



# MIKE SIBBONS FROM THE ARCHIVES

*An eclectic mix of stories from the history of REME*

‘Keeping the punch in the Army’s fist’





FROM THE ARCHIVES

### *Dedication*

To my wonderful grandchildren, Charlie and Millie, in the hope that you will continue to question random facts!



Mike Sibbons was commissioned into the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) in 1968 and held a number of key appointments, both in command and on the staff, before leaving the Army in 1994 to become a Director of The Prince's Trust. In 2007, to fulfil his interest in military history, this avid and passionate researcher became the Archivist at the REME Museum. He was a military researcher for the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are* programme and is an expert in interpreting military records of service. In 2007 he also became a volunteer caseworker with SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, and later a SSAFA Mentor – helping wounded, injured and sick soldiers to transition from the Army to civilian life. He is currently the Divisional Secretary of SSAFA Test Valley in Hampshire.

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

*An eclectic mix of stories from the history of REME*

MIKE SIBBONS

OSPREY  
PUBLISHING

This electronic edition published in 2016 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain in 2016 by Osprey Publishing, PO Box 883, Oxford, OX1 9PL, UK  
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA  
E-mail: [info@ospreypublishing.com](mailto:info@ospreypublishing.com)

Osprey Publishing, part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc  
© The Trustees of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) Museum

All rights reserved

You may not copy, distribute, transmit, reproduce or otherwise make available this publication (or any part of it) in any form, or by any means (including without limitation electronic, digital, optical, mechanical, photocopying, printing, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Mike Sibbons has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the Author of this Work.

ISBN: 978 1 47282 233 8  
PDF ISBN: 978 1 47282 232 1  
ePub ISBN: 978 1 47282 234 5

Index by Angela Hall  
Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro, Gill Sans and Trajan  
Originated by PDQ Digital Media Solutions, UK

To find out more about our authors and books visit [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com). Here you will find our full range of publications, as well as exclusive online content, details of forthcoming events and the option to sign up for our newsletters. You can also sign up for Osprey membership, which entitles you to a discount on purchases made through the Osprey site and access to our extensive online image archive.

Front cover: Sergeant Wes Calder REME from 3 Close Support Battalion REME, 20 Armoured Brigade in Afghanistan (Helmand) on Operation *HERRICK 15* 2012.

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Between 2014 and 2018 our donations will be spent on their Centenary Woods project in the UK.

[www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)

The photographs in this book are property of the Trustees of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) Museum and any enquiries can be made to the Archivist at [enquiries@rememuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@rememuseum.org.uk).

# Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Foreword	8
Introduction	9
How the Reputation of the Corps was Forged on the Battlefield in 1942/43	11
The Birth of REME – ‘What’s in a Name!’	13
The REME Birth Certificate	16
The History of the REME Cap Badge	17
SS <i>Engadine</i> – Advanced Base Workshop (Light) (Floating) REME	19
Operation <i>Grapple</i> – 2 Special Engineer Regiment Workshop REME (Christmas Island)	21
REME Airborne Forces 1942 to the Present Day	25
St Eligius, the Patron Saint of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (and the Legend of the Severed Hoof)	30
Monty’s Caravans	33
65 years on and the Corps continues to be very much ‘On Message’	37
The Mobile Churches of Saint George and Saint Paul go to War	40
From Fork Prongs to Silver Medals	42
Aircraft Servicing in the Army – the Early Days	44
REME in the Crossing of the Rhine 1945	49
The First REME Arms School – Rushton Hall	52
‘No News is Bad News!’	54
Lest We Forget (The Lenham Incident in World War II)	58
‘Fetch Bluebell, Over!’	61
Leadership	63
The Birth of <i>The Craftsman</i>	66
Colonel-in-Chief HRH The Prince Philip (A Celebration of his 90th Birthday)	68
Operation <i>Olympia</i> – 29–30 August 1942	71
The Radfan Incident 1965	74
REME’s Role in the Air Defence of Great Britain	76
Sweetheart Brooches (or What to give your Loved One on Saint Valentine’s Day)	79
War Horses and the part played by the Army Remount Centre at Arborfield	82
Humour in Uniform (Funny True Stories about Life in the Military)	87



