

The Rise of the Engineer: Inventing the Professional Inventor During the Industrial Revolution*

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Abstract

Why was the Industrial Revolution successful at generating sustained growth? Some have argued that there was a fundamental change in the way that new technology was developed during this period, but evidence for this argument remains largely anecdotal. This paper provides direct quantitative evidence showing that how innovation and design work was done changed fundamentally during the Industrial Revolution, through the emergence of a new type of inventor: the professional engineer. Using a rich set of patent data, data from biographical sources, and data on civil engineering projects, I document the emergence of the engineering profession starting in the last quarter of the 18th century and show that engineers differed from other types of inventors in important ways. These findings improve our understanding of innovation during the Industrial Revolution as well as providing perspective for thinking about other long-run changes in the innovation system.

Keywords: Industrial Revolution, innovation, engineering, economic growth

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Technological progress played the central role in the Industrial Revolution. Much of the research on innovation during this event has focused on the factors that led to the burst of inventive activity that took place in Britain in second half of the 18th century. Yet, as Joel Mokyr has pointed out, short bursts of technological progress have occurred many times in history. “The true miracle” he argues, “is not that the classical Industrial Revolution happened, but that it did not peter out like so many earlier waves of innovation” (Mokyr, 2004, p. 15).

Why was technological progress sustained? Some have argued that the explanation for this miracle is that the system through which new technology was developed changed in a fundamental way during the Industrial Revolution. Renowned mathematician and philosopher of science Alfred North Whitehead, for example, argued that, “The great invention of the nineteenth century was the invention of the method of invention.”¹ Did such a change in the process of innovation take place during the Industrial Revolution? And if it did, what did the change look like?

Addressing these questions is not only important for our understanding of a pivotal event in economic history, it can also provide a point of reference as we think about the impact of more recent changes in the innovation system, such as the emergence of the research university and corporate R&D labs, as well the potential impact of future changes such as the use of AI for technology development. Such fundamental changes in the innovation system are difficult to study because they occur rarely, but they may have enormous consequences for economic growth.

Currently, the idea that there may have been important changes in the innovation system during the Industrial Revolution rests on anecdotal evidence. The primary contribution of this paper is to provide direct quantitative evidence documenting the changes in the innovation process that took place in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. I show that a fundamental change *did* take place in the way that innovation and design work was done in Britain. This change was the emergence of a new type of specialized inventor and designer: the professional engineer. I also show that the timing of this change corresponds closely to the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and that this change was a specifically British phenomenon.

Engineering work, ranging from the invention of new mechanical devices to the

¹Whitehead (1925), p. 96.

design of new types of infrastructure, had been done before the emergence of professional engineers. However, I provide historical evidence indicating that how engineering work was done changed in a fundamental way in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Watson (1989), in his history of the Society of Civil Engineers, describes how (p. 1), “When John Smeaton described himself as a civil engineer for the first time...he identified a new profession” which combined “The craftsman’s fund of knowledge, based on natural genius and practical experience...with the assimilation of scientific principles.”

The emergence of this new group of professionals who specialized in design and invention work, and brought scientific insights to solve practical problems, contrasts with the innovation system that existed in the middle of the eighteenth century. Using patent data, I show that before the emergence of engineering, invention was done mainly by either manufacturer-inventors, a group that combined innovative activities with other work related to production and management, or gentleman tinkerers, who saw invention as an amusing diversion. Thus, the emergence of engineers should be thought of as a new division of labor and, as Adam Smith suggested, I provide evidence that specialization allowed engineers to be more productive in inventing new and better technologies.

My empirical analysis begins with a brief examination of the characteristics that defined the new professional engineers that emerged during my study period. This analysis is necessary because the engineering profession emerged before the establishment of a system of engineering education. Thus, engineers cannot be identified based on an educational qualification, as they might be today. To understand the characteristics of this new profession, I use both historical evidence – how contemporary engineers saw their own profession – as well as a quantitative text-analysis approach using biographical information from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB). This analysis shows that activities such as “design,” “invent,” and “patent” were core functions of early engineers, while engineers were also involved in activities related to the implementation of new designs and ancillary activities such as consulting, reporting, and surveying. Notably, these defining characteristics changed very little across the period I study (roughly 1700-1869) and they are similar regardless of whether I identify engineers using the judgment of historians or on individual’s

own self-reported occupations in their patents. These core activities differentiated engineers from, on one side, manufacturer-inventors, and on the other, scientists that did not undertake applied innovation.

Next, I document the emergence of professional engineers and the impact of this group on the development of new inventions and designs in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. The engineering profession that emerged during this period was diverse, ranging from civil engineers such as John Smeaton and James Brindley to mechanical engineers such as Henry Maudslay and Joseph Bramah, with many engineers, such as James Watt and Marc Isambard Brunel, making contributions across multiple branches of engineering. To account for this, I use several empirical approaches to study different aspects of the emerging engineering profession.

First, I examine biographical information from the ODNB, which has the advantage of covering all types of engineering. The ODNB data reveal a dramatic increase in the share of engineers among the noteworthy Britons beginning in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, engineers made up around 20% of all noteworthy individuals associated with science or technology, and over 2% of all of those who merited an ODNB biography. This pattern is clear whether engineers are identified based on their own self-reported occupation (in their patents) or based on the judgement of modern historians.

Second, I study patent data. This analysis is of particular interest because it reflects exactly the type of reproducible inventions thought to have been central to driving economic growth. Confirming the patterns observed in the biographical data, British patent data show the growing importance of engineers to invention in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. Engineers were almost completely absent from the patent record prior to 1760, but they appeared in growing numbers after that point. By 1800-10, they accounted for around 10% of all patents, a share that rose steadily to 20% by the 1840s and then just under 30% by the 1860s. This rising importance of engineers, which closely corresponds to the timing of the acceleration of productivity growth in Britain, has not, to my knowledge, been systematically documented in existing work.²

I also show, using patent data, that engineers were fundamentally different from

²This claim is discussed in detail in Section 1.

other common types of inventors. Most importantly, I document that engineers were more productive, generating more patents per decade than any other type of inventor, and patents of higher quality based on several available patent quality indicators. Engineers also operated differently than other types of inventors. For example, they were more likely to work with coinventors, a feature that may help explain their greater productivity. In addition, individual engineers patented across a substantially broader set of technology categories than any other type of inventor. Even within the career of individual inventors, I provide evidence that once someone began to describe their occupation as engineer they also began to operate differently, by working with more coinventors, and they became more productive. These patterns indicate that engineers represented a new type of inventor, rather than simply a relabeling of some existing type.

Third, I conduct an international comparison, contrasting the patterns observed in British patent data to data on French patents from 1791-1843. As in the British analysis, I find that individuals describing themselves as engineers in the French patent data were more productive than other types of patent holders, produced higher quality inventions, and operated across a broader set of technology categories. This provides further evidence that engineers were fundamentally different than other types of inventors, even in France. However, I also show that French innovation system did not exhibit the same changes that took place in Britain. In particular, there was no “rise of the engineer” in France similar to the pattern observed in the U.K. Instead, the French innovation system remained relatively stable from 1791-1843: dominated by manufacturer-inventors, a structure that was similar the British innovation system in the mid-18th century. Thus, the at least before the middle of the nineteenth century, the rise of the engineer appears to be a uniquely British phenomenon.

Fourth, I examine the professionalization of civil engineering that occurred in parallel with the shifts in other types of engineering work. Using a combination of historical evidence and data covering major infrastructure projects undertaken in Britain after 1500, I provide evidence that the way civil engineering work was done changed in the second half of the eighteenth century. As Skempton (1996, p. vii) describes, “Works of engineering had been executed before 1760, some of considerable magnitude, but they could not provide sufficient employment to support a body of

men trained in work of this kind...” Supporting this historical narrative, I provide evidence showing that, prior to 1750, most major civil engineering projects were overseen by engineers without substantial prior training or experience. This began to change starting in the 1760s. After that point, major civil engineering projects were increasingly overseen by experienced engineers that headed established firms and undertook numerous major projects. They also trained the next generation of civil engineers, most of whom had gained extensive experience working for established firms before being awarded major projects of their own. Thus, we can trace out the professionalization of civil engineering work occurring in parallel with the arrival of engineers as important producers of mechanical inventions documented in the patent data.

Together, these mutually-reinforcing strands of empirical analysis highlight the fundamental changes that took place in the way invention and design work was done in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. These changes were characterized by the emergence of a new profession, engineering, where design and invention were among the core occupational functions. These changes began in roughly the third quarter of the eighteenth century, just as the Industrial Revolution was taking off, and accelerated through at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the emergence of professional engineers as a key group of inventors appears to have been a largely British phenomenon, which may help explain why Britain pulled ahead of other European countries during this period. These empirical findings can help us better understanding how the innovation system changed during this seminal event in economic history.

These results raise a natural question: why did professional engineering emerge at this particular time and place? This question is related to the larger debate over what caused the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and why it began in Britain. This issue remains fiercely debated. Leading explanations include institutions that protected property rights (North & Weingast, 1989; North & Thomas, 1973), including those that allowed the licensing and sale of patented inventions (which many engineers took advantage of in the setting I study), a rising base of scientific knowledge (Mokyr, 1990, 2009), high labor costs Allen (2009a), and an expanding market (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2005). Each of these factors likely contributed to the conditions that allowed

professional engineering to emerge, though separating out the contribution of each is a challenge left to future work.

1 Related literature

This paper contributes makes a specific contribution to existing work on innovation during the Industrial Revolution, but my results also have implications for studies focused on economic growth in more recent periods. I discuss each of these strands below.

This paper is related to two main strands of work within the broad literature on innovation during the Industrial Revolution. One existing set of papers uses biographical sources to look at the careers of important inventors or innovators (Allen, 2009b; Meisenzahl & Mokyr, 2012; Howes, 2017; Khan, 2018). A second closely related set of work uses patent data to examine the British innovation system during the Industrial Revolution. Important contributions to this literature include Dutton (1984), MacLeod (1988), Sullivan (1989), Sullivan (1990), and Bottomley (2014), as well as a number of other papers discussed later. Surprisingly, existing work has failed to document the emergence and growing contribution of the engineering profession during the Industrial Revolution.³ The closest an existing paper has come is Nuvolari *et al.* (2021), which finds that what they define as macroinventions were more likely to be produced by engineers. However, Nuvolari *et al.* (2021) does not document the emergence of engineering, nor, without individually-linked patent data, are they able to study differences between engineers and other inventors in terms of output, average patent quality, coinventors, etc.⁴

This study goes substantially beyond previous work on innovation during the In-

³The “quasi-professional” inventors discussed by Dutton (Ch. 6) are closely related to the engineers I focus on. However, without closely examining occupation data, Dutton did not make the connection to the emerging engineering profession. MacLeod (1988) did review inventor occupations, but surprisingly, she failed to identify the rise of the engineering profession documented here, which leads her to conclude that the era of the professional inventor did not begin until well into the nineteenth century.

⁴Another closely related study is MacLeod & Nuvolari (2009), which focuses on the mechanical engineering industry (essentially machine and tool making). Despite including the term engineering, this sector should not be confused with the engineers I study, who worked across a wide range of industrial sectors and technology types.

dustrial Revolution by (1) identifying the emergence of engineers as an important group of inventors of patented technologies, (2) showing the engineers were fundamentally different—more productive—than other types of inventors, (3) bringing together a wide range of additional data to show that this emergence was not confined to patented inventions, and (4) comparing patterns observed in Britain to another country to show that this emergence was a specifically British phenomenon.

My results have implications for two other lines of work related to the Industrial Revolution. One is a set of studies highlighting the importance of upper-tail knowledge during this period (Mokyr, 2005; Squicciarini & Voigtländer, 2015).⁵ My results provide clear support for the argument that upper-tail knowledge mattered for technological progress during this period. Another long-standing debate has to do with the importance of scientific knowledge in the Industrial Revolution.⁶ As discussed in the next section, engineers clearly saw themselves as a key link between scientific insights and practical application.

My results are also related to more recent work examining the impact of changes in the way that new technology is developed. Examples of such changes include the emergence of the modern research university and the corporate R&D lab. One influential modern paper in this vein is Aurora & Gambardella (1994), which argues that new technologies and increasing computing power have substantially changed the industrial research process in recent decades. Aurora *et al.* (2004) examine the role of markets for new technologies in facilitating research collaborations between firms as well as the emergence of specialized research. While the setting I study was characterized by research undertaken mainly by individuals rather than firms or other larger organizations, there are striking parallels between these modern trends and the pattern of specialization in research activity, and the separation of innovation from production, that I document.

Another strand of literature, including papers by Murphy *et al.* (1991) and Mal-

⁵Mokyr (2005), for example, argues that “what mattered above all was the level of sophistication of a small and pivotal elite of engineers, mechanics and chemists.” A slightly more distant literature focuses on broader based skills, rather than the upper-tail, using information on occupation distributions, literacy, or numeracy. One recent example is de Pleijt *et al.* (2020).

⁶This debate stretches back to work by Landes (1969), Rosenberg (1974), and Mokyr (2002) and includes recent papers by Squicciarini & Voigtländer (2015), Khan (2018), Kelly & Ó Gráda (2020), and a recent book by Jacob (2014).

oney & Valencia Caicedo (2017), shows that engineers make a particularly important contribution to economic growth in more recent settings. An open question in this literature is: where did the engineering profession come from? Was it always present, or is the emergence of engineering a more recent phenomenon? My results answer this question. In particular, I show that the emergence of the engineering profession is a relatively recent occurrence by historical standards, one that corresponded closely with the timing of the onset of modern economic growth.

2 Defining an Engineer

What defined an engineer during the study period? Because the development of engineering education lagged the emergence of the engineering profession, engineers were not defined by a particular educational qualification, as they might be today. Nor were engineers defined by working in a specific type of industry or technology. As my later results show, engineers were in fact uniquely broad in the range of technologies they worked on. Here, I offer two approaches to defining an engineer, focusing both on the specific functions that the occupation involved as well as how it related to other occupations. I begin by looking at how contemporary engineers described their own occupation as it was emerging. I then augment this view using a data-driven approach based on applying text-analysis to descriptions of the lives of engineers in the ODNB.

Contemporary descriptions of engineers and engineering reveal a group that thought of themselves as a unique profession, lying between working mechanics and scientists, one that drew on a combination of mechanical skills and scientific or mathematical knowledge and applied these to invention and design activities ranging from new mechanical devices to major infrastructure projects. For example, James Watt, perhaps the most famous of the engineers in my study period, wrote in 1781 that an engineer “requires invention, discriminating judgement in Mechanical matters, boldness of enterprise and perseverance...”⁷ Watt would also write to another friend that an engineer one needed to know drawing, geometry, algebra, arithmetic, and the ele-

⁷Letter from James Watt to Mrs. Campbell, 15 September 1781. Quoted from Musson & Robinson (1969).

ments of mechanics.⁸ Rees' *Cyclopaedia* of 1819 defined *Engineer* as "in its general sense...applied to a contriver or maker of any kind of useful engines or machines," together with a separately defined *Civil Engineer*, "an order or profession of persons highly respectable for their talents and scientific attainments...as the canals, docks, harbours, light houses, etc. amply and honorably testify."⁹ At the first meeting of what would become the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1818, Henry Robinson Palmer stated that, "An Engineer is a mediator between the Philosopher and the working Mechanic; and like an interpreter between two foreigners must understand the language of both."¹⁰ While disparate, these statements reveal some of the defining features of the new profession, as seen by those witnessing its emergence.

This historical evidence can be augmented using a more quantitative approach that allows me to identify the functional activities of working engineers during the Industrial Revolution. This is done using biographical data from the ODNB covering all engineers born before 1850 (439 in total), as well as two natural comparison groups: manufacturers (349 biographies) and those non-engineers classified as involved in science or technology (1547 biographies).¹¹ Naturally, we should keep in mind that these biographies cover only a select sample of the most successful engineers, manufacturers, scientists and inventors. However, this upper-tail group is likely to have played a particularly important role in technology development, so they are a primary focus of this paper.

As discussed in detail in Appendix B, I use natural language processing methods to parse the ODNB biographies to identify all verb stems (similar to the approach used by Michaels *et al.* (2019)). I then apply a regression approach to identify those verbs that had the strongest association with engineers, compared to other types of inventors. These verb stems reflect the types of activities that individuals undertook

⁸See Jacob (2014), p. 29 and p. 30, footnote 24.

⁹Rees (1819), Vol. XIII.

¹⁰Quoted from ICE (1928), p. 2.

¹¹Within the ODNB, these are the two natural comparison groups. Most engineers were classified as part of those involved in science and technology, so it is natural to compare to that group. Manufacturers were the other major group of inventors during the study period, as the patent data will show. I exclude military engineers from the engineers group. I also include iron masters as manufacturers. Of those individuals classified as working in science or technology, I do not include manufacturers, artists/engravers, alchemists, or fossil collectors.

Table 1: Top twenty verb stems associated with engineers

Verb	t-stat	Verb	t-stat	Verb	t-stat	Verb	t-stat
design	14.61	employ	6.74	complete	5.10	advise	4.40
build	11.53	report	6.23	open	5.01	supply	4.36
construct	9.58	erect	6.10	supervise	4.87	connect	4.24
consult	8.16	survey	5.59	improve	4.83	propose	4.11
patent	6.74	drive	5.27	lay	4.56	invent	4.01

This table presents the 20 words most strongly associated with engineers as well as estimated t-statistics from OLS regressions based on robust standard errors. Engineers are compared to manufacturers and non-engineers categorized as involved in science or technology in the ODNB. All of the coefficients associated with these verbs have sharpened p-values below 0.001. N=789,230 (2335 biographies x 338 verbs).

during their lifetime. Table 1 presents the twenty verb stems most strongly associated with engineers.¹² For all of these, the association is statistically significant at the 99% level after adjusting for multiple hypothesis testing (sharpened p-values below 0.01). The presence of verbs such as “design”, “invent” and “patent” indicate the important role of inventive activities to the engineering profession; out of all the verbs, the one most closely associated with engineers is “design”. There are also terms indicating the role that engineers played in implementing their new designs and inventions, words such as “build,” “erect,” “employ,” “lay,” and “supervise.” Other important roles played by engineers are indicated by the presence of “consult,” “report,” and “survey.” These terms give us a sense of the types of activities or functions that set engineers apart from other highly successful individuals.

The words least associated with engineers can also be informative. When compared to manufacturers, the five verbs most associated with that group, relative to engineers, are “sell,” “expand,” “produce,” “manufacture,” and “buy.” For non-engineers involved in science and technology, the verbs most associated with that group, relative to engineers, are “publish,” “graduate,” “write,” “study,” and “collect.” The contrast between these terms and the words in Table 1 highlights the defining differences, in terms of activities, between these various groups.

Three other results emerge from my analysis of these textual data.¹³ First, split-

¹²See Appendix B for additional results and alternative specifications.

¹³See Appendix B for additional details and results.

ting the sample by time period, I find no evidence that the verbs associated with engineers changed substantially over time. Most importantly, design and invention remained core functions of the occupation throughout the study period. Second, using data where I have matched patentees to ODNB biographies, I find that the results are very similar regardless of whether I identify engineers based on the labels applied by historians in the ODNB or the self-reported occupations from the patent data.¹⁴ Third, also using the linked patent-ODNB data, I find that the results are very similar if I focus on patent holders as the comparison group. Thus, the core functions of engineers appear to be similar regardless of whether we are relying on the patent data or the ODNB to identify who qualifies as an engineer, or whether engineers are compared only to other patent holders, or to other individuals in the ODNB.

To summarize, both the descriptions that contemporary engineers provide about their own occupation and the quantitative analysis of biographical descriptions from modern historians indicate that engineering was an occupation where design and inventive activity were core functions, together with associated activities such as overseeing construction, consulting, surveying, etc. As inventors and designers, engineers filled a gap between scientists and working mechanics and provided a bridge between theoretical insights and practical applications (see Hanlon (2022) for more evidence on the role that engineers played in bridging science and technology). Next, I document the rise of this new occupation.

