

“I like ceremonial and I’ll tell you why..in my experience troops that have the highest possible ceremonial skill and discipline are the best fighting troops...Brigade of Guards, Royal Marines. They are all famous. Why? They can do this very high discipline on parade and it always ends up by the highest discipline in action.”

Earl Mountbatten of Burma

OFFICERS’ DRILL

Colour Ceremony For The British Brigade



September 2011

**Col Richard E Amsterdam
Adjutant-General**

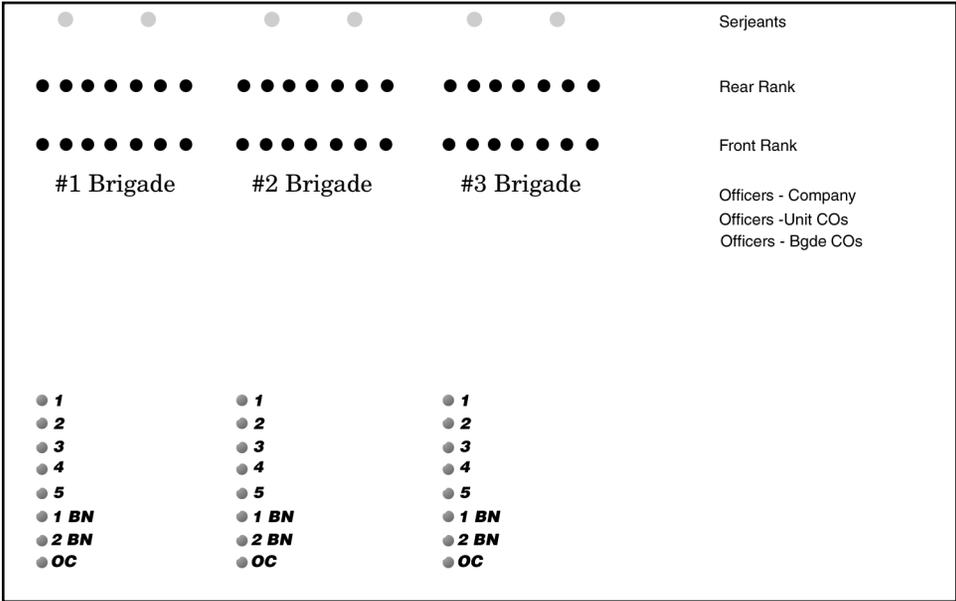


Figure 1: Officers lined up, ready to fall in.

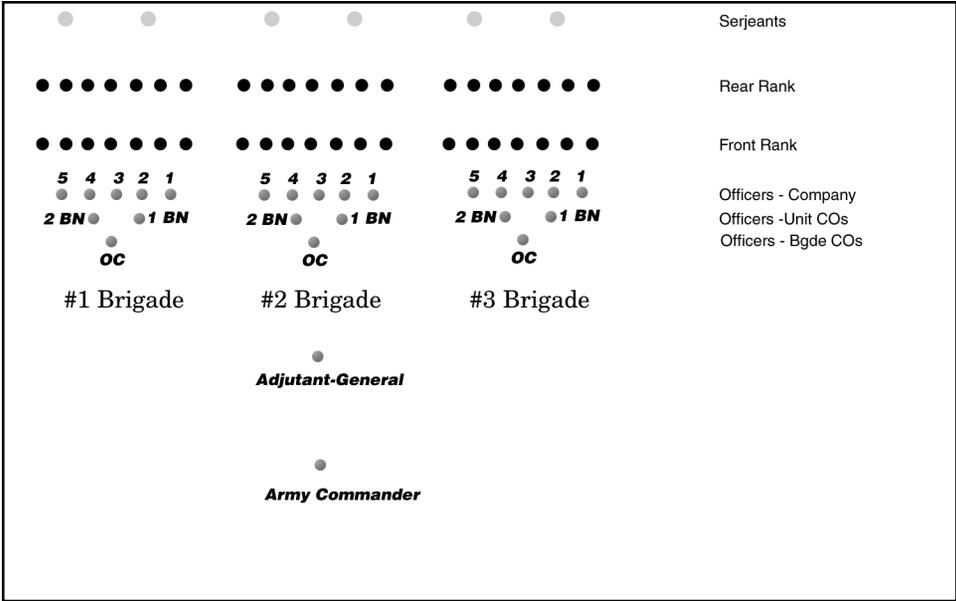


Figure 2: Officers fallen into ranks.

Falling In the Officers

The officers will form three files facing the Army, one file for each of the Brigades, under the command of their Brigade Major, each file facing its own Brigade and positioned directly in front of the right side of its Brigade (the left side as they face their brigade) - See Figure 1. The Army will be formed in open ranks. The lead battalion officer in each file is the officer who will be on the left hand side of his Brigade, the last battalion officer the one who will be the right hand side of his Brigade (see #s 1-5). The unit commanders will form next (see 1BN, 2BN) and the brigade CO will be the last officer in the file (OC). Any other command staff, such as 2ICs, will form as company officers in front of their company. When the command is give to the Army to “fix bayonets” all officers with swords are to draw swords and come to the “support” position. All officers are to comport themselves with dignity in the line keeping in mind that a parade is formed.

