



RSARS

## ROYAL SIGNALS AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

The origins of the Royal Signals cap badge - 'Jimmy'

The cap badge is heraldically described as: "The figure of Mercury holding a Caduceus in the left hand, the right hand aloft poised with the left foot on a globe all silver above the globe a scroll inscribed 'Certa Cito' and below on each side six laurel leaves all gold, the whole ensigned with the Crown in gold."

But to every member of the Corps it is affectionately known as "JIMMY". So what are the origins of the badge and its name? Nobody can be exactly sure, but to believe the most widely accepted theories you must trace the history of communications units in the Army back to the formation, in 1870, of 'C' Telegraph Troop, Royal Engineers. The Troop served with distinction in the Ashanti and Zulu Wars and by 1884, because of the growth in communications requirements, it was decided to form 1st and 2nd Divisions of the 1st Telegraph Battalion, Royal Engineers.

Major CFC Beresford was the initial Commander of the 2nd Division and he was determined that it should have its own emblem (or 'device' as he called it). Although he had asked the Battalion for suggestions there was none better than his own, and so the figure of Mercury was adopted. It was first used in the Battalion magazine, Military Telegraph Bulletin, on 15 September 1884, and was also used on headed notepaper.

It is thought that the inspiration for Mercury came to Major Beresford from the statue of Mercury that his father had probably purchased at the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park in 1851. This had then been set up in his garden in Camberley. The statue was passed to the Royal Signals in 1977.

The new device was liked by the soldiers and so on 9 May 1891 Major Beresford and Lieutenant CJ Elkington RE presented a mace or 'bandstick' to the Band of the Battalion. The handsome bandstick had a figure of Mercury at the top. This was also passed to the Royal Signals at a later date and now resides together with the statue in the Corps Museum.

Mercury was never used by RE communicators as a badge. It was not until the 'Corps of Signals' was formed that the question of a badge came into being. Following the decision of King George V to grant the 'Royal' title the first cap badge of Mercury was approved on 24 March 1921. This was of the initial pattern with the oval band surrounding it. The Corps changed its style of badge in 1946 to that currently used. "Certa Cito", meaning "Swift and Sure", was also included at this stage.

There are a number of theories as to why "JIMMY" was adopted as a term of endearment for the emblem. The most widely accepted is that it came from a very popular Corps boxer, called Jimmy Emblem, who was an Army Champion in 1924 and represented the Corps from 1921 to 1929. It was certainly referred to as "JIMMY" in official correspondence in the early 1930's.



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