

The Field Company, Royal Engineers

The Field Company was the standard unit of the Royal Engineers within any infantry division during the Second World War, with its equivalent in an armoured division being an field squadron. Each infantry division had three Royal Engineers field companies on its establishment. Usually, a field company worked with one of the three brigades, hence the reason there were three field companies in the divisional Royal Engineers.

The principle functions of the Divisional Royal Engineers were bridging, demolitions, creation and clearance of obstacles or roadblocks, concrete and semi-permanent defences, development and maintenance of water supplies, and disposal of unexploded bombs. The field company provided the pool of trained engineers (or sappers) to undertake tasks as directed by the Headquarters, Divisional Royal Engineers, or by the brigade with which they were operating.

War Establishment II/194/2, issued in January 1944, determined the structure and personnel within a field company during the campaign in North West Europe in 1944 and 1945. It was modified slightly in March 1945 by the issuing of War Establishment II/194/3. The changes introduced in March 1945 amounted only to a 3 ton 4 x 4 lorry general service being replaced by one equipped as a mobile office; two 4 x 2 15 cwt lorries being replaced by 4 x 4 versions, and one of the Army Catering Corps cooks being promoted to corporal.

A Major commanded each field company, with a Captain as his second-in-command. There was a small company headquarters, including the company serjeant major and company quarter-master-serjeant. Each company or squadron comprised three platoons; each platoon consisting of a headquarters and four sections commanded by a subaltern. Each section had a corporal or lance serjeant as the commander, and eleven other sappers.

The nature of the trades held by the sappers within each section was variable and determined according to the tasks to which they were allocated. Each section was issued with one Bren gun, one Sten gun (usually carried by the section commander), and ten Lee-Enfield rifles.

FIELD COMPANY OR SQUADRON – PERSONNEL

- Major;
- Captain;
- 5 x Subalterns.

- Company Serjeant Major;
- Company Quarter-Master Serjeant;
- Transport Serjeant;
- 4 x Serjeants.

- 6 x Lance Serjeants, sapper class;
- Lance Serjeant, driver class;
- 11 x Corporals, sapper class;
- 3 x Corporals, driver class;
- 15 x Lance Corporals, sapper class;
- 5 x Lance Corporals, driver class;
- 145 x Sappers;
- 47 x Drivers.

Total = 247

Attached Personnel

- Officers' Mess Cook A.C.C.;
- Corporal Cook A.C.C.;
- 7 x Cooks A.C.C..

Total = 9

Personnel by Trades

- 7 x Blacksmiths;
- 13 x Bricklayers;
- 32 x Carpenters and Joiners;
- 5 x Clerks;
- 4 x Concretors;
- Draughtsman, Architectural;
- Draughtsman, Mechanical;
- 5 x Driver Mechanics, driver class;
- 10 x Driver Operators;
- 4 x Electricians, maintenance;
- 11 x Engine Fitters, IC and pumps;
- 6 x Engine Hands, IC;
- 6 x Masons;
- 3 x Miners;
- 7 x Painters and Decorators;
- 58 x General Dutymen;
- 6 x Motorcyclists;
- 4 X plumbers and pipe fitters
- surveyor, engineering
- 3 X sheet metal worker
- 2 X vehicle mechanic, driver class
- 3 X water dutyman

Total = 194

Non Tradesmen

- 2 x Batman;
- 5 x Batman Drivers;
- 26 x Drivers of vehicles;
- Sanitary Dutyman;
- 4 x Transport non-commissioned officers;
- Water Dutyman.

Total = 39

Vehicles

- 16 x Motorcycles;
- 3 x Jeeps;
- 2 x Light Recce Cars;
- 7 x Trucks 15cwt General Service;
- 3 x 15cwt Compressor;
- 1 x 15cwt Water;
- 7 x 15cwt Personnel 4 X 4;
- 13 x 3ton 4 x 4 General Service;
- 1 x 3ton 4 x 4 Winch;
- 1 x 3ton 4 x 4 Office.

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

Personnel

- Major;
- Captain;
- 2 x Subalterns;
- Company Serjeant Major;
- Company Quarter-Master Serjeant;
- Transport Serjeant;
- Serjeant.
- Lance Serjeant Driver class;
- 2 x Corporals Sapper class;
- 3 x Lance Corporals Sapper class;
- 2 x Lance Corporals Driver class;
- 13 x Sappers;
- 17 x Drivers.

Total = 46

Attached

- Officers Mess Cook, A.C.C.;
- 2 x Cooks, A.C.C..

