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Modern Manuel  
of  
Military Manoeuvres  
Under HRH G<sup>2</sup>R

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Assembled by observations of  
His Royal Highness' recreated army  
And diverse period treatises  
By Captain Stephens,  
3/60<sup>th</sup> regiment of Royal Americans.

Montreal, Lower Canada  
A.D. MMVII

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Note : Latest revision 2 Decembre 2007.

# ADVERTISEMENT

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**T**he author would like to point out that he is but the compiler and writer of the findings made by many others. The present is, in fact, a work in progress. If the reader finds period sources that corroborate, add to or would modify the information within, please contact the author so he can include these findings in further editions. The author wishes to thank, for services already rendered to HRH' forces :

- His Lordship Thomas Nesbitt,
- Captain Christian Cameron,
- Captain Christopher Cook,
- Captain James Parillo,

And last, but not the least, the author's mentor,

- Lt-Colonel Horst Dresler.

In service of HRH' recreated forces,

Captain Stephens,  
Prevost's Coy of Royal Americans.  
[www.reenacting.net/60thRAR/](http://www.reenacting.net/60thRAR/)

# INTRODUCTION

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**I**t has been noticed that when a great army of His Royal Highness assembles, the cohesion of it's troop's evolutions on the field are put through duress. Well intentioned officers have done their best to train their soldiers in the Manual of Arms and to have them go through the evolutions studied in the diverse treatises available in this modern age. I have every confidence that their exemplary tutelage was most efficient, but sadly in many cases, not shared by the other captains of the army. It is in an effort to harmonize the tutelage of these fine officers that this manual has been assembled. In so doing, the author has taken some liberties to change the formulation of some commands to keep with a certain logic instead of solely relying on plain memory to find the proper commands to call out.

It is a sad truth that most of us do not have the leisure to practice ordering companies around regularly and that the men we command are often even more at a loss than we are when trying to figure out how they are supposed to respond to the orders called out. To remedy this situation, within this text, every care has been taken to make clear in print what is expected to

be understood by the officers and subalterns reading it. The words in italics refer to the terms in the Glossary, order action markers are in bold lettering and *Exempli Gratia* are given to guide the commanding officer in the calling out of orders. Where it was deemed necessary, sketches were made to accompany the text.

Soldiers who will go through with these manoeuvres should be familiar with Cumberland's 1757 Manual of Arms. Notions might be mentioned here which will not be described within these pages. Please refer to the Exercise of Foot previously mentioned.

A last warning : the reader should consider this work only as an introduction. There is no better way to perceive the military mind of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century than to read their thoughts on the subject as written in the many period treatises that are still accessible today.

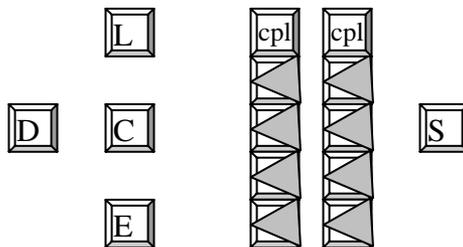
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# ASSEMBLY

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When assembly is beat, soldiers will present themselves facing their officers and colours. The corporal will take position to the right of the formation and act as right marker of the first rank. He is to stand at the *Poise*, to make himself noticed, until ordered otherwise. The other soldiers are to assemble in two ranks to his left and behind him.

The men are to stand in *close order*, which is to say the distance between the soldiers in a rank should be that of the point of the elbow when the fist is held at the hip. A soldier should stand at a distance behind another so he can lay his hand upon the shoulder of the soldier preceding him while his arm is out stretched or one pace (24"). (Source : Cum'57)



Company and officers on parade (Cum'57)

# INSPECTION

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**I**nspections may be called for at any time or whim of the commanding officer. Usually this will be the first thing done upon assembly. To be inspected, the troops should be in *open order*, an arms length between files and 6 paces between ranks. If not, they will be ordered to do so. *E.G.* “Company will take open order... MARCH!” Upon this order the men will outstretch their right arm and shuffle to the left until the soldier to their right can only be reached by their fingers. When the left-most soldier in the rear *rank* has completed the manoeuvre, the commander calls : “Rear Rank! Take your distance!” Upon which the rear *rank* does a *right-about* face, marches 5 paces to the rear (Cum '57) and does a final *right-about* to face *front*. If there is not enough space, the NCO should position himself with his halberd to reduce this distance.

