, so understanding and translating the language was never a problem.

Double celebration

The South African Corps of Signals (SACS) had their Centenary Celebrations – 1923 to 2023, and it was combined with the 23rd Association Birthday luncheon.

The year 2023, without a doubt, has been one of the most exciting years for the Signals Association being the centenary year of the South African Corps of Signals.

Across the Country, celebrations and parades were held and there are still some more to follow in 2024 at Wonderboom at the Signals Formation.

On Saturday, 18 November 2023 the Signals Association in Cape Town hosted a combined SACS Centenary and 23rd Association Birthday luncheon at the SA Legion's Rosedale complex in Cape Town when 38 members, families, and friends of the Association gathered in celebration.

The proceedings were opened by the Chairperson, Geoff Laskey, welcoming guests and the lighting of the 'Flame of the Signaller' by association President, Robbie Roberts.

The Chairperson explained that a flame is commonly associated with the qualities of energy, but it is important to

**Signals Association President
Robbie Roberts**



note that fire consumes, but not without giving back light and warmth. In this regard he said that the Signals Association strive to focus its energy in giving back light and warmth to its fellow veterans and their families in need.

He, however, also emphasized that the Association's Flame was also a symbol of eternity used to remember those who are no longer with us for the service they gave to Corps of Signals and our country and the Association.

Thereafter, the President of the Association honoured the 3rd Bde Sig Company and its Reunion Association who originally initiated the Annual luncheon in May 1946.

Alderman Ian Neilson of the City of Cape Town represented the Mayor of Cape Town, Alderman Geordin Hill-Lewis, and was also the guest speaker at the event. Alderman Neil-



WELCOME: Signals Association Chairman Geoff Laskey welcomes everyone to the event.



SPECIAL GUESTS: From left to right: Signals Association President Robbie Roberts, guest speaker Alderman Ian Neilson, and Alderman Clive Justus.



OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Five Officer of 71 Signal Unit in Attendance at S A Legion Rosedale facility in Cape Town, Marc Goodleser Robbie Roberts, Geoff Laskey, Johan Johnson and Ian Robertson.

son emphasized the importance of communication in the Military sphere and also emphasised the important developments in the fields of communication in general world-wide but also the pivotal role the military play in the development and application of modern technology in ensuring effective military operations and managing the safety of our Country.

On Sunday 19 November 2023, under the auspices of the Gauteng Bunker of the Signals Association held a successful flag Hoisting and luncheon in recognition of the 100th birthday of

the SACS. At this event a plaque was also unveiled in honour of the SACS Centenary celebrations.

At this event Brig Gen (Ret) Denis Jelliman, an honorary member of the Signals Association, unveiled a plaque to commemorate the centenary celebrations of the SACS. This was followed by a Luncheon at GEMS Village where Brig Gen (Ret) Ian Fordred welcomed everyone, and in his speech, said “The history of the Corps of Signals is a testament to the critical role we play as Signallers and communicators. We are the silent en-



UNVEILING: Brig Gen (Ret) Denis Jelliman (Right) and Lt Col (Ret) Andre Grobler, both members of the Signals Association at the unveiling the Corps of Signals plaque at GEM village on 19 November 2023.

ablers of command and control, enabling our commanders to make informed decisions on the battlefield and managing crucial information for the Department of Defence. Today, we take a moment to pay homage to this legacy and the men and women who have contributed to it”.

Gen Fordred also emphasised the importance of training for all Signallers, whether as full-time force members, citizen force members, or national service men, to not only perform their function in the first instance, but also concentrate on the fact that the training, both given and received,

was not just a formality, but a necessity, and a preparation to qualify our signal and communicator personnel to provide essential ICT support to operations.

General Fordred concluded the Gauteng event by congratulating every signaller and communicator who has served with honour and distinction in the SACS and expressed his appreciation for their dedication, service, and for being the heart that has kept the SACS sound.- “Certa Cito”, the Signallers Motto meaning ‘Swift and Sure’.

Both the President of the Association, at the Cape Town event, and General Fordred, at the Pretoria event, asked all to drink a toast to the South African Corps of Signals.

All in all, a worthy tribute by Signaller Veterans to the 100th birthday of the SACS.



Parades and Functions

Some of the Parades and Functions attended by the Signals Association.

As usual the period towards the end of the year is fairly busy as far as functions and memorial parades are concerned. The Signals Association endeavour to support and attend these functions as far as possible.

In addition, we also had our own Corps of Signals centenary celebrations which we were honoured to participate in.

Here are a few of the events we attended:



Annual Kelvin Grove Military function 5 October 2023
Chairman Geoff Laskey and Manco Member Tim Reilly.



Poppy Welfare Fund Collection Franschhoek 11 November 2023

From left to right: Kevin Wistler, Adi Fourie, Liza Marcus, Geoff Laskey, Jeff Marcus and Jess Marcus.



