



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN CORPS OF SIGNALS

100TH ANNIVERSARY

Friday 14 February 2025

Acknowledgments

John Berger MP, Representing the Premier

The Honourable Kate Thwaites MP, Federal Assistant Minister for Women, for Social Security, and for Ageing

Gavin Pearce MP, Federal Member for Braddon

Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of Army, **Lieutenant General Susan Coyle**, Chief of Joint Capabilities and **Senior Members of the Australian Defence Force**

Commander Wayne Newman, Representing the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police

Brigadier Deane Limmer, Head of Corps, Royal Australian Corps of Signals

Colonel Catherine Carrigan, Deputy Chair, Shrine of Remembrance Trustees

Representatives of Ex-Service Organisations

Former and current service men and women

Distinguished guests

It is a wonderful morning.

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the Shrine stands – Bunurong people of the Kulin nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

As many of you know very well, the Royal Australian Corps of Signals traces its origins to the ‘Torpedo and Signals Corps’ – the first regularly formed signal unit in the British Empire.

Their work in those early days, while foundational to today’s practices, was markedly different from what the Corps experience today.

As you can imagine, working with signals, communications and torpedoes around the period of the 1870s wasn't easy, or safe, as an undertaking.

On the 11th of July, 1873, the Torpedo and Signals Corps held the first public trial here to test the effectiveness of their system.

The experiment began as night fell, with a large crowd gathering at the former St. Kilda battery.

At a distance of just over two miles, and using a signalling device no bigger than a handheld lamp, they began to send messages to the jewel in Victoria's navy, HMVS *Cerberus*.

The Argus reported that:

"As soon as the party arrived at the battery, instructions were transmitted to the Cerberus to fire away, and in a few seconds... the first rocket was sent aloft."

Signallers on land, using a 'dot and dash system', communicated to signallers on *Cerberus* afloat in Port Phillip Bay.

The crowds that were watching struggled to fathom that, across that distance and in near total darkness, orders from the land were reaching the vessel – and executed mere moments after the signal had been sent.

Of course, this was in a time when letters took weeks to deliver and travelling from Melbourne to Ballarat required camping supplies – the rapid nature of signalling they saw then was awe-inspiring - it remains awe inspiring today.

It was then a new front of military innovation.

The formation of the standalone Australian Corps of Signals in 1925 reflected the increasing importance of this unit in modern conflicts.

Decades later, in the throes of World War II, a band of Australian, Dutch and English soldiers seemingly vanished in Japanese-occupied Timor.

They were known as 'Sparrow Force', and for months, their families, friends and fellow soldiers presumed the worst.

But, unbeknown to friend and foe alike – in the thin air of the Timorese mountains, those missing soldiers were not only alive but hard at work.

Facing overwhelming odds, lacking supplies and suffering the diseases of the tropics – their survival hinged on communicating with Darwin.

With no radio available – they built one – under the leadership of Captain George Parker of the 8th Division Signals.

Soldiers foraged for parts through rugged mountains, bringing them to a small, windowless shed where signallers worked day and night, illuminated by burning pig fat.

In April 1942, they managed to transmit a faint signal to Darwin.

And after the mainlanders had confirmed their identity, much to their shock, the signallers returned a message stating:

"Force intact and still fighting. Badly need boots, quinine, money, and Tommy gun ammunition."

They'd suffered a lot but they were still there – they were still fighting.

Stories of bravery, excellence and innovation have come to define the Royal Australian Corps of Signals over the course of a century.

To draw on and extend the words of the late brigadier James Hervey Thyer CBE, DSO:

“There is no broken link, no gap in the succession, between the happy warrior of the first signal engineer company who trained at Broadmeadows at the outbreak of war in 1914 and the signaller today training at Simpson barracks.”

Throughout conflict, humanitarian aid and emergency support, the Royal Australian Corps of Signals has truly lived by its motto *Certa Cito* (Swift and Sure).

Yours is a responsibility that demands precision, resilience, and intense concentration – for the messages that you carry can mean the difference between hope and despair.

On behalf of the people of Victoria, I want to offer our deepest appreciation for your service, for all of the new skills and capabilities you are developing for our future security and the vital role that you play each and every day, through your service, across our country, and abroad.

In honouring the Corps today, we also pay our respect to those before in the unbroken chain of courage, excellence and sacrifice.

Their legacy continues to inspire but it’s a legacy that you are carrying forward, and we have our hope in you.

I wish you all a swift and sure journey today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Certa Cito.