Discipline (RSM John Lord ‘Style’!)	89
REME Olympic Heroes (Including the Story of the Soviet Union Pentathlon Team’s Disqualification at Montreal in 1976)	92
REME Fires the Royal Salute	96
REME Guards The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street	98
Lest we Forget (REME Memorials in Recent Campaigns)	100
The Use of Toy Manufacturers in Covert Operations	107
‘Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it’s off to work we go...!’ (The Origins of the Corps March)	110
The Mystery of how the REME Museum obtained Mussolini’s Boots is Solved!	113
West Court – Special Training School 6 Special Operations Executive and the Resident Ghost!	115
The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II	117
The REME Officer and the Arctic Convoy!	123
The Jeep Assembly Competition 1953	126
The Lynmouth Flood and REME’s part in the Disaster Recovery Operation	129
Monty and the Russian Marshal	132
Lest we Forget ( <i>Christ on the Battlefield</i> )	133
The REME Museum’s Victoria Cross	135
Arborfield as a Starfish Site	138
A Brief History of the REME Museum and Archives	140
Thelwell – From REME Sergeant to Artist and Cartoonist!	141
REME (SAS) Hero Honoured after 50 years	144
How the Electrical and Mechanical Services for the Army were Organized before REME was Formed	146
How REME Functioned in the Field During World War II (The Development of the Echelon Repair System)	150
Charity Contact Details	159
Index	160



# Acknowledgements

A great many disparate people and sources have contributed to the creation of this volume, and I am aware that special mentions are due to all who have generously helped to facilitate the book's production.

Firstly, my gratitude goes to Andrew Figgures, Master General REME, who having wined and dined me at West Court, optimistically told me this was a good idea and gave me the go-ahead!

I am also grateful to the Trustees of the REME Benevolent Fund for their support and making publication possible, and for agreeing that all profits from the book's sale will go, equally, to the REME Benevolent Fund and SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

Enormous credit is due to Bill Barclay, Corps Secretary REME, who, having had the initial idea of publishing my articles in a book to raise charitable funds, willingly gave up hours of his busy day to patient and swift reading, answering and actioning my endless emails, and steering my book to the point of publication.

My thanks also go to Rick Henderson, Director of the REME Museum, and his team. Having the run of the REME Archives provided me with no end of material and delving into the snippets and scraps of information compelled me to research further; the end result you can read in this volume.

Thank you to Brian Baxter, my dear friend and colleague, for being my 'sounding board', telling me his stories and so generously sharing his encyclopedic knowledge.

Acknowledgement goes to Zoë Skivington, the previous Editor of *The Craftsman*, for agreeing, in the first place, to publish my initial article and for encouraging me to write more; and to Alison Woolley, the current Editor, for her positive comments and for keeping me writing!

A very special thank you to John Worrall, of *The Craftsman* editorial team, for his unwavering enthusiasm and determination in drafting, sorting out the 'nitty gritty', and tying up the loose ends so efficiently – without him, this book would not have been published. A special thank you must go to Colin Spray, our Graphic Designer – his patience and expertise has turned ideas into a practical reality.

A thank you is also due to my computer wizard son-in-law, Steve House, who expertly and calmly sorted out my technological computer crisis. He did it effortlessly and made it look so easy, saving me hours of editing!

My thanks also go to Tessa, my wife, for her unfailing interest, encouragement and inspirational support – she never doubted me!

Thanks also goes to Ann-Mari Freebairn, Director of Marketing and Communications SSAFA, for her guidance and encouragement, her sound legal advice, her marketing expertise, providing the copy about SSAFA, and for the use of the new logo.

My gratitude also goes to Osprey, our publishers, with special thanks to Anita Baker for her keen editorial eye, skilful editing and wise advice; for our 'over the phone' consultations; and for making the whole editing process as painless and effective as possible – thank you!

Finally, I salute the amazing men and women – past and present – of the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. I had the honour of joining your ranks at the age of 16 and never looked back. Your sense of humour, adaptability, resourcefulness, courage, skill and 'wilco' attitude has inspired and motivated me. I have no doubt that REME has given the British Army a repair organization second to none in the world – I am proud to call myself a 'Craftsman'.

## Foreword

I have known Colonel Mike Sibbons for a good few years now and I congratulate and thank him for writing these fascinating articles and having the commitment and positivity to get them to the point of publication in one volume, so that we can all enjoy his work.

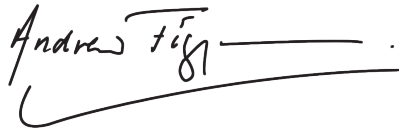
It soon became apparent after his first article was written for *The Craftsman* magazine in 2009 that he was beginning to unearth some really remarkable historical snippets from the depths of the REME Archives. Indeed, his articles became a most popular feature of the magazine and the readership began to look forward, eagerly, to the next publication – as the number of positive comments sent to the *Letters to the Editor* page of the magazine clearly demonstrated!