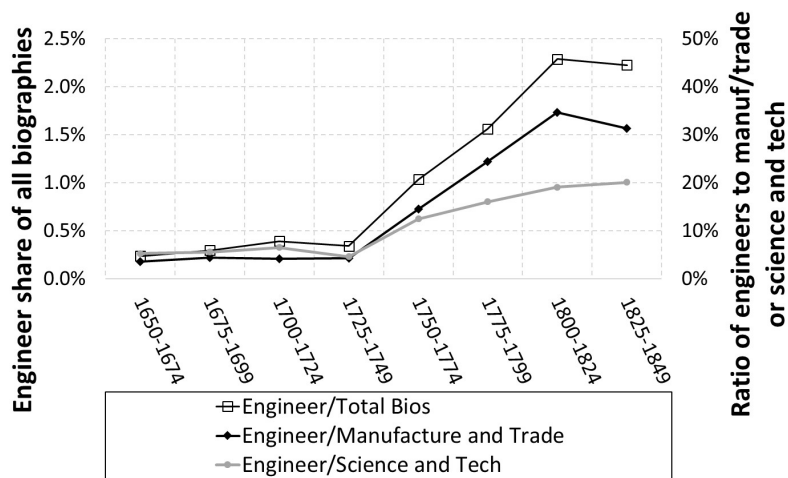
3 Rise of the Engineer: Evidence from Biographical Data

This section uses information from the ODNB to provide an initial view of the rising importance of engineers in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. This analysis provides a valuable complement to the more extensive analysis of patent data coming next, because the ODNB covers successful individuals regardless of whether they obtained a patent. Figure 1 plots the share of engineers found in the ODNB relative to all ODNB biographies (left axis) or relative to all individuals classified as either in ‘science and technology’ or ‘manufacturing and trade’ (right axis). We can see

¹⁴Of those with engineer as their modal occupation in the patent data who match to the ODNB, 84% are also classified as engineers in the ODNB data. Of those classified as engineers in the ODNB that also appear in the patent data, 71% appear as engineers in at least one patent.

that, up to the cohort born from 1725-49, engineers account for a very small share of ODNB biographies. However, starting with the cohort born in 1750-74, there is a dramatic rise in the share of engineer biographies, which accounted for over 2% of all biographies by the cohorts born in the first half of the nineteenth century. A similar increase is apparent when we compare engineers to all individuals classified as working either in science and technology (which includes most engineers) or relative to those working in manufacturing and trade (which also includes some engineers). By the first half of the nineteenth century, engineers accounted for over 20% of all notable individuals associated with science or technology.

Figure 1: Share of engineers in ODNB biographies, 1650-1849



Data collected from the ODNB.

Note that the time-scale here is based on the year of birth, so it is not strictly comparable to some of the graphs I will present later, which are based on patent filing dates. However, as we will see, the rise of the engineer shown in Figure 1 will also be reflected in the patent data, despite the fact that these two analysis rely on alternative ways of identifying who is an engineer. A similar rise is also found when studying Google Ngrams, which show a sharp rise in the appearance of the term “engineer” after 1740 (see Appendix A). These patterns are also consistent with existing historical evidence. As Christine MacLeod has carefully documented (MacLeod, 2007)

engineers experienced a rising stature beginning in the 1760s and 1770s. This contrasts with the rather poor reputation of “the engineer” (often denoting a maker of engines, rather than engineer as we understand it today) in the first half of the 18th century. In 1744, for example, J.T. Desaguliers warned the readers of his *Course in Experimental Philosophy* about being “over run with Engineers and Projectors” who “draw in Numerous People into ruinous and unpracticable schemes.”¹⁵ This poor reputation had been overturned by the early 19th century, as symbolized by the erection of a colossal statue of James Watt in Westminster Abbey in 1834. What had changed? MacLeod (2007) argues (p. 59) that “the strongest case for revising the inventor’s reputation as an untrustworthy ‘projector’ stemmed from the country’s growing awareness of major technological achievements.”

4 Rise of the Engineer: Evidence from British Patent Data

This section analyzes the emergence of engineers as a key group of inventors, drawing on information available from British patent data. I begin by describing the data before turning to the analysis.

4.1 Patent data

Patent data provide a unique window into the development of technology during the Industrial Revolution, including details on thousands of individual inventors and inventions. Of course, not all innovations were patented (Moser, 2012), and not all patents were for useful innovations (MacLeod *et al.*, 2003). For this reason, it is important that the patent data analysis is complemented with results from the biographical data, discussed above, as well as evidence on civil engineering, in Section 6. However, many of the most important inventions of the Industrial Revolution, as well as thousands of other useful, if less famous, ideas, can be found in patent filings.

The patent data used in this study include the full listing of patents filed from 1700-1851, with details including inventor name, inventor occupation, patent title, and inventor address.¹⁶ The core of this data set was digitized from the two-volume

¹⁵Desaguliers (1744), p. 415.

¹⁶Because I often estimate results by decade, I end my main dataset in 1849.

Titles of Patents of Invention, Chronologically Arranged, produced by the British Patent Office (BPO) and published in 1854.¹⁷ I focus mainly on the information about inventor occupations, while also using the names to track the output of each inventor. Excluding patents communicated from abroad, this data set includes 12,622 patent-inventor observations covering 11,243 patents.

One reason to focus primarily on the 1700-1849 period is that patent laws were largely stable during that period.¹⁸ In 1852, there was an important patent reform act that lowered the cost of patenting substantially, leading the number of patents filed annually to increase from several hundred to several thousand (see Appendix Figure 5). Thus, while I have digitized additional data for the 1850s and 1860s, and I will use them in some of the analysis, it makes sense to focus my main results on the 1700-1849 period.¹⁹

The most important step in preparing the data for analysis was linking patents associated with the same individual. Because making these links as accurate as possible is important for this study, this was done using a careful manual linking procedure, described in detail in Appendix C.2. For each of the patent-inventor observations from 1700-1849, I match up patents filed by the same inventor using inventor name, year of patent, inventor address, patent subject matter (based on the patent title), and in some cases additional biographical information. Because I link manually using a fairly rich set of linking information, the chance that patents are incorrectly linked to a common inventor is low, though it is possible that I have failed to link some patents by the same inventor because insufficient information to form a conclusive link was available. However, there is no reason to expect that missing links are common or systematic across inventor types. This matching process identifies 8,328 unique inventors active during 1700-1849. Appendix Table 17 lists the most prolific patent filers during that period.

The raw patent data include over 2,000 unique occupation strings. Several of

¹⁷Woodcroft (1854b).

¹⁸Dutton (1984).

¹⁹Patent data for years after 1851 were digitized from the *Chronological Index of Patents* prepared by the British Patent Office. A second reason to focus primarily on the 1700-1849 period is that, before the 1852 patent law change occupations were provided for most patent entries, but after 1852 the share of patents with missing inventor occupation data is substantial (around 20%).

these, such as “gentleman”, “esquire”, and “engineer” appear regularly. Many others, particularly those reflecting specific manufacturing trades (e.g., “Britannia-ware manufacturer”, “Candle-wick maker”) appear irregularly. To make this set of occupation strings manageable, I have cleaned them and grouped them into broad sets of related occupations. Table 2 provides counts of the occupation groupings used in the analysis for 1700-1849, while examples of specific occupations falling into each group are available in Appendix C.4.²⁰

Table 2: Broad occupation categories used in the main analysis, 1700-1849

Industry	Patents	Industry	Patents
Ag/Food/Drinks	269	Merchants	635
Chemical Manuf.	474	Mining & Metals	759
Construction	410	Misc. Manuf.	1562
Engineers	1726	Textile Manuf.	957
Esquire	754	Prof. services	635
Gentry	1745	Other	833
Machinery & Tools	1068	Unknown	795

Data cover 1700-1849. Excludes communicated patents.

Comparing the names and occupations listed in the patent data reveals that the occupations associated with specific inventors were sometimes not constant across all of their patents. This typically reflected changes in occupation over the career trajectory of an inventor. An example is provided by the engineer Joseph Bramah, famous as a lock and tool maker. Bramah was trained as a carpenter and worked

²⁰Given my focus on engineers, a couple of additional points about that occupation grouping are warranted. First, some inventors listing “engineer” as an occupation also list another occupation. This is not very common, but typically when it occurs the other occupation is some type of manufacturing. Individuals who list engineer together with a second occupation are counted as engineers in my analysis. Second, civil and other types of engineers (e.g. “consulting engineers”) are also counted as engineers for the purposes of my analysis. Third, I exclude from the engineers category those described as “engine makers” as well as mining engineers (which includes “coal viewers”). There is some question about whether these should be treated as engineers or instead classified with, respectively, the machinery manufacturers and miners so, in the Appendix, I also consider robustness results including these groups as engineers. Ultimately, this makes little difference because neither engine makers nor mining engineers are common. Military engineers are also excluded from the engineers category. They are treated the same as other military officers.

installing waterclosets before he turned his attention to developing new inventions.²¹ He first appears in the patent records, in 1778 (patent 1177) as a cabinet maker (consistent with constructing waterclosets). He appears as a cabinet maker again in 1783 and 1784 and then as an engine maker in 1785, 1790 and 1793. Only in 1795 does he begin appearing in the patent record as an engineer (a hydraulic press, his most important invention according to his ODNB biography). Thereafter his interests broaden and he appears in the patent record eleven more times, always as an engineer, with inventions ranging from a beer engine, a planing machine, a paper-making machine, a banknote numbering machine, and a fountain pen. This progression from manufacturer-inventor to engineer was a common pattern in the early days of engineering.

To deal with these changing occupations, when analyzing data at the patent level, I generally assign patents to the occupation group based on the occupation that appears in that patent's entry. When an analysis is conducted at the level of individual inventors rather than patents (such as when looking at patents per inventor), it is necessary to identify a unique occupation for each inventor. In those cases, I typically use the modal occupation that appears across the patents that the inventor filed.²² In robustness exercises, I consider alternative approaches. In some of the analysis I also exploit changes in an inventor's occupation over time to study whether inventors begin to behave differently once they start describing themselves as engineers.

I also use data that provide comprehensive categorizations of the technology type represented by each patent, constructed by the British Patent Office.²³ The BPO index categorizes each patent into one, and occasionally more than one, out of 147 technology categories.²⁴ To my knowledge this is the first use of the full digitized BPO categorization data for the period before 1852. As a check on the results obtained using the BPO classifications, I also replicate my analysis using an alternative

²¹See his ODNB biography.

²²If an inventor does not have a unique modal occupation, then that inventor is excluded from the analysis. However, this results in the exclusion of just 362 out of the over eight thousand inventors in my analysis.

²³These categorizations were published as the *Subject Matter Index of Patents of Invention* in 1854 (Woodcroft, 1854a).

²⁴Appendix Table 20 provides a listing of the top ten technology categories, by patents filed, in the three 50-year periods from 1700-1849.

classification from Billington & Hanna (2018) generated by applying machine learning to the patent titles.

This study also uses several patent quality measures. During my study period, standard patent quality measures such as patent citations are not available. Instead, I use four alternative approaches to measuring patent quality. The first is based on the payment of patent renewal fees. The fees I study were introduced by the 1852 patent reform, so this measure is available only for patents in the 1850s and 1860s.²⁵ The second set of quality measures that I use, based on references to patents in contemporary or modern publications, are from Nuvolari & Tartari (2011) and Nuvolari *et al.* (2021). This is the only quality indicator that is available across the full study period. The third quality measure is based on exhibits in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which has previously been used by Petra Moser to study innovation patterns (Moser, 2005, 2012). This measure is constructed by manually linking patent holders to Moser’s database of exhibits of patented inventions in the Great Exhibition.²⁶ A fourth measure of patent quality is constructed by matching patent holders with at least two patents to the individual profiles of famous Britons in the ODNB.

4.2 *Analysis of the British patent data*

Figure 2 describes the rising importance of engineers as inventors of patented technologies. Specifically, the figure shows, by decade, the share of patents with at least one inventor in a particular occupation group (top panel), and the number of patents with at least one inventor in each occupation group (bottom panel, log scale).²⁷ The rise of the Engineer, starting in the 1760s and 1770s, is apparent. By 1800-10, 10% of patents had at least one engineer inventor. This rose to 20% by the 1840s. By the 1860s, engineers accounted for over 29% of patents for which an occupation was reported. No other group shows a similar pattern of growth across the study period. In the bottom panel we can see that patents by all types of inventors were growing

²⁵These data come from Hanlon (2015). See that paper for further details on the source and construction of the renewals data.

²⁶See Appendix D.6 for further details on the exhibition data.

²⁷The shares in the top panel are relative to all patents for which an occupation is reported. This makes very little difference before the 1850s, but it matters for the last two decades because there was a large increase in patents that did not list an occupation after the 1852 patent reform.

during this period, but no other group experienced growth similar to the rate that we see for engineers after 1760. By the 1860s engineers produced far more patents than any other occupation group.²⁸

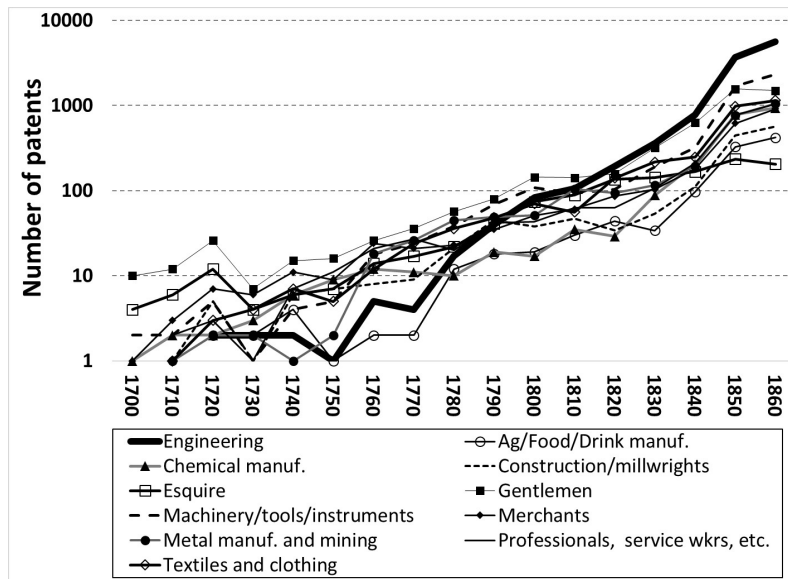
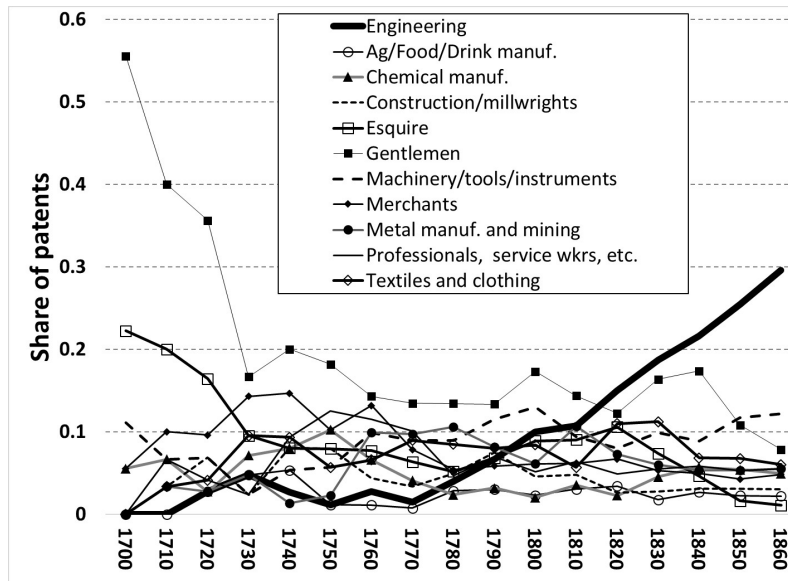
Three broad types of inventors, described by MacLeod (1988, p. 78-9), can be discerned in Figure 2. First, there are the amateur inventors, for whom invention was “an amusing diversion that might one day open up a lucrative sideline.” Many of the gentlemen in Figure 2 probably fall into this group. The second group were the professional inventors, for whom “inventing was not a hobby but a livelihood. Typically, he obtained a large number of patents across a wide field of industries...” We will see that engineers fit this description quite closely. The third group MacLeod called the businessman, “those who were ready to engage in manufacturing or trade...while they sometimes obtained more than one patent, these usually related only to their own branch of business.” This group, which I will call manufacturer-inventors, were the most common type of inventor outside of engineers. In the remainder of the analysis I will make a special point to study the differences between engineers and these manufacturer-inventors.

In Appendix D.1, I compare the pattern of patents by engineers to other groups thought have made an important contribution to innovation during the Industrial Revolution, such as watchmakers, millwrights, instrument makers, and machinists, or those that may have been related to engineers such as “engine makers” or mining engineers.²⁹ The main take-away from that analysis is that none of these groups are large compared to engineers, at least after 1760, and none of them experienced the type of explosive growth in patenting that engineers exhibited.

²⁸For a sense of the individuals that listed their occupation as “engineer”, Appendix C.5 provides a list of the top-five engineer patent filers in each decade. Prior to the 1760s, very few engineers appear in the patent data and even the top patenting engineers were generally obscure, with the exception of John Kay in the 1730s. However, this had changed by the 1780s, when we see the list topped by James Watt and William Playfair (inventor of the bar chart and pie graph, among other things), followed by Joseph Bramah and Richard Trevithick in the 1790s and the first decade of the 19th-century, Marc Isambard Brunel and Bryan Donkin in the 1810s, etc.

²⁹On watchmakers, see Kelly & Ó Gráda (2016). The role of millwrights is emphasized by Mokyr *et al.* (2020). Kelly & Ó Gráda (2020) highlight the role of instrument makers. Kelly *et al.* (2020) discuss the importance of artisanal mechanical skills such as those possessed by machinists and machine makers.

Figure 2: Number of patent observations by occupation category, 1700-1849



Occupation groups are based on the occupations listed in the entry for each patent. Excludes communicated patents. Note that patents with multiple inventors may be counted in more than one category, so the shares may sum to more than one.

4.2.1 Differences in productivity, quality, and coinventors in Britain

In this subsection, I look at whether engineers were different from other types of inventors. Specifically, I study how many patented inventions individuals produced, the quality of their inventions, and whether they worked in teams with other inventors.

Productivity: Table 3 describes the average number of patents per inventor for inventors in each occupation group, where occupations are based on the modal occupation listed across each individual's patents. We can see that Engineers generated far more patents per inventor than those in any other occupation group.

Table 3: Average patents per inventor in each occupation group, 1700-1849

Occupation group	Avg. patents per inventor	Occupation group	Avg. patents per inventor
Ag/Food/Drinks	1.258	Merchants	1.246
Chemical Manuf.	1.586	Mining & Metals	1.436
Construction	1.188	Misc. Manuf.	1.372
Engineers	2.069	Textile Manuf.	1.463
Esquire	1.727	Prof. services	1.349
Gentry	1.571	Other	1.265
Machinery & Tools	1.473	Unknown	1.152

Inventor occupations groups are based on each inventor's modal occupation. Those without a unique modal occupation group are excluded. Communicated patents are not included.

Data cover 1700-1849, the years when matched data are available.

Table 4 verifies that the difference between engineers and other types of inventors is statistically significant and present in various sub-periods. The first column presents results looking across the full sample period. The estimates show that, indeed, engineers produced significantly more patents than other types of inventors. Moreover, magnitude of the coefficient on engineers, 0.689, is very large relative to the average number of patents per inventor, which is 1.52 across the full sample. For comparison, I also estimate results for manufacturer-inventors, a group that includes the Machinery & Tools, Metals & Mining, Chemicals, Textiles, and Misc. Manu-

facturing occupation groups. Unlike engineers, manufacturer-inventors are not more productive than other types of inventors.

We may worry that this difference is simply because engineers were operating in technology areas where patenting was more common.³⁰ In Column 2, I include controls for the modal technology category that each inventor was working in. This has very little impact on my estimates, which indicates that differences in the propensity to patent across technology categories is not behind the higher productivity of engineers relative to other types of inventors. It is also useful to look at how these patterns look in various sub-periods of the sample. The results in Columns 3-6 show that I also obtain clear results within each twenty-year period from 1770-1849 (as shown above, there are few engineers before 1770 so I do not include results for that period). In contrast to engineers, those with manufacturing occupations did not generate more patents than the average inventor in any sub-period.

