



**A General History of  
32nd (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers)  
(1859 to Present Day)**

**Rewritten from a 1972 original**

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# **The Scottish Volunteer Signals**

## ***Early Signals***

Various types of message passing have been used in Scotland since the time immemorial, from the hand signals of Megalithic Man as he practised a form of Pythagorean geometry for his lunar and solar observations nearly four thousand years ago; to the beacon which warned the Borderers of the approach of Roman, Saxon, Norman and English; and the fiery cross which roused the Gael of the Highlands in time of war.

## ***The Volunteers***

After the disasters of the Crimean War and the realisation that the magnificent reserve force of 300,000 Militia and Volunteers of 1805 had shrunk to 15,000 and the Army's siege train was still as inadequate as Wellington had claimed as far back as the first siege of Badajoz in 1810, an attempt was made in 1859 to recreate the volunteer force of the Napoleonic Wars. Taking cognisance of the inadequacy of the Engineer Establishment of the Army, belated exertions were made to rectify this:

On 12 May 1859 the War Office sanctioned the creation of the Volunteer Force in Great Britain and General Peel, the Secretary of State for War, signed a circular to all Lord Lieutenants granting them authority to raise volunteer units in their respective counties.

In the next fifty years the Volunteers were to grow to a force numbering 278,329 in 1907, the year before the formation of the Territorial Force. Their limiting factor however was that they were organised only for local defence.

## ***The Territorial Force***

Following the early defeats of the South African War came the realisation that the army still had insufficient reserves capable of taking the field on the outbreak of a general war. This in turn led to the Haldane reforms of the Army and Territorial Force in 1908. In 1909 the first year after the creation of the Territorial Force its strength was 254,524. The figures for the Engineers in Scotland were:

Highland District:	Establishment	597
	Strength	504
Lowland District:	Establishment	1,435
	Strength	1,598

With little reorganisation the Territorials were to prove their worth in two major wars and win enduring glory in the annals of the British Army.

## **52 (Lowland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

### ***Lanarkshire Engineer Volunteers***

On 28 November 1859 at a meeting held in the Scottish Exhibition Rooms, Bath Street, Glasgow it was decided to raise a Volunteer unit of Military Engineers.

A number of civil engineers, architects, surveyors, measurers etc agreed to offer their services in the formation of the unit. The unit under the command of Captain Ronald Johnstone was the first Engineer unit raised in Great Britain. Unfortunately they were not registered at the War Office until 27 February 1860 during which time a London Engineer Unit was raised and officially registered, therefore, in the order of precedence to the 32 counties with Territorial Army Units, Glasgow takes second place to London. The first “drill” took place on 5 December 1859 in the Scottish Exhibition Rooms, Bath Street. It was known as the 1<sup>st</sup> Lanarkshire Military Engineers. A second unit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lanarkshire Military Engineers was raised on 9 May 1860. Their first major parade was held on Glasgow Green on 24 May 1860 to commemorate the Queen’s birthday.

At a review of the Volunteers by HM Queen Victoria at Holyrood Park, Edinburgh on 7 August 1860 the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lanarkshire Engineers were under the command of Captain Johnstone their combined strength was 185 all ranks. All expenses were borne by the volunteers out of their own pockets.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Lanarkshire Military Engineers were formed on 28 April 1862 with their headquarters at Calder, near Kirkintilloch. A major reorganisation took place in 1863 when the 97<sup>th</sup> Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers (The Glasgow Guards of four companies) amalgamated with the three units of the Lanarkshire Engineer Volunteers. The unit was now organised into 6 Coys with HQ at 115 West Campbell Street, Glasgow C2. The uniform of the Regular R Engineers was adopted in 1863 and the link with Jardine Street was first established in 1864 with its adoption as the Corps training ground, a link it was to retain to the present day.

The Corps under the Command of Ronald Johnstone went from strength to strength and he later became Colonel and first Honorary Colonel of the Regiment. The role of the Corps became the garrison engineers of the Leith Forts for the defence of Edinburgh during the Prussian scare of 1864 and the French scare of 1866.

The Volunteers of the time appeared to have been enthusiastic and studious. They studied Vaubans systems of fortification and the writings of Colonel Jones, Wellington’s Chief Engineer. Later the merits of the French and Prussian battery systems at the siege of Paris were vigorously debated. At the annual dinner of 1878, a lecture on Osman Pashas heroic defence of Plevna was well received. Contemporary photographs show observation towers built at the Kelvinside training ground towering above the surrounding tenements; flying, trestle and suspension bridges were built over the Kelvin at the spot were the RHQ stands to this day.

On “field days”, the Kelvin was defended and assaulted while “torpedoes” were exploded to simulated bridge demolition to the delight of the Glasgow populace who invariably watched in their thousands. Recruiting literature of the day included testimonials from empire builders in various, distant, parts of the world testifying to the value of their early military engineering training with the Lanarkshire Engineer Volunteers.

In 1894 a Telegraph Company was added to the unit, and in the same year the new headquarters was opened in Jardine Street. The cost of this, a half timbered pseudo Tudor building, was borne by the unit and raised by subscription, fetes, bazaars etc. It still stands today and is possibly the oldest used drill hall in Scotland, dare we say Great Britain?

Their first opportunity for active service came in 1900 when volunteers were called for, to serve in South Africa. Two sections of two officers, Lt J Lang and Lt J H Fleming and 99 men subsequently served there.

On arrival in South Africa the unit moved to Velgelegen where they built a railway deviation bridge with crib piers 34 feet high. They then took part in the general advance to Pretoria, building more deviation bridges to replace those destroyed by the Boers on the way. At Pretoria their first task was to help strengthen the defences of the town and in repairing a steam and oil engine for the town water supply pumping system, here the experience of the Clydesiders was particularly useful. Until the end of the operation they were nominally stationed at Pretoria but were usually on trek with mobile columns. At the end of the war they returned to Jardine Street with a Boer flag, assorted captured weapons – which can still be seen today in the Officers' Mess – and a new Honorary Colonel, General The Lord Kitchener of Khartoum who had been their Commander in Chief in South Africa, an appointment he was to hold until his death in 1916.

Annual Camps were now permitted and the Glasgow Engineers held their first one at Dunoon in 1902 where field work construction and artesian well drilling were the order of the day.

In the shake up which followed the Boer War and the subsequent Haldane reforms, the Territorial Force was formed in 1908 and considerable reorganisation took place. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lanarkshire Engineers became the Glasgow Group RE TF, whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lanarkshire Engineers became the 1<sup>st</sup> Lowland Divisional Engineers TF.

The Glasgow Group stayed at Jardine Street and were organised into Wireless Cable and Air Line companies. They also provided the Field Company for the 1/1<sup>st</sup> Highland Div. Their training at this time appeared to be more hilarious and edifying, and no one appeared to have any conception of what they would do in war other than galloping across the veldt laying a single cable to an unknown destination.

For Annual Camp it was the custom to receive the horses at Jardine Street about 5am, sort them into draft and riders, harness up somehow and – the main aim – get clear of Glasgow area before pub opening time at 8am. The deadline was missed on a few notable occasions. Once the Lugton Inn was not cleared before opening time and the subsequent ride through Barrhead was enlivened by the uproarious soldier on Cable and GS wagons to the delight of the local populace. One, Sapper McGonigle, a saddler fell off a wagon at Eglinton Toll and declared he was going home by subway; he was never seen again. On another occasion the Great Western Road was the scene of some excitement when two fully teamed and packed cable wagons bracketed two trams which in turn were indelicately sandwiching a third cable wagon.

In 1914 the Group had dispersed after Summer Camp when the order came to mobilise. This was unfortunate as the horses had already been released to their owners and had to be collected again, this time in the midst of general mobilisation and fierce competition for them, and we did not do at all well, each unit had its own territory and ours was not a good area for horse recruitment, in addition there was dark suspicion that the 5<sup>th</sup> Cameronians had poached on our territory.

The Group moved to Bannockburn and most of the horses took sick, this however did not prevent the despatch of Wireless, Cable and Air Line Sections IV, VI and X Corps and also the 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted

Division of Imperial Yeomanry. The rump of the Group then moved to Hitchin where it formed the Hitchin Signal Depot under the command of Lt Col J A Rose, TD.

IV Corps Signals arrived in France in time for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle of Ypres and were the first territorials to see action. Here they were commanded by General Sir Henry Wilson one of the few senior commanders of the time to use the telephone (military historians will remember his famous telephone call to General Smith-Dorrien just before the battle of Le Cateau in 1914). A telephone exchange dating from the Boer War, part of the Jardine Street stores, had to be set up. Sir Henry spoke each morning to his two divisional commanders with much ceremonial. As he left the WC after breakfast and started down the stair an orderly gave the Signal Office the news and the Divisional Commanders were fetched to the telephone in time for the Corps Commander.

VI Corps Signals left from Hitchin and rang a dinner bell from the back of a truck all the way to Southampton. Just south of Aldershot the King and Queen with Princess Mary passed in their car. The princess laughed and waved to the ring of the bell. It was to be 22 years before she was to meet the bell ringers face to face when she presented 52 Lowland Signals with a Pipe Banner in 1938. The staff of VI Corps were reputed to have been an astonishing collection even at that time. One General Ludlow – head of Q Branch – had his own way of dealing with recalcitrant telephones, he threw it on the ground and danced on it before calling for Signals.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in maintaining overhead cable routes, these were shelled continuously and either the cables or poles blown down. Later 6 foot trenches were dug to protect the cables from shell fire, and test points were established at places considered safe. Ypres in the summer of 1915 was extensively damaged, largely abandoned but constantly patrolled to prevent looting; it nevertheless remained a picturesque little city, which still retained its old ramparts of a Vauban defence system. These were honeycombed with headquarters which had to be served by cable routes, the test point of these were naturally located in the deepest and best stocked cellars of the city and if the bottles taken out in sandbags under the noses of patrolling Genedarmes did not contain Highland mist it was the next best thing for keeping up Scottish morale in war.

## ***1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Divisional Signals***

Shortly after mobilisation in 1914 two Cable Sections were despatched to Bury St Edmunds to form No 1 Troop of a Signal Squadron for the 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Division. The day after they arrived they were inspected by General Alderson, the Divisional Commander. Our idea of horsemanship and those of the Yeomanry appeared to disagree, and at the end of the visit with admirable self restraint he said he had learned from our CO that we were mostly plumbers, and he would well believe it.

As we have already said, our horses were not of the best and they appeared to have caused considerable amusement to the English staff officers who came from miles around to have a look at the camel like features from Glasgow. Many of those animals were to stay with the unit for a long time and although unprepossessing in appearance were tough and did excellent service.

This Troop also had only one uniform, which was by no means new when war broke out. With the activity of intense training the seat of riding breeches naturally soon wore out. Ordnance said they were Territorial Troops and so could not have WD clothing, but to try the TA Association. The Suffolk Association said that they were out of their area and they could not deal with it. In the meantime the Division APM began to arrest the Scottish Signallers for indecent exposure, in desperation the walking out dress was summoned from Jardine Street, scarlet tunics and blue

coveralls with a red stripe. One, LCpl McLean, was a piper in the Group Band, his full dress was a green doublet with much silver trimmings, a Royal Stewart kilt and plaid, and a Glengarry with a blackcock's feather. His first appearance in Bury driving a GS wagon to collect rations caused a sensation. The APM now arrested him for being overdressed. They finally got their WD dress at Christmas 1914.

## **52 (Lowland) Divisional Signals TF**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lanarkshire RE Volunteers emerged from the Haldane reforms and the organisation of the Territorial Force as the 1<sup>st</sup> Lowland Divisional Telegraph Coy RE. The HQ was at Rutherglen and a friendly rivalry existed with their old friends at Jardine Street. Exercises were of the horse and line laying variety and on one notable occasion in 1912 some Fife miners attempted to steal their cable. The subsequent outcome is not recorded for posterity.

On Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 the unit was attending Annual Camp at Troon when the Divisional HQ received a single worded wire at 5.25pm "Mobilize" and they went straight to their war station at the Bridge of Allan. The role of the Div at this time being the defence of the Forth/Clyde bridges and the East coast of Scotland.