Personnel by Trades

- Blacksmith;
- Bricklayer;
- 2 x Carpenter and Joiners;
- 2 x Clerks;
- Concretor;
- Draughtsman Architectural;
- 2 x Driver Mechanics, Driver class;
- 4 x Driver Operators;
- Electrician, Maintenance;
- 2 x Engine Fitters, IC and pumps;
- Painter and Decorator;
- General Dutyman;
- 3 x Motorcyclists;
- Plumber and Pipe Fitter;
- Surveyor, Engineering;
- 2 x Vehicle Mechanics, Driver class.

Total = 26

Non-Tradesmen

- 2 x Batmen;
- 2 x Batmen Drivers;
- 5 x Drivers of vehicles;
- Sanitary Dutyman;
- Transport non-commissioned officer;
- Water Dutyman.

Total = 12

Vehicles

- 7 x Motorcycles;
- 2 x Light Recce Cars;
- 1 x Truck 15 cwt G.S.;
- 1 x 15 cwt water;
- 1 x 15 cwt personnel 4 x 4;
- 5 x 3 ton 4 x 4 G.S.;
- 1 x 3 ton 4 x 4 winch.

The 15 cwt 4 x 4 will be fitted with a wireless set and one of the 3ton 4 x 4 lorries will be for use as an office. The company headquarters were issued with four Bren guns, two PIAT anti-tank weapons and one 20mm anti-aircraft guns.

Each company carried the following:

- 2,400 primers;
- 672 slabs of TNT;
- 1200 lb of plastic explosive 808;
- 900lb of ammonal;
- 72 X 10lb Beehive charges;
- 3 X camouflet sets;
- detonators and fuses;
- 6 X mine detectors;
- 72 X No 75 grenades (mines).

In reserve, each field company had one 3 ton lorry in the divisional troops company, Royal Army Service Corps, to carry an identical load.

PLATOON or TROOP

Personnel

- Subaltern;
- Serjeant.
- 2 x Lance Serjeants Sapper class;
- 3 x Corporals Sapper class;
- 4 x Lance Corporals Sapper class;
- Lance Corporal Driver class;
- 44 x Sappers;
- 10 x Drivers.

Total = 67

Attached

- 2 x Cooks, A.C.C.

Personnel by Trades

- 2 x Blacksmiths;
- 4 x Bricklayers;
- 10 x Carpenters and Joiners;
- Clerk;
- Concretor;
- Driver Mechanic, Driver class;
- 2 x Driver Operators, Driver class;
- Electrician, Maintenance;
- 3 x Engine Fitters, IC and pumps;
- 2 x Engine Hands;
- 2 x Painter and Decorators;
- 19 x General Dutymen;
- Motorcyclist;
- Plumber and Pipe Fitter;
- Sheet Metal Worker;
- Stoker;
- Waterman.

Total = 26

Non-Tradesmen

- Batman Driver;
- Transport non-commissioned officer;
- 7 x Drivers of vehicles.

Total = 9

Organisation

All transport was at platoon headquarters

- Motorcycle 1;
 - Serjeant;
- Motorcycle 2;
 - Transport Corporal;
- Motorcycle 3
 - Motorcyclist.
- Car 5 cwt 4 x 4 (jeep);
 - Subaltern, Batman Driver.
- Truck 15 cwt G.S. 1;
 - Driver I.C.;
- Truck 15 cwt G.S. 2;
 - Driver I.C..
- 15 cwt machinery compressor;
 - Driver I.C.;
- 15 cwt personnel 4 x 4 1;
 - Lance Corporal driver operator, driver operator;
 - Carries Wireless set No19;
- 15 cwt personnel 4 x 4 2;
 - Driver I.C..
- 3 ton 4 x 4 G.S. 1;
 - Driver I.C.;
- 3 ton 4 x 4 G.S. 2;
 - Driver I.C.;
- 3 ton 4 x 4 G.S. 3;
 - Driver I.C.;
- 3 ton 4 x 4 winch;
 - Driver mechanic.

➤ The above transport also carried

- 1 x Clerk;
- 2 x Cooks;
- 4 x other unidentified personnel.

Each platoon is issued with 2 PIAT anti-tank weapons, 800 primers, 224 slabs of TNT in 4.5" slabs or gun cotton in 6" slabs, 400lb of explosive 808 (plastic explosive) in 1.37" X 3.5" rolls, 300lb of ammonal in 25 lb blocks (9" cubes), 24 X 10lb Beehive cutting charges, 1 X camouflet set for making holes for charges, Detonators and fuse and 4 mine detectors.