

Engineers and All Saints Church

The arrival of large numbers of troops in the United Kingdom, during the first years of the Second World War, created a crisis in accommodation and training facilities. The Royal Canadian Engineers soon found themselves involved in construction projects. Even the divisional engineers, whose primary activity was training for operations, were tasked with the construction of their own barracks and other facilities. Some of the construction tasks involving Royal Canadian Engineer included: building camps, barracks, hospitals, training areas, roads and airfields, and constructing coastal defences.



One unusual project was the reconstruction of All Saint's Church, South Merstham (near Redhill) that had been destroyed by aerial bombing. In keeping with the tradition of military engineers to help others in need, a detachment of 1st Canadian Troops, RCE undertook the reconstruction. The sappers salvaged the stones and timbers from the original church and built a new one! The church was dedicated by the Bishop of Southwark on 25 April 1943.

The resulting public relations were very positive and our sappers were held in high esteem locally. This is but one of many similar projects undertaken by our engineers in England during the war that earned the goodwill of the local populace.