City of Cape Town Day of Remembrance 12 November 2023
Piet Jordaan, Association PRO.



Day Of Remembrance Point Cenotaph Mossel Bay 11 November 2023
Deon Potgieter previously D Projects and Sias Coetzee previously 82 Sigs.

Savannah parade 3 September 2023

Marina Valentine Attended Operation Savannah Operation Savannah was the South African code name for their military incursion into Angola from August 1975 to March 1976.

It was part of the South African Border War and arose due to the Angolan War of Independence. Annually during September, a remembrance

Day of remembrance

Remembrance Day is a memorial day observed in Commonwealth member states since the end of the First World War to honour armed forces members who have died in the line of duty. The day is also marked by war remembrances in several other non-Commonwealth countries.

It became universally associated with the remembrance of those who

service is conducted for members of the SANDF who participated in this Operation.

As a matter of interest, as the result of the War a half-million Portuguese and other foreign nationals in Angola, had nowhere to go and a haven outside was hard to find. But many Portuguese in Angola, fled in convoys to South West Africa (Namibia).

had died in the war. Originally known as Armistice Day, it was renamed Remembrance Day after World War Two to commemorate those who were killed in both World Wars.

In South Africa Events this day is observed by many Cities and Veteran Organisations, and where possible representatives of the Association attended these events and laid wreaths on behalf of the Association.



Red Cross Memorial Childrens Hospital Day of Remembrance Ceremony 10 November 2023

Peter Longbottom, Geoff Laskey, Ian Robertson and Maurice Espin.



Remembrance Day St Johns College Port Elizabeth 10 November 2023
Ivor Markman attended.

Day of Remembrance Pretoria 11th November 2023



Something to ponder

Billionaire Steve Jobs, who died at the age of 56, had the following to say about life:

As we grow older, and hence wiser, we slowly realise that:

- Wearing a \$300 or \$30 watch - they both tell the same time,
- Whether we carry a \$300 or \$30 wallet/handbag - the amount of money inside is the same,
- Whether we drive a \$150,000 car or a \$30,000 car, the road and distance is the same, and we get to the same destination,
- Whether we drink a bottle of \$300 or \$10 wine - the hangover is the same,

- Whether the house we live in is 300 or 3,000 sq ft - loneliness is the same.

Your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world. Whether you fly first or economy class, if the plane goes down - you go down with it.

Therefore, I hope you realise, when you have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, who you chat with, laugh with, talk with, sing songs with, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth ... That is true happiness!!

Message from our President

In my end of year message a year ago I felt confident that my successor, Geoff Laskey, who followed me as long standing chairman, was the right person to take over from me to ensure the continuation of what had been achieved up to and including that time.

I was spot-on and I could sit back this past year, away from executive responsibilities, and witness how Geoff and his management team have been, and are still performing.

It is pleasing for me, as President, to witness the degree of professionalism within which the current management team (MANCO) is executing their duties for the good of our association and it will be remiss of me not to add my congratulations to Geoff and his dedicated guys.

Our association continues to enjoy the respect of many other military veterans, particularly amongst the Signals fraternity in our country. This was proven given the vast response from Signallers countrywide who have recently responded positively to postings in the Facebook pages of both the Signals Association and the SA Seinkorps when Jimmies got together in Cape Town and Gauteng in celebration of the 100 years of existence of the SA Corps of Signals (SACS).

At the Centenary luncheon hosted in Cape Town on Saturday 18 November, which was combined with the

23rd Birthday of the Signals Association, I was honoured being asked to pay tribute to our forerunners, being the WWII veterans of the 3rd Brigade Signal Company and its Reunion Association who ceremoniously handed over their 70 year old tradition of meeting every year, without fail, between 1946 and 2016, to our association. I furthermore had the honour to toast the 100 years of the SACS.

In Pretoria, Ian Fordred had the honours the very next day by calling upon all Jimmies who gathered there in celebration, to drink a toast to the SACS.

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 2024 be a prosperous and safe one for you all and may you furthermore be blessed with good health.

Certa Cito Veteran greetings.
Robbie Roberts

Mind your P's and Q's

So what exactly is the 'Phonetic Alphabet', and why do we use it?

Spell "Mike India Lima India Tango Alpha Romeo Yankee, break, Delta Echo Sierra Papa Alpha Tango Charlie Hotel Echo Sierra."

Now most of you will recognise that as 'Military Despatches' spelt out using the phonetic alphabet.

The phonetic alphabet is commonly used when speaking via radio. It is not uncommon for there to be static or interference when communicating via radio and it is easy to mishear what is actually being said - even when someone spells out a word.

The letter C could be misheard as B, D, E, G, P, T or V. Likewise, Q and U sound similar. This is why the phonetic alphabet was introduced.

These days there is an international phonetic alphabet, and everyone uses it. It has been in use since 1956 and is as follows.