The inspecting officer should have the men “Recover” their firelocks and then “Open pans and half-cock”, the latter stated in the order to be sure the soldiers do so, as in the prime and load sequence (Cum.'57). The officer should then have the men “Shut pans”, at which they will cast their muzzles about and reach for their rammers. The officer will call “Draw rammers” to which

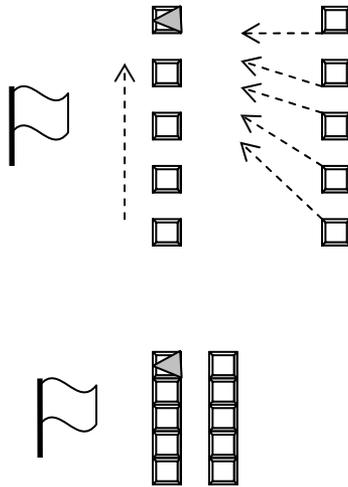
the men will draw their rammers and insert them in their muzzles leaving only 12" out. As the officer goes through the ranks we will call "Ram!" to each soldier as he desires them to do so. As soon as each soldier has done this he will count 1, 2 and then draw out his rammer and insert it in the pipes leaving the head 2" out. Once the inspecting officer has completed this part of the inspection, he will order "Return rammers".

The men will then be ordered to "Poise" to ease the officer's inspection of the lock. The officer will inspect the tightness of the flint and flashguard, the presence of a hammer stall and the holding capacity of the half-cock by depressing the trigger.

The final step is to inspect the men's cartridges. The officer should have the men "Shoulder" and then order them to "Open cartridge boxes" so he can inspect random cartridges for size (# of grains) and proper construction. The soldiers are to remain still while the officer goes through the ranks, using their right hand to keep the flap of their cartridge box open. All that remains is to order the men to "Close cartridge boxes!"

The company may now be ordered to *close order*. This is done in one direct maneuver. Upon the "Company will Close order... MARCH!" the front rank will shuffle to the right until every man is within the correct distance of about 12" (men touching the soldier next to them if they raise their right elbow while keeping their

fist on their hips), as the rear rank marches to the front by 5 paces and take their proper spacing as they are moving, aligning themselves on their file leaders (Bland's).



### Company Closing Ranks

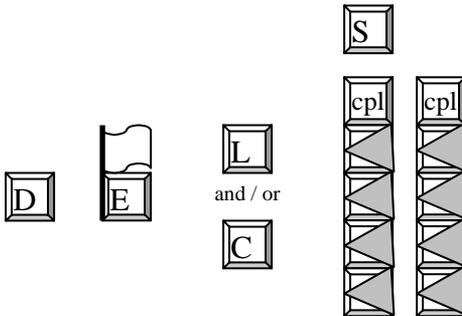
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# MARCHING

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**A** *march* is always begun with the left foot. Eyes of the soldiers are looking in the distance towards where they are facing. The cadence should be approximately of 75 paces a minute and every soldier should be in step with the others. If a drummer is present, he should beat the left step; otherwise, the *right marker* should call it once in a while to keep everyone in step.

According to Bland's '59, field evolutions, specifically when troops are called upon to *march*, fire or *wheel*, ranks should be in *close order*.



Company on parade march.

In the absence of better source material, the author suggests two methods to modify the speed of the troops. The first is to change the step distance. The normal step distance on the *march* is of 24"; and the *Half Step* is of 12". *E.G.* "Half STEP!" and to return to the norm call : "MARCH!"