In writing these articles, Mike has displayed an ability to investigate and ‘dissect’ the most complex historical documents and produce a most readable account. Written in a relaxed and engaging modern style, they will certainly stimulate thought and the desire for further research. The article *Christ on the Battlefield* will surely motivate you to go and see the splendour of the painting by David Shepherd yourself.

Whilst some of the articles may have a REME ‘thread’, they will appeal to a much wider audience and you do not need to have a military background to appreciate and enjoy them. Each article is a stand-alone piece of writing and, although eminently readable, the book is not designed to be read in one sitting, cover to cover – it is for dipping in and out of, whenever time allows, and when a topic catches the eye! It is a compendium of poignant, often forgotten historical facts, expertly crafted in a most agreeable and entertaining manner.

I am particularly delighted that all the profits from the sale of *From the Archives* are going, equally, to the REME Benevolent Fund and SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity – these are extremely effective, worthwhile and far-reaching military charities that deserve our continued support.

Studying military history is important – it enables us to link the past to the present and, hopefully, learn lessons for the benefit of the future. This book is very much part of that process and I commend it to you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Andrew Figg", followed by a horizontal line and a period. A large, sweeping underline is drawn beneath the signature.

**Lieutenant General A. C. Figgures CB CBE**  
**Master General REME**

# Introduction

When I joined the staff of the REME Museum as the Corps Archivist in 2008, I was given the rather daunting task of researching and cataloguing the history of the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) from its formation to the present day. After some thought and planning, I soon realized that the only way of achieving this successfully was to pretty much read every document in the Archives and then enter the key topics from each onto our museum collection management system – thus ensuring easy access for researchers in the future. What started initially as a real chore that kept me awake at night soon became a labour of love!

REME was formed in 1942 and has been involved in every single operation undertaken by the British Army since World War II; it is the high profile nature of the Corps' operational involvement that has not only shaped our rich and illustrious history, but also the volume and quality of the archive material that we have in the collection. I believe the Corps Archives are an essential resource for military historians and family researchers, from old comrades to the adventurous young, and from the serious student of military history to the casual visitor – clearly linking the past to the present, for the benefit of the future. Indeed, before I left the Archives in 2014, we had become regular military researchers for the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are* programme and experts in interpreting World War II military records of service.

As I worked through the material in the Archives, I soon began to unearth some amazing stories – the formation of a major new corps during wartime; unique insights into inspirational deeds and bravery; and examples of the good-humoured fortitude that have characterized the British Army through the ages. I was soon encouraged to share the results of my work with the readership of *The Craftsman* (our Corps magazine) and *The REME Journal* (the publication of the REME Institution).

This volume contains articles I wrote between 2008 and 2014. To highlight just a few, there are stories about the birth of REME and its unique 'birth certificate'; Operation *Grapple* – UK nuclear testing on Christmas Island; the refurbishment of Monty's caravans; the manufacture of mobile churches to go to war; effective April fool spoofs; the antics of prisoners of war; the coronation of HM Queen Elizabeth II; the air defence of Great Britain; war horses at the Arborfield Remount Depot; Olympic heroes; the use of toy manufacturers in covert operations; the mystery of Mussolini's boots; Arctic Convoy PQ 17; Thelwell – from REME sergeant to artist and cartoonist; and, most significantly, 'Lest we Forget', including the painting of *Christ on the Battlefield* by David Shepherd. There are many, many more and I hope you find them interesting – I very much enjoyed writing them for you!

I am indebted to the Master General REME (Lieutenant General Andrew Figgures) and the REME Corps Council for encouraging the publication of *From the Archives*; and to the Trustees of the REME Benevolent Fund for their support, and for agreeing that all profits from its sale will go, equally, to the REME Benevolent Fund and SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. I would like to thank the REME Corps' Secretary (Lieutenant Colonel Bill Barclay) for his support and inspirational idea to produce these articles in one volume; the editorial staff of *The Craftsman* for their excellent work in putting it all together for publication; and my dear friend the Corps Historian for many years at the REME Museum (Brian Baxter) for his encouragement and for allowing me to continually bounce ideas off him!