Feverishly all prepared for a war few, if any, had any conception. Tactics were simple, lay a line between two places and attach a telephone at each end, a smattering of morse by flag was understood by a few; these were the extent of their signals knowledge. But the human material which formed the company was splendid stuff, they were to evolve their own tactics in an abundantly hard school during a very short space of time, and win the whole hearted admiration of an exceedingly tough enemy. It was then, and was to remain until the end of the war, essentially Lowland in character.

In early 1915 it was announced that the destination of the division was France, later however the improvement of the situation on the Western Front especially at Ypres decided the War Office to use them elsewhere and on 7 May it was announced that the destination of the Lowlanders was the Dardanelles where Sir Ian Hamilton was in urgent need of reinforcements in his attempt to open a passage through the Dardanelles to supply Russia through the short southern route. A plan which had it succeeded might have had far reaching effects.

On 11 May 1915 they became the 52 Lowland Division, its Brigades were numbered 155, 156 and 157. And the Telegraph Coy became the 52 (Lowland) Divisional Signal Coy RE TF and it was as such they set out from Stirling on 22 May under command of Major A.S. Angwin (later to become Colonel Sir Arthur Angwin KCWG, KBE DSO MC TD).

## **Dardanelles 1915**

The Signals sailed from Liverpool on 24 May on board the "Empress of Britain" in company with the 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots. Any relation that they may have felt was subdued by the tragic train disaster which befell the 7 RS at Gretna on 22 May in which 214 were killed and 220 injured. They arrived at Alexandria on 4 June and sailed for the Dodecanese four days later. The Division regrouped on the island of Murdos and landed at Gallipoli on 12 June 1915 for their baptism of fire.

On 28 June 1915 the Division was committed to its first action; in concert with their flanking formations they were to assault the Turkish trenches, 156<sup>th</sup> Brigade was to lead the way. The assaulting troops in a painfully tragic way which begs description were committed to a frontal

attack without support or good seasoned infantry well equipped with machine guns in entrenched positions. Through an unaccountable staff error no gunfire support was provided for the Lowlanders. Scourged with a storm of shrapnel and a hail of rifle and machine gun fire 156 Brigade men fell on all sides, but no one faltered, with grim dourness they struggled on gallantly. In the first hour the Brigade losses were 1,563 out of 2,941. The Brigade Commander was killed leading his men.

In this desperate fight, Signals went forward brining their telephone stations with the advancing infantry while linemen ran out the cable behind them. The lines continually being cut by shrapnel and were repeatedly repaired and strengthened. Of one line section, seven were killed and twenty wounded as they struggled with quiet determination heedless of all but their mission, while the Turks, who had the communication trenches ranged to a yard cut them down.

All through that dreadful summer of 1915 the grim struggle went on. By July half of the Division was killed or wounded. In addition the discomfort of dust, heat, shortage of water, plague of flies and the stench of the battle-field. In addition to the fighting, disease took nor did the suffering end there, October and November brought storms of rain and snow, trenches were drowned in flash flooding and had to be abandoned under the fire of Turkish guns. The rain brought new difficulties to Signals, who laboured unceasingly to restore the circuits. By early January the Divisional strength was down to 2,799 all ranks.

After a fact finding tour by Field Marshal Kitchener – still the Honorary Colonel – it was decided by the War Cabinet to withdraw from the Dardanelles. This was done quietly under the cover of an elaborate deception plan and by 7 January 1916 only elements of 52<sup>nd</sup> Division were left to cover the withdrawal. They withdrew on the night of 7/8 January without the loss of a man.

Signals stayed to the end and withdrew on the last night bringing all their equipment with them save for one telephone which during withdrawal fell down a crevice and could not be removed. They concentrated first on the island of Lemnos then moved to Abbassiah just outside Cairo. In mid February they moved again, this time to the Suez Canal defences at Kantara, which were being threatened by the advancing Turks.

## **Romani and Mahemdia 1916**

At Kantara the unit built up its strength as wounded men returned and replacements were received and some useful training was carried out for the next phase. This was to be an advance into Sinai to intercept an advancing Turkish Army.

Together with Australian and New Zealand troops the 52 (L) Division advanced into Sinai under command of General Sir Archibald Murray on 11 May 1916. A defensive line of 13 redoubts were constructed between and around Romani and Mahemdia to the East of the Suez Canal. In the classic set piece battle which followed, General Murray's force destroyed the Turkish army and killed or captured half. The Turks never again threatened the Suez Canal. Gallipoli was avenged.

The advance continued across the Sinai and on 7 August 1916 Gaza was invested. An initial attack in which the 52<sup>nd</sup> took no part failed. A second battle of Gaza on 17-21 April 1917 during which a frontal attack was made by the Lowlanders, also failed against strong Turkish opposition.

After the Second Battle of Gaza, it was realised that the Turks were tapping our lines, these were now patrolled vigorously to prevent this.

Later in the year when General Allenby took command and following an intense barrage of Western Front proportions, Gaza was again attacked on 1 November 1917. The objectives of the Lowland Division were two great earth works, Umbrella Hill and El Arish redoubt. The former was an advance work which could enfilade the El Arish redoubt. During the battle the Signal Company were heavily engaged. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> alone the lines to El Arish were cut repeatedly calling for the greatest possible determination and endurance. For the linemen there was none of the heat, excitement and comradeship of the assault, but dogged work, often alone, across soft sand, in an area alive with shell burst and machine gun fire. But the work went on, this time the assaults were successful, Gaza was carried by storm; the road to Jerusalem was open to a Christian army for the first time since the Second Crusade.

## **The Advance to Jerusalem**

Allenby's success at Gaza was repeated at Beesheba and the whole of the Turkish line was forced to withdraw.

The Lowlanders now entered a phase of mobile warfare which they were long to remember as almost enjoyable. Almost daily a text book infantry war was fought. After a fire fight, a bayonet charge was ordered by bugles and encouraged by the pipes as cheering lines surged forward against the withdrawing Turks. However, a sudden counter attack by the Turkish Command threatened to upset Allenby's plans. But the Lowlanders filled a critical gap at Suffa and held back the Turkish attack. During all these operations, the Cable Wagon came into their own, bounding along in traditional style spinning out the singing cable.

## **Passage of the Auja**

The River Auja just north of Jaffa provided a moat for the Turkish positions. If casualties were to be kept down the river would have to be "bounded" by surprise attack. For the success of the operation it was vital that a crossing be made at a number of points simultaneously. This was nearly ruined by one attacking force having at the last moment to delay the assault for 30 minutes due to a delay with their pontoon bridge. Signals rose to the occasion, all units "got the message" and nowhere was the attack sprung prematurely. The result was that in a single night the Division appeared to the Turkish High Command to be an impossible obstacle and forced the Turks to abandon their prepared positions and withdraw on 20 December 1917.

It is interesting to note that Turkish prisoners were invariably surprised at the slight stature of their captors. In the demonology of the Turkish Army the Lowlanders were of giant size.

After a well earned rest and reorganisation, and as a result of the success of the German offensive in France the 52<sup>nd</sup> were suddenly ordered to France in Spring 1918. They left the Middle East on 11 April and arrived at Marseilles on 17 April 1918.

## **France 1918**

By the time the Lowland Division reached France the Second Battle of the Marne had been fought, and the last German offensive contained and the thrust towards Paris defeated. After reforming in the Abbeyville area, the 52<sup>nd</sup> took its place in the line on Vimy Ridge alongside its sister division the 51<sup>st</sup>, the first time Highlander and Lowlander had fought together in any great strength since Flodden.

There followed an intensive period when they joined in the succession of blows which was to force the Germans back all along the Western Front of Second Somme, Second Arras, Moeuvres and from Canal du Nord and eventually to force the Germans into accepting a humiliating armistice. For the Signal Company, the mobile phase of the last month of the war had been like the advance from Gaza in many respects, galloping horses, rumbling cable wagons, everyone knew the end was near. North West of Conde, the news of the armistice was received with tremendous excitement mingled with intense relief.

It has been a long Annual Camp since they left Rutherglen for Troon.

## ***Between the Wars***

On the reforming of the Territorial Army in 1920, 52<sup>nd</sup> (Lowland) Division Signal Coy RE TA was formed as the direct successor to 2 (L) Div Signals TF and the Glasgow Signal Group RE TF. When the Royal Corps of Signals was founded in June the unit transferred to that Corps. It was a very different unit which again camped at Troon in 1921.

During the depressing period between the two world wars, the unit successfully held on to the hard core of battle tried veterans. With the change of equipment the accent was no longer placed on lines and cables. In 1922 a 120 watt set was taken to camp. This set was designed from one taken off a captured U Boat, its main problem lay in the weight of the station when accumulators and masts were added. Horses were still taken to camp until 1934 when the unit was mechanised.

*Extract from The Wire*

### **52nd (Lowland) Divisional Signals.**

21, Jardine Street, Glasgow, N.W.

18th May 1939

Readers might imagine that, owing to the vast changes, which have occurred since January, we should have plenty to write about. Actually, there are plenty about whom to write, but nothing very exciting to say about them. In our last exciting serial we anticipated and hoped that our C.O. would have two complete Units to cope with within a fortnight. Well, it actually only took about ten days before we had to close our doors to recruiting, both first and second line Units being right up to war establishment.

As a result of this increase in numbers, our former reasonably peaceful training centre is now a hive of industry by day and almost a nightmare by night. Conditions are improving now that Glasgow Academy is being used by our second line Unit, and the new offices constructed.

Regarding general training: we have already held several Week-end Schemes at Gables. One of the most interesting was a Scheme held by No. 3 Company in conjunction with the 157th Infantry Brigade. This week-end proved most interesting, and both Units concerned benefited considerably.

Camp this year is to be at Dunbar, and as there will be about 1000 men, it should at least prove very interesting.

One appointment has been made this month, and that is the appointment of Lieutenant R. Graham to be Adjutant of our second line Unit. Congratulations and the best of luck!

## **World War II**

On the embodiment of the Territorial Army in 1939, the Regiment was the first unit in Scotland and the second in Great Britain to double its establishment strength. The CO at that time, Lt Col T M Murray Niven received a congratulatory telegram from the Secretary of State for War, Mr Hore Delisha.

At the end of 1939 all dress had to conform to regular army, shoulder titles Ts were taken down much to everyone's annoyance.

As in 1914 the Division first moved to the Clyde-Forth complex before moving to Tidworth in the last week of May 1940. During this time the Battle of France was being fought and the air was alive with speculation. HM the King inspected the Division on 6 June 1940, outstanding items of war scale stores were received and on 7 June the Division entrained for Southampton and left for France.

### **France 1940**

It was the fate of 52<sup>nd</sup> Division in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War that they should be shaded by the events and exploits of their sister division, the 51<sup>st</sup>. With all eyes of Scotland on St Vallery en Caux, where the 51<sup>st</sup> were beleaguered and with the strict censorship enforced little was known of the chapter of adventures which surrounded the landing of the Lowlanders in France after Dunkirk and while the tragedy of St Vallery was taking place, until long afterwards when the memory was already dimmed and public thirst for such events had long been sated.

Sometimes referred to as the 2<sup>nd</sup> BEF, a force of infantry and armour made up of 52 Division and 1 Armoured together with a hodgepodge of hastily assembled lines of communications troops known as 1<sup>st</sup> Beumans. Code named "Norman Force" and under command of General J H Marshall Cornwall they landed at Cherbourg and on the same night moved eastwards to the region of St Pierre Eglise. 157 Brigade made up the spearhead of the Division and in their vehicles moved rapidly northeastwards behind the Siene.

The intention was that the force would stiffen weakening French resolve and would form a line of resistance on the Seine. On 12 June 1940 they reached Conches, 20 miles south of Rouen. Here they learned the Germans had captured Rouen and had crossed the Seine. Having penetrated deep into the heart of Seine et Loire, and with its flanks "in the air" on the 14 June the 157 Bde had its first action. Strung out on a long front the Brigade held the Germans for 9 hours until outflanked they were forced to withdraw. It was on the morning of this retreat that they received the news of the surrender of Paris. At the end of the action they fell back on Le Mans when they received orders from the French Army to withdraw south-westwards – away from the sea – they received these orders and prepared to fall back on the Normandy ports as they realised, in view of the situation that the French plans were unrealistic.