The second is to change the pace cadence. "Quick MARCH!" should be beat at 120 beats a minute while "Slow MARCH!" should be beat at 60 beats a minute. The drummer should adjust to conform.

When the formation has to cross uneven ground, an obstacle or if they are to trek in the ruff, the commanding officers may have the soldiers dispence from walking in step. This is done by ordering : "Route STEP!"

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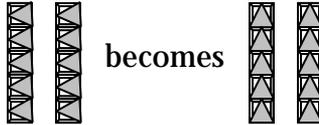
## FIELD EVOLUTION

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**M**oving a company around a battlefield is no easy task without all involved being familiar with the proper commands and the actions they will entail. All the following manoeuvres may be called in either direction : left or right.

“To the right... TURN!”

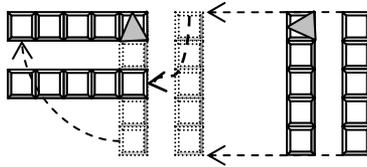
The most simple way to have a company change direction is the *turn*.



The *turn* is a quarter pivot done by each soldier within the formation, effectively changing the *front*. When a *turn* is ordered, it will be called for in a certain direction. It is so basic that, in the Duke of Cumberland’s Exercise of the Foot, the *turn* isn’t even called, it’s implied. *E.G.* “To the... RIGHT!” This last form should only be used on parade with practiced troops. Under fire, the soldiers need a time to respond after a direction is called. Giving the direction and then the order will make it easier on the soldier and reduce the risk of confusion on the field.

“To the right... WHEEL!”

The next evolution that should be endeavored to master is the *wheel*.

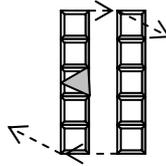


The whole formation makes a *turn* towards the direction mentioned. The soldier at the end of the first rank, standing to the side where the *wheel* has been called, will step in place while slowly turning. All soldiers look out towards the soldier at the outside end of the wheeling formation to keep in line with him. This end soldier is the only one looking in towards the pivot point man.

It is practical for the troops to make sure their right elbow keeps contact with the soldier next to him, as in the *close order* description. Since one soldier is unseen, as all troops are looking out, it is the only way the *rank* can maintain a semblance of cohesion.

Soldiers in the rear rank should shuffle to the side as they are wheeling. The formation should keep a clean rectangular shape through-out the manoeuvre. Troops will cease the *wheel* and continue marching only when the order : “FRONT” will be called.

“To the right, centre... WHEEL!”

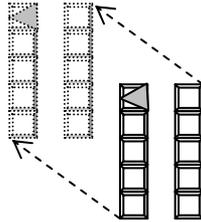


A centre wheel is a formation pivoting around the centre-most soldier in the front rank. It is a difficult manoeuvre to accomplish, especially in the heat of battle. To ease the cohesion of this manoeuvre, the NCO should point out, before giving the order, which soldier is to be the pivot point. The soldiers, as in a normal wheel, should look to the outside and keep contact with their right elbow with the soldier next to him. The direction called is always that which the company should be striving to face.

“To the right... REAR WHEEL!”

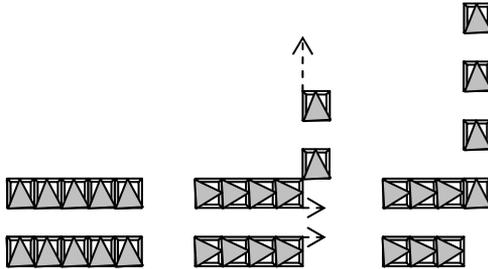
In some occasions, the C.O. might want to have their company to wheel to the rear. The principal is the same : the pivot point man is in the first rank and all troops look outwards while they are marching towards the rear.

“To the right... INCLINE!”