**Colonel Mike Sibbons**



# How the Reputation of the Corps was Forged on the Battlefield in 1942/43

*First published in March 2011*

**In the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (Army) DEME(A)'s Christmas and Farewell Message published in the December 2010 edition of *The Craftsman*, Brigadier Brian McCall said: 'May I start by stating publicly how much I have enjoyed my tenure as your director and how impressed I continue to be by the sheer professionalism of the Corps whether that be on operations, or on training, or in barracks. The reputation of the Corps is higher than ever...' This article looks at the development of the Corps' reputation in its early days, particularly during the Desert Campaign of 1942/43.**

**O**n 6 February 1943, four months after the formation of the Corps, Charles Graves – a journalist – wrote an article in the magazine *The Sphere* ('the Empire's Illustrated Weekly'), published by London Illustrated Newspapers Ltd, entitled 'The Creation of REME and how the work of their expert Craftsmen made possible the successful campaigns in Libya and Tripolitania'. Charles Graves wrote:

The most incredible advance of the Eighth Army over 1,400 miles in ninety days would never have been possible except for REME – that is a bald statement of fact – and yet thousands of people have not the slightest knowledge of this remarkable Corps; the only Corps formed since 1939 to be granted the prefix of 'Royal'. The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) was born on October 1 last year. In some ways their history is like that of tank warfare – we invented it, the Germans developed it and we have now improved on the Germans.

Rommel's swift advance towards Egypt owed much of its success to the skill and courage of the German maintenance crews who mended both German and British tanks on the battlefield and sent them back into action within a few hours, thus copying the original idea of the engineering branch of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC).

The importance of this tank and transport recovery organization was soon apparent, but nothing much was done about it immediately. In our British way we appointed Sir William Beveridge, a civilian, to be chairman of a committee to report on skilled men in the Services. The report contained the suggestion that a corps of mechanical engineers should be formed; Lieutenant General R. M. Weeks CBE DSO MC (Director General of Army Equipment) agreed and REME was formed (see page 13 – 'The Birth of REME – 'What's in a name?!').

It was a bold move, for it meant a reorganization affecting thousands of soldiers and hundreds of establishments. As a first stage, all the engineering personnel of the RAOC and a proportion of the maintenance engineers of the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) and the mechanical maintenance and electrical technicians of the Royal Engineers (RE) were grouped under Major General Rowcroft, Director of Mechanical Engineering (DME) at the War Office.

Already, within a few months of formation, this new British Army organization had triumphed in the Middle East campaign. Never before in British history has an army fought with more efficiently maintained equipment. How was it done?

The centralization of the engineering services not only produced a pool of skilled men, but gave wider scope to the echelon repair system in the field (see page 150 – ‘How REME Functioned in the Field during World War II’). The first effect of the reorganization was the establishment of a complete and direct chain of administration from Major General Rowcroft to the REME officers in the field who acted as technical officers to brigade and divisional commanders. Secondly, it provided every unit in the Army with a highly trained detachment capable of maintaining the necessary equipment in action.

By means of the flexible echelon system a small REME detachment of trained men could get a broken-down tank on the move again by replacing the damaged engine and sending the broken one back to a workshop that had the facilities to repair it. Defects that in World War I meant that a weapon had to be sent from France to Woolwich for servicing, could be repaired in the field in a matter of hours. The pivots of the echelons were the base workshop, which was static, and the semi-mobile workshop on the lines of communication. The manufacturing capability of the base workshops was on a huge scale, comparable with the old assembly lines of Detroit!

The 3rd echelon was almost as well equipped as the base workshop, but designed to be movable. The 2nd echelon, the mobile workshops, which were really heavy lorries equipped with breakdown outfits, effected the heavy replacements and the repairs that its machinery could handle swiftly and still keep pace with the advance of the division or the brigade to which it was attached. The 1st echelon, the Light Aid Detachment (LAD), which went into action with its unit, had the most spectacular job – this consisted of pulling tanks and other war equipment from the battlefield while under heavy fire and repairing them while under enemy bombing. Since October 1942, REME had recovered from the battlefield an unbelievable number and variety of enemy vehicles and arms. At the same time, their recovery and repair units were right up with the advanced elements, with a LAD behind each front-line unit.

Each division had about 1,000 REME officers and craftsmen – as the privates were called. They had worked impossible hours under impossible conditions to enable the British Army to capture Tripoli. Actual fighting created conditions that could not be foreseen, either in the drawing office or on the factory floor, but on-the-spot modifications introduced by REME made it possible to continue using weapon systems irrespective of the conditions. What is more, those engineers sent back a stream of ideas for new weapons and devices, which were already having a decisive effect on land and air warfare.