At this time General Sir Alan Brookes, one of the most clear headed of British Generals, spoke to the War Office urging them the necessity of extricating the 2<sup>nd</sup> BEF from its untenable position. At first Mr Churchill demurred, but news of Marshal Petains appeal to the French people to surrender decided him, and the order to recall the 2<sup>nd</sup> BEF was given. Sir Alan Brookes' stand undoubtedly saved Scotland from a double tragedy. Orders were given for the re-embarkation and Div HQ recalled 157 Bde from its isolation.

Evacuation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BEF started on 15 June from Cherbourg, in the meantime, 157 Bde marched to a defensive position at St Anne before leaving a few hours later to rendezvous with the transport due to arrive early on the morning of 17 June. Staff work however was not at this time stage of the highest standard and considerable confusion arose over transport allocation, it was eventually sorted out and the remainder of the division headed away from its concentration area at Le Mans towards Cherbourg.

Unfortunately the division line of march in a westerly direction cut across the main French retreat line. Hordes of refugees and stragglers of all kinds added to the problem. German planes indiscriminately bombed and strafed the dense columns adding to the confusion and misery. The journey which normally takes two hours, took 24 in that awful summer to accomplish it, but luckily they sustained no casualties.

The tanks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured were given first priority as these were virtually the sole remaining tanks of the British Army. The Divisional Signals embarked on the night 17/18 June and slipped away for England, but much of its long awaited and newly obtained equipment had to be left behind for lack of shipping space.

It was in Cherbourg during the evacuation that Signals came into their own in the ensuing confusion. The Despatch Riders sorted out traffic problems, acted as guides and carried messages, they helped to restore some order to the chaos; now getting other formations to their allotted vessel.

Although much essential equipment was left behind the essential and irreplaceable part of the division, the men of the Clyde, Forth and the Borders had returned to prepare for the return bout, whenever it should come.

## **Mountain Divisional Signals**

Following the hasty retreat from France, the 52<sup>nd</sup> moved into reserve positions north of London, and remained there until November when travelled north of the border and took up defensive positions on the Tay and Forth estuaries. It was a period when German invasion was expected hourly and there were many false alarms. It was also a period of reorganisation for the Regiment, as older men returned to vital industry and younger men took their places. Brigade and Divisional exercises began to be carried out on an increasing scale during the spring of 1942 and in April they moved into the north eastern Highlands and for the next two years they were to become very familiar with the headquarters of the Dee, Don, Findhorn and Spey and the mountainous country around them. They also sported and grew very proud of the MOUNTAIN flash which they now wore beneath the St Andrews cross of the Divisional badge. For they had now become a "Mountain Division" and joined the elite of the European armies. French, Chasseurs de Alpin; German, Garberger Truppen; Italian Bersergliri. For the Divisional Signals this was a period of intense activity, for not only did they provide the normal communications of the Division, but they also tested their equipment over terrain and in temperatures not often, until then, experienced by large bodies of British Troops. They had to find out the effects of sub zero temperatures on radio sets, generators, and batteries and a host of other vital questions which would have to be answered quickly.

In addition to this they played an even more important role in the game of military chess. The very presence of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division in North Scotland after D Day forced Hitler to retain valuable troops in Norway which could have been used to better effect in France. Even when the Division moved elsewhere, first to Ayrshire on amphibious warfare training then to England for training in on

airportable role, Signals by their use of the radio sets to send dummy traffic from various parts in Scotland bluffed the Germans into believing the 52<sup>nd</sup> were still in their threatening positions.

However, having trained as Mountain and Airportable troops they were now committed to battle in the swamps of the low countries in a vital battle to clear the Scheldt estuary so that the port of Antwerp could be used to relieve the overextended lines of supply which then existed, and was causing a slowing down of the allied rate of advance towards Germany.

It was easy to be cynical of the decision to use the 52<sup>nd</sup> for this. But it was a vital operation, and they were the finest uncommitted Division available.

Events were to prove that only a superb trained, razor keen fighting formation could have succeeded in this almost impossible terrain.

## **Northwest Europe 1944/45**

The Divisional Signal Regiment embarked for its last campaign under the command of Lt Col R J N Solly in September 1944. Their destination was Germany. But it was to be a long and bloody road, taking them to the mud and swamps of Beveland and Walcheren; the snow of Gennep; Rhine and the Dortmund Ems Canal and finally the capture of 50 U Boats in Bremen. At no time in the long haul to its destination was communications lost.

## ***Post World War II***

On the reformation of the Terriers in 1947 the Regiment again was born this time as 51/52 (Scottish) Inf Div Divisional Regt TA under the command of Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC. But a year later 52 (L) Infantry Divisional Signal Regt TA came into being at Jardine Street. Where it was to remain suffering several changes of role until 1967 when it was disbanded on the formation of 32<sup>nd</sup> (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers) of which 52 (Lowland) Signal Squadron (V) remained a part. Staying at Jardine Street for a few more years on the banks of the Kelvin where observation towers rose one hundred years before, and close to the spot where trestle bridges spanned the river to the amusement of the Glaswegians of Maryhill and who's grandchildren, both girls and boys served with the Squadron today, but instead of the explosion of "torpedoes", morse and HF signals are heard instead.

The Squadron moved to East Kilbride in 199?

## ***Appointments***

### **52 (Lowland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

#### **Lanarkshire Engineer Volunteers**

##### **Commanding Officers**

1859 – 1865 Lt Col R Johnstone  
1865 – 1893 Lt Col D Matheson VD  
1893 – 1896 Lt Col H D Robinson VD  
1896 – 1897 Lt Col W R Broadfoot VD  
1897 – 1899 Lt Col E R Crawford VD  
1899 – 1904 Lt Col D Campbell  
1904 – 1908 Lt Col J Park-Smith HVO, VD

##### **Honorary Colonels**

1865 – 1893 Col R Johnstone  
1893 – 1898 Col Sir D Matheson KCB, VD  
1898 – 1916 Fd Marshal Earl Kitchener  
1922 – 1928 Brig Gen Godfrey Faussett CB, CMG  
1928 – 1938 Lord MacGowan of Ardeer KBE  
1938 – 1950 Lord Stevenson OBE  
1950 – 1965 Lt Col T M Niven TD, DL  
1965 – 1967 Col H E Lang OBE

### **Lowland Divisional Signals TF**

##### **Commanding Officers**

1908 Lt Col D Laidlaw VD  
1912 Lt Col D Gourlay TD  
1914 Lt Col J A Rose TD  
1915 – 1919 Maj A S Angwin DSO, MC  
(later Col Sir Arthur KCMG, KBE, DSO, MC, TD)

### **52 (Lowland) Divisional Signals TA**

##### **Commanding Officers**

1920 Lt Col J C Munro Kerr DSO, TD  
1920 Lt Col J D Murdock MC, TD  
1922 Lt Col J S Muirhead DSO, MC, TD  
(later Brig Sir John DSO, MC, TD)  
1929 Lt Col F L Robertson MC  
1933 Lt Col Robertson OBE, DCM  
1938 Lt Col Niven TD  
1940 Lt Col W C Buchanan MC, TD  
(later Brig Buchanan OBE, MC, TD)  
1941 Lt Col R G Muir

1943	Lt Col R J N Solly
1945	Lt Col R Linton
1947	Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC
1949	Lt Col W A Purser
1950	Lt Col A C R Stead OBE
1952	Lt Col D M Rhind OBE
1956	Lt Col R Linton
1956 – 1959	Lt Col B R M Hayles
1959 – 1963	Lt Col H E Lang OBE, TD
1963 – 1967	Lt Col J B Johnston

## **52 (Lowland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

### **Officers Commanding**

2002	Maj D Gordon
2005	Maj P Donegan

# **51st (Highland) Signal Squadron**

## ***1st Aberdeenshire Engineer Volunteers***

Founded in 1874 in the City of Aberdeen, the unit has always maintained close links with that city. They were affiliated to the 1st Lanarkshire Engineer Volunteers and close links were always maintained with their much stronger sister unit in Glasgow. Their first CO was Captain W Hall, and Colonel Sir A H Grant became Honorary Colonel in 1890 and granted permission for them to wear the tartan of Clan Grant.

On the reorganisation of the Reserve Army in 1908 they became 1/1st (Highland) Divisional Telegraph Company RE TF, and as such were mobilized in 1914 and moved to their war station at Bedford on 15 August 1914. Initially they were under strength and their horses were of inferior quality, but these defects were put right before the unit embarked for France with the Division at the end of April 1915. The winter of 1914/15 was a wet one and an epidemic of measles – which affected the Highlanders badly, killing 10% of those affected. Contrary to popular belief the staff work was of a very high order at this time, but one of the greatest difficulties at this time was to put across to the independent Highlanders the idea that orders were not a basis for argument, and that training was not a recreation to stop when they got tired. The Signal Company came on very fast and was outstanding in this respect.

On arrival in France they joined the Indian Corps of Haig's 1st Army in Busnes, Robeq and Lillers. On 11 May 1915 they became the 51st (Highland) Divisional Signal Coy RE TF, and were commanded by Major A Robertson. They arrived during the 2nd Battle of Ypres and on 19 May went into the line without any period of acclimatisation. The unit sustained its first casualties on 29 May when Div HQ got shelled and several Signallers got killed. The first attack in divisional strength was at Festubert on 15 June, when after two days of bombardment the infantry went over the top only to find the German wire uncut, and they were decimated by German machine gun fire in their attempt to storm forward, and were forced back. After this they were much troubled by sniper fire. All told it was not a happy settling in period, and they learned the lessons of war the hard way.

At this time there was much rivalry between the Territorials and the New Armies of Lord Kitchener, and much experimenting was carried out by all arms. In addition, they moved to another part of the line where they took over a good trench system from the French with overhead cover of 3 foot of earth, yet in subsequent bombardments even this was insufficient to afford good protection. The winter of 1916/17 was a bad one, rain, frost, snow, thaw, all had their adverse effect on the chalk trenches and life was most miserable.

General G H Harper took over command on 24 September 1916, and during the winter the Division wryly began to call themselves "Harper's Duds". They were in the line in January 1917, and the rest was badly needed. After which all units of the Division went into furious training. It was during this period that they developed their "bounding principle". The Division now took over a sector north of Arras in March 1917 in fine fettle after its rest and training in spite of intermittent bad weather. The new area was to become the spiritual home of the 51st in France. The ruins of Ecuri, Anzin, Marquill, Bray, Ecoivres and Mont St Eloi. The enemy, however, were constantly overlooking them from Vimy Ridge. Later, in May the Division took over the whole of the XVIIth Corps front, as preparations went on for the Somme Battle.

The 51st was committed to the maelstrom of the Somme Battle on 21st July and attacked High Wood – the highest point in Picardy. This position had been taken but the Germans had regained the position after a fierce counterattack. No advance was made against a pitiless cross fire despite great gallantry, the misery was intense, incessant bombardments, intense heat, swarms of flies and on 25 July the Germans used phosgene gas for the first time, it crept up insidiously like the smell of sweet apples, there was no water supply in the forward area and the suffering was great but they hung on until relieved on 8 August. Again General Harper used the time to rest and train his division and a short spell in the line at Armentieres and Hobuterne did much to help.

### ***Beaumont Hamel***

The village of Beaumont Hamel was a natural defensive feature. It contained caves and cellars ideal for sheltering hundreds of men in addition it was honeycombed with dugouts and criss crossed by trenches. A place of tremendous strength, and very difficult to clear.

An attack on this position on the first day of the Battle of the Somme had been a disastrous failure, since which time it had come to be regarded as impregnable. Harper refused to attack with a 3 brigade front and only used 2 brigades in his first line with one in reserve. The attack took place on 13 November 1916 after repeated bombardments. This however was a distinct advantage as it increased the extent of the artillery bombardment. On D Day the infantry advanced close to the edge of the bombardment. In addition Harper had placed the bulk of the Division's machine guns on a slight rise, this gave an intense barrage of close support fire to the leading forces. Moreover, the morning of the attack was clouded by a thick fog. Nevertheless great difficulty was experienced in advancing as parts of the battlefield were impassable due to the great depth of the mud.