A - Alpha
B - Bravo
C - Charlie
D - Delta
E - Echo
F - Foxtrot
G - Golf
H - Hotel
I - India
J - Juliett
K - Kilo
L - Lima
M - Mike

N - November
O - Oscar
P - Papa
Q - Quebec
R - Romeo
S - Sierra
T - Tango
U - Uniform
V - Victor
W - Whisky
X - X-ray
Y - Yankee
Z - Zulu

Now while this is the phonetic alphabet as used throughout the world today, this wasn't always the case.

During World War II the British and Americans had their own phonetic alphabets that they used.

British Army

A - Ack
B - Beer
C - Cork
D - Don
E - Eddy
F - Freddy
G - George
H - Harry
I - Ink
J - Jug
K - King
L - London
M - Emma

N - Nuts
O - Orange
P - Pip
Q - Quad
R - Robert
S - Esses
T - Toc
U - Uncle
V - Vic
W - William
X - Xerxes
Y - Yellow
Z - Zebra

It is interesting to note that both the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force had their own phonetic alphabets. The American military also had their own phonetic alphabet.

American Army

A - Able
B - Baker
C - Cast
D - Dog
E - Easy
F - Fox
G - George
H - Hypo
I - Int
J - Jig
K - King
L - Love
M - Mike
N - Negat
O - Option
P - Prep
Q - Quack
R - Roger

S - Sail
T - Tare
U - Unit
V - Vice
W - William
X - X-ray
Y - Yoke
Z - Zed

During World War II the German military also used their own unique phonetic alphabet.

German Army

A - Anton
B - Berta/Bruno
C - Caeser
D - Dora
E - Emil
F - Friedrich/Fritz
G - Gustav
H - Heinrich
I - Ida
J - Josef
K - Konrad/Kurfust
L - Ludwig
M - Martha
N - Nordpol
O - Otto
P - Paula
Q - Quelle
R - Richard
S - Siegfried
T - Toni
U - Ulrich
V - Viktor
W - Wilhelm
X - Xantippe
Y - Ypern

Z - Zeppelin

I personally recall being in the Ops room at a place called Okalongo when an infantry captain was sending a radio message through to his headquarters at Ngongo.

His version of the phonetic alphabet was something to behold. His alphabet included words such as Alcohol, Brandy, Castle, Gin, Rum, Tequila, Vodka and Whisky (at least he got this one right). He sounded like a walking advertisement for a bottle store.

The poor signaller was turning red in the face trying to suppress his laughter. Of course it didn't help when the person on the other end of the ra-

dio, a major, said, "Use the right blerry words man. Who learned you the blerry radio alphabets."

It was too much for the signaller who fell off his chair, doubled over with laughter. It earned the poor young troopie seven extra duties. I at least managed to run out of the ops rooms before I cracked up with laughter.

I'm sure a few of you out there must have an amusing story or two about the subject. So how about telling the rest of us? Or how about coming up with your own phonetic alphabet.

I had a mate who was a pilot and he came up with his own phonetic alphabet which, unfortunately, I can't print here. Every word was a swear word.



Annual Poppy Day

“In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow, Between the crosses, row on row”. The opening line from the poem “In Flanders Field” by John McCrae.

The poppy became a symbol of remembrance and is worn during November as a sign of respect to those that made the ultimate sacrifice dur-

ing war. Every year the South African Legion, the oldest military veterans organisation in South Africa, holds a ‘Poppy Day’ to raise funds for military veterans.

PAMELA POOLE, Poppy Coordinator, sent us through these photographs.



ABOVE: Members of the Signals Association do their bit. From left to right: Kevin Wistler, Adi Fourie, Liza Marcus, Geoff Laskey, Jeff Marcus and Jess Marcus.

OPPOSITE PAGE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): The SA Legion stall at Meadowridge Shopping Centre.

Peter Malan and John Souter at Meadowridge Shopping Centre.

Legionnaire Peter Dickens, President of the SA Legion Branch UK and EU and Old Bill of Seagull Shellhole on Poppy Day Collection.





ABOVE: Legionnaires E. Muller (Parachute Battalion), Billy Boshoff (Selous Scouts), and Jim Harwood (Parachute Battalion).

RIGHT): Karen Dickens (left).



ABOVE: Members of the Sea Cadets played their part in Poppy Day.

BELOW: SA Naval Forces (World War II) Veteran Able Seaman Small, 99 years old.



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 send you many good wishes on your special day.

December

1st Desmond de Beer

4th Hendrik van Staden
5th Louw Cornelissen
5th Dirk Hagendoorn
11th Johan Johnson
20th Ian Robertson

January

24th Geoffrey Laskey
29th Margaret du Toit

February

3rd Peter Lindsay Steyn
12th Ian Fordred
16th Robbie Roberts



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.

