

In Kenya, with the outbreak of the Second World War, and the expansion of the King's African Rifles, the requirement grew for the number and skills of signallers within the East Africa Command. The East African Signal Corps was formed on 1 September 1939, and in 1940, the new Corps provided one section for each of the two East African brigades, namely the 21st (East Africa) Infantry Brigade, and the 22nd (East Africa) Infantry Brigade, and signals sections for the North and South Areas of East Africa Command. In late 1940, personnel from the British Royal Corps of Signals arrived in Kenya to form the headquarters signals unit for the 11th (African) and 12th (Africa) Divisional Signals. In addition, the 25th (African) Corps Signals unit was formed to the advanced headquarters of East Africa Command at Carissa. A third signal section was formed for the newly raised 25th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade in 1941. In late 1941, the 28th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade was raised, and a new signals section formed.

At first, these units were led by officers seconded from the Royal Corps of Signals, but locally trained European and African personnel were increasingly posted to units of the East African Signal Corps as the training provision expanded. An East African Signal Corps training centre was formed in Nairobi, but circa 1942, it was moved to barracks at Nanyuki in Kenya. The language of instruction in the Corps was Ki-Swahili. The strength of the Corps grew from one-hundred and twenty personnel in 1939, to about one-thousand, five-hundred in May 1943, and a peak of one-thousand, six-hundred and forty-two personnel in 1944. Personnel were drawn from Kenya, Nyasaland, Tanganyika Territory and Uganda. European men and women were also recruited from North and South Rhodesia, and South Africa to join the Corps. The E.A.S.C. provided the personnel for the 11th (East Africa) Infantry Divisional Signals, and the five infantry brigades that were deployed to Ceylon and Burma.

On 2 July 1944, at the barracks at Nanyuki, a fire in a house used for accommodation by European instructors claimed the lives of five men. They were:

- 3853104 Company Quarter-Master-Serjeant Harold DUNSCOMBE – 38 years;
- 40121 Company Quarter-Master-Serjeant Angus Ian MURRAY;
- 7632317 Lance Serjeant Harold JUDSON, R.E.M.E. – 33 years;
- 4797034 Colour Serjeant Nathan OSGOTHORPE – 38 years;
- 2322774 Company Quarter-Master-Serjeant Ronald Charles SANDHAM – 34 years.

C.Q.M.S. DUNSCOMBE was a member of The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) and was attached to the King's African Rifles. He was born on 11 April 1906 in Manchester, and was the son of Richard Henry and Hannah DUNSCOMBE. Richard Henry DUNSCOMBE is shown in the 1911 Census as living at 279, Droylsden Road, Newton Heath, Manchester with his wife and four children. In 1911, his occupation was as a Machine Calico Printer, but he joined the Manchester Regiment and served as a soldier because he later became a Chelsea Pensioner. Harold married to Sybil Iris WILLISHER of Silver End, Essex, during the third quarter of 1938.

C.Q.M.S. MURRAY was a member of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, and was attached to the 62nd (Nyasaland) Bn. The King's African Rifles. Lance Serjeant JUDSON was a member of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, and would have been involved in the maintenance of the signals equipment. He born on 15 February 1911, and was the son of Walter and Ada JUDSON, of Keighley, Yorkshire. In 1939 he worked as a bus driver, and was married in the fourth quarter of that year to Gertrude May JUDSON of Beechcliffe, Keighley.

Colour Serjeant OSGOTHORPE was a member of the Royal Norfolk Regiment who was attached to the 6th Bn. The King's African Rifles. He was born on 2 July 1906 in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, OSGOTHORPE worked as a general labourer, and Alice was a housewife.

C.Q.M.S. SANDHAM was a member of The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) and was also attached to the 62nd (Nyasaland) Bn. The King's African Rifles. He was the son of John and Harriett SANDHAM. He was born in 1910 in Alfreton, Derbyshire, as his family lived at 2 Mansfield Road in the town. His father and mother were both Assurance Agents in 1911, but later his father became a Colliery Railway Engine Driver. Ronald had four elder brothers, and one younger brother. On leaving school in 1936, Ronald gained employment as a Sales Representative for the General Post Office in Nottingham. In 1939, the family lived at 8, Chesterfield Road North, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, but at the time of his death, SANDHAM's official address was No. 41 in the same road. His effects of £555 17s 5d passed to his mother Harriett, who was by then a widow as her husband had died on 10 July 1943.



Left – C.Q.M.S. SANDHAM as a Corporal, with the Signaller's qualification badge above his rank stripes on his right arm.

Courtesy of: Ancestry.co.uk

DUNSCOMBE is buried in the Nanyuki War Cemetery, memorial 1.44, and the inscription on his grave reads: *THROUGH ALL LIFE'S CHANGES HAROLD I WILL NOT FORGET YOU, OR YOUR LOVE FOR ME.* JUDSON is buried in Grave 1.45, and the inscription on his grave reads: *'HIS LIFE A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY, HIS DEATH A SILENT GRIEF.'* OSGOTHORPE is buried in Grave 1.46, and MURRAY is buried in grave 1.47. Lastly, SANDHAM is buried in Grave 1.48, and the inscription on his headstone reads: *'IN LOVING MEMORY OF RONALD CHARLES OF MANSFIELD, ENGLAND'*.