While the results in Table 4 identify engineers using the modal occupation appearing in an individual's patents, and excluding those without a unique modal occupation, there are other reasonable alternative ways to classify engineers. I explore several of these in Appendix D.2 and find that all of the alternatives I consider show that engineers patented substantially more inventions than other types of inventors.

At this point it is worth considering whether the decision not to include engine builders or mining engineers as part of the engineers category has any bearing on the results I obtain. To examine this, in Appendix D.3, I present additional results following the approach used in Table 4 but classifying these groups as part of the engineers category. The results are effectively identical to those presented in Table 4, which signals that the decision of whether or not to classify engine builders and mining engineers in the engineers category has no impact on my overall results.

Patent quality: Next, I provide evidence showing that, in addition to producing more patents, engineers also produced higher quality patents and achieved greater overall career success. In Column 1-2 of Table 5, I measure patent quality using the payment of renewal fees to keep patents in force after, respectively, three or seven years. Renewals were expensive: £50 at three years and £100 at seven years, compared to

³⁰As Moser (2005) has shown, patenting rates can vary substantially across sectors.

Table 4: Number of patents per inventor regressions

	DV: Number of patents per inventor					
	All years (1)	All years (2)	1770- 1789 (3)	1790- 1809 (4)	1810- 1829 (5)	1830- 1849 (6)
Engineer	0.689*** (0.0865)	0.616*** (0.0903)	1.023** (0.468)	0.802*** (0.237)	0.339*** (0.131)	0.448*** (0.0921)
Manufacturer	0.0618* (0.0325)	0.0272 (0.0368)	0.0136 (0.0579)	-0.0240 (0.0585)	-0.0285 (0.0580)	-0.00298 (0.0529)
Tech. cat. FEs		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,966	7,966	652	1,209	1,802	4,215
R-squared	0.018	0.044	0.187	0.121	0.061	0.055

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. OLS regressions with robust standard errors in parenthesis. The unit of observation is an inventor. Data cover 1700-1849. The outcome variable is the number of patents per inventor across all years (Column 1-2) or with 20-year periods (Columns 3-6). The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the inventor's modal occupation is engineer. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included. The regression in Column 2 controls for the modal technology category for each inventor looking across all of that inventor's patents by including a full set of technology category fixed effects. In Columns 3-6, I control for the modal technology category for each inventor within each period. In all of these, if there is a tie for the modal category then one is selected randomly. Data cover 1700-1849, when matched data are available.

the initial patent application fee of £25.³¹ As a result, only 18% of patents were renewed at year three and just 6.3% at year seven. The results in Columns 1-2 show that patents with at least one engineer inventor were substantially more likely to be renewed. The effects are large in magnitude compared to the sample averages and strongly statistically significant. While patents by manufacturer-inventors were also more likely to be renewed, they were substantially less likely to be renewed than patents by engineers. Additional results using the patent renewal data are presented in Appendix D.4.

In Column 3 and 4 of Table 5, I consider a second measure of patent quality based on references in contemporary or modern sources. Column 3 uses the WRI

³¹For comparison, average annual nominal earnings for a worker in full time employment in 1851 were about £33. See measuringworth.com.

(for Woodford Reference Index) compiled by Nuvolari & Tartari (2011), which is based only on contemporary sources. Column 4 uses the BCI (for Bibliographic Composite Index) from Nuvolari *et al.* (2021). The BCI augments the WRI with references in modern sources. In both cases the indexes have been standardized. The results suggest that patents with at least one engineer inventor were of higher quality than other patents. These patterns are particularly strong in the BCI index, which Nuvolari *et al.* (2021) argue is the more reliable measure. In contrast to the results in Columns 1-2, these measures suggest that manufacturer-inventors generated lower-quality patents than the average. More complete results obtained using the patent quality indices are available in Appendix D.5.

In Column 5, I use exhibiting in the Great Exhibition of 1851 as an indicator of quality. The sample is the set of all inventors who patented from 1830-1849 and the outcome variable is an indicator for whether a patent holder subsequently appeared as an exhibitor or inventor in the Great Exhibition. The regression estimates reflect how the probability of being in the Great Exhibition varies by occupation group. The results show that engineer patent holders were substantially more likely to exhibit patented inventions in the Great Exhibition than other patent holders. Further details and additional results using the Exhibition data can be found in Appendix D.6.

Finally, in Column 6, I look at an indicator of the overall career success of patent holders, as indicated by their inclusion among the noteworthy individuals in the ODNB. For each of the 2,053 inventors with two or more patents, I manually search for each individual in the ODNB. Engineers, identified based on the occupations listed in the patent data, made up 15.5% of the group that I attempted to match to the ODNB database, but they account for 26.9% of those found in ODNB, and 34.2% of those matched who were born after 1780, an indication that engineers were more likely to achieve substantial career success than other types of inventors.

Column 6 of Table 5 provides further evidence on this pattern. The regression presented in that column is run over all inventors searched for in the ODNB database (those with two or more patents) and the outcome is an indicator for whether an individual is found in the ODNB. The explanatory variable is the modal occupation of each inventor. These results indicate that engineer inventors were about 8 percentage points more likely to appear in the ODNB than other inventors with at least two

Table 5: Patent quality regressions

	Patent renewals		Reference indices		Great	ODNB
	Year Three	Year Seven	WRI	BCI	Exhibition	Biography
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0462*** (0.00899)	0.0200*** (0.00637)	0.0400 (0.0307)	0.231*** (0.0434)	0.0441*** (0.0131)	0.0808*** (0.0262)
Manufacturer	0.0140* (0.00772)	0.00870* (0.00520)	-0.0486* (0.0253)	-0.104*** (0.0307)	0.0159* (0.00835)	-0.0374** (0.0149)
<i>*See table notes for details on fixed effects included in different specifications.</i>						
Observations	54,742	41,215	18,473	18,473	4,469	1,987
R-squared	0.020	0.015	0.134	0.058	0.003	0.013
Testing difference between engineer and manufacturer coefficients						
F-statistic	10.0	2.37	7.42	55.9	4.18	20.92
P value	0.002	0.124	0.007	0.000	0.041	0.000

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. OLS regressions. Results in Column 1 use data on renewals paid at year three for patents filed from 1856-1869. Results in Column 2 use data on renewals paid at year seven for patents filed from 1853-1866. In Column 1-2, patents that are classified into multiple technology categories appear more than once. To deal with this, standard errors are clustered by patent. The regressions in Columns 1-2 included both year and technology category fixed effects. Results in Column 3 use the (standardized) WRI index from Nuvolari & Tartari (2011) as the outcome variable. Results in Column 4 use the (standardized) BCI index from Nuvolari *et al.* (2021). The data in Columns 3-4 cover 1700-1849. Patents that fall into multiple technology categories appear more than once in these data. To deal with this, standard errors are clustered by patent. Results in Column 3-4 also include year and technology category fixed effects. In Column 5, the sample is composed of all individuals who filed patents from 1830-1849 and the outcome variable is whether they match to a patented invention exhibited in the Great Exhibition of 1851. Since the Exhibition analysis is based on matching individual inventors, the explanatory variable in Column 5 is the modal industry of the inventor. In Column 6, the sample includes all inventors with two or more patents and the outcome variable is whether the inventor appears in the ODNB. The explanatory variables are based on the modal occupation of each inventor.

patents, while manufacturer-inventors were less likely to be noteworthy enough for inclusion. These are large differences given the sample average rate of inclusion is 12.8%.³² Further ODNB results are available in Appendix D.7.

³²This sample mean differs from the 11.9% of inventors with 2+ patents found in the ODNB

Overall, the results in Table 5, together with the more complete regression results available in the associated appendices, shows that, across a range of different quality indicators, engineers generated higher quality patents and had greater overall career success than other types of inventors. This is true relative to all inventors or to manufacturing-inventors in particular. Next, I consider other ways in which engineers differed from other inventors.

Coinventor teams: One reason that engineers may have been more productive is that, because invention and design was central to their profession, they may have been better able to form coinventor teams. Coinventor teams may have been beneficial either because they brought together individuals with complementary technical skills, or because they helped inventors partner with those who were more able to fund or commercialize inventions.³³ Across the study period, coinvention was generally rising, a pattern that has also been documented in more recent periods (Jones, 2009).

Table 6 presents regression results where the unit of observation is the patent, the outcome variable is whether the patent has more than one inventor (10.7% of all patents), and the key dependent variable is whether one of the inventors is an engineer. Column 1 presents baseline results using OLS regressions while Columns 2 and 3 add in decade and technology category fixed effects respectively. Columns 4-6 follow the same format, but using Probit regressions.³⁴ These results show that patents by engineers involved significantly more co-inventors than patents filed by other types of inventors. The results are strongly statistically significant as well as large relative to the average rate of multi-inventor patents of 0.107 across the full sample. Thus, these findings indicate that engineers went about the process of invention in a way that differed markedly from other inventors.

because it includes only inventors with a unique modal occupation.

³³It is not possible to clearly differentiate these alternative motivations. However, in Appendix D.8 I explore the composition of these coinventor teams. This analysis indicates that engineers often coinvented with manufacturers or gentlemen, which may reflect the formation of partnerships between inventors and those who were well-placed to commercialize a new invention, or those who could contribute financing or political connections to a project, though it could also reflect different types of skills useful in the invention process.

³⁴Note that in Columns 3 and 6 the number of observations increases because patents listed in more than one technology appear more than once, and to account for this standard errors are clustered by patent.

Table 6: Patenting with coinventors

DV: Indicator variable for patents with multiple inventors						
	OLS regressions			Probit (marginal effects)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0663*** (0.00974)	0.0582*** (0.00984)	0.0441*** (0.00841)	0.0663*** (0.0097)	0.0550*** (0.0094)	0.0446*** (0.0087)
Decade FEs		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tech. Cat. FEs			Yes			Yes
Observations	11,243	11,243	15,679	11,243	11,243	15,185
R-squared	0.006	0.013	0.087			

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Data cover 1700-1849. In Columns 1-2 and 4-5 the unit of observation is a patent and robust standard errors are used. In Columns 3 and 6 the unit of observation is a patent-by-technology-category, so patents listed in multiple technology categories may appear more than once. To account for that, standard errors are clustered by patent. The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether one or more of the inventors is listed as an engineer in the patent entry.

Summary: The results in this subsection show that engineers generated more patents than other inventors, that on average these patents were of higher quality than those produced by other inventors, and that they worked with more coinventors. One may wonder at this point whether these differences were due mainly to the selection of more productive individuals into engineering. To address this issue, in the next section I consider how the behavior of individuals change when they begin to think of themselves as engineers rather than manufacturer-inventors.

4.2.2 Changes upon becoming an Engineer

As the description of Joseph Bramah's career in Section 4.1 illustrates, when engineering was still a relatively new profession a number of engineers first appear in the patent data as manufacturer-inventors or other types, and then eventually began to think of themselves instead as engineers. Using these occupation switchers, I can study whether the behavior and output of an inventor changes when they begin to describe themselves as an engineer.

To undertake this analysis, I begin by focusing on only those inventors with two or more patents (around 1900 inventors). For each inventor, I construct a dataset that covers all years from their first to their last patent and indicates the number of patents they filed in each intervening year. There are 380 inventors with multiple patents that list themselves as engineers in at least one patent. For these, I identify the first year that they list their occupation as engineer and generate an indicator variable that takes the value of one for that year and all subsequent years until the last patent that they filed. I then run regressions looking at how outcomes for each of these inventors changes after they began describing themselves as an engineer, with individual fixed effects included so that identification is driven entirely by changes within inventors over time. Specifically, I study how becoming an engineer is related to whether an inventor works with coinventors (their behavior) and how many patents they produce per year (their productivity).³⁵

The results are presented in Table 7. The first three columns of this table focus on one observable measure of the behavior of inventors: the share of their patents filed with at least one coinventor. The results in the first column show that individuals began working with more other inventors once they became engineers. To ensure that this wasn't just due to becoming more experienced as inventors, the second column includes a control for the number of years since each inventor's first patent. In the third column, I drop observations from the first year in which an inventor listed their occupation as engineer. This changes the sample, since it eliminates those who did not have patents in years after they first list their occupation as an engineer (about 18% of engineers), but we still see evidence that inventors worked with more coinventors after becoming engineers.

In Column 4-6, I look at the output of inventors, specifically the number of inventions they produced per year, between the first and last year that they patented.³⁶ The results in the first column shows that individuals generated about 0.25 more patents per year after they started describing themselves as engineers. This is a large

³⁵Unfortunately, it is not possible to also assess how patent quality changes when inventors become engineers, since the only quality measures available across the full study period, the reference-based indexes, are too noisy to generate clear results given the sample size used in this analysis.

³⁶Note that the sample size is larger in Columns 4-6 than in Column 1-3 because the sample in Column 4-6 includes inventors who never had a multi-inventor patent.

increase relative to the sample average of 0.32 patents per year. Column 5 shows that this is not due to a general increase in patenting as inventors' careers progressed. In Column 6, I drop from the sample the first year in which an individual described themselves as an engineer. This is done because to become an engineer the individual must appear in the patent database, which causes a direct link between becoming an engineer and generating a patent. Dropping this ensures that this mechanical effect is not behind my results. I still observe clear effects in Column 6 despite the fact that these results are likely to be biased toward zero (the true magnitude of the change should lie between the estimates in Columns 5 and 6). Additional results, in Appendix D.9, show that even stronger effects are estimated if quadratic controls for time since first patent are included.

Table 7: Within-inventor regressions

	DV: Share of patents with multiple inventors			DV: Patents per year		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0513** (0.0229)	0.0620*** (0.0235)	0.0915*** (0.0305)	0.252*** (0.0334)	0.266*** (0.0335)	0.0686** (0.0328)
Years since first patent		-0.000928 (0.000605)	-0.000755 (0.000587)		-0.00123*** (0.000458)	-0.000624 (0.000431)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dropping first year as Eng.			Yes			Yes
Observations	5,333	5,333	5,152	18,787	18,787	18,641
R-squared	0.547	0.548	0.552	0.234	0.234	0.233

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors are clustered by individual. The Engineer variable is an indicator for each individual that takes a value of one starting from the first year in which an individual listed their occupation as engineer in a patent, and zero otherwise.

The fact that the same individuals begin to behave differently, and produce more, once they begin describing themselves as an engineer indicates that the broad differences between engineers and other inventors documented above are not merely due to the selection of more productivity individuals into the engineering profession. In-

stead, these results suggest that once an individual began to think of themselves as an engineer, their behavior changed in a way that led to increased inventive output.

4.2.3 Differences in technology type and scope in Britain

In the next stage of the analysis, I bring in the British Patent Office technology categorizations and use them to study differences between engineers and other inventors in terms of the types of technologies that they worked on. It is useful to begin by discussing some of the technology categories in which engineers were particularly active. As detailed in Appendix D.10 engineers accounted for a high fraction of patents in key Industrial Revolution technology categories, including mechanical tools for boring, drilling, and punching, steam engines, boilers, railways and rolling stock, gas manufacturer and use, as well as advances related to civil engineering (arches, bridges, tunnels, embankments, etc.). However, engineers patented across a wide range of different technology types.

Table 8 presents the average number of technology categories patented in by inventors falling into each occupation group. Clearly engineers worked across a broader set of technology categories than any other type of inventor. This was not due to the fact that many patents by engineers were filed later in our study period. Regression results in Appendix D.11 show that not only did engineers work on significantly more technology types when looking across the full sample period, but the same is true in every two-decade sub-period from 1770 forward (we know from above that there were few engineers before 1770). In contrast, inventors holding manufacturing occupations consistently patented in fewer technology categories, most likely those closely related to their manufacturing activities.

Thus, engineers were not merely generating more inventions of the same type. Instead, they were producing both more inventions and inventions that spanned a wider set of different technologies. In this, they appear to have been fundamentally different than other types of inventors.³⁷ It is worth noting that engineers typically

³⁷It is important to note that these results do not contradict the idea, emphasized in recent work by Jones (2009), that inventors become more specialized as knowledge advances. Rather, the growth of specialized inventors (engineers) should be interpreted as the first step in this specialization process. Moreover, the fact that engineers were more likely to work in coinventor teams is also consistent with what we would expect given the results in Jones (2009).

did not produce patents in more technology types per patent filed. Rather, their diversity on technology categories covered was closely tied to the fact that they were producing more patents overall. However, this does not detract from the fact that they were able to patent in a broader set of technologies, because it may be that their greater overall productivity was possible exactly because they possessed the ability to pursue promising ideas across a broader range of technology types.

One might wonder about the extent to which the technology category results are dependent on the specific features of the BPO classifications. To allay this concern, Appendix D.12 shows that equivalent results are obtained using a very different set of patent classifications generated by Billington & Hanna (2018).

Table 8: Average number of technology categories per inventor, by occupation type

Occupation group	Avg. number of tech. categories per inventor	Occupation group	Avg. number of tech. categories per inventor
Agric., food/drink makers	1.548	Merchant	1.483
Chemical manuf.	1.740	Metals and mining	1.589
Construction	1.470	Misc. manuf.	1.462
Engineering	2.459	Textile Manuf.	1.388
Esquire	1.897	Prof. services	1.605
Gentry	1.822	Other occ.	1.490
Machinery and tool manuf.	1.547	Unknown	1.519

Based on the modal occupation group of each inventor. Inventors without a unique modal occupation group are not included. Excludes patents that are communications. Data cover 1700-1849.

4.2.4 Background of engineers

Using patent data that has been manually matched to ODNB biographies (discussed in more detail in Appendix D.13), it is possible to extract biographical information on the background of patenting inventors. Briefly, the most common educational background for engineers (as identified by the patent occupations) was an apprenticeship. Prominent engineers apprenticed in a wide variety of older occupations,

such as millwrights, watchmakers, carpenters, merchants, land surveyors and civil engineers, shipbuilders, coal viewers, etc. Of these, the most common for engineers was carpenter or joiner. In later years, some engineers also apprenticed at famous engineering firms. The wide range of different apprenticeship backgrounds emphasizes the broad set of paths that led into engineering as well as the fact that engineering was not merely a relabeling of an older occupation such as millwright. Engineers were also more likely than other types of inventors to have a purely working background (beyond basic primary schooling). A number of prominent engineers fell into this group, such as the famous railway engineer George Stephenson. Engineers were less likely than other inventors, particularly gentlemen and other professionals, to have formal higher education. This suggests that what higher education they did have was probably primarily due to self-study, a feature that appears regularly throughout the ODNB biographies. One implication of this fact is that it would be a mistake to classify this important group of inventors based on their formal educational background.

5 International comparison: Engineering in France

This section compares the changes in the British innovation system to France, a natural comparison country, during the same period. Specifically, I focus compare patterns observed in patent data, using data on French patents.

5.1 French patent data

I study French patents using data that span the inception of the system in 1791 to 1843, just before a major patent reform was undertaken in 1844.³⁸ Similar to the British patent data, the 11,804 patents filed in France during this period include the patentee name and, in most cases, patentee occupation and location, patent title, and technology category. I clean and prepare the French patent data using essentially the same procedures applied to the British data, including standardizing occupation information and conducting a laborious manual matching of patents to identify

³⁸This analysis builds on the work of Hallmann *et al.* (2021). French patent data for this period have also been used by Nuvolari *et al.* (2020).

unique individuals.³⁹ Starting with 14,161 patent-inventor observations, this matching procedure identifies 10,559 individual inventors (filing 1.35 patents per inventor on average).

Three differences in the French data are worth noting. First, patentees in France could apply for protection over 5, 10, or 15 years, with higher fees for a longer duration. This feature is useful because it provides an indicator of expected patent quality. Second, the occupations appearing in the French data differ from those found in Britain, with almost no one described as a “Gentleman” or “Esquire”.⁴⁰ Thus, if one is concerned about how the presence of many gentlemen in the British data affect the results, this issue will not be present in the French data. Third, the French system distinguished between patents of *invention* of new technologies, *improvement* to existing technologies, and *importation* of technologies discovered abroad. All three types are included in my analysis.