Troops *March*, keeping their proper facing but cross-stepping towards the direction called. The formation going at a  $45^{\circ}$  angle towards the direction called. Troops will cease marching at an incline and continue marching when the order : “FRONT” will be called. (Source : Cum’57)

“Company will march from ranks into files by the  
right... MARCH!”

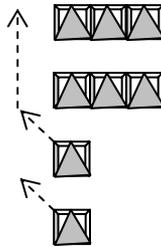


The file called out will *march*, the others *face* towards the proper direction and *half-step* to the position of the file called out and then *turn front*, when they get behind the forming file, upon which they shall proceed at the *march*. This continues until the whole formation is in one *file*.

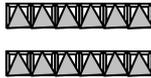
“Company will Reform into two ranks to the  
left... REFORM!”

Called to break a *file* and reform troops rapidly. The lead soldier of the filing troops acts as *Right* (or left) *Marker* and the following troops assemble to his left or right, according to the call, in *close order*.

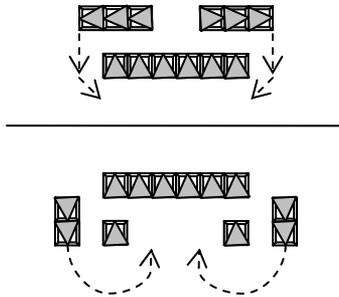
To do so, the number of soldiers corresponding to the # of *ranks* called *halt*. The following soldiers *incline* towards the called direction until the next # of soldiers take their place as second *file*. Continue until no soldier remains.



“Company! Take care to perform street firing!”



When the company is loaded, the order “Front rank, Make ready, Present, FIRE!” will be given. The front rank will then retire by the flanks and reform behind the rear rank.

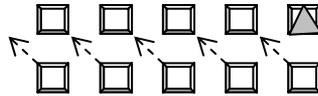


As the front rank is retiring, the following ranks are to march up 6 paces to take up the front rank’s initial position. As soon as the retiring rank is reformed, it will prime and load.

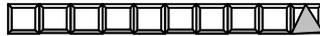
In this way, the front rank is always loaded and ready to give fire. If this manoeuvre is used with three or more ranks, a company can maintain constant fire upon the enemy. An effective tactic to quell rebellious civilians or natives in narrow passages, hence it’s name.

This manoeuvre is deemed as essential to master by Grant in his Highland Discipline ’57.

“Rear rank, to the left double your front...  
MARCH!”

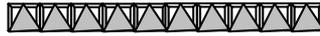


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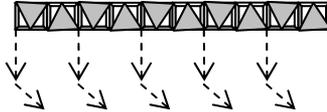


This to be done from *Open Order*. The rear *rank* is to march forward, taking the last 2 steps to *incline* to the left and step in between the soldiers in the first *rank*. (Source : Cum'57)

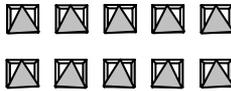
“Left half rank, to the right, half your front...  
MARCH!”



becomes



becomes



Those soldiers who are to double (the initial rear *rank*) are to make an about-face to the right and *march* 6 paces to the rear, the last 2 steps at an incline to come behind their original right-hand side neighbor. They then right about-face to face front, forming the rear rank.

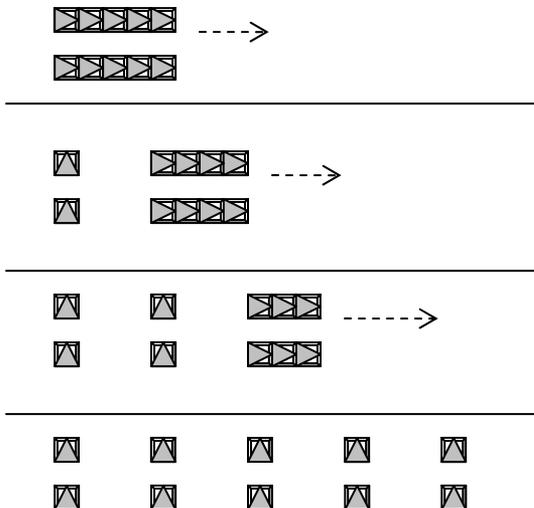
The original order from Cumberland's is : “Left half rank, to the side step double your files to the right... MARCH!” This is rather confusing to the soldiers, hence the change.

