



Did you know...

Here is some information about the early engineers and siege warfare...

THE EARLY ENGINEERS

- The first Royal Engineer was called Humphrey de Tilluel; he came to England with William the Conqueror as part of the invasion force in 1066. You can see him on the Bayeux Tapestry supervising the construction of a pre-fabricated fort that had been transported to England with the invasion fleet.
- A monk called Gundulph, who was responsible for designing the White Tower in the Tower of London, replaced Humphrey. Gundulph also strengthened Rochester Castle and turned the Saxon church at Rochester into a Cathedral.
- Gundulph eventually became Bishop of Rochester.
- Today's Royal Engineers think of Gundulph as their founding father, part of his original Cathedral still stands as part of Rochester Cathedral and the Corps hold a service there every year.
- By the time of Richard I (the Lion Heart) the King's Engineers and the skilled craftsmen were used to build the castles and were regarded to be amongst the best castle builders in Europe.
- In times of war the King's Engineers built fortifications as well as siege engines, which were used to destroy castles. They also tunnelled under castle walls so that they could place mines there and blow up the walls. In peacetime they were responsible for building roads, bridges, and other building works. These jobs are still carried out by today's Royal Engineers.
- The Engineers became part of the Office of Ordnance in the early 1400's. The Office of Ordnance had both Engineers and Artillery officers on its permanent establishment. In 1518 the Office of Ordnance became the Board of Ordnance.
- The Engineers were formed into the Corps of Engineers in 1716 and were granted the Royal title in 1787.
- In 1741 the Royal Military Academy was founded in Woolwich, to train Royal Engineer Officers who previously had to go to Europe to study military engineering and fortifications.
- Unlike cavalry or infantry officers, who could purchase their commissions Engineers officers could only obtain a commission after successfully completing their training course at the Royal Military Academy.



- The first engineer soldiers were the Company of Soldier Artificers raised in Gibraltar in 1772. In 1787 the Corps of Royal Military Artificers was raised in Britain and were re-organised into the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners in 1812.
- When the Board of Ordnance was abolished in 1856 the Corps of Royal Engineers was formed with the soldiers of the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners joining the officers.
- Royal Engineers are commonly known as "sappers" after the word for trenches "saps", which, engineers used to construct to assault enemy fortifications.

SIEGE WARFARE

- Siege towers were a common sight in the wars of the middle ages; they were used until the 16th century. A siege tower had two purposes one to act as a platform from which to climb over the top of a fortress wall, and secondly to cover mining or ramming operations at the bottom of a fortification.
- The battering ram is one of the oldest types of siege weapon; they were used to batter down the doors of towns and castle being besieged.
- The catapult was a siege engine which had an arm used to hurl an object great distances.
- One of the earliest types of catapult was an 'Onager'; used by the Romans. It was called an 'Onager' after a type of donkey, because of its kicking action. The medieval 'Mangonel' was based on this catapult but it wasn't as powerful.
- The 'Mangonel' shot heavy objects from a bowl-shaped bucket at the end of the arm. The bucket could launch more rocks than a sling could. They were used to throw rocks, burning objects or even dead animals and people.
- The 'Trebuchet' was a much simpler design than most catapults. It was used to smash masonry walls or to throw projectiles over them.
- Within besieged castles the 'Trebuchet' were some times used to throw bodies of dead people or animals over walls of towns and castles to spread diseases among the besiegers.
- The 'Trebuchet' was one of the most accurate forms of catapults.