The division took all its objectives and Beaumont Hamel was the foundation of the Highland Division. No more did they call themselves with wry humour, "Harper's Duds".

### ***Arras, Passchendale, Cambrai, Marne, Vimy Ridge, Canal du Nord***

For the 51st (Highland) Division Signal Coy on the Western Front there was little rest, war to them was of three phases: offensive, defensive and static; in the first two phases HQs changed location often and at practically no notice; it was a task to link up the Battery's Battalion and the Divisional HQ irrespective of enemy action. In the static phase cables were buried, lines tidied, test points constructed. These in turn were destroyed by high explosive and shrapnel fire, lines cut, poles smashed, cables uprooted, communication trenches destroyed. Despite the bitter unrelenting hail of German gunfire during the savage battles of High Wood, Armentieres, Beaumont Hamel, Third Ypres, Cambrai, and Lys Champagne, brigade and Divisional Signal Officers suffered direct hits repeatedly, loss of communication was measured in minutes. In addition to lines wireless, electric lamps, pigeons and runners were all used.

The terrain over which they laboured and in many cases quietly worked alone, was moonscape like in its savage bleakness and often impassable with bog like muck. At Cambrai a line party in no mans land captured two German airmen in their aircraft which had force landed. At the same battle in the confusion of the first tank battle, at Flesquieres, the advancing infantry were surprised to be met by a Signals Subaltern and lineman quietly smoking.

Monday 30th July 1917      Proceeded to Hindenburgh Farm with one man on stn. Another joined me there from Cpl Green's stn. Erected at midnight got through to Corps and Foch Farm.



*arrive. No 1 is in charge, and will keep constant watch to see that the earth base leads are in good condition. Nos 2 and 3 will relieve each other at frequent intervals."*

The success of the Highland Division was due in no small measure to General Harper, who was probably one of the Army's most intelligent infantry officers of his day. He constantly urged his men to use their rifles instead of bayonet and trained them to think rather than fight blindly. His constant aim was to teach them to fight not merely gallantly but with tactical intelligence. He was also the first Divisional Commander to have his Divisional Signal Officer at his conferences. He became GOC in C Southern Command after the war but was unfortunately killed in a car accident in 1920.

The Divisional Signal Officer, Major J S Muirhead (later Brigadier Sir John Muirhead KCB, DSO, MC, TD) was one of the most thoughtful officers of the Signal Service at that time, who by his constant attention to detail and insistence on training at every possible opportunity, his Signal Company are probably best on the Western Front. In addition his paper of the Post Bellum Signal Service was remarkable in its foresight.

## ***Marne 1918***

In the Spring of 1918 the Germans tried their last fling; using massive reinforcements released from the Russian Front by the Russian collapse it was their intention to attempt to knock France and Britain out of the war before the arrival of the Americans. In the event they failed, but it was a close run thing.

On 1 April 1918, 51 Div moved to an area near Bethune, but were moved a week later to MI Corps in the rear of two Portuguese divisions at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert. In the face of a sudden German thrust the Portuguese collapsed and 51 immediately attempted to stem the route. In some of the most bloody fighting of the war, 51 held up the advance of 8 German divisions for three days, but were almost decimated in the process. When relieved many reinforcements and much rebadging was necessary before they could take the line again.

Later they were take up a position on Vimy Ridge alongside their Sister Division 52 (Lowland) and together they were to keep up a series of hammer blows which together with those taking place along the Western Front were to drive the Germans out of the war. And in the final days of the fighting, the Signal Company was singled out for special mention for the way they kept the communications through in the final mobile battle.

## ***Between the Wars***

In 1920 when the Territorial Army was constituted, 51st Divisional Signal Coy RE TA was formed at Aberdeen and has retained its links with the city ever since. Like 52nd, it suffered in the past for reaction and it was not until the 1930s that modern technical progress was made. Yet in the feverish activity of the rearrangement period the 51st responded well and in the mobilisation of 1939 two Signal Regiments were formed, the 51st and its shadow formation, the 9th.

*Extract from The Wire*

**51st (Highland) Divisional Signals.**

Fonthill Barracks, Aberdeen.

May 1939.

At the time of writing, Fonthill Barracks is the scene of great activity. We are having new barracks sometime in the future, and the contractor is now busy pulling down the old buildings. At the same time, in consequence of the expansion of the Territorial Army to double War Establishment, the Company is busily building up its strength, and has now reached unprecedented proportions. We have completed both the First and Second Line Units, and have received a nice telegram of congratulation from the War Minister, Mr. Leslie Hore-Belisha. When the recruits (masses of them) parade for drills each Monday and Friday evening, the parade ground resembles Wembley during a Cup Final.

The Sections are well into their stride with Section training, and are also making great efforts to train sufficient operators to meet the demands of the new Establishment.

We congratulate the following on passing the test for Operator Signals B.III at a Trade Board held at Fonthill Barracks on 10th April : Signalmen Duguid J., Fyfe W., Greig C., Hay J., Hepburn C., McDonald D., Pearlman M., Stuart A. and Vincent J.

We are very sorry to lose our Commanding Officer, Colonel E. Birnie Reid, O.B.E., who retired from active command of the Unit during April, but we know that he will keep a kindly eye on the Unit's future activities. In his place we welcome Lieutenant-Colonel T. P. E. Murray, and hasten to assure him of our whole-hearted support in his work as Commanding Officer, and trust he will be happy in his new command.

ONECOY.

## ***World War II***

### **France 1940**

After mobilisation at Aberdeen and a period of intensive training the Divisional Signals moved first to Aldershot then to France in January 1940, under the command of Lt Col T P E Murray. Their first action was in the Maginot Line in the Saar sector under French command. Here they were faced with unusual problems of co-ordinating the support communications with the French, whose system of operation and security were totally different to ours. However, in the true spirit of the "Auld Alliance" the 51st conformed to the French methods. The French Signal Officer was made happy with a ten page receipt signal by the CO and left hurriedly. During this period an enormous volume of signals was passed, and at times Gaelic was used to confound the German monitors. The German breakthrough at Sedan was the opening of a furious battle which swung the division from the Saar onto the Normandy coast on 25 May 1940.

In the Normandy battles the Divisional lines of communication suffered from continuous bombing and strafing from the German Air Force. In the sanguinary battles which followed communications were never lost although the strain of exhaustion was very great. On 6 June radio contact was

established with HMS Wanderer from the Regiment's position at Bazinval, and through her to London. They arrived at St Valery-en-Caux on 12 June 1940, the town was blazing and as the selected site of the Div HQ was untenable they moved in with Signals in a nearby Chateau. From there they moved to their final location in a wood just south of the town.

At the bitter end, Signals played their part in the defence of Div HQ and it was patrols from the Aberdeen Signal Coy which located the cluster of German tanks which had broken through from the west.

It was from this last position that a signal was sent in clear to HMS Wanderer announcing the surrender of the division after which all messages on hand were cleared to the navy and sets were destroyed. One officer, Captain W R Muirhead, found a rowing boat and with another British Officer and some Frenchmen reached the UK in four days.

## **Ark Force**

Meanwhile 154 Bde Signals, which had withdrawn to Le Havre with Ark Force, set out from Le Havre in an attempt to save their vehicles and equipment. A Bren gun was set in the lead vehicles with a 4 gallon tin of petrol. The orders were to destroy vehicles should there be danger of capture. Half the vehicles got across the Seine before the ferry was put out of action. Those who succeeded in crossing continued south and made contact with 52 (Lowland) Division advancing from Cherbourg.

## **51 Division – The Phoenix**

In 1939 the 9th (Scottish) Division was recruited from the same areas as the old 51st. In 1940 under the command of Gen Sir Alan Cunningham, who was mainly responsible for the change to the 51st, it became the reincarnation of the older division. Under Gen Neil Ritchie it was spread out thinly as an anti-invasion force along NE Scotland. In April 1942 the Div was relieved in NE Scotland by 52 (L) Div and moved to Aldershot where six months were spent in training and fitting. On the 1st June the King and Queen inspected the division and in the 3rd week of June 1942 the Highland Division issued out once more to war. On the 11th August they landed at Port Tewfik and Geneffa, concentrated at Quassassin – close to the old battlefield of Tel el Kebir.

Their arrival in Egypt coincided with Rommel's threat of invasion of the Nile delta. After a period of intensive training amidst the agonies of "Gyppo Tummy" the Division moved into defensive positions around Cairo.

Montgomery had taken over command of the 8th Army on 13 August and had immediately given his famous no retreat from the Alamein position. The desert army were quietly preparing for the expected Rommel offensive. The attack began on the night of 30/31 August, and initial fighting in the north against Australians and the centre against the Indians, Rommel attempted the "Schwerpunkt" on the Alam Halfa Ridge almost halfway between the sea and Quattara Depression. Here he was met with tough resistance and strong countermeasures and Rommel's armoured spearheads were badly blunted: first round to Montgomery. Rommel backed away on 7 September.

During the battle the Highland Division had moved out into the real desert, and the real difficulties of moving and living in the desert were first encountered. In some places a thin layer of sand covered bedrock, in others there was almost bottomless sand, defensive positions were very difficult to dig and vehicles got bogged down. It all added to the experience of war in the desert. The

divisional position was about 25 miles behind the Alamein position just in front of El Hamman. Here they occupied area Brigade boxes.

The second round which was to become known to history as the Battle of Alamein. Montgomery's plan was simple, deceive the enemy into thinking the attack would come from the south, then attack in the north on a narrow front with four infantry divisions, 9th Australian, 51st Highland, 2nd New Zealand, 1st South African, break through the German defences with infantry, once the breakthrough had been affected follow through with the 1st Armoured Division. It was the classic concept of infantry and cavalry, but one which had been reversed hitherto in the desert.

In this battle the Division Signals were commanded by Lt Col Denholm-Young, and most of the communications was by land lines. In this 2Lt John Carruth particularly distinguished himself, during the preparation for the battle he together with his linemen laid 130 miles of cable often through minefields, connecting Div HQ with its brigades and field regiments on all of the first night and day of battle he and his men laboured repairing break after break in the lines always under fire often in the middle of minefields. No circuit was out for long.

The battle opened on the night of 23 October 1942. On 27/28 Oct the Div was withdrawn to prepare for "Supercharge". The last attack took place on 4 November by 51 HD. Rommel broke but heavy rain on 6 and 7 November delayed the pursuit. The cutting off party was delayed and the Desert Fox slipped away, very badly mauled, Tobruk was taken on the 13th, and Bengazi was entered on the 20th. The Div spent Hogmanay 1942 at Wadi Matratin. Set piece battles took place at Merso Brega and Buerat. El Agheila was taken when Rommel withdrew leaving 90th Light to cover his withdrawal. Under pressure from Montgomery, 51 speeded up its advance. Tripoli was taken on 23 January 1943 and the Div HQs were set up in Tripoli Stadium and lines soon ran out to all of the Bde HQs in the surrounding area. The Prime Minister, CIGS, and many high ranking allied officers reviewed the division and many were the compliments on its discipline and bearing especially after such a gruelling battle and pursuit. The debt owed for St Valery was well and truly paid.

## **Sicily 1943**

The Sicilian operation, the first amphibious landing of the Division was next. After hard training the Divisional Signals embarked and like everyone else had a rough crossing in dire weather. Two assault communications worked well and soon all units were pressing forward. But after the first two days stiff opposition was met, the Germans were tough first class troops and tough actions took place at Viccini, Francefonte, Ramacca, Gerbini and in the Sferro Hills.

In the dry lava regions of Mount Etna a curious and unique phenomena was experienced when the earth return telephone circuits failed to operate, however this was overcome by positioning latrines close to earth spikes.

On 10 August this Sicilian Campaign was completed successfully and later in the year the Divisional Signals now under the command of Lt Col J Cochran returned to the UK to prepare for Operation Overlord, the return to St Valery.

## **North West Europe 1944-45**

On their return to Britain the unit was stationed at Mersham and after a period of re-equipping and familiarisation, were ready once more for action. It was here that the Colonel in Chief, The Princess

Royal, visited the Regiment and after inspecting several sections had a briefing on the Division's campaigns and the Regiment's part in them. She later lunched with the Officers.