The next added for the newly implemented Light Infantry (sources pending...) :

To be executed when *marching* parallel to the enemy, to cover more ground.

“Take care to extend by 3 paces... MARCH!”

The rear rank will *halt* and *face* the enemy. Further ranks, one by one will *halt* after having marched the distance called out and *face* the enemy. To improve the efficiency of this manoeuvre, each halting rank will call out “HALT!” as they do so.



# BATTALIONS

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**F**rom the start, the reader should understand the different standards used for a battalion under formation.

It is customary to field the companies in order of seniority, the oldest company taking the right or the lead.

Battalions are fielded, by default, as a number of companies side by side. This is deemed the *Battalion Front*. When the battalion forms a *column*, it will have a *front* of one company, i.e. each company follows one after the other.

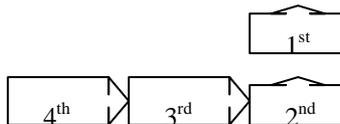
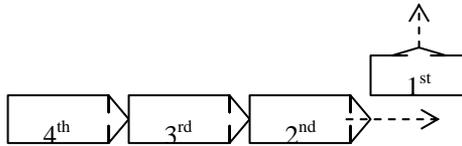
Orders given to a battalion will have all companies act as so many soldiers in formation. *E.G.* “Battalion! To the right wheel, MARCH!” will have the whole battalion *wheel* as one entity. If the orders state “by company”, then each company must, in turn, accomplish the called order.

It’s usually a good idea to have a battalion halt before giving a more complex order. Even though HRH’ army is reputed to be the most disciplined and quiet within ranks, the noise of shuffling feet and equipment will probably drown the commander’s voice and prevent the companies from carrying out the orders efficiently.

“Battalion! By company, form column, from the right, MARCH!”

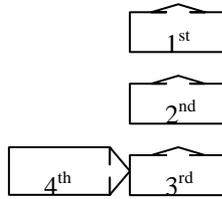


Given when the battalion is marching in a *battalion front*. The company at the side which was called (in this case the right) marches while the other companies will be ordered to *turn* towards the same side.

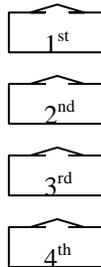


When the second company arrives in the spot the front company has left, the company will be ordered to *turn* front. *E.G.* “Company! To the front.. TURN!”

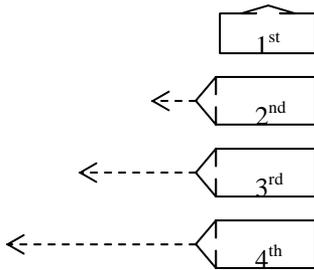
This will proceed with the following companies until a *column* with a company front has been formed.



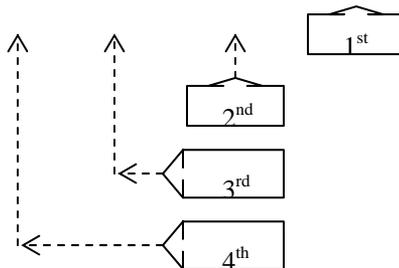
Care must be taken to preserve the interval between companies. This should happen easily enough if the commanders of the companies not yet in *column* watch their charges so they do not bunch up or arrive too early at the point where they will turn.



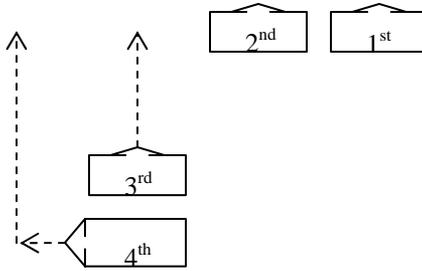
“Battalion! Take care to form battalion. To the left, form BATTALION!”