5.2 Analysis of French patent data

A first question to ask is whether engineers (ingénieure) in France differed from other inventors, as they did in Britain. This issue is examined in Table 9. Column 1 shows that engineers filed more patents per person than other types of inventors, while manufacturer-inventors filed fewer patents.⁴¹ As I will discuss later, some of the engineers that patented in the French data were based in Britain. To ensure that these British inventors are not driving the results, Column 2 presents results in which any inventor declaring an address in the U.K. in any of their patents is excluded.

Columns 3-4 conduct a similar exercise looking at the average length of the patent term applied for by different types of inventors. This is interesting because it may be an indicator of the ex ante assessment of the quality of an invention, though it should be considered with caution because it may also be influenced by factors such as credit

³⁹Individual matches in the French patent data are particularly reliable because there were few common surnames and the data often included multiple first and middle names.

⁴⁰However, a number of inventors described themselves as either working in government (e.g., mayor) or as a member of the military. These are probably the most comparable occupations to the “gentleman” category found in the British data given that the military and public service were two of the primary occupations for the British upper classes.

⁴¹As in the British patent analysis, the manufacturer-inventor category includes those working in machinery and tools, metals and mining, chemicals, textiles, and misc. manufacturing.

constraints. The results in Column 3 (all inventors) and Column 4 (excluding British inventors) indicate that engineers applied for significantly longer patent terms than other types of inventors, suggesting that they may have been producing higher-quality innovations. Columns 5-6 of Table 9 show that engineers in France also filed patents across a wider range of technology categories than other types of inventors.

Thus, my analysis of the French patent data confirms the main patterns found in the British patent data: engineers were more productive, in terms of the number of patents they produced, there is evidence suggesting that they also produced higher quality patents, and they also patented across a broader set of technology categories. Moreover, not only were engineers more productive than the average non-engineer inventor, they were also more productive than every other occupation group (see Appendix Table 39).

Table 9: Differences between engineers and other patentees in France

	Patents per person		Avg. length of patent term		Tech. categories per person	
	All inventors	Excluding UK-based	All inventors	Excluding UK-based	All inventors	Excluding UK-based
Engineer	0.965*** (0.147)	0.838*** (0.137)	1.156*** (0.204)	1.045*** (0.218)	0.690*** (0.108)	0.594*** (0.0993)
Manuf.	-0.0589*** (0.0179)	-0.0589*** (0.0181)	-1.195*** (0.0736)	-1.047*** (0.0740)	-0.0954*** (0.0201)	-0.0949*** (0.0212)
Observations	10,556	9,980	10,541	9,967	10,557	9,981
R-squared	0.032	0.025	0.031	0.026	0.011	0.008

Robust standard errors in parenthesis. Occupations are based on the modal occupation of each inventor. Inventors without a unique modal occupation group are not included.

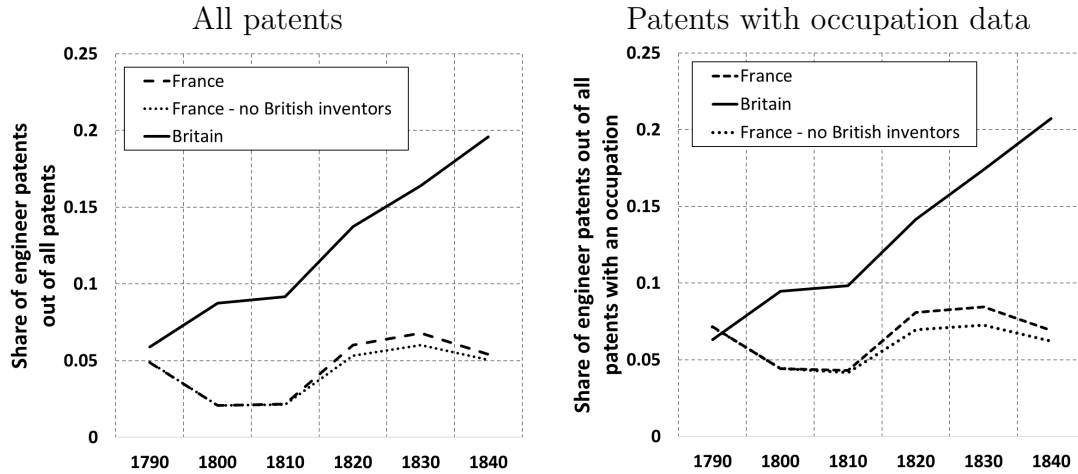
Next, I ask: did the French innovation system undergo the same changes documented in the British innovation system? In particular, do we observe a similar emergence of engineers as an important group of inventors in France? Figure 3 presents the key patterns, comparing the share of patents filed by engineers in Britain and France relative to all inventors (left panel) or those inventors who reported an occupation (right panel). Unlike Britain, we can see that France did not experience a rise of patents by engineers in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Instead, the types of inventors that patented in France remained essentially stable throughout

1790-1843 period and dominated by manufacturer-inventors (see Appendix Figure 8), similar to the patterns observed in Britain before the emergence of engineering. This contrast may help explain why it was Britain, rather than France, that emerged as the technology leader during this period.

The fact that we do not observe the emergence of engineers as an important part of the French innovation system before the mid-1840s may be surprising given the well-established system of engineering education that existed in France at this time. However, as discussed in Appendix G, the French system was largely directed by the government and focused on producing engineers skilled at designing public infrastructure, mainly for military purposes. In contrast, the engineering profession that developed in Britain did so with very little government intervention, resulting in a profession with more of a focus on developing economically-valuable new technologies. British engineers may have also benefited from the availability of skilled craftsmen in Britain, which made it easier to implement new inventions (Kelly *et al.*, 2014). These differences can help explain why it was in Britain, rather than France, where engineers emerged as a major part of the innovation system.

A final aspect of interest in the French patent data is the contribution of foreign inventors, particularly the British. Of the inventors with an address listed in the French data, 92% had a modal location in France. The next largest group by far was the British, accounting for 5.8%, followed by the U.S. (0.5%) and all of the various German territories (0.47%). While British inventors accounted for just 5.8% of all French inventors, they accounted for 11.7% of all engineers, and 13.8% of patents by engineers, in France. Moreover, within the group of British inventors that reported an occupation, 37.4% were engineers. Since engineers accounted a lower fraction of all British patentees during this period, this tells us that engineers were much more likely than other British inventors to also patent their inventions abroad. This provides yet another indicator that engineers differed in important ways from other types of British inventors.

Figure 3: Share of patents by engineers in Britain and France



Source: Engineers are identified as those listing engineering as their modal occupation. The French data spans 1791-1843. The British data cover 1790-1849.

6 The Professionalization of Civil Engineering

Civil engineering work is perhaps the most closely associated with the engineering profession, and it was the first to develop many of the features of a profession, such as dedicated professional societies. This section reviews available historical evidence on the development of the civil engineering profession, supported with some new quantitative analysis.

While civil engineering work has been undertaken for millennia, historians highlight the fundamental changes that took place in how this work was done during the eighteenth century. Bill Addis, in his monumental history of 3000 years of building engineering (Addis, 2007), titles the chapter covering 1750-1800, “Engineering becomes a Profession.” In it, he describes how this professionalization was reflected in the career of John Smeaton, one of the leading civil engineers of the age (p. 239-240):

[John] Smeaton was able to apply general principles, based on science and tested using full-sized and scale model experiments, to an engineering problem in a field entirely unfamiliar to him...the translation of real engineering problems into simplified theoretical models was becoming a matter of course for the few engineers who were scientifically and mathematically educated...from Smeaton's calculations...we can see that he had already established our modern approach to engineering design...While Smeaton has become an engineering icon...many other engineers were treading similar paths.

I provide quantitative support for this narrative using a list of 338 major British civil engineering projects. These data, from Skempton *et al.* (2002), have been digitized and combined with biographical information on the engineers involved.⁴² While the data cover 1500-1830, I focus mainly on the period after 1600, since there were few major projects before that point. These data show that from 1600-1760, roughly 75% of major engineering projects were overseen by someone who had not previously overseen another major project (see Appendix Figure 10). After 1760, however, the pattern changes. From that point until 1830, roughly 35% of all major projects were overseen by a chief engineer who had not already overseen a major project. Moreover, after 1760, and unlike before that point, very few major projects were overseen by engineers who did not either have prior experience or training under a more experienced engineer. Thus, the engineers chosen to oversee major projects were becoming a more experienced group.

What changed in the middle of the eighteenth century? Before 1760, major infrastructure projects were often designed and overseen by skilled craftsmen as one-off endeavors.⁴³ Many of these “proto-engineers,” with backgrounds that included millwright, architect, surveyor, mason, and mining engineer, were skilled, and some were brilliant. What was different was that they had rarely developed their skills by working on previous major engineering works, and they rarely undertook more than one or two important engineering projects in their lifetime.

One striking example of this pattern is provided by the construction of the West-

⁴²Further details on these data can be found in Appendix F.

⁴³Certainly there were some exceptions, such as Cornelius Vermuyden or George Sorocold.

minster Bridge, the most expensive infrastructure project undertaken in Britain the first half of the eighteenth century. Parliament chose Charles Labelye as the engineer in charge of this project. Labelye was skilled and knowledgeable, but up to that time he had not a single major engineering project to his name, either as chief engineer or as an assistant engineer under someone more experienced (Skempton *et al.*, 2002). That Parliament chose him to undertake the most important engineering project of the period was emblematic of how civil engineering was done up to that point.

After about 1760, this pattern begins to change, with the emergence of a more professional body of engineers, each overseeing numerous major engineering works. From 1700-1750, for example, the most prolific individuals on Skempton's list, Thomas Steer and John Reynolds, oversaw four major projects each. From 1750-1800, the most prolific engineer, John Smeaton, oversaw eighteen, followed by William Jessop (15 projects), John Rennie (9 projects), James Brindley (8 projects), etc.⁴⁴ By 1800, the idea that a project such as the Westminster Bridge would have been awarded to an engineer with no prior experience would have seemed absurd.

One aspect of the professionalization of the civil engineering that took place after 1760 was that young engineers typically gained extensive experience as assistant engineers before overseeing major projects. From 1700-1760, my data show that only 20 percent of engineers undertaking their first project had prior experience working under an engineer who had previous experience on a major project. This changed in the following generation. After 1760, more than half of all engineers overseeing major projects were trained by more experienced engineers. John Smeaton, one of the most influential early civil engineers, trained five engineers who would go on to oversee major projects, including William Jessop. James Brindley, another important early engineer, trained six, including Robert Whitworth. Jessop would go on to train or partner with seven later engineers who oversaw major projects. Whitworth would train six. Thus, we can see the profession of civil engineering develop after 1760, as

⁴⁴Between 1750 and 1770, for example, Smeaton was responsible for the Eddystone Lighthouse, the Colstream Bridge, work on the Perth Bridge, the Potteric Carr Drainage, work on the London Bridge Waterworks, and the Adlingfleet Drainage. In just the first decade of the 19th century, John Rennie built the Kelso Bridge, the Leith East Docks, the London Docks, the East India Docks in London, the Humber Dock in Hull, and oversaw the drainage of the Wildmore Fens. Further evidence on this patterns is provided in Appendix Table 41.

the knowledge and experience of the first generation of professional civil engineers was passed on to the next.

The growth of engineering into a distinct and respected profession was accompanied by the development of institutions that helped engineers meet one another and exchange ideas. The Society of Civil Engineers was founded in 1771, followed by the Institution of Civil Engineers 1818 and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in 1846. These provided a forum for engineers to engage, a way to present and publish their new ideas, and a representative of their interests. There was also a growing specialized press focused on disseminating engineering knowledge, including William Nicholson's *Journal of Natural Philosophy*, founded in 1797, Alexander Tilloch's *Philosophical Magazine* (1798), and, later, *Mechanic's Magazine*, founded in 1823 by Joseph Clinton Robertson, an engineer. Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century British engineers were immersed in a rich intellectual milieu based on networks formed through the learned societies and information transmitted through a vibrant scientific and technical press, while the profession itself rested on institutional foundations that would survive to today.

So, the rise of engineers as an important group of *inventors* shown in the patent data paralleled by the professionalization of civil engineers as *designers* of a wide variety of civil infrastructure. These various strands of engineering were closely tied to one another, with many engineers moving between them, and in a number of cases we see civil engineers filing patents, or mechanical engineers relying on income from civil and consulting work while developing new inventions.

7 Conclusions

This paper documents the emergence of a new division of labor, characterized by the emergence of professional engineers, and by doing so it provides a new perspective on the Industrial Revolution. Central to this perspective is the idea that there was a change in the process through which new technology developed, an innovation in the process of innovation. I am certainly not the first to argue that the innovation process changed in important ways during this period. What is new here is backing that argument up with quantitative evidence and describing in more detail the nature

of the change.

It is not my intention to argue that the changes documented here mattered to the exclusion of other factors that may have influenced the innovation rate during the Industrial Revolution, such as an increasing stock of human capital, the inducements created by an expanding market, the influence of Enlightenment thinking, or the protections provided by the institutional environment. Most likely, such factors worked together.

In fact, these factors likely help explain why the engineering profession emerged when it did. Engineers required access to scientific and technical knowledge, which was improving and becoming more available as a result of the Enlightenment. It was also vital that they be able to profit from their inventions, which was possible only because of the property rights provided by the English state. Finally, the emergence of engineers almost certainly required that the market expand sufficiently to be able to accommodate specialization. Sorting out the relative contribution of these various factors, and potentially others, to the onset of the Industrial Revolution in general and the emergence of the engineering profession in particular, remains an important but challenging direction for future research.

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A Evidence from Google Ngrams

Figure 4 describes the usage of the term “engineer” in books contained in the Google Books repository, as reported by Google Ngrams (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>), from 1700-1850.

Figure 4: Google Ngram for “engineer”



Data from Google Ngrams, June 18, 2020.

B Verb stem analysis appendix

This appendix describes in more detail a text analysis exercise that aims to identify the functional activities that characterized the early engineering profession. The starting point for this analysis is biographical data from the ODNB, a rich data source that has been used in numerous previous studies.⁴⁵ These biographies cover only a select sample of the most successful or notable individuals, so an analysis of this data will not be representative of all engineers. However, it will reflect the activities of upper-tail engineers, the group most likely to invent valuable new technologies and therefore the primary interest in this paper.

I begin by collecting the text of the biographies of all those classified by the ODNB as engineers born before 1850 (439 in total), as well as two natural comparison groups: manufacturers (349 biographies) and those non-engineers classified as involved in science or technology (1547 biographies).⁴⁶ Using natural language processing methods, I parse the biographies and identify all verb stems. These verb stems reflect the types of activities that individuals undertook during their lifetime. This procedure identifies 924 verb stems. I focus on the 338 verbs that appear in at least 100 out of the 2335 biographies used in the analysis. To provide a point of comparison, I identify a set of ‘neutral’ verbs (e.g., is, do, died, sat, etc.) that are unlikely to reflect activities associated with a particular occupation. I then run the following regression specification:

$$VERB_{vi} = \sum_{v \in \hat{V}} (\gamma_v ENG_i \theta_v) + \phi_i + \eta_v + \epsilon_{vi}$$

where $VERB_{vi}$ is an indicator for whether verb stem v shows up the biography of individual i , ϕ_i is a set of individual biography fixed effects, which accounts for

⁴⁵Previous studies using these data include Allen (2009a), Meisenzahl & Mokyr (2012), Nuvolari & Tartari (2011), and Khan (2018).

⁴⁶Within the ODNB, these are the two natural comparison groups. Most engineers were classified as part of those involved in science and technology, so it is natural to compare to that group. Manufacturers were the other major group of inventors during the study period, as the patent data will show. I exclude military engineers from the engineers group. I also include iron masters as manufacturers. Of those individuals classified as working in science or technology, I do not include manufacturers, artists/engravers, alchemists, or fossil collectors.

variation in the length of individual biographies, and η_v is a set of verb fixed effects, to account for variation in the baseline frequency with which each verb is used. The explanatory variables of interest in this regression are constructed by interacting an indicator for whether an individual is an engineer (ENG_i), with θ_v , an indicator variable for each verb in the set of verbs \tilde{V} that excludes neutral verbs. The estimated coefficient for each verb in this set, γ_v , reflects the extent to which that verb is particularly common in engineer biographies. Since I am looking at many outcomes, I adjust for multiple hypothesis testing by calculating sharpened p-values, following Benjamini *et al.* (2006) and Anderson (2008).

Table 10 presents the full listing of verbs strongly associated with engineers (sharpened p-values below 0.05), when comparing to both manufacturers and non-engineers involved in science and technology. The presence of verbs such as “design”, “invent” and “patent” indicate the important role of inventive activities to the engineering profession. Out of all the verbs, the one most closely associated with engineers is “design”. There are also terms indicating the role that engineers played in implementing their new designs and inventions, words such as “build,” “erect,” “employ,” “lay,” and “supervise.” Other important roles played by engineers are indicated by the presence of “consult,” “report,” and “survey.” These terms give us a sense of the types of activities that set engineers apart from others.

The words least associated with engineers can also be informative. When compared to manufacturers, the five verbs most associated with that group, relative to engineers, are “sell,” “expand,” “produce,” “manufacture,” and “buy.” For non-engineers involved in science and technology, the verbs most associated with that group, relative to engineers, are “publish,” “graduate,” “write,” “study,” and “collect.” The contrast between these terms and the words in Table 1 highlights the defining differences, in terms of activities, between these various groups.

Table 11 presents the top-20 verbs related to engineers from four alternative estimation approaches. The results in the first two columns correspond to my preferred approach. That approach uses an indicator for whether a verb appears in a biography as the outcome variable and compares to biographies from both manufacturers and non-engineers involved in science and technology. The next two columns compare only to manufacturers, followed by two columns comparing only to those involved

Table 10: Verb stems associated with engineers with sharpened p-values below 0.05

Verb stem	T-stat	Sharpened p-value	Verb stem	T-stat	Sharpened p-value
design	14.61	0.001	install	3.91	0.001
build	11.53	0.001	replace	3.88	0.001
construct	9.58	0.001	advocate	3.60	0.002
consult	8.16	0.001	operate	3.42	0.003
patent	6.74	0.001	engage	3.37	0.003
employ	6.23	0.001	apprentice	3.36	0.003
report	6.10	0.001	knight	3.28	0.003
erect	5.59	0.001	develop	3.11	0.005
survey	5.27	0.001	act	3.07	0.006
drive	5.15	0.001	train	3.01	0.006
complete	5.10	0.001	manufacture	2.98	0.007
open	5.01	0.001	assist	2.90	0.008
supervise	4.87	0.001	adopt	2.85	0.009
improve	4.83	0.001	join	2.75	0.011
lay	4.56	0.001	devise	2.74	0.012
advise	4.40	0.001	commission	2.72	0.012
supply	4.36	0.001	run	2.69	0.013
connect	4.24	0.001	test	2.66	0.014
propose	4.11	0.001	promote	2.48	0.02
invent	4.01	0.001	introduce	2.26	0.032

Estimated coefficients and t-statistics based on robust standard errors. Sharpened p-values are calculated using the approach from Anderson (2008). Regressions include verb and individual fixed effects. N=789,230 (2335 biographies x 338 verbs).

in science and technology. While these two sets of results are similar, we can see some interesting contrasts. For example, relative to manufacturers, engineers were more likely to be engaged in activities such as publishing and writing. This is not true when comparing engineers to non-engineers involved in science and technology. Similarly, engineers were more likely to be involved in activities such as manufacturing or supervising when compared to non-engineers involved in science or technology, but not when compared to engineers. However, when comparing to either group we consistently see that engineers are closely associated with activities such as designing, consulting, constructing, and surveying (“invent” and “patent” also have p-values below 0.05 when compared to either group, though they fall outside of the top 20 terms in some cases). The last two columns present results where the count of verbs in a

biography is used in place of an indicator for whether a verb appears. This alternative approach also delivers very similar results.