In early June the unit embarked at Tilbury. The Signal Plan for the invasion of Normandy was simple, normal radio nets would operate from the decks of landing craft, and as each formation went ashore it opened on its respective net. Lines were to be laid as soon as possible after landing. To provide for casualties, all nets were duplicated.

An exact landing was made on D+2 in only 4 inches of water. The Division held the Orne bridgehead for six weeks and a very elaborate line system laid. At the end of the first battle it was found that there had been very heavy casualties among the signallers of the Infantry Battalions and RE Regiments, so the first of the Regimental Signal Schools was opened at Gazelle.

For the breakout battle the division came under the command of 2nd Canadian Corps and in anticipation of a mobile role after the breakout the TAC HQ half-track, later became forever associated with GSO II, Major W A Darglish was prepared.

At 2300hrs on 7 August the Division in two columns debouched on to the tracks at the start line, following the air bombardment and under a barrage they started their advance. Before firing tracers and searchlights marked the axis. At the Command Post, listening to the radio reports of progress it was an apparent success. All objectives were taken, but not without stiff fighting. A signal centre was established, at Garcelles-Secqueville, to which the G~OC moved his CP on 8 August and Main Div HQ followed next day. After heavy resistance at St Sylvain the advance speeded up and Lisieux was captured on 22 August after stiff fighting by 153 Brigade.

During this advance TAC HQ was highly mobile after moving three times during the day, this tested to full the flexibility of the Signals who did not fail. On 1 September, 152 Brigade was directed on St Valery. TAC HQ halted at Pissy Poville, and later that night the duty officer announced that St Valery-en-Caux was in the hands of the Division after four and a half years. On 2 September the Division HQ moved into the same chateau which it had occupied in 1940, but in changed circumstances.

After the reduction of the fortress of Le Harve under its fanatical commander, the division rested until the end of September, during this time considerable overhauling of the radio equipment was done.

The next move was to Holland where the Signals were billeted at Iteghem, 35 miles north east of Brussels. The Officers' mess was located in the home of the Burgomaster, and the WOs and Sergeants' mess were likewise well billeted in the most friendly town. In Belgium and Holland for the first time the Divisional Signals were able to use a good un-destroyed system of underground. At this time the division was responsible for guarding the supply routes to Nijmegen.

On 7 November an assault crossing of the Wassem and Nooder canals were carried out and on 25 November the division relieved the 101st US Airborne Div and 50 Division. This was the first time the Divisional Signals came in contact with the US Signal Corps and it was a memorable experience to observe them. By this time the surrounding countryside was flooded and all lines had to be poled. But on 4 December they were relieved and moved back to Hooge Hei near Uden. From here 48 hour passes to Brussels were granted.

## **The Ardennes and Reichswald**

On 16 December Hitler made his last gamble with an all out offensive under Von Runstedt, and there followed a month of intensive activity in the most bitter weather. The winter of 1944/45 was the severest in living memory and in deep snow, ice and cutting wind the Division now under the command of 30 Corps, prepared to meet the German onslaught should the Americans fail to hold the German advance. The Americans held and on 8 January they relieved the 53rd Welsh holding the line March to Hatton, with Div HQ at Bailonville. Not satisfied with the existing line system which was snow covered, 51st laid new lines and poled them.

There followed an advance on a double axis which increased the strain on the Signals but on 11 January the GOC ordered a move of TAC HQ to Rendeux Haut which gave a much shorter line to lay. At this time in the intense cold some 19 sets and the electrolyte in radio batteries froze.

The advance continued towards the German frontier and in the Reichswals the division took part in what was for many the bitterest fighting of the entire war. They cleared the area and on 14 February 1945 the Germans fell back over the Niers and blew the bridges at Kessel and Gennep.

However, 154 Brigade bounced the lines of the Niers and it was here that the line parties of 154 distinguished themselves. Led by Capt Williams who tied a cable to his waist and swam the 2000 yard wide swollen Niers and linked the assaulting battalions with Bde HQ and maintained it until Brigade HQ could cross.

After 17 days of continuous fighting, the division had captured all its objectives. Bad weather, numerous breaks in the lines from shell fire and the added formations which came under command all had their effect. On 28 February the CO sent the following message to the CSO, "Today the men are very tired and if Linemen somehow weren't a race apart with a morale all of their own they will be dispirited."

The advance planning for the Rhine crossing was now undertaken by Major Frazer the 2IC with staff of clerk and draughtsmen. This was to be the most formidable undertaking the Division was ever to be called upon to do, and next to the D Day landing was certainly the most hazardous operation of the war.

## **The Rhine Crossing**

Two DUKWS were loaned to the unit and a tripod fitted to each one on which the largest possible cable drum (7 pair cable) was used to hold double carrier quad. This arrangement took 500 yards of cable, this was estimated to be sufficient for the Rhine crossing. The quad was then bound together every four feet with insulating tape, it was joined with junction boxes filled with boxed loops for strength. Four drums were made of double quad and two with single quad. Each cable was weighted by sandbags tethered with wire successfully anchored the cable. Duplicate radio nets were worked out. Infantry battalions now had new No 46 sets and the RA Ops had 68 sets, all sets were crystal controlled.

In addition to the planning, Signal advance parties under Major Henderson with most of C Section under Capt McLaughlan and Lt Howard had gone to the operations area. By arrangement with CSO 30 Corps it had been decided that the CSO would co-ordinate the high demand for lines in this area. Plans involved setting up a network over all the Div area with test points at selected tactical points for HQs and forward on the river bund at bridgeheads, rafts and ferries and traffic control points. For 10 days the whole of C Section worked with three ploughs on buried line lay. Forward test points made behind large bunds 20 foot high on the Rhine. In all 300 miles of cable was used.

It was excellent farm country completely deserted, but the livestock had been left behind, which was put to good use. In addition the weather was excellent and detailed recesses of cellars revealed plenty of bottled vegetables and smoked ham. The whole operation was carried out behind a dense smoke screen. There were times, however, when new arrivals caused some havoc like the smoke section who on arrival billeted in a cellar used for a test point and made extra room for themselves by tossing the test point out of the window. Our linemen didn't like that.

H hour was 2100hrs on 23 March 1945. Radio silence was broken at 2000hrs, except for the Royal Artillery nets who opened 30 minutes in advance to conduct the opening bombardment. The infantry moved up in Buffaloes and struck the water at H hour, first reports by radio reported were OK but resistance was felt before Rees in front of 153 Bde.

The Divisional Signal Centre was established at D Test Point in a cellar of a farm building behind the bund. The line parties were under command of Major Henderson and Capt McLaughlan was OC C Section. There was some difficulty with the Line Party buffaloes because of the steep bank, and the first one was holed by a shell and sank. The other made it in 40 minutes, Major Henderson phoned through from the east bank to say telecoms were established over the Rhine, Capt McLaughlan and Sgt Coull were wounded, but Major Henderson reorganised the parties and each section with handcarts set off to lay lines to brigades. As a result of the action, an immediate DSO was awarded to Major Henderson and a MM was awarded to Signalman Clark and Reilly who took cable across the Rhine.

A firm bridgehead was established by morning. All brigades were linked by a secure line to the Div HQ by 0330hrs and for the rest of the night linemen patrolled the lines repairing damage of shell fire and tracked vehicle. On 27 March the main Div HQ crossed the river and the chase was on. At this stage the CO moved back to take cover as CSO from Brigadier Bartlett who had been captured. But a few days later the arrival of a new CSO, Brig L C C Harrison allowed Colonel Cochran to return to the Regiment.

Between the 5 April and 5 May the Division moved 16 times and the only bar to the headlong process was roadblocks and mines. Many vehicles, German army and civilian were "acquired" along the way but at the Vesper many were unseated. It was at this time that the Division came across their old enemies of the desert the 15th Panzer Grenadiers and it was fitting that the Signal Officer of this Division, Hauptmann Webber and his officers surrendered to the CR Signals of 51st Highland Division.

The Divisional Signalas moved to Syke, 15 miles south of Bremen and then to set up main trunk exchanges at Hannover, Hamburg and Bremen on the Common User Line Network for the Occupation Forces. Fonthill seemed a very long way away.

## ***Post World War II***

With the rebirth of the Territorial Army in 1947, the Regiment again came to life as the 51/52 (Scottish) Infantry Division Signal Regt TA, under the command of Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC. But a year later the 51st and 52nd split unto their separate identities and 51st (Highland) Inf Div Signal Regt TA was born again, in its old familiar role. This role changed however to one of Home Defence which lasted until the reorganisation of the Reserve Army. In 1967 the Regiment was reduced to squadron size and became 51 (Highland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers) and part of 32 (Scottish) Signal Regiment (V). Their role now being that of a Port Task Force. They were once more to undergo a change of role when in 1969 they became part of 13 Signal Group (V) and found themselves back in the Home Defence role once more.

## Spring 1965

*Extract from The Wire (July-August 1965)*

### **51 (Highland) Infantry Div Sig Regt TA**

#### **There's a moral here somewhere!**

In the months which have elapsed since last these notes appeared the Regiment has not been idle. We had not quite realised how much the outside world in the Corps waits for our contributions to "The Wire" until our new Quartermaster, **Captain (QM) F Pavey**, arrived the other day and remarked that he had been seeking advance news of the Regiment in "The Wire" for months, but never a word about us appeared in print. Suitably chastened, our scribe set to work.

#### **Winter sowing brings forth Spring blossoms**

A winter's classroom work for trainee tradesmen and those for up-grading has now blossomed into the Spring outdoor training season. Radio, line and radio relay troops have all been on exercises during recent weekends and Squadrons generally are well advanced in preparation for camp. The more precise results of these activities will be known soon, as Trade Boards are to be held in mid-June.

Annual Camp this year takes us back to Burniston Barracks, Scarborough, where we hope to carry out a full programme of training. The main exercise during the fortnight will bring us in contact with our divisional staff and promises to be an arduous, although we hope also rewarding, experience.

#### **Our Autumn recruiting campaign – encouraging results**

In our last notes we mentioned the success of our Autumn recruiting campaign. Since then we have had further recruits, including an encouraging first response in the Cumbernauld area where we are breaking new ground. We have also had a welcome influx of new officers, young and enthusiastic, who are rapidly taking their share in regimental activities. Both old and new officers participated in an Officers' Training Weekend in April when their prowess (or otherwise) in most fields of signals knowledge was put to the test. For weeks beforehand almost the only topic of discussion among the subalterns was as to how quickly they could achieve the required morse speed (and what would happen if they didn't). The weekend's activities included a cocktail party, supper and dance which enabled us to meet many of our colleagues from other local units. It did not, of course, do anything to help one's morse which the Chief Instructor had thoughtfully (?) decided to test first thing on Sunday morning.

#### **Achievement**

The regimental rifle team has put in much hard practice over recent months. Headquarter Squadron were the winners of the inter-Squadron competition at the Regimental Rifle Meeting at Fort George. At the Divisional Meeting we were up against twenty-four regimental teams, including eleven infantry teams. We came 5th in the LMG and 8th overall with our CO, **Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Wotherspoon**, winning the Senior

Officers' match. For the first time we are sending a team to the Corps Meeting at Bulford in June.

### **Spectacle**

Our Pipes and Drums took part, along with the bands of 52nd (L) Regiment (TA) and 61st (City of Edinburgh) Regiment (TA) in the ceremony of beating Retreat on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle on 5th June. It was a colourful spectacle and a large crowd saw **Colonel D. D. Fairman**, OBE, CSO, Scottish Command, take the salute. This is the second year in succession that the three Scottish TA Signal Regiments have massed their bands for this ceremony.

### **And sadness...**

The Regiment was stunned a few weeks ago by the news of the sudden death of RQMS **Kenneth Fraser**. A genial companion and a conscientious soldier, he had presided over our stores with care and his own delightful brand of humour for the last five years. He was at work as usual on 10th May, and soon after midnight he was dead. We are happy in the knowledge that only the previous weekend at our rifle meeting at Fort George he had been in the company of men of his old Regiment, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, who were in camp at the Fort. A bearer party of his colleagues of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess was present at the funeral, as were many members of the Regiment in Aberdeen. Our sympathy goes to Mrs Fraser, who now finds herself alone in a strange country.