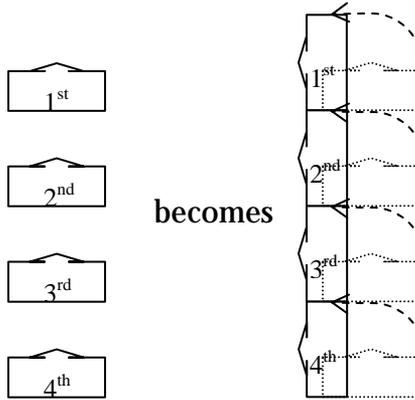
The lead company halts as the following companies turn towards the called direction. These companies continue marching until they have reached a proper distance beyond the first company. As they get to their battalion positions, they are to turn front and take their proper positions in the *battalion front*.



Modern Manuel of Military Manoeuvres.  
Stephens, MMVII

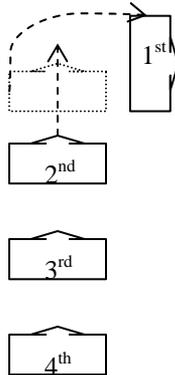


**“Battalion! Take care to form battalion. To the  
left wheel, form BATTALION!”**

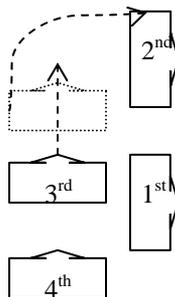


In order for this evolution to be executed properly, and in proper order, the intervals between companies must have been maintained. Each company simply *wheels* to the direction called to form the *battalion front*.

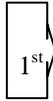
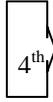
**“Battalion! Take care to form battalion. By company, to the right wheel, form BATTALION!”**



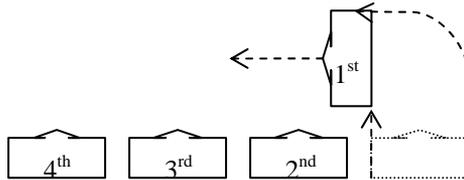
Being called by company, each company will, in turn, execute a *wheel* to bring them in *battalion front*. Upon the order, the first company is to wheel right and move but a few paces out of the oncoming column's way before halting. The column moves through and, as soon as the second company is in the proper position past the first, it also *wheels* to take its place in the *battalion front*.



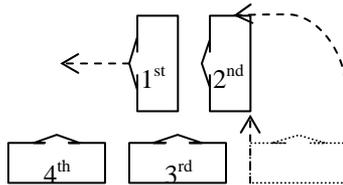
Once all companies have wheeled and halted, the  
battalion is presenting a proper front.



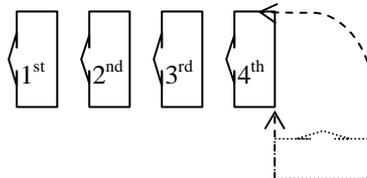
“Battalion! Take care to form column, from the right. By company, to the left wheel, MARCH!”



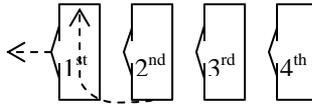
The first company marches but a few paces before wheeling left to pass before the waiting *battalion front*. As it goes past the second company, this company does the same, advancing and wheeling to fall in behind the first.



Company commanders will have, again, to take care to maintain intervals between companies to permit wheeling into another formation. The remaining companies will continue as the first have done until they all are in a column of a company front.

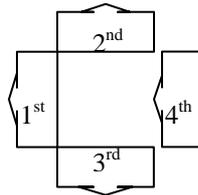
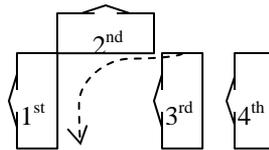


“Battalion! Take care to form a square, FORM SQUARE!”