It was an engineer's war. We have only to read the Middle East communiqués to understand that. It must be remembered that the enemy was highly skilled, technically minded, brave and ingenious. REME needed men of character, intelligence and determination. They had to be fighting men as well as being technicians.

When the Eighth Army began its advance on 23 October, REME began work under full-scale battle conditions for the first time. The mobile workshops wrestled with final desert adjustments, modifications and last-minute repairs. Then, when hundreds of British guns started their terrific barrage from the Alamein line, the REME recovery sections moved forward to undertake the vital task of keeping the minefield lanes open for the advance of the British tanks. The Royal Engineers (‘Sappers’) first cleared a certain number of pathways through the enemy minefields, but it was inevitable that some of the tanks moving forward in the dark would accidentally deviate. It was foreseen

that such accidents would wreck the whole attack, since a tank with its track blown off would block the narrow passage and render the entire lane useless for a vital period.

To overcome this possibility, REME provided the minefield task force and they were instructed to keep the minefield lanes clear at all costs. The advance had barely started when calls for REME assistance began to pour in. Surrounded by mines and meeting a hail of enemy machine-gun and artillery fire, the huge recovery vehicles roared to the scene of each casualty and the lanes were kept clear. The tanks recovered were, in many instances, repaired by REME operating just behind British guns and sent back into action a few hours later – improvisation was used with the greatest success. Some of the tractors operating in rain-soaked areas became completely bogged in. The REME solution was to remove the tracks from captured German tanks and fit them to British tractors, enabling them to pull loads under almost any conditions.

There are dozens of tales of individual adventure. Clever planning, plus the adaptability, courage and skill of REME personnel gave the Eighth Army a repair organization second to none in the world. It is this evolutionary lineage, and the distinction of being forged on the battlefield, together with the Corps' 'can do' attitude and the ability to improvise, that forms the foundation of the traditions of the Corps.

## The Birth of REME – ‘What’s in a name!’

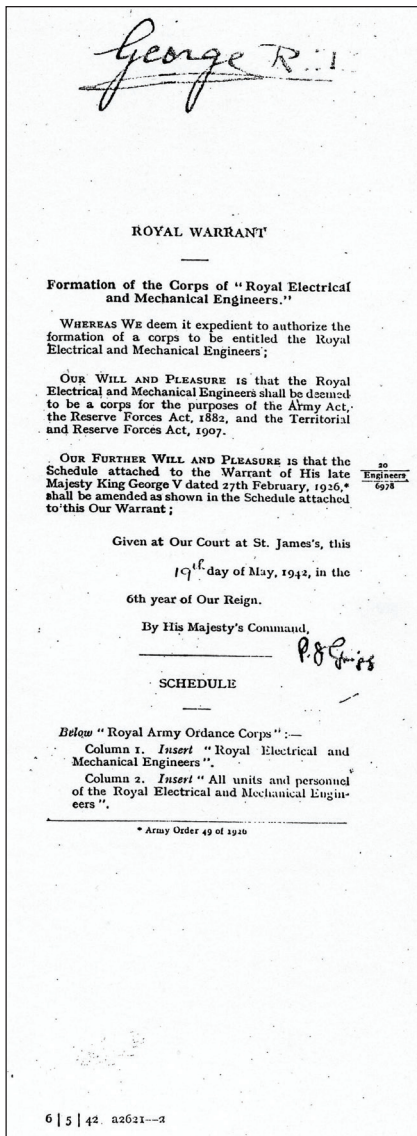
*First published in October 2010*

**Published on 1 October 2010, the anniversary of the formation of the Corps, this article tells the story of how the title of the Corps was selected and how it did not initially meet with the approval of His Majesty the King!**

Whilst 1 October 1942 was our ‘ruling date’, the royal warrant authorizing our creation was dated 19 May 1942 and this one sheet of paper signed by His Majesty the King masks a robust debate about the title of the new corps. On 4 March 1942 the Secretary of State for War (Sir James Grigg) wrote to the Private Secretary to the King (Sir Alexander Hardinge):

The Army Council has recently been considering a question which the increasing mechanization of the Army has forced into prominence, namely whether the functions of mechanical maintenance of the Army's equipment should be concentrated in one corps, instead of being shared among the RAOC, the RASC and, to some extent, the RE and the more actively combatant corps like the RAC etc. ... major change of organization of this kind is not, of course, one to be lightly undertaken in the middle of a great war, when many of the formations whom it would affect are engaged on active operations ... but the Army Council feel that these drawbacks must be faced ... and that the duties of engineering maintenance should be concentrated in one corps... I should be grateful if you would acquaint The King of the proposal to constitute this new Corps of Engineering Maintenance: we are still considering its precise title and I shall make a formal Submission to HM as soon as possible, but perhaps I might express the hope that, as its constituent personnel will be drawn from corps which already enjoy the privilege of the title





Copy of the royal warrant, signed by His Majesty the King on 19 May 1942, forming the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (REME). The original document is in the National Archives at Kew.