## ***Appointments***

### **51 (Highland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

#### **1st Aberdeenshire Engineer Volunteers**

#### **Commanding Officers**

1881 – 1891 Capt W Hall  
(later Lt Col W Hall from 4th Aug 1888)  
1891 – 1904 Lt Col R H Anstice  
1904 – 1908 Lt Col W S Gill VD

#### **Highland Division Engineers TF**

1908 – 1911 Lt Col W S Gill VD  
1911 Lt Col Y A Cornwall  
1914 Lt Col G A Cornwall  
1914 Maj A Robertson  
1915 Maj J Stevenson  
1916 – 1919 Maj J S Muirhead DSO, MC

#### **51st (Highland) Division Signals TA**

1920 Maj (later Lt Col) A B Robertson DSO  
1923 Lt Col F R G Forsyth MC

1928 Lt Col E G McHutchon OBE, TD  
1934 Lt Col E Birnie Reid OBE, TD

**52 (Highland) Divisional Signals TA**

1939 Lt Col T P E Murray TD

**9 Div Signals TA**

1939 Lt Col A H Lennie MM, TD

**51 (Highland) Division Signals**

1942 Lt Col C P S Denholm-Young OBE  
1943 Lt Col J Cochran OBE, TD  
1945 Lt Col N M Hay MBE

**51/52nd (Scottish) Infantry Div Sig Regt TA**

1947 Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC

**51 (Highland) Infantry Div Sig Regt TA**

1948 Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC  
1953 Lt Col N Hay MBE  
1953 Lt Col MacKinnon TD  
1960 – 1964 Lt Col T B BMcKain MBE, TD  
1964 – 1966 Lt Col J M Wotherspoon TD  
1966 – 1967 Lt Col Loudon MBE, TD

**51 (Highland) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

1967

...

2004 Maj A Thompson  
2007 Maj L Smith

**Honorary Colonels of the Regiment**

1890 – 1914 Col Sir A H Grant Bt  
Col J Hamilton-Leigh  
Col R J Nicol of Barlogie OBE  
Col F R G Forsyth MC, DL  
1947 – 1953 Lt Col E B Reid OBE, TD  
1953 – 1960 Lt Col T P E Murray OBE, TD, ADC  
1960 – 1967 Lt Col J B Cochran OBE, TD

## **61st (City of Edinburgh) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

In 1939 orders were issued for 3rd Anti-Aircraft Divisional Signals TA to be raised in Edinburgh and Glasgow, as part of Anti-Aircraft Command, and in 1940-41 the unit was actively engaged in the German air offensive against Great Britain. In 1940 the Glasgow Company was absorbed into the newly raised 12th AA Divisional Signals, and in 1941 the remainder was converted into a mixed unit. In 1942 AA Command was reorganised and the unit was amalgamated into 6th AA Group (Mixed) Signals, covering Scotland and North East England.

Following demobilisation in 1945 it was reformed in 1947 with two companies in Edinburgh and two in Glasgow. It was known as 13th AA (Mixed) Signal Regiment TA.

In 1955 when AA Command was abolished the regiment was converted into Scottish Command (Mixed) Signal Regiment TA. In 1957 it became 61st Signal Regiment TA and subsequently was allowed to add City of Edinburgh to its title in 1962.

In the reorganisation of the Reserve Army in 1967, it became part of 32 (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers), with responsibility for the provision of communications in North East England and Scotland in an emergency.

In 2000 under the command of Maj B Shankland the Squadron travelled south to Ripon for annual camp and put NCRS to the test in the area around Ripon, moving out to Carlisle and Longtown Depot in the second week.

In March 2001 members of the Squadron travelled to Canada to trial new masts in extreme weather conditions. These masts were to replace the dated fibreglass sectional masts that were designed to only ever be used two or three times. The new masts proved a huge success and are still in use today cutting the time to set up dramatically.

The Squadron moved from their training centre at Chesser Crescent to newly refurbished premises just off Lanark Road at Redhall View in 2001. The TA Centre was originally home to the Royal Engineers' TA, being suitably located near the Water of Leith, so it was rather suitable for the Squadron to move in and closer to its engineer origins.

In 2002 the Squadron attended annual camp in Ripon, North Yorkshire with the Squadron Command Post moving location to Warcop and Strensall throughout the exercise, Exercise Horseshoe III.

The Squadron retained its National Communications role until 2006 when it changed to UK Operations and Defence Resilience. Using the latest communications equipment the Squadron now provides the vital link between the military forces and the blue light services and local authorities in time of national crisis, emergency or disaster in Central Scotland. The Squadron also provides individual reinforcements to the Regular Army on operations throughout the world.

Members of the Squadron have served in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

## ***Appointments***

### **61st (City of Edinburgh) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

#### **Commanding Officers**

#### **3rd Anti-Aircraft Divisional Signals TA**

1939	Lt Col J F Darby TD
1940	Lt Col E L Farnall
1942	Lt Col A J L Schofield

#### **6th Anti-Aircraft Group (Mixed) Signals**

1942	Lt Col D MacGregor MBE DCM
1943	Lt Col W H Arnold
1944	Lt Col W F Gill
1945	Lt Col W H Arnold

#### **13th Anti-Aircraft (Mixed) Signal Regiment TA**

1947	Lt Col J R Sutcliffe OBE
1948	Lt Col H Scarborough TD
1952	Lt Col J O Brady MBE ERD
1955	Lt Col J Lothian ERD TD

#### **Scottish Command (Mixed) Signal Regiment TA**

1955	Lt Col J Lothian ERD TD
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#### **61st Signal Regiment TA**

1958	Lt Col T D Childs MBE TD
1961	Lt Col G S Fenton MBE

#### **61st (City of Edinburgh) Signal Regiment TA**

1962	Lt Col J D Stewart TD
1963	Lt Col E K Beattie
1966	Lt Col G E Gill TD

#### **61st (City of Edinburgh) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

1967	Maj C Oliver
1971	Maj W R Crook TD
1977	Maj J Rhynas
1979	Maj R McNaught
1984	Maj J McKee
1987	Capt B Murray
1988	Maj A MacGillivray
1990	Maj B P Gilfether TD
1992	Maj A C C Lapsley TD

1995	Maj F Farquharson
1998	Maj B Shankland TD
2003	Maj A A Bruce JP
2005	Capt G P Gaw
2006	Maj G J Lindsay

**Honorary Colonel of the Regiment**

1947-1965	Col Sir Harold F Mitchel
1965-1967	Col T D Childs MBE TD

## **69 (North Irish Horse) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)**

### ***World War I***

(pages missing)

... Regimental Headquarters moved to Antrim, and commenced the enlistment and training of further squadrons and reinforcements.

Three further squadrons of the Regiment went to France in May and November 1915 and January 1916 having a total strength of 70 officers and 1,931 Other Ranks, of whom 118 were eventually commissioned.

In June 1916, the North Irish Horse became two Regiments, the first comprising squadrons under Lord Cole, The Hon. Arthur Hamilton and Major Finlay, and the second made up of squadrons under Major Waring and Major Bramston Newman, together with a Divisional Cavalry Squadron from 36th Division. Both Regiments then became part of the Corps of Cavalry.

On 17 September 1917 the second North Irish Horse Regiment was dismounted and was attached to Battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles and the Royal Irish Fusiliers in 36th Division.

It was appropriate that, having been the first Yeomanry Regiment to go into action, they were the last out. During the First World War they collected seventeen Battle Honours and sixty-eight Decorations, including one Victoria Cross.

The Battle Honours recorded on the Guidon are:

RETREAT FROM MONS		MARNE	1914
AISNE	1914	ARMENTIERES	1914
ALBERT	1916	MESSINES	1917
YPRES	1917	BAPAUME	1918
CAMBRAI	1918		

### ***Between the Wars***

The North Irish Horse were put in a state of “suspended animation” between 1918 and 1939, and consisted of one person – Sir Ronald Ross – whose name remained in the Army List. They thus became an annual newspaper item as “the one-man Regiment”.

### ***The Second World War***

In May 1939, Mr Neville Chamberlain announced in the British House of Commons the reconstitution of the Regiment, while a similar announcement was made at Stormont. By a Special Army Order on 11 September 1939, the North Irish Horse was transferred from the Corps of Cavalry of the Line to the Royal Armoured Corps and was reconstituted as an Armoured Car Unit of the Supplementary Reserve. The Commanding Officer was Sir Ronald Ross, the Adjutant

Captain O C Smith-Bingham (17/21 Lancers) and the squadron leaders were Lord O'Neill, Sir Norman Stronge and Major R Booth.

Recruiting commenced almost immediately, and the first twelve recruits for the new Regiment reported to the East Lancashire Fusiliers at Palace Barracks on the 1st October, followed by a further twelve on 12th October. After initial general military training at Holywood this original party went to Enniskillen, where the Castle Barracks and the County Hall housed a rapidly growing Regiment; the training of which was entrusted to Senior Warrant Officers of 17/21 Lancers and the Royal Tank Corps.

In July 1940 the Regiment moved to Portrush and was engaged on coastal patrol and beach defence duties, and it was December of the same year that news came that the battle role had been changed from an Armoured Car Regiment to an Infantry Tank Unit.

Early in 1941 the North Irish Horse moved to Ballykinlar and were issued with Valentine Tanks. In October of the same year the Regiment moved to Westbury, Wiltshire where the first of the new Churchill tanks, with which the Regiment fought throughout World War Two, began to arrive. Continuing its training in England on a Divisional and Corps scale, the Regiment was stationed near Didlington, in the battle area of Norfolk, and lastly Wickham Market.

In 1942 Lt Col David Dawnay was appointed Commanding Officer of the North Irish Horse.

During their training in Norfolk a signal arrived on 27 December for the North Irish Horse to proceed overseas almost immediately. They sailed from Liverpool on 20 January and arrived in Algiers on 1st February 1943.

The Regiment made a very swift name for itself in the final stage of the African Campaign, including the capture of Longston Hill in April, one of the greatest feats ever achieved by tanks. In support of the 5th Buffs, the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the 6th Royal West Kents and 1st Surreys, the North Irish Horse advanced up the Hill the Germans had thought impassable by tanks. The North African Campaign ended in May, and the North Irish Horse continued training in the area of Anaba (Bone).

In January 1944, Col Dawnay was posted to the 23rd Armoured Brigade and the second in command, Lord O'Neill, assumed command. On 26 March orders were received to proceed to Italy, and the Regiment departed on 16 April. Early in May Lord O'Neill became ill and had to go into hospital. Lt Col Strickland took temporary command, and commanded the North Irish Horse through their first battle in Italy; this was the attack on the Hitler line near Cassino. In this battle the Regiment, still with Churchill tanks, assaulted one of the strongest defensive lines that have ever been constructed. In support of the First Canadian Infantry Brigade the line was broken after the bitterest fighting, the Regiment losing 35 tanks. This battle led to the capture of Rome and the full retreat of the German army.

As a Battle Honour to commemorate this great victory the Canadian Commander-in-Chief gave the North Irish Horse the privilege of wearing the Maple Leaf – a unique distinction in this War, and the only occasion this type of Battle Honour has been given.

In June Lord O'Neill returned, but in October was tragically killed after leading the Regiment on the continuing advance and a number of battles including Arezzo and Incontro.

During this time, the North Irish Horse re-equipped with Churchills armed with a 75mm gun. In November Lt Col A W Llewellyn Palmer DSO, MC was appointed Commanding Officer, and took

the North Irish Horse through the remainder of the Italian Campaign and, in particular, the great battle of Senio, where the Regiment led the attack and were the first to reach the River Po, where the campaign and war in Italy virtually ceased.

On 30 April the North Irish Horse were ordered to stand down for the last time. The Regiment, thereafter, set up a P.O.W. Camp near Rimini to receive 10,000 German prisoners-of-war. This was manned for a few months only, following which the Regiment moved to Wolfsberg, Austria. While at Wolfsberg a squadron in turn took over the duties of guard at Allied HQ in Vienna.

Demobilisation had, meanwhile, commenced and the Regiment moved to Wuppertal, Germany, prior to eventual demobilisation in June 1946. So ended the Second World War with the Regiment collecting 53 decorations, including two DSOs, one DCM, twenty-one MCs and bars and sixty-two mentions in despatches.