While marching in *column*, if an attack comes from multiple directions, as it often happens in this North-American campaign, companies are to form a *square* to defend from all sides as suggested by Bland, Grant and others.

The first company halts as the second company *wheels* right. The rest of the column to *march* until the third company reaches the right position to *wheel* left to cover the left flank. Upon this, the fourth is to halt.



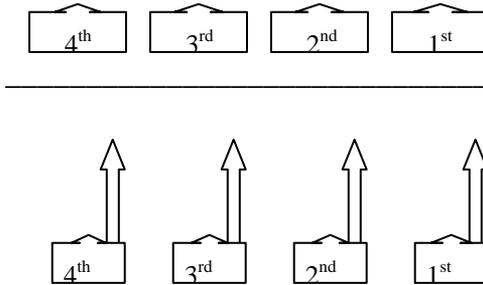
All that remains is to face the last company to the rear so they can cover the battalion's route of retreat.

Officers and colours will take position in the center, while serjeants take the corner to the right of their company.

The square has a few variations. If more than four companies form the battalion, the commander may want to expand the front or the sides of the square to form an oblong square. The easy way to do this is to keep the following companies wheeling left and right as they arrive to elongate the square. Grant has a particular way of putting together what he calls the hollow square and Bouquet adapted it to the situation he was in at the Battle of Bushy Run in 1763. There are plenty of examples that this formation was known, practised and used.

It is good to note that, whichever formation is chosen, Bland's suggests to put sustaining companies within the square. See the Sustaining section.

**“Battalion! By company, from the right, advance  
by files, MARCH!”**



Each company marches off, from the right, from ranks into files, keeping the same *front*. This manoeuvre is ideal to cross rough terrain quickly.

To reform :

**“Battalion! Take care to reform battalion,  
FORM BATTALION!”**

Each company reforms into it's original number of ranks.

(CCMM, 1781)

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## SUSTAINING

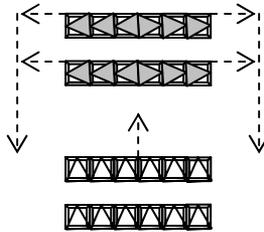
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**T**he wise general, being confronted with a long battle, or risk of being harassed by cavalry, will surely want to take measures to keep sustained fire and yet, permit his troops to maintain their arms by giving them a rest once in a while. This can be done easily in the close quarters of a defile or a street with *street firing*. This measure can be adapted to a battalion. Bland recommends this tactic specifically when forming a square. He places extra sections, primed and loaded within the square to sustain the outsides. The commander will have to keep spacing to permit passage of retiring sections though.

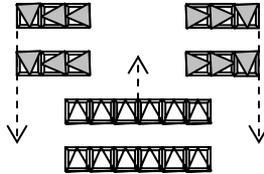
“Rear company will sustain the front!”

To start with, the two companies should be one behind the other at a proper distance. This distance should be equal to the front of the rear company.

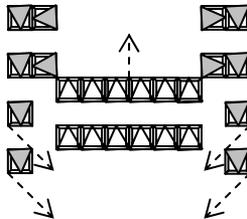
The company to the fore will be ordered to “Company will retire, from the flanks, by files, MARCH!” while the rear company will be ordered to march.



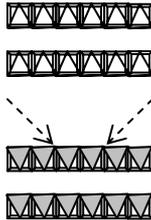
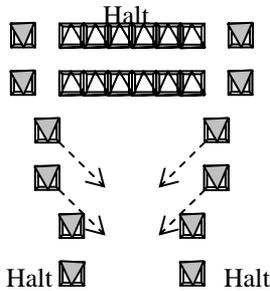
The fore company's men face outwards and march. The flank men, after having taken two paces, turn rear and retire by files.



As soon as they have past the rear company, the leaders of the retiring files *incline* to the centre only two paces to mark the flanks of the reforming company.