'Royal', the new corps may also be allowed that privilege. Sir Alexander Hardinge responded:

... His Majesty approves of your proposal that the functions of mechanical maintenance of the Army's equipment should be concentrated in one corps... The King agrees to the use of the title 'Royal' ... and suggests for your consideration the title 'Royal Army Repair and Maintenance Corps'.

Up stepped the Council of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers:

The Council believes that if the new corps is launched with 'Maintenance' in the title its future will be very seriously prejudiced. Maintenance is a part of the function of mechanical engineers, but if the new corps is limited to maintenance there will be no defined Army Corps whose function it is to seek and pursue the development of improved fighting vehicles of warfare and officered with men of the necessary training, competence and authority ... if the title embodies the word 'Maintenance' it will be felt in all mechanical engineering circles that the new corps has a secondary and lower grade function ... it will put this section of the service on the garage level instead of on the design, production, development, operation and maintenance level which it should properly occupy, requiring officers of the correct professional standing.

Following this intervention by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Executive Committee of the Army Council noted the King's suggested title and recorded:

... The King had suggested a title, but the Committee was inclined, with respect, to think that the proposed title was on the long side ... a number of alternatives were considered and the majority agreement was in favour of the 'Royal Corps of Mechanical Engineers' ... the Committee thought that the above title was the most descriptive of the work which would fall to the new corps to undertake.

The Army Council's view was passed to Sir Alexander Hardinge by Sir James Grigg. The King responded via Sir Alexander Hardinge:

... The King discussed this matter with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff last week ... the upshot is that, although His Majesty still favours his original suggestion of 'Royal Army Repair and Maintenance Corps', he has no strong views and is quite prepared to agree to that of 'Royal Corps of Mechanical Engineers' in the event of the Army Council preferring it. Then came the view of the Council of the Institution of Electrical Engineers:

... there should be a dual title (i.e. Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) in order to encourage the recruitment and transfer of the best available electrical, as well as

mechanical, engineering personnel... In the course of time it is not unlikely that electrical engineering will play as important, if not a greater, part than mechanical engineering in the equipment of the Army ... in the building up of the new organisation, the services of the older and more experienced men from other Corps will be needed, but unless they can be made to feel that they are not going into a 'blind alley', which does not lead to the higher executive ranks of the Army, they will be reluctant to sever connections ... the new corps must therefore be combatant in the fullest and widest sense of the word and in every respect equal to the other Technical Corps.

The Executive Committee of the Army Council noted the views of both Institutions:

... the Committee felt that there was substance in the above observations and that, although it meant a change of decision on their part, it would be a pity to ignore professional advice and to start the new corps on the wrong foot, particularly as it would derive benefit from affiliation (as has the RE) with the leading professional institutions, of which the Institution of Electrical Engineers is the senior and not an offshoot of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Army Council, after consulting with the Adjutant General, recommended that the Secretary of State approve the title of 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers', subject to His Majesty's consent.

... I would therefore like to suggest for His Majesty's approval that the new Corps should be known as the 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)'... The King may be interested to know that the Chief Royal Engineer has been consulted with regard to the title. The latter entirely agrees that the word 'Electrical' should be included, but would prefer that the title should contain the word 'Corps' as in the case of the Royal Corps of Signals... I consider that the title 'Royal Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME)' is rather cumbrous!!

Sir Alexander Hardinge responded:

... The King attaches a certain importance to the inclusion of the word 'Corps', even though the initials RCEME would be rather cumbrous, as you say; at the same time His Majesty has no strong views, and is prepared to agree to whatever the Army Council prefers.

The Executive Committee of the Army Council agreed on 3 April 1942 to:

... reaffirm their previous decision that the title of the new corps should be 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)' and ... invited the Permanent Under Secretary to prepare a formal submission to The King in the sense of the above for signature by the Secretary of State.

The royal warrant authorizing the creation of the new corps – 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)' – was signed and dated by His Majesty the King on 9 May 1942, with a formation date of 1 October 1942.