The parade commander (usually the Adjutant-General) will give the command, “fall in the officers...quick march.” Officers with swords come to the Advance, using left hand for support. Officers march to their positions in ranks and wait for the command to face front. Each file of officers will march directly towards the right hand file man of their Brigade. The column of officers will make a right turn four paces in front of their Brigade and continue to march until the lead officer is in his proper position. Each officer will then halt. Unit commanders and, other unit officers, form 2 paces in front of the line of battalion officers. The Brigade Commander forms 2 paces in front of the unit commanders. All will stand fast until the parade commander gives the order to face front. At this command officers are to face to the right, those with swords will come to the “support” and those with fuseses will plant them. Each Brigade Commander should be positioned four paces in front of the line of officers, centered on his Brigade facing front.

When the command is given to close ranks (“rear ranks, close to the front...quick march”), officers will face to the rear (and those with swords come to the Recover) on the command “front” then come to the Advance. On the command “march” all march to their close order positions in the front rank and halt. At the command “front face” all face to the front.

Officers’ Salutes

Officers have to be alert when the command is give to “present arms.” They do not salute when the command is given preceding the trooping of the colours until the colours are 6 paces to their left. At that point the officer will salute with his sword in the proper manner of by hand if he is carrying a fusee. When the colours pass 6 paces to his right he comes down to his previous position. This same procedure is followed when a reviewing officer is passing in front of the line of officers when a high ranking officer or official is reviewing the parade.

However in all other situations officers salute properly when the command is given to “present arms, ” which happens on parade during a “General Salute ”or a “Royal Salute.”

Colours are not dipped during a “General Salute” but they are during a “Royal Salute.” They are dipped by bringing the colour staffs straight down to the horizontal and then with a motion to the left, parallel to the ground, lay the colours on the earth so that they lie flat on the ground.

CEREMONIAL

“The finest edge is made with the blunt whetstone”
(John Lyly: Euphues 1579)

A Ceremonial parade, impeccably performed, can never fail to be a source of inspiration to those who watch it or take part in it. It is the noblest and proudest form of drill. Based on the ‘blunt whetstone’ of drill instruction to recruits it was for many hundreds of years the foundation of battle discipline in all Armies. Vegetius, in AD 378, wrote, ‘troops who march in an irregular and disorderly manner are always in great danger of being defeated.’

Today, once the elements of discipline have been instilled through drill on the parade square, it develops, naturally, into various forms of crew drill, gun drill and battle drill, but the aim of discipline remains unchanged. This aim is the conquest of fear. Drill helps to achieve this because when it is carried out men tend to lose their individuality and are unified into a group under obedience to orders.

If men are to give of their best in war they must be united. Discipline seeks through drill to instill into all ranks this sense of unity, by requiring them to obey orders as one man. A Ceremonial parade, moreover, provides an occasion for men to express pride in their performance, pride in their Regiment or Corps and pride in the profession of Arms.

(sgd) Alexander of Tunis, F.M.

Background

Since the 1700s the colours of a regiment tended to become battalion colours. They had always been a rallying point in battle. At night they were paraded through the ranks before being lodged. In the morning they were escorted with ceremony from their billet to their place in the battalion on parade. So in time the colours came to represent the spirit of a regiment. Consecrated at the time of their presentation, they are in due season laid-up in a hallowed place.

That hallowed place would be a chapel in the cathedral of each regiment. And hanging from the ceiling would be the regimental colours, King's and Queen's colours, in some regiments so old they predate the Union flag, some so paper thin and worn that the sunlight shines through them.

Unlike the modern Trooping of the Colour Ceremony on the Queen's Birthday in Horse Guards, colours were usually trooped in pairs, the sovereign's colour on the right and the regimental colour on the left. Colours were not trooped through a brigade but only through a battalion. But since it is not practical for the British Brigade to troop colours by battalion we will consider the 3 brigades as a single battalion and troop one set of colours from a single battalion.

Forming the Army

For the Colour Ceremony, the Army is first formed by brigades. Each brigade is formed on its own ground by its Brigade Serjeant Major.

The drums and fifes of the Army are massed in position on the Army Parade Grounds. They are assembled there by playing of "Drummer's Call" fifteen minutes before the time set for Army Assembly by the Adjutant-General.

"Assembly" is then played by the massed music and each Brigade assembles at close order in two ranks on its own parade ground under command of its Brigade Serjeant Major.

Officers will report to the Army parade ground. If a Colour Ceremony is scheduled, the Colour Ensigns with Colours and their escorting Grenadiers (or soldiers) will assemble at the left of the Army Parade Ground when Drummers Call is played, they will be under orders of a Brigade Major.

Once the Brigades are in order, they will be marched onto the Army Parade Ground.

A Note on the Officers' Sword Salute

When the command is given to 'present arms,' the men come to the salute in a 3-count movement. Since the officer's salute would normally be only a 2-count movement it is obvious that the officers would arrive at the "present" before the men. In order for the officers and men to start and finish this movement at the same time the officers should insert a 2-count pause between counts 1 and 2. British officers employ this movement on parade today.

Officers draw swords whenever the men are commanded to "fix bayonets." When the command is give "unfix bayonets" officers should sheath swords.