Table 11: Verb stem results using alternative comparison groups or outcome variables

Baseline		Compare to manufacturers only		Compare to sci/tech only		Using verb counts as outcome	
Verb stem	Sharpened p-value	Verb stem	Sharpened p-value	Verb stem	Sharpened p-value	Verb stem	Sharpened p-value
design	0.001	design	0.001	design	0.001	design	0.001
build	0.001	construct	0.001	build	0.001	build	0.001
construct	0.001	consult	0.001	construct	0.001	construct	0.001
consult	0.001	complete	0.001	employ	0.001	consult	0.001
patent	0.001	publish	0.001	consult	0.001	employ	0.001
employ	0.001	survey	0.001	patent	0.001	patent	0.001
report	0.001	report	0.001	open	0.001	report	0.001
erect	0.001	propose	0.001	erect	0.001	erect	0.001
survey	0.001	award	0.001	manufacture	0.001	improve	0.001
drive	0.001	advise	0.001	report	0.001	complete	0.001
complete	0.001	assist	0.001	supply	0.001	drive	0.001
open	0.001	connect	0.001	drive	0.001	supervise	0.001
supervise	0.001	test	0.001	improve	0.001	open	0.001
improve	0.001	consider	0.001	supervise	0.001	lay	0.001
lay	0.001	engage	0.001	survey	0.001	propose	0.001
advise	0.001	undertake	0.001	install	0.001	survey	0.001
supply	0.001	act	0.001	lay	0.001	connect	0.001
connect	0.001	prepare	0.001	operate	0.001	supply	0.001
propose	0.001	supervise	0.001	replace	0.001	advise	0.001
invent	0.001	lay	0.001	complete	0.001	act	0.001

Estimated coefficients and t-statistics based on robust standard errors. Sharpened p-values are calculated using the approach from Anderson (2008). Regressions include verb and individual fixed effects. In the first and last set of results, N=789,230. When comparing only to manufacturers, N=266,344. When comparing only to non-engineers working in science or technology, N=671,268.

Table 12 presents the top ten verbs associated with engineers based on the matched patent-ODNB data set. In these results, engineers are identified using the occupations reported in the patent data (based on each inventor’s modal occupation) and the comparison group is made up of those individuals in the matched data set with a unique modal occupation other than engineering. Note that this data set includes a much smaller set of biographies, so the results are not as strong as those shown above.

Despite that, a number of the terms shown in Table 12, most notably “design,” are also found in the tables above.

Table 12: Verb stems associated with engineers based on matched patent-ODNB data

Verb stem	p-value	Sharpened p-value	Verb stem	p-value	Sharpened p-value
design	0.0001	0.014	cast	0.0065	0.242
erect	0.0003	0.025	develop	0.0083	0.242
drive	0.0004	0.025	manufacture	0.0083	0.242
construct	0.0043	0.242	install	0.0136	0.315
achieve	0.0057	0.242	apprentice	0.0139	0.315

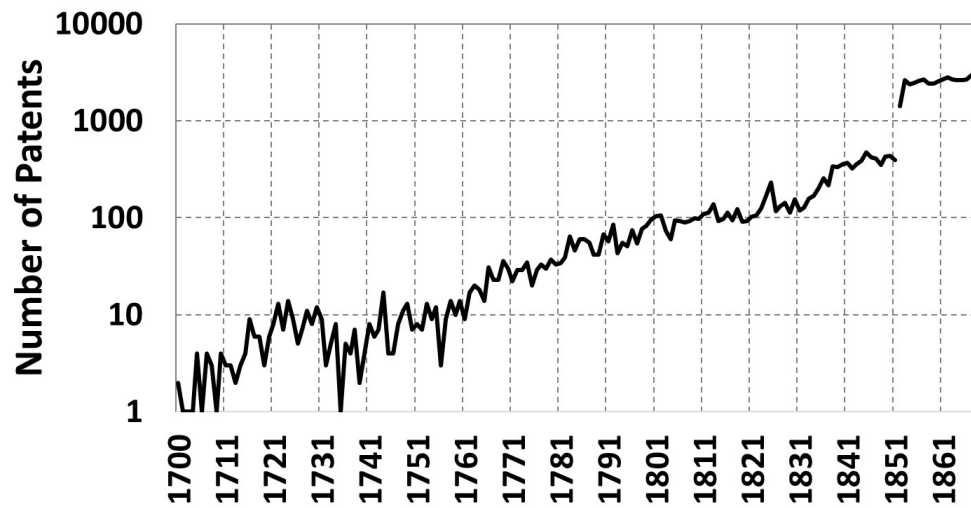
Estimated coefficients and t-statistics based on robust standard errors. Sharpened p-values are calculated using the approach from Anderson (2008). Regressions include verb and individual fixed effects. N=41,940 (180 biographies with unique modal occupations x 233 verbs).

C British patent data appendix

C.1 Number of patents over time

Figure 5 describes how the number of patents increased across the study period. The graph uses a log scale and excludes patents received as a communication from a person abroad.

Figure 5: Number of patents by year, 1700-1849 (log scale)



C.2 Patent linking appendix

This section discusses the procedures used to link up patent entries associated with the same unique inventor. At the outset it is important to recognize that this linking problem is different in a number of important ways than the more well-known problem of linking individuals across various censuses (see Abramitzky *et al.* (Forthcoming) and Bailey *et al.* (Forthcoming) for discussions of census linking). The most important differences are:

1. Unlike standard census to census linking, the linking undertaken in this paper aims to match up all patents associated with a single individual. This means that rather than searching for unique one-to-one matches, some patents may correctly link to numerous other patents, while many others may correctly not link to any others. One consequence of this is that standard statistics such as link rate are less meaningful in my context.
2. A second important difference relative to the standard census matching problem is that, because patenting is a rare activity typically undertaken by a relatively elite group, I am working with a much smaller universe of observations that need to be linked. Working with a much smaller sample makes linking easier, since it means that it is much less likely that an observation for one individual will have observations for multiple other individuals that are plausible matches. Working with a small universe (not sample) of observations also means that a manual linking approach, similar to the one pioneered by Ferrie (1996), can be used.
3. A third important difference has to do with the quality of the underlying data in my sample. Unlike an historical census, which is collected by thousands of enumerators talking with individuals who themselves may not be literate, and may not even speak the same language well, the patent data that I study was provided and collected by a relatively elite group of individuals. Literacy was almost certainly universal within this group. Moreover, patent filers had strong incentives to ensure that their information was registered correctly, since incorrect filings could potentially raise subsequent legal issues. These differences

mean that the underlying data is likely to have substantially fewer errors than raw census microdata. As one indicator of this, I do not find any nicknames, such as “Bill” or “Bob”, in the data. This does not eliminate all name errors, since there are transcription errors, but it means that one important source of error in standard census linking is unlikely to be substantial in my setting.

4. A fourth difference relative to standard linking problems is that I am working with a different, and in many ways richer, set of information to link on. The examples provided below illustrate the type of data that goes into my links. One implication of this rich set of linking data is that we can typically have a high level of confidence in individual links. A second consequence is that implementing automated linking methods in this setting is likely to be more challenging, another reason to prefer a manual linking procedure.

Given these features, I have chosen to use a manual linking procedure. This procedure involves the following steps:

1. First, I manually reviewed the names and cleaned up obvious transcription errors.
2. Next, I use automated methods to parse names into separate first name and surname fields. This is relatively straightforward except that it requires the removal of suffixes such as “Jr.” or “the younger”.
3. Next, in an Excel file, I sort the data based on (i) first name and (ii) surname and then work down the list of patents to identify potential matches. In the majority of cases, similar names will be located near one another, unless there has been a transcription error in one of the first few letters of the first name. For each potential match, I review available information including the full name, occupation, location, patent description, and co-inventors (see examples below) in order to identify matches.
4. After fully working through the data once, I then re-sort the data based on (i) surname and then (ii) first name and repeat the procedure. Under this sorting approach, entries for the same individual should be very close to one another

unless there has been a serious transcription error in the first few letters of the surname or in the procedure used to parse out surnames.

The best way to get a sense of the information that goes into forming a match is to review some examples. A somewhat arbitrary place to start is to look at the first few entries in the dataset when sorting by first name. These are presented in Table 13. One thing that can be seen in this table is that, because the universe of entries is small, there are quite a few obviously unique names. There are also a number of obvious potential matches, such as those associated with Abraham Buzaglo and Abraham Henry Chambers. One transcription error can be seen in the data, in the last line, but when sorting by either first name or surname that entry will still end up near the other patents by the same individual. It is not hard to imagine working down this list and identifying likely matches. Of course, there are other names that are much more common, so it is not always this easy.

Before coming to some more challenging examples, it is useful to get a sense of the information that goes into making a match. Table 14 presents the first few sets of matched patents in the data (sorting by first names) where I have filled in the inventor's location and the patent description from the original sources. We can see that quite a lot of information is available to make matches. Often, one type of information, such as occupation or location, may vary across entries. We can see this in the case of Abraham Buzaglo, though it is worth noting that an experienced reviewer may note that St. Mary-le-Strand and Strand are essentially equivalent and that both are in close proximity to the City of London. The information on type of invention can be quite useful. Even though the first two entries differ in the listed occupation and location, a comparison of the inventions would strongly suggest a match, even if the name wasn't as unique as Abraham Buzaglo. The last two entries, where one had a transcription error in the name, illustrate that exact name matches are not required to identify a link. These entries also highlight how useful coauthor information can be in confirming a link, though even without that, the almost identical patent descriptions would be enough to identify a link.

The entries in Table 14 are representative of the vast majority of matches, which are straightforward. However, it is also useful to consider some more challenging

Table 13: First 25 entries in the patent data when sorting by first name

Patent No.	Pat. Year	Name (as originally entered)	Occupation
7292	1837	Aaron Fearn	Dyer
2166	1797	Aaron Garlick	Manufacturer
393	1713	Aaron Hill	Esquire
5137	1825	Aaron Jennens	Manufacturer and japanners
4558	1821	Aaron Manby	Iron master
9141	1841	Aaron Ryles	Agent
7923	1839	Abel Morrall	
10553	1845	Abel Siccama	Bachelor of arts
2569	1802	Abner Cowell Lea	Manufacturer
6196	1831	Abraham Adolf Moser	Engineer
8744	1840	Abraham Alexander Lindo	Gentleman
2242	1798	Abraham Bosquet	Esquire
7843	1838	Abraham Bury	Esquire
826	1765	Abraham Buzaglo	Gentleman
928	1769	Abraham Buzaglo	Warming machine maker
1211	1779	Abraham Buzaglo	Warming machine maker
7882	1838	Abraham Collen	Esquire
380	1707	Abraham Darby	Smith
5369	1826	Abraham Dixon	Manufacturer
845	1766	Abraham Foster	Peruke maker
5962	1830	Abraham Garnett	Esq.
4441	1820	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire
4527	1821	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire
4906	1824	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire
5114	1825	Abraliam Henry Chambers	Esquire

examples, which highlight the advantages of a manual linking procedure. The first example is for patentees named Henry Smith, a fairly common name. The first two columns include the patent number and patent title for each patent with an inventor with this name. The third column presents the unique individual ID generated by my name matching process. The first two Henry Smiths (nos. 3804 and 3805) are unique. The third Henry Smith (no. 3806) is matched to three different patents. For this inventor, the match between patents 9291 and 10808 is fairly straightforward, but the match to patent 12266 is more difficult. In that case, the inventor has moved to a different town and the entry is missing an occupation. However, the very specific nature of the invention, railway wheels, makes it extremely unlikely that these are

Table 14: First few matches in the data when sorting by first name

Pat. No.	Pat. Year	Name (pre-cleaning)	Occupation	Location	Invention	Coinventors
826	1765	Abraham Buzaglo	Gentleman	City of London	Machine for warming rooms of all sizes with a coal fire	
928	1769	Abraham Buzaglo	Warming machine maker	Catherine St., Mary-le-Strand	New invented warming machine	
1211	1779	Abraham Buzaglo	Warming machine maker	Strand, Westminster, Middlesex	New invented muscular strength and health restoring exercise	
4441	1820	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire	Bond St., Middlesex	Improvement in the preparing or manufacturing of substances for the formation of highways and other roads	
4527	1821	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire	Bond St., Middlesex	Improvements in the manufacture of building cement, composition, stucco...	
4906	1824	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire	New Bond St., Middlesex	Improvements in preparing and paving horse carriage ways	
5114	1825	Abraham Henry Chambers	Esquire	Stratford Pl., Mary-le-Bone	New filtering apparatus	Ennis Chambers, Charles Jeppard
1843	1791	Abraham Hill	Saw maker	Whiteley Wood, Sheffield	New method of making scythes with steel blades	
1972	1793	Abraham Hill	Saw maker	Whitley Wood, Sheffield	New invented method of making with iron backs steel knives for cutting hay and straw	
11737	1847	Abraham Solomons	Merchant	City of London	Certain improvements in the manufacture of charcoal and other fuel	Bondy Azulay
12165	1848	Abraham Solomons	Merchant	City of London	Improvements in the manufacture of gas, tar, charcoal and certain acids	Bondy Azulay
10547	1845	Adam Og Den	Gentleman	Hey Chapel, Ashton-under-Lyne	Certain improvements in machinery for preparing and cleaning wool, cotton and similar fibrous substances	John Sykes
11798	1847	Adam Ogden	Wool cleaner and machine maker	Huddersfield, York	Improvements in machinery for cleaning wool, cotton, and similar fibrous substances	John Sykes

coming from a different inventor. Thus, patent no. 12266 is matched to the Henry Smith with individual ID 3806. The fourth entry, individual ID 3807, could potentially be a match for the patent with individual ID 3805 because the name and location are the same and the timing is proximate. However, Birmingham is a large city and there is no similarity in the subject matter of the invention. Therefore, these two entries are not matched. Finally, the Henry Smith with individual ID 3808 is matched to two patents. Both are straightforward given the occupation and location. These are more representative of the types of matches that are common in the database.

Table 15: Names matching for “Henry Smith”

Pat No.	Pat year	Indiv. ID	Name	Occupation	Address	Patent title
2658	1802	3804	Henry Smith	Lieutenant, H.M. Navy		New improved vessel or barrel for the more safe and expeditious carriage and conveyance of gunpowder
8446	1840	3805	Henry Smith	Lamp manufacturer	Birmingham	Improvements in gas burners and in lamps
9291	1842	3806	Henry Smith	Engineer	Liverpool	Improvements in the construction of wheels and breaks for carriages
9838	1843	3807	Henry Smith		Birmingham	Improvements in apparatus for fastening doors and in apparatus for giving action to alarms
10241	1844	3808	Henry Smith	Agricultural implement maker	Stamford, Lincolnshire	Certain improvements in the construction and arrangement of hand rakes and horse rakes, and in machinery for cutting vegetable substances
10808	1845	3806	Henry Smith	Engineer	Liverpool	Improvements in the manufacture of wheels for railways, and in springs for railway and other carriages, and in axle guards for railway carriages
11638	1847	3808	Henry Smith	Agricultural implement maker	Stamford, Lincolnshire	Certain improvements in machinery for cutting and separating vegetable substances
12266	1848	3806	Henry Smith		Vulcan Works, West Bromwich	Improvements in the manufacture of railway wheels

The second example is for a subset of individuals named John Browne. Here, the first two entries are an obvious match. The next two individuals are also a clear match given the address and occupation. The fifth John Browne, from Brighton, also appears to be unique. The remaining five patents are all matched to one individual, no. 5485. There is some question about whether these should be matched given that there is an address change and there does not appear to be a commonality in the subject matter of the inventions. However, patent 12452 makes it clear that the patent listing an address on New Bond Street belong to the same individual who later lived on Great Portland St. The difficult patent is then 12326, which has a different address but the same occupation as patent no. 12452. However, it is clear that

the individual moved during this period and a search of Google maps reveals that Osnaburgh St. is in very close proximity to both New Bond St. and Great Portland St. in London. Together, this information is enough to conclude that all five patents likely came from the same individual.

Table 16: Names matching for “John Browne”

Pat No.	Pat year	Indiv. ID	Name	Occupation	Address	Patent title
5496	1827	5480	John Browne	Merchant and copartner	Bridgewater, Somerset	A certain composition or substance which may be manufactured or moulded either into bricks or into blocks of any form...
6742	1834	5480	John Browne	Merchant	Bridgewater, Somerset	An improved instrument or apparatus for ascertaining levels
7863	1838	5482	John Browne	Esquire	Castle St., Middlesex	Improvements in paving roads and streets
8050	1839	5482	John Browne	Esquire	Castle St., Middlesex	Improvements in saddles and stirrups for horses and other animals
9349	1842	5484	John Browne	Gentleman	Brighton	Improvements in the manufacture of mud boots and overalls
10104	1844	5485	John Browne	Esquire	New Bond St., Middlesex	Improvements in urinary utensils
10180	1844	5485	John Browne	Esquire	New Bond St., Middlesex	Improvements in apparatus for protecting the human face, or part of the human face, from the inclemency of the weather
12326	1848	5485	John Browne	Gentleman	Osnaburgh St., Middlesex	Improvements in fire escapes, and in apparatus to facilitate persons employed in cleaning windows
12452	1849	5485	John Browne	Gentleman	Formerly of Bond St., now of Great Portland St.	Improvements in constructing and rigging vessels, and improvements in atmospheric and other railways
12686	1849	5485	John Browne	Esquire	Great Portland St., Middlesex	Improvements in apparatus to assist combustion in stoves or grates

To summarize, it is hoped that these examples provide a useful illustration of the linking procedure used in this paper. It should be clear that the combination of a relatively small universe of observations, together with a rich set of data to match on, lend themselves to a manual matching procedure, and that such a procedure can generate matches where, in the substantial majority of cases, there is little doubt about the accuracy of the resulting link.

C.3 List of top patent holders

Table 17 lists those patent holders with 10 or more patents during the 1700-1849 period, excluding communicated patents. This list includes a number of famous engineers. Many of the names on this list appear in the ODNB (indicated in italics).

Table 17: Top patent filers during the 1700-1849 period

Inventor	Pats.	Inventor	Pats.
William Church	18	<i>Robert William Sievier</i>	11
<i>Samuel Hall</i>	17	William Chapman	11
<i>Joseph Bramah</i>	16	Christopher Nickels	11
<i>Marc Isambard Brunel</i>	15	<i>David Napier</i>	11
Joseph Clisild Daniell	15	Augustus Applegarth	11
William Palmer	14	<i>Thomas Hancock</i>	11
Robert Dickinson	14	John George Bodmer	11
Elijah Galloway	13	Joseph Manton	10
<i>Edward Massey</i>	13	Thomas Robinson Williams	10
John Heathcoat	13	<i>William Hale</i>	10
<i>John Dickinson</i>	13	<i>Joseph Maudslay</i>	10
<i>William Congreve</i>	13	Richard Witty	10
William Crofts	12	<i>Samuel Brown</i>	10
Lemuel Wellman Wright	12	<i>Edmund Cartwright</i>	10
Andrew Smith	12	William Losh	10
Benjamin Cook	12	Anthony George Eckhardt	10

Top patent filers from 1700-1849, excluding communicated patents. Names in italics have been matched to the ODNB.

C.4 Details on occupation groups in the patent data

Table 18 presents the most common occupations within each of the broad occupation groupings used in my analysis. We can see that some groups, such as engineers, esquires, merchants and gentlemen, have a few very common occupations. Others, particularly those in manufacturing, often have a much larger number of unique occupations, each with fewer patents.