When the commander orders the *halt*, the advancing company halts and so do the retiring file leaders. The following file-men continue their *incline march* and fill in the gap between the file leaders.



The only thing remaining is for the new rear company to face front and they are then free to pick their vents, brush pans and see to their flintlocks. All the while, if the enemy takes advantage of the manoeuvre to try and charge, they will have to face the already primed and loaded advancing company. A dreadful thought indeed!

FINIS

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# SOURCES

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- Exercice for the Foot, 1757,  
HRH Duke of Cumberland.  
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Museum Restoration Service.
- Concise Compendium of Military Manoeuvres,  
1781
- Military Treatise, 1759, Webb
- New Highland Discipline, 1757, George Grant
- Science of Military Posts, 1761, de La Cointe
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- Treatise of Military Discipline, 8<sup>th</sup> edition,1759  
Humphrey Bland
- Turn Evolution, 20<sup>th</sup> cent., Tom Nesbitt

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# GLOSSARY

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- CO : Commanding officer, Lieutenant or Captain for a company. Battalions should be under the command of a Major at the very least.
- NCO : Non-commissioned officer, specifically, serjeants or corporals. Those under whose direct responsibility the soldiers fall under. Often those who command sections.
- E.G. : *Exempli Gratia* : used as exemple.
- Battalion : A regroupment of 2 to 10 companies.
- Battalion front : Each company formed one next to the other, facing front, in order of seniority.
- Close order : see p.9
- Column : Battalion formed in a file, one company following the other. See Battalion section.
- Colours : The company's flag(s). Usually carried by an Ensign.
- Company : The soldiers serving under a captain. The basic field unit. Composed of 25 to 100 men.
- Face : The direction the soldiers should be looking at.
- File : Line of soldiers standing behind one another.
- Flank : The side of...
- Front : The width of the first rank (frontage); also the direction of the enemy; also the current direction when already on the march.
- Halt : Soldiers come to a halt, the last step taken from the right. Soldiers keep their formation and position of arms.
- Incline : see p.15
- March : see p.10
- Open order : see p.7
- Pace : The distance traveled by raising one foot and bringing it down. Approximately 24". (Source : Cum'57)

- Poise : see Cumberland's 1757. Holding up the firelock straight before the soldier.
- Rank : Line of soldiers standing next to one another.
- Rear : The furthest from the *front* or towards the direction opposed to the *front*.
- Recover : see Cumberland's 1757. Holding the firelock before the right breast, with two hands, the barrel inwards.
- Rest firelocks : see Cumberland '57. Firelock at the hip, muzzle slightly forward.
- Rest upon : see Cumberland '57. Firelock held before the soldier, butt upon the ground.
- Right-about Face : Turning in the direction opposite to the front by the right.
- Right marker : The right-most soldier in the first rank. Most evolutions and formations are to be aligned with him.
- Section : A sub-division of a *company*. About 15-30 men.
- Street firing : see p.18
- Square : Defensive formation were men are facing all sides at once. see p.31
- Wheel : see p.13
- Wing : A sub-division of a *battalion*. At least 2 companies.

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## A note on giving orders

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The key to smooth responses from the company you are commanding is calling orders in a clear and strong voice. Do not expect the soldiers to guess what you wanted to say, this leads to interpretation. If soldiers start interpreting, the unit cohesion will suffer because nothing guarantees they will all interpret the same thing!

Commanding officers should strive to give their orders in a standard way, each time using the same formulation. If the troops are already *marching* orders should be called as is. *E.G.* “To the right... INCLINE!” The order *March* should only be given if the troops are not already *marching*. Troops at the *halt* will only execute the order called when told to *march*. *E.G.* “To the right incline... MARCH!”

If want to give every chance to your company to execute the order cleanly, give them forewarning. *E.G.* “Take care to incline... To the right... INCLINE!” This works well because you are, in fact, calling the orders twice, giving a further occasion for the hard of hearing to understand what you want him to do.