Battle Honours portrayed on the Guidon are:

HUNTS GAP	SELLE
LONG STOP HILL 1942	DJESEL RMEL
HITLER LINE	TUNIS
GOTHIC LINE	ADVANCE TO FLORENCE
SENIO	CASA FORTS
	ITALY 1944-45

## ***Since the War***

The North Irish Horse was reconstituted in September 1947, as a Yeomanry Regiment of the Territorial Army, in the role of an Armoured Car Regiment. The squadrons were equipped with Daimler armoured cars and Dingo scout cars, and were located at Belfast, Londonderry, Lurgan, Ballymoney and Enniskillen.

Apart from being equipped with Saladins, Saracens and Ferrets, in the early 1960s, this situation lasted until the 1st April 1967 when the new T & AVR units came into being. The TA was drastically cut on this re-organisation, only one Cavalry Regiment emerging, formed from five of the old Yeomanry Regiments. The other Yeomanry Regiments continued to exist only in Cadre form. As a result of the re-organisation the Regiment now consists of the following:

The North Irish Horse Cadre  
D (North Irish Horse) Squadron, Royal Yeomanry Regiment  
69 (North Irish Horse) Signal Squadron  
The North Irish Horse Element of the North Irish Yeomanry

## ***69 (North Irish Horse) Signal Squadron (Volunteers)***

The Squadron became part of 32 (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers) in 1969. In 1972, barely three years after its organisation as a Signal Squadron, 69 Signal Squadron is today operationally viable and stands ready to assume its responsibilities as the Regional Signal Squadron for Northern Ireland should the need ever arise.

The Squadron remained part of 32 (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers) until the Options for Change and the TA Review on 1 April 1995 that resulted in the squadron being transferred to 40 (Ulster) Signal Regiment.

### ***Officers Commanding***

1969 – 1971 Major C O Eaton TD (later Lt Col)  
1971 – 1974 Major W B S Buchanan  
1974 - Major (QM) N Dykes

# **The History of the 82nd Signal Regiment – Army Emergency Reserve**

## ***Section I – G.H.Q. Signals (SR)***

The Reserve Army history of the Regiment really began when the Supplementary Reserve of the Regular Army was formed in 1924. In Glasgow, the 52 (L) Divisional Signals (TA) was made responsible for raising and administering a number of attached miscellaneous signal sections. With this end in view Lt (later Lt Col) J W Robertson of 52 (L) Divisional Signals (TA) was transferred with a nucleus of senior serving TA NCOs to the Supplementary Reserve.

Due to his enthusiasm, recruitment went on at a great pace, but conditions were made very difficult by the complete lack of training equipment. By this time Major J W Robertson had been joined by Lt W Anderson who held a direct SR Commission.

Fortunately for the new sections, equipment began to come to hand the following year sufficient to enable effective training to be carried out. The SR units consisted of two horsed cable sections, two construction sections, and an operating section known as RAF Signals and part of Air Contingent Signals. The sections attached to 52 (L) Divisional Signals were known as Lowland Signals (TA and SR).

Annual Camps were carried out with 52 (L) Divisional Signals at the Wallace Field, Troon, Ayrshire, the TA unit providing the signal offices and despatch riders and the SR units, the lines and some of the operating personnel. At about this time, Captain John Cameron, Sectional Engineer, GPO Glasgow, and Lts Arnold, J Anderson, J J Craik MM, and J Rankine joined SR Signals, all with direct SR Commissions.

In 1933, a re-organisation took place in which 23 and 24 Cable Sections and 26 and 27 Construction sections become a Company of GHQ Signals at Leeds. The RAF Operating Section remained a separate part of Air Contingent Signals. Also Captains G W Cummin and W M Smith transferred from 52 Div Signals, the former in command 1 Company with Major J W Robertson in command of the whole SR troops. These had grown in strength following a recruitment drive in the Post Offices by Captain Cameron.

For the first time SR Signals instead of going to camp with 52 (L) Divisional Signals went to Salisbury Plain and provided signals for a War Office Exercise by augmenting the Regular “A” Corps Signals.

Major J W Robertson transferred back to the TA and took over command of 52 (L) Divisional Signals, G W Cumming was promoted to Major and appointed to Command the SR troops. The officers at this time were Major G W Cumming, Captain W M Smith, Captain J J Craik MM, Lt J D Rankine and 2Lt W Johnston and A S W Mitchell.

SR Signals again went to Salisbury Plain to provide Signals for a War Office Exercise. Captain Gibling was the Regular Adjutant to both the TA and SR units at 21 Jardine Street, Glasgow.

A further re-organisation was carried out towards the end of the year, the Leeds connection being ended, and GHQ Signals (SR) formed in Glasgow. The organisation of the new unit was as follows:

Major J F Darby of 44 Div, Signals was appointed to Command 3 Coy. The SR units ceased to be administered by the TA, and GHQ Signals (SR) was given its own Regular Adjutant, Capt L D M Paterson, R Signals, although the accommodation at Jardine Street, Glasgow continued to be shared with 52 (L) Divisional Signals.

The unit rapidly increased in strength both in Glasgow and Edinburgh where Major J F Darby, GPO Telephone Manager, was particularly successful in bringing his Company up to strength in a matter of months. 41 and 42 Teleprinter Operating Sections who were formed at Glasgow were recruited by Lt W Johnston mainly from the Glasgow Post Office, although there were men from Inverness, Oban, Stranraer, and one from Orkney. They were wholly postal men and the Post Office co-operated by giving them teleprinter training in the Glasgow P.O. Telegraph school. Although they could not be paid for this extra training, it was possible eventually to count the attendance at the school as extra drills.

The Despatch Riders were recruited mostly from motor-cycle clubs; they were required to own motor cycles and the machines had to be maintained to a set standard of efficiency. These despatch riders were real enthusiasts. The D.R. Sergeant was a power engineer in the Glasgow T.M.O.

The annual camp was held at Colchester, and this year for the first time since World War I, a GHQ exercise was held in which communications for the General Staff were provided by their own Signals Unit. This was looked upon as an achievement particularly since arrangements had to be made for the phenomenally large number of 40 local subscribers. The telephone equipment was very primitive. One 60 line and 40 line positions constituted the telephone exchange with no common multiple or positions constituted coupling keys. In his enthusiasm each staff officer at the start of the exercise lifted his telephone at the same time as everyone else, and the switchboard operators were unable to handle the flood of calls until relief was given by the staffing of another 60 line positions borrowed hastily from Air Contingent Signals at Leeds. The occasion was also historic in that it was the first time teleprinters were used on a War Office Exercise.

In 1939 the Annual Camp was at Ampthill where the Unit took part in another War Office Exercise. The training arrangements from the officer viewpoint were not satisfactory as their troops were taken away to augment "A" Corps Signals and they were left high and dry. This was adversely commented upon by two senior officers from the War Office who had come to see how the SR Troops were performing.

As regards strength, the recruiting campaign had been so successful that the unit was allowed to hold a surplus of 10% of its War Establishment, and waiting lists were maintained in Glasgow and Edinburgh for certain trades.

Early in 1939 Major J F Darby left to form 3rd AA Divisional Signals in Edinburgh with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Major H A Ashdowne, GPO Regional Engineer, Edinburgh, took over command of 3 Coy. The Annual Camp took place 15-29 July, at Barry Camp in Angus, and there was a very modest exercise based on the rapid setting up of signal offices.

During the exercise the unit was inspected by Brig Chevenix Trench from the War Office who was later to be Signal Officer in Chief to the BEF.

On its return to Glasgow the unit marched to its new headquarters at Yorkhill Barracks, headed by its colourful pipe and drum band complete with Drum Major.

Shortly after this Lt Col Cumming left to take a short Service Commission as Major in Western Command. Then towards the end of August instructions were received to mobilise the Unit which

was done by Major W M Smith. As the command had not been filled, Major G W Cumming was recalled at Lt Col and instructed to take the unit overseas.

The supernumerary men were posted to Catterick, and the supernumerary officers to the Scottish Command Signal Company in Edinburgh.

The mobilised unit moved overseas first concentrating at Le Mans and the 3 Coy went in advance to Arras to man the various communications of GHQ. As the first British soldiers to set foot in a nearby village since World War I, the French equivalent of our British Legion gave to Lt Col Cumming early in September 1939 a flag in honour of the occasion.

The Construction and Line Troops of GHQ Signals (SR) quickly acclimatised themselves and built up a tremendous network of P.L. and U.G. lines not only for GHQ but also in the L of C Area as a whole. Towards the end of the year intelligence suggested that the name of the Unit should be changed as it disclosed the whereabouts of GHQ – a whereabouts known to many. However, the name of the unit was changed to 1 HQ Signals which it retained throughout the War until 1945 when it was renamed BAOR Signal Regiment.

1 HQ Signals were ordered back to Britain early in the last week of May. A number of officers and personnel remained right to the last to assist Lord Gort, C in C, by keeping communications going until the Divisions took over the breaches. There were 2 W/T dets, a line det and signal office staff who were evacuated soon after Lord Gort left, leaving Lt Hough with switchboard operators to keep communications through. Some switchboard operators got cut off and one exchange continued to be manned and answered calls many days after the Germans had surrounded Arras. Lt Hough who was the last Signals Officer to leave France, Lt Dyce and Lt Pennicke, a Regular, were awarded the MBE for the part they played in the evacuation. Lt Col G W Cumming was awarded the OBE. Captain Bucknall who had been detailed on the outskirts of the bridgehead to man a road block was not so fortunate, and he and his men were taken prisoner after their ammunition ran out. On being released at the end of the War he was mentioned in Despatches. The GHQ Signal Office flag at Arras was brought back via Dunkirk by Captain (QM) Colin Sinclair, an ex-quartermaster of 82nd Signal Regt (AER).

On coming back from France the unit consisted of:

- 4 Teleprinter Operating Sections
- 4 Construction Sections
- 4 Despatch Rider Sections
- 1 Line Maintenance Section
- and numerous wireless troops.

These were concentrated at Barnsley where it was found that the Unit had lost 60 killed, wounded or missing in the Evacuation of the B.E.F. A number of personnel were then sent to Commands to assist in anti-invasion roles. The remainder moved to Hammersmith in London to provide communications for GHQ Land Forces.

In October 1940, Lt Col Cumming took over an appointment in Northern Command and Lt Col C K Thursby-Pelham MC assumed command.

In 1943 Lt Col F F Hough MBE one of the original officers of GHQ Signals SR who joined in 1937 took command. He was followed in 1944 by Lt Col W K Hagan CBE. The unit took part in Operation Overlord and the subsequent campaign in NW Europe during which it attained the abnormal strength of over 2000.

After the War the unit moved to the Bad Oynhausen and provided communications for HQ British Army of the Rhine. It was then combined with two L of C Signal Regiments and renamed No. 2 Line of Communication Signal Regiment, continuing to provide communications for Army Headquarters as well as throughout the British Zone in Germany.

In 1948, it was again renamed HQ BAOR Signal Regiment, and No. 2 L of C Signal Regiment was reformed as a separate unit. Four years later on the formation of Army Groups in Germany, it became HQ Northern Army Group Signal Regiment and in 1953 was renamed 18th Army Group Signal Regiment.

In a letter to the author, Col G W Cumming stated that 18th Army Group Signal Regiment agreed that the date of promotion to GHQ Signals SR to a Lt Col's command should be regarded as the birthday of the unit, i.e. 12th July 1937. He was invited to the parade in celebration of the 21st Anniversary but was unable to attend.

In 1959 on the re-designation of Signal Regiment it was renamed the 10th Signal Regiment (Army Group).

This then is the history to date of GHQ Signals (SR) and its regular descendant the 10th Signal Regiment.

## ***Section II – The 82nd Signal Regiment (AER)***

On the reconstitution of the Territorial Army in 1947, a Major Signal Unit, 50 L of C Signal Regiment (TA) was raised at 21 Jardine Street, Glasgow from the personnel who originally belonged to 52 (L) Divisional Signals (TA), 15th Divisional Signals (TA) and GHQ Signals (SR). Two Squadrons were formed in Glasgow, and a third squadron in Edinburgh by Major F N McMillan, ex GHQ Signals (SR).

