



Honorable Conquests: An account of the enduring work of the Royal Engineers throughout the Empire

A.J Smithers

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The origin of the Corps of Royal Engineers, now affectionately known as The Sappers but then as the King's Military Engineers, has been traced as far as 1414, though it was not until 1716 that a permanent officer corps of engineers was established by the Board of Ordnance with the title Corps of Engineers.. Being part of the Regular Army it is hardly surprising that the Corps should be associated in the public mind with such tasks as building roads, bridges and defensive works or breaching those of the enemy and scant attention was hitherto been paid to the remarkable achievements of the Corps in times of peace. In Honourable Conquests A.J. Smithers sets out to redress that balance. Britain having acquired an Empire, more by accident than design, it fell to the lot of the Army, first in India and later in other parts of the Empire, to act in the role of unofficial Colonial Policemen As well we all know, the policemen's lot is not a happy one, so the ingenious Engineers found better ways to pass the time, thereby leaving behind them some remarkable testimonies, not only to their professional skills but to their very considerable contribution to the welfare of mankind- in India, in Canada, in Australia and other parts of the Empire. It is to such men as General Pasley Colonel By, General Cotton and Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, truly great men now all but forgotten, on whom Smithers turns his narrative skill and wry humour in this fascinating book. As the completion of the Channel Tunnel approaches, his penultimate chapter concerning the involvement of the Royal Engineers with that project over a hundred years ago will be of particularly topical interest.

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