

ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS

A SHORT HISTORY

Armies in the field have used some form of signalling since the very earliest times. Smoke, beacons, the 'Murray Telegraph' Semaphore machines all played their part and in 1835 the Morse Code was invented, and the development of the first electric telegraph. It was the experience gained in the Crimea War that led to the formation of the Signal Wing of the Royal Engineers (RE) and the Telegraph Troop, C Troop RE, saw service in the Zulu War using the heliograph. With the invention of the telephone in 1876 a new era began. C Troop and the Postal Telegraph Companies amalgamated and played a major role in the Ashanti campaign of 1895-1896.

Shortly before the First World War the RE Signal Service was formed and by the end of WW1 communications had expanded beyond expectation with a comparatively lavish service, based on a balanced system of telegraph, telephone and despatch facilities. The introduction of wireless, with its extended ranges, particularly appealed to Commanders who now recognised the extent to which they depended upon efficient communication.

Although official agreement to form a separate Signal Corps was made in 1918, various bureaucratic delays interfered until, on 28th June 1920, a Royal Warrant was signed by the Secretary of State for War, The Rt Hon Winston Churchill, giving approval to the formation of the Corps of Signals. His Majesty King George V conferred the high honour of the title 'Royal' on 5th August in the same year.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's the Corps increased its strength and had personnel serving in overseas stations which included Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon, Egypt, Jamaica and many other outposts of the Empire. Valuable active service experience was gained in campaigns on the North West Frontier.

During the Second World War the Royal Corps of Signals expanded from 541 Officers and 9,837 soldiers in September 1939 to 8,518 Officers and 142,472 soldiers by 1945. Some 4,631 were killed or wounded in action.

During post war campaigns the Corps has played an active part in Palestine (1945-48), Malaya (1949-60), The Korean War, counter terrorist actions in Cyprus, Borneo, Aden, Arabian Peninsula, Kenya, Belize and Northern Ireland. In recent history, and to date, The Corps has deployed units and individuals on operations in The New Hebrides, Zimbabwe, The Falklands, Lebanon, Namibia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierre Leone and the Middle East/Gulf.

Wherever the British Army are involved, the Royal Signals has been represented, providing the vital communications so essential to effective command and control in circumstances ranging from active service operations to humanitarian aid.

Blandford is the home of the Royal Signals. The Signal Officer in Chief (Army), his Headquarters and the Regimental Headquarters are all located here. The Corps continues to work to provide professionally delivered, state of the art communications and information systems for the British Army and to live up to its motto of 'Certa Cito' which, freely translated means 'Swift and Sure'.