

The British Army: A Rich and Complex History Spanning Over 11 Centuries

The British Army is one of the oldest and most respected military forces in the world. Its history dates back over 11 centuries, and it has played a major role in shaping the course of British history. From the Norman Conquest to the present day, British soldiers have fought in countless conflicts around the globe, from the Crusades to the World Wars.

Early History

The origins of the British Army can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon period. In the 9th century, King Alfred the Great established a system of fortified towns known as burhs. These burhs were garrisoned by professional soldiers, who were responsible for defending the kingdom from Viking raids.



The Changing of the Guard: the British army since 9/11

by Simon Akam

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After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Anglo-Saxon army was disbanded and replaced by a feudal army. This army was composed of knights and men-at-arms, who were obligated to provide military service to their lords. The feudal army was a powerful force, but it was also expensive and difficult to maintain.

In the 12th century, King Henry II introduced a new system of taxation known as the scutage. This tax allowed knights to pay a fee instead of providing military service. The scutage system raised a large amount of money, which allowed the king to maintain a standing army of mercenaries.

The standing army was a more effective fighting force than the feudal army, and it played a major role in the Plantagenet kings' wars against France. In the 14th century, the English army won a series of famous victories over the French, including the Battle of Crécy and the Battle of Agincourt.

The Tudor Period

The Tudor period was a time of great change for the British Army. In the 16th century, the English army adopted new weapons and tactics, including the longbow and the arquebus. These new weapons gave the English army a significant advantage over its opponents, and they played a major role in the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588.

During the Tudor period, the British Army also began to expand its role overseas. English soldiers fought in Ireland, Scotland, and France, and they helped to establish the British Empire.

The Stuart Period

The Stuart period was a time of civil war and political turmoil in England. The British Army played a major role in the English Civil War, and it was ultimately the Parliamentary army that emerged victorious.

After the Restoration in 1660, the British Army was reorganized and expanded. The new army was a professional force, and it was used to suppress dissent in England and to fight wars in Europe.

The 18th Century

The 18th century was a period of great expansion for the British Empire. The British Army played a major role in this expansion, and it fought in wars in North America, India, and the Caribbean.

The British Army also underwent a number of reforms in the 18th century. These reforms included the of new uniforms and weapons, and the establishment of a system of military training.

The 19th Century

The 19th century was a time of great change for the British Army. The army fought in the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, and the Boer War. It also played a major role in the suppression of the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

The British Army underwent a number of reforms in the 19th century. These reforms included the of conscription, the establishment of a general staff, and the creation of a territorial army.

The 20th Century

The 20th century was a time of great conflict for the British Army. It fought in the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War. It also

played a major role in the Cold War.

The British Army underwent a number of reforms in the 20th century. These reforms included the of new weapons and equipment, the establishment of a professional officer corps, and the creation of a volunteer army.

The 21st Century

The British Army is currently undergoing a period of transformation. The army is being reduced in size, and it is being equipped with new weapons and equipment. The army is also being trained to fight in a new era of warfare, which is characterized by asymmetric threats and cyberattacks.

The British Army is a long-standing and proud institution. It has played a major role in the history of Britain, and it continues to be a vital part of the nation's security.

The British Army is one of the oldest and most respected military forces in the world. Its history is long and complex, and it has played a major role in shaping the course of British history. From the Norman Conquest to the present day, British soldiers have fought in countless conflicts around the globe, and they have helped to safeguard the nation's freedom and security.



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