Table 18: Major occupations within each broad grouping

Agric/Food/Drinks		Machinery & Tools		Gentleman	
Farmer	71	Machinist	159	Gentleman	2037
Brewer	44	Machine maker	151	Baronet	21
Miller	30	Mechanic	128	Knight	17
Sugar refiner	21	Watch maker	112		
Distiller	19	Gun maker	66	Other	
		Mathematical inst. maker	44	Artist	65
Chemical		Engine maker	29	Printer	56
Chemist	232	Smith	22	Manager	30
Manufacturing chemist	88	Cutler	20	Stationer	30
Apothecary	18			Hatter	23
Practical chemist	12	Merchant		Agent	21
Soap boiler	12	Merchant	679	Master mariner	21
		Wine merchant	17		
Construction		Timber merchant	11	Prof. services	
Millwright	59	Grocer	10	Surgeon	114
Builder	49			Clerk	75
Carpenter	38	Metal & Mining		Doctor of medicine	49
Plumber	35	Ironmonger	106	Architect	48
Potter	23	Iron master	100	Patent agent	44
		Brass founder	96	Optician	36
Engineering		Iron founder	90	Mechanical draughts	36
Engineer	1250	Whitesmith	27	Surveyor	33
Civil engineer	540	Iron manufacturer	23		
Gas engineer	13			Textiles	
Millwright & engineer	9	Misc. Manufacturing		Cotton spinner	113
		Manufacturer	328	Lace manufacturer	98
Esquire		Coachmaker	64	Clothier	68
Esquire	840	Musical instrument maker	62	Dyer	64
		Cabinet maker	44	Calico printer	53
		Paper maker	36	Weaver	43
		Tanner	33		
		Hat manufacturer	27		

Counts are based on data from 1700-1849.

C.5 List of top patenting engineers by decade

Table 19 lists the top 5 individuals filing patents with an engineering occupation (in the patent data) in each decade up to the 1840s (counting only patents where they list their occupation as engineer). This provides a rough guide to prominent engineers, though note that engineers may fail to make the list simply because their patents were spread across different decades, and some of these individuals may have filed additional patents in a decade under a different occupation which would not be included here.

Table 19: Top engineer inventors by decade

Decade	Name	Pats.	Decade	Name	Pats.
1720s	Thomas Benson	1	1800s	Joseph Bramah	6
	Isaac De La Chaumette	1		Archibald Thompson	4
1730s	John Kay	1	Samuel Miller	4	
	Thomas Benson	1	William Chapman	4	
1740s	Moses Hadley	1	Richard Trevithick	4	
	John Wise	1	1810s	Samuel John Pauly	5
1750s	George John	1	William Davis	5	
			Marc Isambard Brunel	4	
1760s	Robert Mackell	1	Bryan Donkin	3	
	William Blakey	1	Joseph Bramah	3	
	Jonathan Greenall	1	1820s	Lemuel Wellman Wright	9
	Thomas Perrins	1	Jacob Perkins	7	
	Charles Nicholas Michel Babu	1	James Fraser	6	
1770s	John Budge	1	John Hague	6	
	John Rastrick*	1	James Neville	5	
	Christopher Chrisel	1	1830s	John Ericsson	11
	Matthew Wasbrough	1	Joseph Gibbs	10	
1780s	James Watt	5	Andrew Smith	9	
	Robert Cameron	4	John George Bodmer	7	
	William Playfair	3	Joseph Whitworth	7	
	John Besant	1	1840s	Henry Bessemer	13
	Joseph Hateley	1	Joseph Maudslay	8	
1790s	James Rumsey	3	John George Bodmer	8	
	Joseph Bramah	3	Elijah Galloway	8	
	Joseph Hateley	2	John Coope Haddan	7	
	Thomas Mead	2			
	William Whitmore	2			

Patents indicate the number of patents that the inventor produced in a decade where their occupation was listed as an engineer. Inventors in italics appear in the ODNB. *John Rastrick is not included in the ODNB, but his son of the same name was included for his work as an engineer and inventor.

C.6 Additional details on the BPO technology category data

Table 20 describes the number of patents and share patents in top technology categories by period. Before 1750, the largest category of inventions was “Water and Fluids”, which includes pumps, water-wheels, etc. Weaving and Spinning were important in the early period and grew even more important over time. Three other technologies associated with the Industrial Revolution, such as steam engines, metal, and railways, also become much more important over time while technologies such as Musical instruments and Coaches a road conveyances declines.

Table 20: Top ten technology categories by period

		1700-1749	
1700-1749	Technology category	Patents	Share
1	Water and Fluids	94	0.051
2	Navigation I: Ship-Building, Rigging, and Working	79	0.043
3	Weaving and Preparing for Weaving	71	0.038
4	Spinning and Preparing for Spinning	68	0.037
5	Weapons of Defence, Ammunition	68	0.037
6	Coaches and Other Road Conveyances	64	0.035
7	Motive-Power and Propulsion	57	0.031
8	Musical Instruments	46	0.025
9	Medical and Surgical Treatments	46	0.025
10	Steam-Engines and Boilers	45	0.024
		1750-1799	
	Technology category	Patents	Share
1	Water and Fluids	132	0.050
2	Weaving and Preparing for Weaving	119	0.045
3	Spinning and Preparing for Spinning	110	0.042
4	Metals and Metallic Substances	106	0.040
5	Medical and Surgical Treatments	99	0.038
6	Coaches and Other Road Conveyances	91	0.035
7	Navigation I: Ship-Building, Rigging, and Working	84	0.032
8	Fireplaces, Stoves, Furnaces, Ovens, and Kilns	67	0.025
9	Motive-Power and Propulsion	64	0.024
10	Steam-Engines and Boilers	62	0.024
		1800-1849	
	Technology category	Patents	Share
1	Steam-Engines and Boilers	751	0.054
2	Motive-Power and Propulsion	722	0.052
3	Spinning and Preparing for Spinning	711	0.051
4	Weaving and Preparing for Weaving	694	0.050
5	Railways and Railway Rolling-Stock	492	0.035
6	Metals and Metallic Substances	472	0.034
7	Navigation I: Ship-Building, Rigging, And Working	402	0.029
8	Smoke Prevention: Consumption of Fuel	354	0.025
9	Coaches and Other Road Conveyances	353	0.025
10	Printing	305	0.022

Excludes communicated patents.

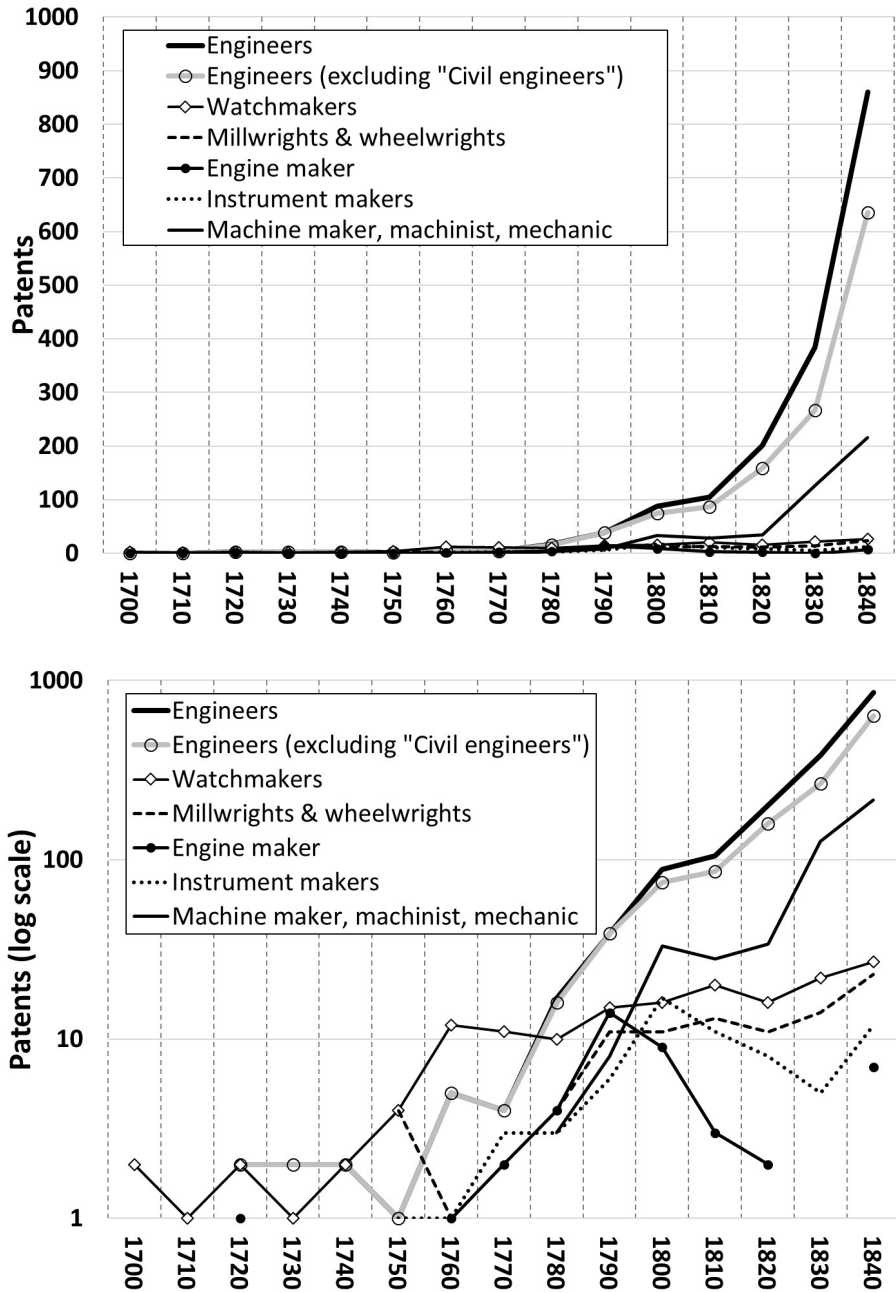
D British patent analysis appendix

D.1 Additional comparisons to specific occupation groups

This appendix provides additional comparisons between engineers and a selection of more detailed occupation groups that have been highlighted as making an important contribution to innovation during the Industrial Revolution. In particular, I compare engineers to watchmakers (including clockmakers), millwrights and wheelwrights, engine makers, instrument makers, and a general category encompassing those described as machine makers, machinists or mechanics. I also considered comparing to coal viewers/mining engineers, but there too few patents by inventors listing those occupations to allow any useful comparison.

The top panel of Figure 6 describes patents by each of these groups across the study period. Note that, as in the main analysis, the engineers category includes civil engineers. If an individual lists occupation as spanning both engineering and another one of these groups, such as “Engineer and millwright”, I count the patent in both groups to allow a fair comparison. It is clear from the top panel of this figure that only among engineers do we see a take-off in patenting in the decades just after the onset of the Industrial Revolution. In fact, the difference is so extreme that, when graphed in levels, it is hard to see much action among the other occupation groups, with the exception of the broader “Machine maker, machinist and mechanic” category, which shows some increase after 1820. To deal with this, the bottom panel provides the same figure but using a log scale on the y-axis. There we can see some more interesting patterns. Patents by watchmakers, for example, increased substantially between 1730 and 1760, before leveling off. This suggests that watchmakers were making an important contribution to innovation in the middle of the eighteenth century, a pattern that is in line with other evidence on the importance of watchmakers at this time (Kelly & Ó Gráda, 2016).

Figure 6: Comparing engineers to a selection of detailed occupations



Excludes communicated patents.

D.2 Patents per inventor using alternative ways of identifying engineers

In the main analysis I identify engineers as those where engineering is the modal occupation among the occupations listed in each inventor's patents and those without a unique modal occupation are excluded from the analysis. In Table 21, I look at results for the number of patents per inventor when using other alternative definitions of engineer. To ease comparison, Column 1 presents results following the approach used in the main text. Note that this differs from the estimates shown in Table 4 only because I am not estimating a separate coefficient for manufacturers. In Column 2, I present results where I still identify engineers based on having engineering as a unique modal occupation, but instead of dropping those without a unique modal occupation I include them as non-engineers. In Column 3, I count as engineers anyone with at least one patent listing engineering as their occupation. In Column 4, engineers are those with at least one-third of their patents listing engineering as their occupation. In Column 5, engineers are those with two-thirds of their patents listing engineering as their occupation. This is a fairly restrictive definition which excludes a number of people who clearly should be counted as engineers, including William Chapman (inventor of the railroad bogie), William Symington (builder of the first practical steamboat), and William Playfair.

All of these alternative results provide strong evidence that engineers were more productive than other types of inventors. It is interesting to note that the size of the coefficient on engineers actually increases as I apply less restrictive criteria for identifying engineers. This signals that in identifying engineers, type one errors (failing to correctly identify engineers) are probably dominating type two errors (incorrectly identifying those who are not engineers as engineers), so that when more restrictive criteria are used, more productive individuals, who look like they should be classified as engineers, are instead being grouped in the non-engineer category. In any case, Column 1 shows that the use of modal industry while excluding those inventors without a unique modal industry, as is done in the main text, represents a reasonable middle-ground approach.

Table 21: Patents per inventor using alternative definitions of engineer

	DV: Number of patents per inventor				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Approach from main text	Including those without unique modal occupations	Engineer is anyone with a patent listing engineering	Engineers have \geq one-third patents listing engineering	Engineers have \geq two-thirds patents listing engineering
Engineer	0.606*** (0.0906)	0.546*** (0.0901)	0.884*** (0.0938)	0.722*** (0.0867)	0.488*** (0.0888)
Tech. cat. FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,966	8,327	8,327	8,327	8,327
R-squared	0.044	0.041	0.060	0.050	0.039

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. OLS regressions with robust standard errors in parenthesis. The unit of observation is an inventor. The outcome variable is the number of patents per inventor across all years. The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the inventor's modal occupation is engineer. All columns include controls for the modal technology category for each inventor within each period. In all of these, if there is a tie for the modal category then one is selected randomly.

D.3 Results including other groups as engineers

In the results presented in the main text, the engineers category excludes those described as engine builders as well as mining engineers (also called coal viewers).⁴⁷ One may worry that this is too restrictive a definition for engineers. In Table 22, I present results generated following the procedure used in the main text, but including these groups as engineers rather than in the machinery manufacturers or mining category.⁴⁸ These results are effectively identical to those presented in the main text, which tells us that the decision of whether or not to include engine builders and mining engineers in the engineering category has no impact on my results. This should not be surprising given that both of these groups are small relative to the large number of inventors who identify as engineers.

⁴⁷Engine builders also includes those described as, for example, engine makers or engine manufacturers.

⁴⁸Note that this changes the sample size slightly because it means that some inventors that previously did not have a modal occupation, and were therefore not included in the analysis, now have a modal occupation.

Table 22: Patents per inventor including engine makers and mining engineers

	DV: Number of patents per inventor					
	All years (1)	All years (2)	1770- 1789 (3)	1790- 1809 (4)	1810- 1829 (5)	1830- 1849 (6)
Engineer	0.677*** (0.0844)	0.629*** (0.0876)	0.805** (0.380)	0.740*** (0.220)	0.315** (0.125)	0.474*** (0.0911)
Manufacturer	0.0596* (0.0326)	0.0113 (0.0372)	-0.0720 (0.0627)	-0.0184 (0.0602)	-0.0470 (0.0590)	0.00514 (0.0535)
Tech. cat. FEs		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,965	7,965	652	1,209	1,803	4,215
R-squared	0.018	0.047	0.183	0.124	0.064	0.055

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. OLS regressions with robust standard errors in parenthesis. The unit of observation is an inventor. The outcome variable is the number of patents per inventor across all years (Column 1-2) or with 20-year periods (Columns 3-6). The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the inventor's modal occupation is engineer. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included. The regression in Column 2 controls for the modal technology category for each inventor looking across all of that inventor's patents by including a full set of technology category fixed effects. In Columns 3-6, I control for the modal technology category for each inventor within each period. In all of these, if there is a tie for the modal category then one is selected randomly.

D.4 Additional results using patent renewal data

Table 23 present a more complete set of regression results using patent renewal data. The results in Panel A are based on OLS regressions, while Panel B presents corresponding results from Probit regressions. All of these results indicate that patents by engineers were more likely to be renewed at both three and seven years, and the results are both large in magnitude and strongly statistically significant. The magnitude of the results generated using OLS and Probit regressions are very similar. Manufacturer-inventors were also more likely to renew their patents, but much less likely than engineers.

Table 23: Additional results using patent renewal data

Dep. var:	Patent renewed at three years			Patent renewed at seven years		
A. OLS regressions						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0555*** (0.00619)	0.0557*** (0.00619)	0.0462*** (0.00899)	0.0244*** (0.00429)	0.0244*** (0.00429)	0.0200*** (0.00637)
Manufacturer	0.0222*** (0.00515)	0.0221*** (0.00517)	0.0140* (0.00772)	0.0124*** (0.00342)	0.0121*** (0.00342)	0.00870* (0.00520)
Year FEs		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tech. cat. FEs			Yes			Yes
Observations	30,579	30,579	54,736	27,436	27,436	41,214
R-squared	0.003	0.003	0.020	0.001	0.002	0.015
B. Probit regressions (marginal effects)						
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Engineer	0.057*** (0.0064)	0.057*** (0.0064)	0.047*** (0.009)	0.025*** (0.0046)	0.025*** (0.0046)	0.019*** (0.0062)
Manufacturer	0.023*** (0.0054)	0.023*** (0.0054)	0.015* (0.0080)	0.013*** (0.0036)	0.013*** (0.0036)	0.009* (0.0053)
Year FEs		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tech. cat. FEs			Yes			Yes
Observations	30,579	30,579	54,736	27,436	27,436	41,214

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in Columns 1-2, 4-5, 7-8 and 10-11. In Columns 3, 6, 9 and 12, standard errors are clustered by patent number to deal with the fact that patents may appear multiple times if they are classified into multiple technology categories. The analysis in Column 1-3 and 7-9 cover patents originally filed from 1856-1869. The analysis in Columns 4-6 and 10-12 cover patents originally filed from 1853-1866.

D.5 Additional patent quality index results

Tables 24-25 present additional results using the patent quality indices. Table 24 presents more complete results using the same approach taken in the main text. In that approach, engineer and manufacturer patents are identified based on the occupations listed in the entry for each patent. Table 25 presents results from an alternative approach in which engineer and manufacturer patents are identified based on the modal industry of each inventor.

Table 24: Additional results using patent quality indices

Dep. var:	WRI Index			BCI index		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0825*** (0.0270)	0.0689*** (0.0258)	0.0389 (0.0306)	0.250*** (0.0359)	0.251*** (0.0381)	0.230*** (0.0435)
Manufacturer	-0.0596*** (0.0192)	-0.0653*** (0.0187)	-0.0510** (0.0252)	-0.0598*** (0.0171)	-0.0676*** (0.0181)	-0.105*** (0.0306)
Year FEs		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tech. cat. FEs			Yes			Yes
Observations	12,622	12,616	18,473	12,622	12,616	18,473
R-squared	0.002	0.105	0.134	0.010	0.036	0.058

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. OLS regressions. Columns 1-2 and 4-5 present robust standard errors. In Columns 3 and 6, standard errors are clustered by patent number to deal with the fact that patents may appear multiple times if they are classified into multiple technology categories. The analysis in Column 1-3 covers patents originally filed from 1856-1869. The analysis in Columns 4-6 covers patents originally filed from 1853-1866.

Table 25: Patent quality index results using inventors' modal industry

Dep. var:	WRI Index			BCI index		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.127*** (0.0300)	0.110*** (0.0297)	0.0822** (0.0335)	0.273*** (0.0386)	0.273*** (0.0409)	0.278*** (0.0475)
Manufacturer	-0.0488*** (0.0189)	-0.0606*** (0.0184)	-0.0470* (0.0242)	-0.0860*** (0.0161)	-0.0941*** (0.0170)	-0.130*** (0.0278)
Year FEs		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tech. cat. FEs			Yes			Yes
Observations	12,622	12,616	18,473	12,622	12,616	18,473
R-squared	0.003	0.106	0.135	0.013	0.039	0.062

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. OLS regressions. Columns 1-2 and 4-5 present robust standard errors. In Columns 3 and 6, standard errors are clustered by patent number to deal with the fact that patents may appear multiple times if they are classified into multiple technology categories. The analysis in Column 1-3 covers patents originally filed from 1856-1869. The analysis in Columns 4-6 covers patents originally filed from 1853-1866.

D.6 Additional results and discussion using the Great Exhibition data

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was the first major “World’s Fair.” As discussed in Moser (2005) and Moser (2012), inclusion in the Great Exhibition can be used as an indicator of the quality of an invention, since only the best inventions were chosen

by expert juries. The full listing of exhibits in the Great Exhibition of 1851 were digitized by Moser, who generously shared them with me. Moser digitized data includes an indicator for whether an exhibit was patented, based on information from the description of each invention.