When the supplementary Reserve of the Regular Army was reconstituted following the publishing of the Army Reserve Act 1950, 50 L of C Signal Regiment was transferred to the Supplementary Reserve, the larger TA element being used to raise again 52 (L) Division Signals (TA).

From the ex GHQ Signals (SR) nucleus was formed on 20th January 1951, 50 L of C Signal Regiment (SR), Major F N McMillan having been appointed its first Commanding Officer, with the rank of Lt Col. He rallied to the Regiment a number of volunteers, ex GHQ Signals (SR) Officers and other ranks. The subsequent responsibility for raising the Regiment including the National Service component was vested in the Supplementary Reserve Depot and Training Centre, later to be known as HQ AER R Sigs at Blacon Camp, Chester.

The new Regiment was officially reorganised by the War Office as the non-regular successor to GHQ Signals (SR), and the Glasgow TAAFA released monies for the Officers and Sergeants messes and PRI. Later 52 Divisional Signals released to the Regiment silver belonging to GHQ Signals (SR) and its successor 1 HQ Signals which had been handed to them for safe custody.

The first Annual Camp was at Blacon, Chester on 9-23 June 1951 – a combined camp with 51 L of C Signal Regiment (AER). Between these two Regiments there sprang up a healthy rivalry, and they competed each year for a Silver Guard Mounting Competition Cup. The camp was a tented one and fairly primitive but a happy time was had by all. The equipment, including cable, was new, but there were initially shortages of such vital items as sulphuric acid for charging purposes. Everyone worked hard whether a volunteer or National Serviceman, and within a short time the camp was organised and training had commenced in earnest. Time was found in the second week to carry out a Regimental Exercise “TARTAN”.

The new equipments used on the scheme were the latest types of 53 Set, CT 1 + 1 CT1 + 4 S & D, 3 Channel Duplex and No. 10 sets for radio relay. Together the volunteers and National Servicemen worked well. Any spare personnel such as General Duties were sent to help the Depot Staff move equipment from the Chester Railway Sidings to the new Gymnasium at Blacon which was stacked to the roof with signals equipment for Field Marshall Montgomery’s Exercise “RED SPIDER”. The Adjutant was particularly hard worked as he was Imprest Holder and Paymaster as well.

## ***Appointments***

### **82nd Signal Regiment AER**

#### **Commanding Officers on Formation of Supplementary Reserve**

1924           Maj J W Robertson OBE, DCM

#### **General HQ Signals SR**

1932           Maj J W Robertson OBE, DCM

1934           Maj (later Lt Col) G W Cumming OBE, TD

#### **No 1 HQ Signals**

1940           Lt Col C K Thursby-Pelham MC  
(later Brig OBE, MC)

1941           Lt Col L H Harris TD  
(later Sir L H Harris KBE, TD)

1942           Lt Col F Jones

1943           Lt Col F A Hough MBE

1944           Lt Col H K Hagon OBE

1945           Lt Col H L Lewis

1946           Lt Col A T S Sloden OBE

#### **No 2 L of C Signal Regiment**

1946           Lt Col R C Conway-Gorden

#### **HQ BAOR Signal Regiment**

1948           Lt Col F C Seeley OBE

1949           Lt Col J E S Sanders OBE

#### **No 50 L of C Signal Regiment**

1949           Lt Col F Winter ERD  
(combined with 52 (Lowland) Div Sigs TA)

1949           Lt Col W A Purser  
(combined with 52 (Lowland) Div 20 Jan 1951 (SR))

1951           Lt Col E N McMillan

### **82nd Signal Regiment AER**

1960           Lt Col W N Oliver MBE, ERD

1961           Lt Col W O Dalziel TD

#### **Honorary Colonel of the Regiment**

1956           Col J Gardines OBE, TD

1956           Col W N Oliver MBE, ERD

1958           Col M G Holmes

## 32nd (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers)

Born in anguish out of the reorganisation of the Territorial Army in 1967 from four proud Signal Regiments:

51st (Highland) Divisional Signal Regiment TA  
52nd (Lowland) Divisional Signal Regiment TA  
61st (City of Edinburgh) Signal Regiment TA  
82nd Signal Regiment AER

and later in 1969 by 69 (North Irish Horse) Signal Squadron (V), a unit of no less pride and with many Battle Honours of two World Wars, a pessimist might be forgiven if he thought that such an indigestible mass would ever knit in to the cohesive one which is the mark of a good Regiment. But the pessimist would be proved wrong.

*Extract from The Wire (Sept-Oct 1969)*

### **32nd (Scottish) Signal Regiment (V), Glasgow**

#### **Wind of change**

Those of us north of the border have not escaped the 'wind of change'; we started 1969 with a new and more realistic role in support of U.K.L.F. This necessitated a great deal of re-training, with the changeover from radio relay to HF radio.

There have also been changes in personnel. We absorbed the Scottish Regional Signal Troop and Sub-Regional Troops, and, inevitably, a number of individuals who had been with the Reserve Army for some time have had to go; to them we say farewell and thank you. Not satisfied with our basic responsibilities for the whole of Scotland, it was decided to give us a stake in Northern Ireland, too, and we now have 69th (North Irish Horse) Signal Squadron (V) in Londonderry.

As if this wasn't enough, those members of the Permanent Staff who helped to found the Regiment on 1st April 1967, are now leaving at the end of their tour, amongst them **Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Davies**, who has been relieved by **Lieutenant-Colonel David Cattermull**; **Major Jim Robinson** by **Major Frank Lettin**, and **Major John Douthwaite** as Quartermaster by **Captain Peter McNaughton**.

#### **'Sight and Sound'**

'O.K. cries' are not the monopoly of the Regular Army – for the benefit of those readers who have not heard of 'Sight and Sound', it is a commercial venture which undertakes to teach anyone to touch-type on a typewriter, from scratch, in 12 one-hour lessons (which preferably should be on consecutive days). We were extremely fortunate in having at camp an instructor from the firm with a set of their equipment, and 48 volunteers were put through the course. No previous training is required; some of the trainees were linemen converting their trade to comcen operator as part of the re-organisation. Camp is not the best place for 'Sight and Sound,' because it is difficult to organise subsequent teleprinter training to follow on immediately afterwards. Conflicting requirements make it difficult to ensure that volunteers attend for the specified periods and, or course, the multitude of visitors are a distraction to

trainees trying to concentrate, though **General Sir Derek Lang**, G.O.C.-in-C. in Scotland, when he visited us, joined as a trainee and appeared on Yorkshire Television in this role.

We all hope that 'Sight and Sound' will be available to us out of camp as the answer to reducing the time it takes to teach a volunteer the basic keyboard skill.

## **Camp**

Once again we went to Scarborough, and not to the Continent as had originally been promised, prior to our new role. There was some apprehension as we assembled there – those of us from Scotland had almost forgotten our former tribal loyalties (Highland, Lowland and City of Edinburgh) – but how would the men from Londonderry (North Irish Horse) affect us. We need never have feared, they fitted in extremely well, and what is more, brought the North Irish Horse Regimental Guidon with them to add a splash of colour to the Regimental parades.

Forty-two of our volunteers went to the Training Brigade in Catterick for their camp, and we say thank you yet again to **Major Fred Leatherland** and the instructors of 8th and 24th Regiments for all their help.

Those at Scarborough spent their first week on individual training, and the second week on exercise. We started with a Regimental one to shake out, before the group exercise 'Red Shoe'. This showed that there is great potential in the Regiment, ready to be harnessed. The weather was fine and everyone enjoyed it, particularly the W.R.A.C., under canvas, who were able to show the men how to erect tents that would stay up.

The considerable traffic handling capacity of the D11s' teleprinters resulted in the directing staff running out of practice traffic – at about the same time as the Officers' Mess ran out of tonic water. The Regimental Padre had with him the official report on the World Council of Churches. Anyone subsequently monitoring our traffic would have been mystified by the mixture of ecumenical discussion and action to overcome the great tonic water shortage.

One of the trials of every camp is the number of visitors; a very efficient 69th (North Irish Horse) Squadron guard commander found a novel and effective means of entertaining those who did not know the password, by arranging a short stay in his guardroom.

## **Farewells**

The Regiment's farewells to **Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Davies** were nothing if not original. The Warrant Officers and Sergeants, having wine and dined him, disposed of him atop the Scammell, seated in an armchair. Fortunately, he was wearing a crash helmet, as he attempted a parachutist's exit without the parachute.

The officers, not to be outdone, planned a Viking farewell. Fortunately they decided against floating him out to sea, and instead produced a novel 'longship' floating in a water-filled trailer with mist (from dry ice) rising from the water.

And so to 1970 when, we have been told, we are to camp north of the border, at Cultybraggen. When the news gets around, no doubt it will result in sighs of regret from the maidens of Scarborough, matched by more sighs – of relief – from the men (and officers) of the Regiment.

Under Options for Change and the TA Review the Regiment transferred 69 (NIH) Signal Squadron to 40 (Ulster) Signal Regiment on 1 April 1995

In 2002 the Regiment has two distinct roles:

**National Communications.** To provide mobile and static UK mainland post strike and recovery infrastructure communications for Government, Military and selected civilian users by deploying and operating the National Communications Radio System (NCRS).

**Regional Integrated Communications Planning (ICP) Communications.** To provide General Officer Commanding Scotland with Command and Control secure and insecure communications facilities to execute his regional ICP responsibilities. The main capabilities are provided by Deployable Communications Detachments for Key Points and the Brigade Main HQs, Mobile Signal Detachments for the Commanders' Rovers, Brigade Tactical HQs and Liaison Officers and MOULD Insertion Vehicles (MIVs) to extend or replace the MOULD radio system hilltop sites. The Regiment also provides reinforcement detachments to bring 242 Signal Squadron up to full strength.

## ***Appointments***

### **32nd (Scottish) Signal Regiment (Volunteers)**

#### **Honorary Colonels**

1967 – 1972 Maj Gen A M W Whistler CB, CBE  
1972 – 1977 Col I M Wotherspoon TD, ADC  
1977 – 1983 Col K F Lloyd  
1983 – 1988 Col D J Macintyre  
1988 – 1992 Col Sir David McNee Q.P.M.  
1992 – 1993 Col J A Sherriff  
1994 – 1999 Col A S Petrie OStJ, TD, JP  
1999 – Col A C Cunningham TD

#### **Commanding Officers**

1967 – 1969	Lt Col G L Davies
1969 – 1972	Lt Col D G Cattermull
1972 – 1974	Lt Col R Goodwin-Jones
Sept 1974 – Sept 1976	Lt Col R P Hills
Sept 1976 – May 1979	Lt Col A S Petrie TD
May 1979 – Nov 1981	Lt Col Cross
Nov 1981 – Apr 1984	Lt Col J J Cullen
May 1984 – Oct 1986	Lt Col Culley
Oct 1986 – Apr 1989	Lt Col D P Hughes
Apr 1989 – Jan 1992	Lt Col M J Anderson
Jan 1992 – Jun 1994	Lt Col W Brewin
Jun 1994 – Sept 1996	Lt Col J O Robertson
Sept 1996 – Jun 1999	Lt Col A A C Lapsley TD
Jun 1999 – Dec 2002	Lt Col J McKee MBE
Dec 2002 – Jul 2004	Lt Col E M Blyth TD
Jul 2004 – Dec 2006	Lt Col R J H Sutherland TD
Jan 2007 -	Lt Col H A Jenkins

#### **Regimental Sergeant Majors**

Jul 1987 – Aug 1989	WO1 S A May
Aug 1989 – Jul 1991	WO1 T A Mortlock
Jul 1991 – Oct 1992	WO1 W Heelan BEM
Oct 1992 – May 1994	WO1 Patrickson
Sept 1994 – Feb 1997	WO1 G G A Keith
Feb 1997 – Jan 1999	WO1 J S McLachlan
Jan 1999 – Apr 2001	WO1 A B Hilborn
Apr 2001 – May 2003	WO1 S J Russell
May 2003 – Aug 2004	WO1 J Greenwood
Aug 2004 – Nov 2006	WO1 A Ironside
Nov 2006 -	WO1 D P Wilson