For each patented invention in Moser's database, I attempt to match the exhibitor (or in some cases a different inventor, if one is named in the exhibit description) to those patent holders in my database from 1830-1849. This match was done manually using the surname and first initial of each inventor, their address, as well as details on the nature of the invention. In total, out of the 683 patented inventions with inventors listing an address in England or Wales in Moser's data, I am able to match 351 to individuals in my patent data, or just over 50%. There are a number of reasons why I may fail to find match. For example, some exhibits were done by companies rather than individuals, which makes it impossible to match to an individual inventor. Also, for those with common names it is often impossible to make a match given that only first initials are provided in the exhibition data, and in some cases (e.g. "Jones and Sons") even first initials are not available. In total, 14.4% of the inventors that patented from 1830-1849 were engineers, but they make up 21% of those who matched to exhibits.

Table 26 presents some additional results using the Great Exhibition data. The first two columns present OLS regressions while the second two columns show marginal effects from Probit regressions. In Columns 1 and 3, the sample includes all inventors who filed a patent from 1830-1849 and the outcome variable is whether they match to an exhibition. We can see that both the OLS and Probit results tell a similar story. Engineers were more likely to match to patented exhibits in the Great Exhibition than other types of inventors and, while manufacturer-inventors were also more likely to exhibit, they were less likely to do so than engineers (the difference between the engineer and manufacturer coefficients is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level in both specifications).

The results in Column 2 and 4 look at whether, conditional on exhibiting, an inventor was more likely to win an award. These results indicate that, conditional on being an exhibitor, both engineers and manufacturer-inventors were more likely to win awards than other types of inventors, but the two groups are statistically

Table 26: Additional results using Great Exhibition data

	OLS regressions		Probit marginal effects	
	Exhibited	Awarded	Exhibited	Awarded
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Engineer	0.0441*** (0.0131)	0.138* (0.0742)	0.0468*** (0.0144)	0.137* (0.0723)
Manufacturer	0.0159* (0.00835)	0.157** (0.0614)	0.017* (0.0090)	0.0157*** (0.0609)
Observations	4,469	329	4,469	329
R-squared	0.003	0.022		

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. In the “Exhibited” columns, the sample is the set of all inventors who patented from 1830-1849 and the outcome variable is an indicator for whether an inventor matches to a patented exhibit. In the “Awarded” column, the sample is the set of patent holders who match to a patented exhibit in the exhibition database and the outcome variable is an indicator for whether the exhibit received an award. In both types of regressions, the explanatory variables are based on the modal occupation of each inventor. Inventors without unique modal occupations are not included in the analysis.

indistinguishable from each other in their likelihood of winning an award.

D.7 Additional results measuring patent quality using the ODNB

This section provides some additional discussion of results using appearance in the ODNB to assess patent quality (Table 5 Column 6). Note first that this analysis is not based on the main ODNB dataset, which identifies engineers based on the occupations listed in the ODNB. Instead, this analysis is based on a dataset constructed by (i) starting with all patent holders who filed two or more patents, (ii) searching and manually matching these patent holders to the ODNB database, and (iii) looking at how the probability that individuals in the patent data were found in the ODNB data varies based on their occupation classification, where the occupation classifications come from the patent data. Constructing the dataset in this way allows a fair comparison between the occupations appearing in the patent data.

There are roughly two thousand individuals with two or more patents in the 1700-1849 period. Given the effort involved in manually matching each name to the ODNB, it is necessary to limit to this set of more productive inventors, rather than searching for every individual that filed a patent. I manually search for each of these individuals in the ODNB, verifying a match by comparing information in the ODNB to the details such as patent number, subject, and year, inventor address and occupation, and co-inventors in the patent data. In many cases the ODNB lists the actual patent number of patents filed by famous inventors. This procedure yields 245 matches, a match rate of 11.9% (this rate rises to 18.7% for inventors with three or more patents and 23.8% for those with four or more). Given that this is a careful manual match relying on multiple sources of information for verification, it is unlikely that there are many false matches in the matched set. It is possible that some matches are missing due to, for example, misspellings and other sources of name variation, but these are unlikely to be systematic across different occupation groups.

Of the patent holders matched to the ODNB data, the three most common broad occupation groups (based on occupations in the patent data) are engineers, manufacturers, and gentleman/esquires. Table 27 describes the number of inventors in each of these three main groups with two or more patents (first column) which were searched for in the ODNB database, the number actually found in the ODNB databases (second column), and a breakdown of those found in the ODNB database that were born

up to 1780 (third column) or after 1780 (fourth column).⁴⁹ The most important pattern to note here is that engineers made up 15.5% of the inventors searched for in the ODNB database but 26.9% of those found in ODNB, and 34.2% of those born after 1780. This suggests that, even conditional on having produced at least two patents, engineers were more likely to have become noteworthy individuals than other types of patentees. Since inventors were likely to become noteworthy through the success of their inventions, this indicates that engineers were more likely to produce noteworthy inventions than other types of inventors.

A notable feature of the data in Table 27 is that engineers made up over one third of those inventors with at least two patents born after 1780 that achieved a substantial level of prominence in their lives, a greater share than any other group, even when all manufacturing inventors are grouped together. This provides another indication of the substantial contribution made by engineer inventors to technological progress.

In fact, these figures likely understate the relative success of engineers, since other types of inventors were more likely to find their way into the ODNB for reasons other than the success of their inventions; the gentry category, for example, includes several Earls, who were naturally more likely to be included in ODNB, while manufacturers could make it in for building up large and successful firms. We can see this reflected in the data. I have also digitized the text of the matched ODNB biographies and undertaken a text analysis. This shows that “patent” appears in 81 percent of the matched biographies for engineers but only 68 percent of matched biographies for non-engineers. Similarly, “invent” appears in 70 percent of the biographies for engineers but only 53 percent for non-engineers.

Table 28 presents regression results where the data set are those inventors with 2+ patents who were searched for in the ODNB and the outcome variable is an indicator for whether the inventor was found in ODNB. Since this outcome is an indicator variable, I run both OLS and Probit regressions. As explanatory variables, I focus on whether the modal occupation associated with each name was engineering. In Columns 2, 4, and 6 I control for the actual number of patents associated with each

⁴⁹In a small number of cases the year of baptism is used in place of the year of birth because the year of birth is not reported in the ODNB.

Table 27: Appearances in the ODNB data by broad occupation group

	Inventors with ≥ 2 patents	Inventors in ODNB database	Inventors in ODNB born by 1780	Inventors in ODNB born after 1780
Engineers	220 15.5%	56 26.9%	17 18.1%	39 34.2%
Manufacturers	584 41.1%	54 26.0%	20 21.3%	34 29.8%
Gentlemen & Esquires	300 21.1%	46 22.1%	26 27.7%	20 17.5%

Includes only inventors with a unique modal occupation. The percentages in the first column reflect each occupation group's share of total inventors searched for in the ODNB (those with ≥ 2 patents). The percentages in the second column are the shares of inventors from each occupation group found in the ODNB relative to all inventors found in the ODNB. The shares in the last two columns are the shares of inventors from each occupation group found in the ODNB born before or after 1780, relative to all inventors found in the ODNB born before or after 1780.

name.

The results in Table 28 indicate that engineers were more likely to end up in the ODNB and this is true even conditional on the number of patents filed. In terms of magnitudes, focusing on the results from the linear probability models in Columns 1-2 we can see that the chances an individual is in the ODNB increases by just over 6 percentage points if they are an engineer, or over 9 percentage points if I do not control for the number of patents that they produced. These are large differences relative to the sample mean of 12.8%.⁵⁰ This much greater probability suggests that the technologies that engineers were producing were more impactful than those produced by other types of inventors, even after controlling for the fact that they were, on average, producing more inventions than other types of patentees. As expected, filing more patents is also strongly associated with the chances that an individual ends up in the ODNB. Inventors with manufacturing occupations, in contrast, were less likely on average to end up in the ODNB (gentlemen, esquires, and other types of inventors fell in between).

I have also digitized the text of the ODNB biographies for all of those inventors

⁵⁰This sample mean differs from the 11.9% of inventors with 2+ patents found in the ODNB because it includes only inventors with a unique modal occupation.

Table 28: Regression results using ODNB data

DV: Indicator for being in the ODNB						
	OLS regressions				Probit (marginal effect)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineers	0.0948*** (0.0254)	0.0575** (0.0244)	0.0808*** (0.0262)	0.0393 (0.0253)	0.075*** (0.0252)	0.0351 (0.0226)
Manufact.			-0.0374** (0.0149)	-0.0472*** (0.0146)	-0.0397** (0.0155)	-0.0457*** (0.0149)
No. of patents		0.0325*** (0.00467)		0.0330*** (0.00470)		0.0215*** (0.0029)
Observations	1,987	1,987	1,987	1,987	1,987	1,987
R-squared	0.010	0.069	0.013	0.073		

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Engineers and manufacturers are identified based on unique modal occupation. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included.

in the matched patent-ODNB data. One thing that we can look at in the ODNB biographies is the length allocated to each inventor. This provides an additional way to quantify the prominence of the various inventors, since more important individuals are granted more extensive biographies. The length of the ODNB biographies in my matched data set range from 188 words (Joseph Clinton Robertson) to 9,968 (James Watt), with a mean length of 1,208 words. There is a clear correlation with the importance of each inventor. The top five engineers, by word count, are Watt, George Stephenson (4,897), Richard Trevithick (3,126), Charles William Siemens (2,934), and Henry Bessemer (2,924).⁵¹ While one could naturally argue about whether any particular inventor receives the space (and appreciation) that they deserve, in broad strokes this statistic seems informative.

Table 29 presents the average word count per inventor by occupation group. We can see that engineers typically have longer articles than others, with the exception of Gentlemen and Esquires. This suggests that, even conditional on being included in the ODNB, engineers may have been more successful than other types of inventors.

⁵¹After Watt, the next longest articles are on Thomas Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald, the Naval hero, followed by Henry Seymour Conway, a cousin of Walpole who rose to be Commander in Chief and played an important role in the American Revolution.

Table 29: Words per article by inventor type

Occupation	Avg. words	Occupation	Avg. words
Agric., food/drink makers	699	Manufacturing	954
Construction/millwrights	992	Merchant	1,162
Engineering	1,323	Other occ.	752
Esquire	1,112	Prof. services	997
Gentry	1,378	Unknown	1,563

D.8 Analyzing the make-up of coinventor teams

In this appendix I examine the composition of teams of coinventors and how these differ for inventors within broad occupation groups. These patterns can be viewed in Table 30, where I separate engineers, those with manufacturing occupations, gentlemen and esquires, and all others. The way to read this table is as follows. Each cell reflects the share of multi-inventor patents including one or more inventors from the row occupation and the column occupation, divided by the total number of multi-inventor patents filed by inventors in the row occupation. Thus, the values sum to (close to) one looking across the row, with the discrepancy due to the fact that some multi-inventor patents have more than two inventors.

Looking across the top row, the first cell reflects the share of multi-inventor patents by engineers that include one or more other engineers as coinventors. The second cell of the first row reflects the share of multi-inventor patents by engineers that include one or more manufacturers as coinventors, relative to the total number of multi-inventor patents by engineers, and so on.

There are a couple of intriguing patterns to notice in this table. First, those with manufacturing occupations were much more likely to coauthor with other manufacturers than engineers were to coauthor with other engineers. In part, this may reflect that there were, overall, more other manufacturers to coauthor with, but it also hints at the possibility that because manufacturers were more focused on technologies related to their specific industries, they were more likely to coauthor with others working in that industry. In contrast, looking across the top row shows that engineers are often found to be working with inventors from other groups. This may reflect, for

example, partnerships between inventors and manufacturers or with gentlemen who could contribute financing or political connections to a project. This pattern is even more pronounced for Gentlemen and Esquires, a group that regularly patents with every other group.

Table 30: Make-up of coinventor teams by inventor type

		Coauthoring with:			
		Engineers	Manufact.	Gentl/Esq.	Others
Patents by:	Engineer	0.419	0.215	0.215	0.234
	Manufacturer	0.081	0.596	0.137	0.247
	Gentry/Esq.	0.196	0.330	0.265	0.271
	Other	0.133	0.372	0.170	0.546

See text for details of the construction of these figures.

D.9 Additional within-inventor regression results

Table 31 presents some additional within-inventor regression results. Specifically, these regressions include quadratic controls on time since first patent. In all cases, the estimated effect of becoming an engineer is even stronger than that reported in the main text.

Table 31: Within-inventor regressions robustness

	DV: Share of patents with multiple inventors			DV: Patents per year		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Engineer	0.0585** (0.0237)	0.0581** (0.0236)	0.0896*** (0.0305)	0.278*** (0.0339)	0.294*** (0.0380)	0.0919** (0.0373)
Years since first patent	0.000639 (0.00128)	0.00116 (0.00170)	0.00109 (0.00170)	-0.00847*** (0.00196)	-0.0304*** (0.00339)	-0.0302*** (0.00351)
Years since first, squared	-5.30e-05 (4.24e-05)	-8.62e-05 (9.15e-05)	-7.87e-05 (9.08e-05)	0.000194*** (7.14e-05)	0.00136*** (0.000202)	0.00139*** (0.000211)
Years since first, cubed		3.98e-07 (1.21e-06)	4.03e-07 (1.17e-06)		-1.26e-05*** (2.31e-06)	-1.29e-05*** (2.41e-06)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dropping first year as Eng.			Yes			Yes
Observations	5,333	5,333	5,152	18,787	18,787	18,641
R-squared	0.548	0.548	0.552	0.238	0.248	0.247

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors are clustered by individual. The Engineer variable is an indicator for each individual that takes a value of one starting from the first year in which an individual listed their occupation as engineer in a patent, and zero otherwise.

D.10 Distribution of engineer patents across tech. categories

Table 32 lists the technology categories where engineers made up the largest fraction of patentees. Table 33 lists the technology categories that accounted for at least 2% of all patents by engineers in the 1700-1849 period. Both of these show that engineers played an important role in key Industrial Revolution technologies, including machine tools, steam engines, railroads, etc. However, we can also see that engineers were fairly diverse in the types of technologies in which they patented. Clearly, they were not a group that was working in just one or a small number of technology types.

Table 32: Technology categories with a high share of patents from Engineers

Technology category	Share by Engineers
Boring, Drilling, Punching	0.622
Steam; Steam-Engines and Boilers.	0.517
Boilers and Pans	0.484
Railways and Railway Rolling-Stock	0.419
Gas Manufacture and Consumption	0.400
Bridges, Arches, Viaducts, Aqueducts	0.356
Air and Wind: Air and Gas Engines and Windmills	0.351
Turning	0.333
Tunnels, Excavations, And Embankments	0.286
Smoke Prevention. -Consumption Of Fuel	0.284
Measuring And Numbering	0.283
Motive Power and Propulsion	0.282
Casks And Barrels	0.280

This table lists the share of patents within a technology category with “engineer” listed as the occupation, excluding communicated patents. Data cover 1700-1849.

Table 33: Top technology categories for patents by Engineers

Technology category	Patents	Share of engineer patents
Steam-Engines And Boilers	444	0.148
Motive-Power And Propulsion	238	0.080
Railways And Railway Rolling-Stock	207	0.069
Smoke Prevention -Consumption Of Fuel	125	0.042
Water And Fluids	112	0.037
Boilers And Pans	93	0.031
Metals And Metallic Substances	90	0.030
Gas Manufacture And Consumption	86	0.029
Spinning And Preparing For Spinning	86	0.029
Fireplaces, Stoves, Furnaces, Ovens, And Kilns	85	0.028
Heat, Heating, Evaporating, And Concentrating	73	0.024
Coaches And Other Road Conveyances	66	0.022
Ship-Building, Rigging, And Working	65	0.022
All others	1221	0.408

This table lists the share of patents with “engineer” listed as the occupation represented by each technology category, for those categories that accounted for at least 2% of patents by engineers, excluding communicated patents. Data cover 1700-1849.

D.11 Number of technology categories per inventor regressions

Table 34 presents regression results looking at the how the number of technology categories patented in varies with inventor type. The results in the first column, which use data from the full sample period, show that engineer inventors patent in more technology categories than other types of inventors, while manufacturer-inventors patent in fewer categories. These results are not driven by the fact that engineers are concentrated toward the latter part of the sample. Columns 2-5 show that similar patterns are also observed in every two-decade sub-period from 1770-1849.

Table 34: Number of technology categories per inventor regressions

DV: Number of technology categories per inventor					
	All years	1770- 1789	1790- 1809	1810- 1829	1830- 1849
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Engineer	0.824*** (0.0916)	2.437*** (0.904)	0.855*** (0.302)	0.534*** (0.153)	0.705*** (0.109)
Manufacturer	-0.125*** (0.0322)	-0.0302 (0.0805)	-0.100 (0.0658)	-0.165*** (0.0614)	-0.130** (0.0518)
Observations	7,917	648	1,204	1,789	4,195
R-squared	0.031	0.089	0.030	0.022	0.025

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. The unit of observation is an inventor. The outcome variable is the number of different technology categories that the inventor patented in across all years (Column 1) or within 20-year periods (Columns 2-5). The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the inventor’s modal occupation is engineer. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included. Data cover 1700-1849.

D.12 Alternative Billington-Hanna technology category data

This section looks at whether the results using the technology category data are robust to using an alternative set of technology categorizations. As an alternative to the BPO categorizations, I use a machine-learning based classification generated by Billington & Hanna (2018) using the text of patent titles to allocate patents into 20 categories. In the analysis below, I use their “TopicOne” categorization, though similar results are also obtained from their “TopicTwo” categorization.

Table 35 presents a breakdown showing the average number of Billington-Hanna technology categories that individual inventors in each occupation group patented in. We can see from this table that in general inventors were substantially less likely to be active in multiple Billington-Hanna technology categories, a natural consequence of the fact that there are far fewer categories than in the British Patent Office classification. However, we also see that engineers are, on average, active in more technology categories than any other group. The regression results in Table 36 confirm that this difference is statistically significant across the full sample period as well as every twenty-year sub-period from 1770.

Table 35: Average Billington-Hanna technology categories per inventor, by occupation type

Occupation group	Avg. number of tech. categories per inventor	Occupation group	Avg. number of tech. categories per inventor
Agric., food/drink makers	1.144	Merchant	1.153
Chemical manuf.	1.288	Metals and mining	1.228
Construction	1.127	Misc. manuf.	1.183
Engineering	1.570	Other occ.	1.144
Esquire	1.376	Prof. services	1.196
Gentry	1.304	Textiles	1.134
Machinery and tool manuf.	1.207	Unknown	1.079

Based on the modal occupation group of each inventor. Inventors without a unique modal occupation group are not included. Excludes patents that are communications.

Table 36: Number of Billington-Hanna technology categories per inventor regressions

	DV: Number of technology categories per inventor				
	All years	1770-1789	1790-1809	1810-1829	1830-1849
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Engineer	0.363*** (0.0447)	0.559* (0.317)	0.470*** (0.144)	0.236*** (0.0864)	0.334*** (0.0547)
Manuf.	-0.0121 (0.0152)	-0.00736 (0.0346)	-0.00685 (0.0347)	-0.0499 (0.0380)	0.0104 (0.0236)
Observations	7,964	652	1,210	1,803	4,213
R-squared	0.023	0.028	0.030	0.010	0.020

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. The unit of observation is an inventor. The outcome variable is the number of different technology categories that the inventor patented in across all years (Column 1) or within 20-year periods (Columns 2-5). The explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the inventor's modal occupation is engineer. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included.

D.13 Analyzing inventors' background

In this appendix, I consider the background of patent holders that can be matched to the ODNB. To construct this data set, I began with all individuals responsible for at least two patents in my main study period (1700-1849) and attempted to manually match each to the ODNB. Out of the 2,052 inventors with two or more patents

searched for, I find 245 matches, a match rate of 11.9%. This approach allows a fair comparison between the backgrounds of inventors in different occupations groups, where occupation is identified based on the patent data definition.

I focus on the type of education each inventor had based on a manual review of the biographical information in the ODNB. This can shed light on the extent to which engineers differed from other types of inventors in terms of their educational background, though of course it is important to remember that this is a selected sample of only the most successful inventors.

Table 37 describes the share of inventors in the matched ODNB data with each type of educational background broken down by occupational group (based on the modal occupation listed for each inventor). The categories I focus on are university education, apprenticeship, a purely working background (beyond basic primary schooling), private pupillage, learning through working in a family business, and whether the individual attended a grammar or boarding school (as opposed to a village or smaller private school). Note that these shares do not need to add up to one since for some the background is unknown and for others they may have taken advantage of more than one option (e.g., an apprenticeship and then university).

As a starting point, it is notable that the overall patterns shown in Table 37 bear a great deal of similarity to patterns reported in previous studies based on biographical sources. For example, Meisenzahl & Mokyr (2012) find a university attendance rate of 15%, while Howes (2017) finds a rate of 18%. The top row of Table 37 shows that the rate among my matched patent-ODNB data is 17.3%. For apprenticeships, Meisenzahl & Mokyr (2012) report a rate of 40% while 31% of the inventors in the expanded databases used by Howes (2017) were apprenticed. The rate in my data is very similar to Howes', at 27%. Howes (2017) also finds that 8% of his inventors were private pupils, which is similar to the 9.6% in my data. These similarities provide an indicator that the overall patterns identified in the set of patentees I focus on are similar to those found among the prominent inventor samples used in previous studies.

In the first column of Table 37, we see that engineers were, if anything, less likely to have attended university than other types of inventors except manufacturers. Gentlemen and the "other" category (which included a number of doctors) were more likely

to have attended university. However, for those engineers that did spend time at university, it was almost always at a Scottish university, particularly Edinburgh, whereas most of the university attendees in other groups attended Oxford or Cambridge.

The most common educational background for engineers was an apprenticeship. In this they were similar to inventors who listed a manufacturing occupation. Engineers were also substantially more likely to have a purely working background, which almost always meant that they were mainly self-taught in their spare time. The remaining columns show that engineers were just slightly more likely to have been a private pupil, and they were much less likely to have learned through working in a family business than manufacturers. Finally, engineers were less likely to have attended a grammar, boarding, or higher-end private school than other types of inventors, though their rate was similar to manufacturers. This is perhaps not surprising given that these schools often favored teaching Latin and Greek over more practical mechanical skills.

Table 37: Educational background of different types of inventors from ODNB data

	University	Apprenticed	Working	Private pupillage	Family business	Grammar/boarding sch.
All	0.173	0.274	0.096	0.096	0.183	0.212
Engineers	0.107	0.375	0.143	0.125	0.179	0.125
Gentl/Esq.	0.196	0.196	0.065	0.109	0.109	0.326
Manufact.	0.111	0.333	0.074	0.056	0.315	0.111
Others	0.288	0.173	0.096	0.096	0.115	0.308

Inventors are classified based on their modal occupation. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included.

A natural question about the patterns shown in Table 37 is whether the differences across occupations are due to differences in the period in which most of the inventors in a particular group were born. To examine this, Table 38 breaks down the education results based on the date of birth of each individual (which is reported in the ODNB for almost all of the matched inventors). Perhaps surprisingly, this reveals that the overall share of inventors coming from each type of background was fairly stable over time. However, among engineers, we see a much high share of inventors with a working background among those born before 1750, while the importance of apprenticeships rises over time from 25% for those born before 1750 to 48% for those born after 1800.

In contrast, among manufacturers, the share apprenticed was declining over time, replaced mainly by a rising share trained in within the family business or as private pupils. University education rose among engineers, from zero before 1750 to 19% for those born after 1800, and a similar increase is observed among manufacturers.

Table 38: Educational background of different types of inventors from ODNB data

Born before 1750							
	No inventors	Univ.	Appr.	Working	Private pupillage	Family business	Grammar/boarding sch.
All	34	0.235	0.235	0.147	0.059	0.206	0.265
Engineers	4	0.000	0.250	0.500	0.000	0.250	0.250
Gentl/Esq.	8	0.250	0.125	0.250	0.125	0.125	0.375
Manufact.	6	0.000	0.667	0.000	0.000	0.333	0.333
Others	16	0.375	0.125	0.063	0.063	0.188	0.188
Born from 1750-1800							
	No inventors	Univ.	Appr.	Working	Private pupillage	Family business	Grammar/boarding sch.
All	117	0.128	0.282	0.085	0.085	0.171	0.214
Engineers	31	0.065	0.323	0.129	0.065	0.194	0.097
Gentl/Esq.	24	0.167	0.208	0.000	0.167	0.125	0.375
Manufact.	32	0.094	0.344	0.094	0.031	0.250	0.094
Others	30	0.200	0.233	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.333
Born 1800 or later							
	No inventors	Univ.	Appr.	Working	Private pupillage	Family business	Grammar/boarding sch.
All	57	0.228	0.281	0.088	0.140	0.193	0.175
Engineers	21	0.190	0.476	0.095	0.238	0.143	0.143
Gentl/Esq.	14	0.214	0.214	0.071	0.000	0.071	0.214
Manufact.	16	0.188	0.188	0.063	0.125	0.438	0.063
Others	6	0.500	0.000	0.167	0.167	0.000	0.500

Inventors are classified based on their modal occupation. Inventors without a unique modal occupation are not included.

E French patent analysis appendix

This section presents some additional descriptive statistics and results obtained from the French patent data. As a starting point, Figure 7 plots the number of patents in France across the study period, 1791-1843. We can see that relatively few patents were filed from the initiation of the system until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. After 1820, the number of patents per year increased substantially.

Figure 7: Patents in France during the study period

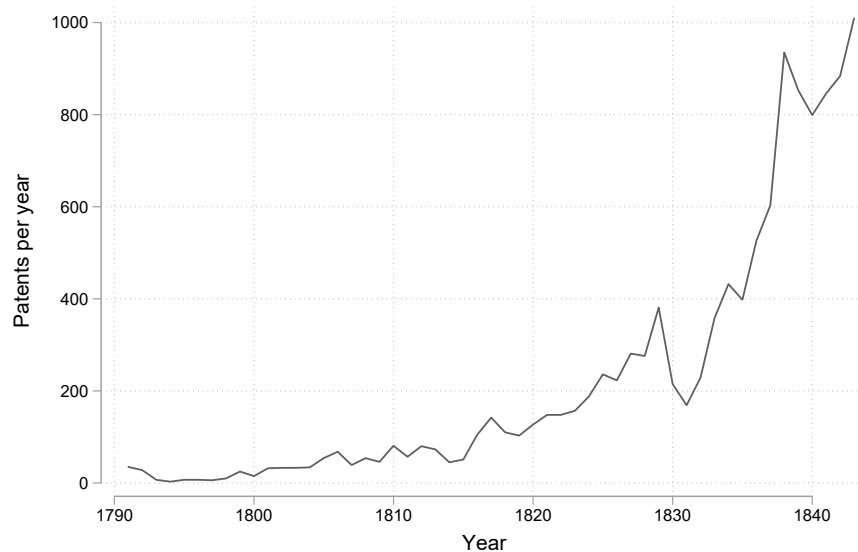


Figure 8 plots the share of French patents by different occupation groups. Two patterns are notable here. First, the overall distribution of patents changes very little across the study period, with the exception of a mild decline in patents by “other” occupations, those that are essentially unclassifiable. We see no evidence of the rise of engineering as an important part of the innovation system, nor do any other occupation groups show substantial increases. Second, main group of inventors by far across the period are manufacturer-inventors, particularly those in the miscellaneous manufacturing category, which includes a diverse set of manufacturer-inventors: glass makers, makers of shoes and hats, etc.

Figure 8: Share of French patents by occupation groups

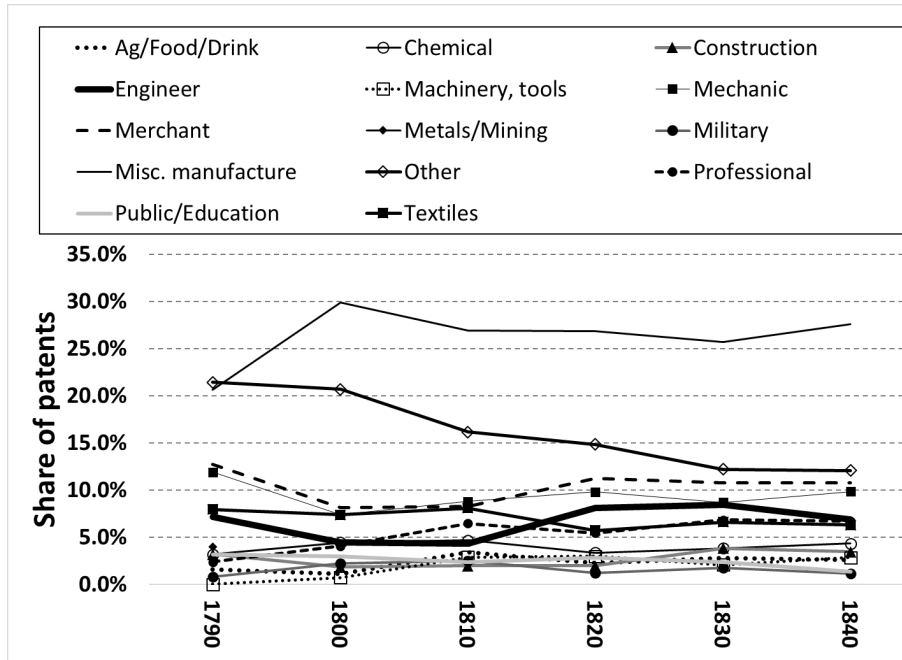


Table 39 presents averages of patents per inventor, the length of patent term per inventor, and the number of technology categories per inventor, for different occupation groups. These results reveal that engineers filed more patents than any other occupation group, they filed patents with longer terms on average than any other occupation group, and they patented in more technology categories than any other occupation group.

Table 39: Average characteristics by occupation group in France

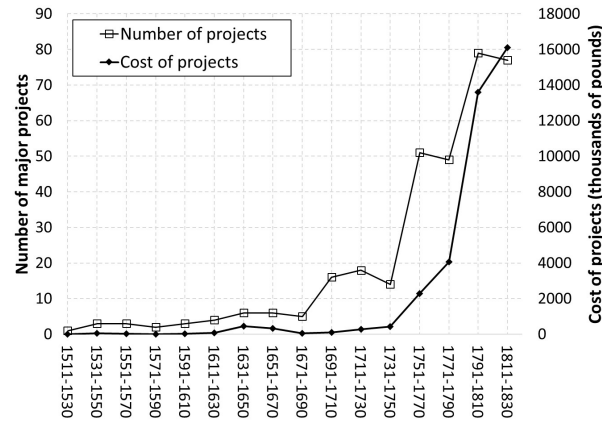
Occupation group	Avg. patents per person	Avg. length of patent term (years)	Avg. number of tech. categories
Ag/Food/Drink	1.17	7.65	1.10
Chemical	1.33	8.52	1.23
Construction	1.15	7.27	1.10
Engineer	2.29	9.72	1.91
Machinery, tools	1.31	6.85	1.11
Mechanic	1.42	7.66	1.27
Merchant	1.18	8.57	1.11
Metals/Mining	1.21	8.05	1.13
Military	1.32	8.72	1.18
Misc. manufacture	1.26	7.14	1.12
Other	1.22	8.45	1.13
Professional	1.25	8.61	1.16
Public/Education	1.44	8.35	1.28
Textiles	1.25	7.49	1.07
Unknown	1.41	8.98	1.29

F Civil engineering appendix

This appendix provides some additional detail supporting the analysis of civil engineering in Section 6. Figure 9 describes the number of major infrastructure projects on Skempton’s list in each decade as well as the estimated cost (in current dollars) of those works. We can see from this graph that, while there was some growth in the number of projects in the first half of the 18th century, the major increase started between 1750 and 1770. While it is difficult to determine the direction of causality, it seems likely that the increase in the demand for civil engineering work described in Figure 9 provided an increase in market size that was sufficient to allow individuals to begin specializing as civil engineers.

Table 40 provides a breakdown of the main types of infrastructure projects that took place in each period. From 1500-1700, the most important types of projects, in terms of numbers or cost, related to harbors and drainage works. The large expenditures on drainage in the first half of the 17th century reflects the Great Level drainage project of the Fen marshlands. River navigation improvements were also important during this period, as were occasional bridge and water supply construction projects.

Figure 9: Number and cost of major civil engineering works, 1500-1830



Source: Skempton *et al.* (2002) Appendix II.

From 1750-1799, however, the pattern changed due to the enormous canal building boom that took place. Canal building continued after 1800, but at a slower pace, while we can begin to see the start of the railway boom that gathered steam after 1830.

Figure 10 describes the share of major British civil engineering projects that were the first major project undertaken by the chief engineer (open diamond symbols). From 1600-1760, roughly 75% of major engineering projects were overseen by someone who had not previously overseen another major project. The only major exception to this is in 1640-1659, when the Dutchman, Cornelius Vermeyden, oversaw several important drainage works. It is notable that this pattern persists into the 18th century despite the substantial increase in the number of projects available after 1690. After 1760, however, the pattern changes. From that point until 1830, roughly 35% of all major projects were overseen by a chief engineer who had not already overseen a major project. The second series in Figure 10 (filled circles) shows the number of first time project by individuals who had not previously trained under a more experienced engineer.⁵² After 1760, we can see that very few projects were

⁵²This data set is generated through a laborious manual review of the biographies of every engineer that oversaw a major project in the data. I begin the graph in 1680 because before that point I am not confident that the available biographical information is detailed enough to identify the training

Table 40: Share of major civil engineering projects, by type and period

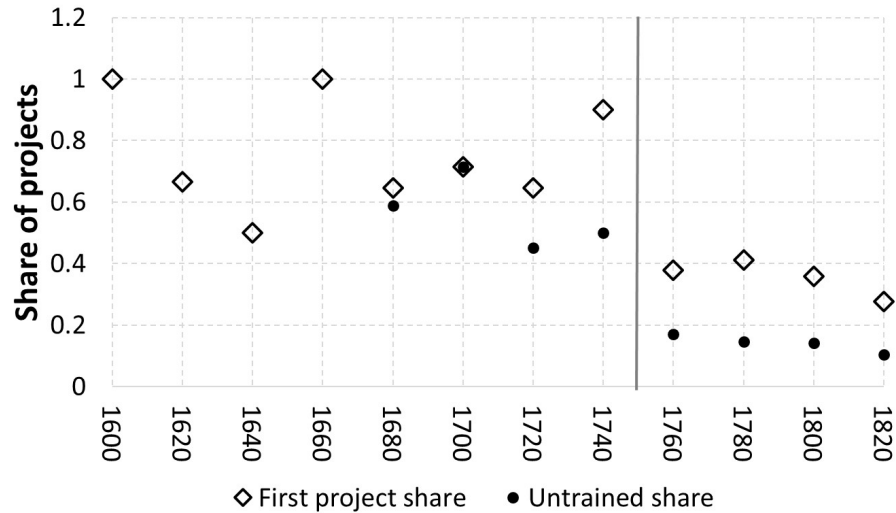
Share of projects								
Period	Canals	River Nav.	Drainage	Harbors	Railways	Water supply	Bridges	Other
1500-1549	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00
1550-1599	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00
1600-1649	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.17	0.00
1650-1699	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.26	0.00	0.22	0.00	0.00
1700-1749	0.08	0.17	0.11	0.28	0.03	0.06	0.11	0.08
1750-1799	0.41	0.12	0.09	0.12	0.03	0.00	0.18	0.04
1800-1830	0.17	0.04	0.04	0.29	0.10	0.00	0.25	0.04

Share by cost (where cost estimates are available)								
Period	Canals	River Nav.	Drainage	Harbors	Railways	Water supply	Bridges	Other
1500-1549	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.82	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.00
1550-1599	0.11	0.00	0.18	0.70	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
1600-1649	0.00	0.15	0.73	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.00
1650-1699	0.09	0.07	0.36	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1700-1749	0.14	0.17	0.04	0.26	0.01	0.00	0.31	0.02
1750-1799	0.84	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.00
1800-1830	0.24	0.03	0.03	0.43	0.06	0.00	0.11	0.04

Source: Skempton *et al.* (2002) Appendix II.

overseen by engineers who did not either have prior experience or training under a more experienced engineer. Thus, the engineers chosen to oversee major projects were becoming a more experienced group.

Figure 10: Changes in the structure of the civil engineering profession



Source: Author's calculations using data from Skempton *et al.* (2002) Appendix II. Engineers are identified as having trained under a more experienced engineer if they had either worked for an engineer who had previously overseen one of the major projects on Skempton's list or were partnered with such an engineer on their first major project.

Table 41 lists the top three individuals in each period and the number of projects they oversaw for each half-century from 1500. Below the top three, I also provide the mean number of major projects across all individuals in each period as well as the ratio of the number of projects done by the top individual and the top three individuals to the mean. These statistics provide a sense of the extent to which the distribution of projects across individuals was becoming skewed.

for most engineers.

Table 41: Leading civil engineers by period and their share of projects

1500-1549			1550-1599		
Top individuals:	John Thompson	1	Top individuals:	Jacopo Aconcio	1
	Richard Cavendish	1		John Trew	1
	Thomas Franche	1		Joas Johnson	1
Mean projects per individual (all)		1	Mean projects per individual (all)		1
Ratio of top/mean		1	Ratio of top/mean		1
Ratio of top three/mean		3	Ratio of top three/mean		3
1600-1649			1650-1699		
Top individuals:	Cornelius Vermuydt	3	Top individuals:	John Hadley	3
	John Liens	2		Thomas Fitch	2
	Hugh Myddleton	1		Edmund Dummer	2
Mean projects per individual (all)		1.33	Mean projects per individual (all)		1.26
Ratio of top/mean		2.25	Ratio of top/mean		2.38
Ratio of top three/mean		4.5	Ratio of top three/mean		5.55
1700-1749			1750-1799		
Top individuals:	John Reynolds	4	Top individuals:	John Smeaton	18
	Thomas Steers	4		William Jessop	15
	Humphrey Smith	3		John Rennie	9
Mean projects per individual (all)		1.45	Mean projects per individual (all)		2.2
Ratio of top/mean		2.76	Ratio of top/mean		8.19
Ratio of top three/mean		7.6	Ratio of top three/mean		19.1
1800-1830					
Top individuals:	Thomas Telford	26			
	John Rennie	17			
	John Rennie Jr.	9			
Mean projects per engineer		2.62			
Ratio of top/mean		9.94			
Ratio of top three/mean		19.9			

Source: Author's calculations using data from Skempton *et al.* (2002) Appendix II.

G Government and the engineering profession

The government never played the central role in the British engineering profession that it in other countries, most notably France. There, (military) engineers were

deeply embedded in the state, which also oversaw the leading engineering schools, and as a result the engineers that they produced directed their attention first and foremost at solving the problems of importance to the military or the state.⁵³

Addis (2007) contrasts the role of government in France and Britain in the development of civil and building engineering (p. 237):

The civil engineering profession in Britain developed very differently from its counterpart in France. In Britain, there were formal systems for educating and training military engineers, but the state played no part in establishing similar systems for civil engineers until the late nineteenth century. There was also very little state patronage of civil engineering works...By contrast, the scope of the civil engineer's role in France was defined largely by the king and his government's plans for establishing the French nation.

The main way that government influenced the development of the engineering profession was as a source of demand for engineering services. Here the Royal Navy was particularly important. The most famous example is the Portsmouth Dockyard, where Henry Maudslay gained experience building machinery designed by Mark Isambard Brunel under the direction of Samuel Bentham.⁵⁴ Even this influence, however, was relatively modest compared the enormous demand coming from private works, ranging from canal and railway companies to coal mines and textile factories.

⁵³See Lundgreen (1990) and Alder (1997), particularly p. 9-11.

⁵⁴While both Maudslay and Brunel appear in the patent record as engineers, Samuel Bentham, brother of the more famous Jeremy, appears as an esquire in the majority of his seven patents.