

Gentlemen,

While practicing the Manual Exercise of Arms at Niagara it became apparent that it was not immediately clear from the substance of Cumberland's 1757 when and where the terms "firelock", "bayonet" and "arms" were to be used or indeed how interchangeable they were. After taking some time to look this over at a more studious pace I have come to the following observations based on my reading of Cumberland's 1757 and its context in the 1762 edition of Bland's which incorporates this official 'manual' and was specifically revised to provide general guidelines to new officers.

Form follows function. Firstly, let us look at the Manual Exercise itself. The confusion of terminology derives largely from the issue of context - we as re-enactors perform an exercise in groups of 8 or so that is laid out in the drill manual for a battalion of 400+, which including sergeants, subalterns, lieutenants, captains, ensigns and pioneers, all which can be clearly seen if we envisage the Manual Exercise in its entirety.

Now, on to the terms themselves - "Firelock" is the default term, as its efficient handling and use is primarily what concerns the body of the manual. Note that from the 29th movement to the 43rd, which gives instructions for loading and firing, it is ALWAYS referred to as a "firelock" even though bayonets have already been fixed and will remain fixed until 87th movement when bayonets are ordered to be unfixed. The notion that when a firelock has a bayonet attached it is referred to, as "arms" is simply not substantiated by the primary documentation.

NB - the term is always "Shoulder!" and not shoulder your firelocks, shoulder your arms or shoulder your bayonet. Many of the things we tend to do by 'memory' are part of the Rev War drill most re-enactors learned before they started F&I, for instance "Shoulder your firelocks!" instead of simply "Shoulder!" and "To the right, face!" instead of "To the - right!". Are part of the 1764 Drill Manual. The command "shoulder your firelocks" occurs only once in the 1757 drill - it is used at the 9th movement to return from "secure your firelocks." However, I hasten to add that this is the exception, and repeat that everywhere else in the Manual the order is exclusively to "Shoulder".

"Bayonet" is used in the 1757 Manual in the following commands:

- 12th - Draw your bayonets
- 13th - Fix your bayonets
- 14th - Poise your bayonets
- 23rd - Charge your bayonets
- 24th - Rest your bayonets on the left arm
- 25th - Rest your bayonets
- 44th - Charge your bayonets
- 50th - Clean your bayonets
- 87th - Unfix your bayonets
- 88th - Return your bayonets

All these movements concern either the affixing or removal of the bayonet or its use as a the primary weapon (i.e. when the firelock is not firing).

And so we come to the term "Arms", which crops up in only 4 places. Firstly, if we read both the preface to the exercise and the instructions throughout the manual we see that officers and sergeants are to "recover" and then "order their "arms" as part of drawing up the battalion prior to performing the exercise and as the battalion manouvers. That of course for a 1757 Battalion will refer to officer's swords and sergeants halberds, and there are also included specific instructions for grenadier officer's carrying fusees instead to do likewise. Throughout the exercise, such as when the battalion doubles its front to perform the platoon exercise or when it gives the details for how the battalion performs its maneuvers, there are very clear and precise directions for the officers and sergeants handling of their "arms." These are in the general directions and not part of the numbered exercise.

Secondly, there is the command to "present your arms" - while this is still part of the exercise of arms it is also the command given by the Major for the battalion to honour the presence of a general officer on the parade ground. It seems to be used when the position is the end in itself rather than a preparatory stage to another maneuver - i.e. a firelock is held at 'present' but goes through the 'rest'. This is corroborated by the 25th command to "rest your bayonet" prior to shouldering and commencing the platoon exercise, as well the explanation in the preface about the review by general officers (where interestingly enough the command after fixing the bayonet is to "poise firelocks"!)

Thirdly, after the platoon exercise of firing the battalion is ordered at the 44th command to "Charge your bayonets" and there is a specific instruction that this is 'the front rank only' with 'the Sergeants on the flanks charge their halberds in like manner'. Thus the 45th command to "recover your arms" makes sense, as it is both rank and file and the sergeants with halberds in the first rank who are addressed. This is the exception rather than the rule.

Finally, the ONLY other place in which "arms" are referred to is the command "rest upon your arms" - it is NEVER, "rest upon your bayonet" (ouch) or "rest upon your firelock." This may be an archaism or simply a way of preparatory awareness because it's only given when about to fix or unfix the bayonet: it's not prelude to lounging about, as we tend to use it as modern re-enactors but a warning that the enemy is about to be engaged.

In conclusion. The orders given in the Manual of Exercise for the Foot are laid out to be declaimed by the Major to the whole battalion, officers, NCO's and rank and file. All that is ever addressed solely at the company level is the safety check and the sizing of ranks. Taken out of context, like most pieces of information, is at best meaningless and at worst baffling. As re-enactors we should perhaps rely on the default terminology of "firelock" with "bayonet" used only when it's referring to its sharp pointyness. "Arms" is addressed to officers swords, and sergeants halberds or when saluting a general officer (and the colours). "Rest upon your arms" seems to be a unique command that perhaps derives

from an earlier form of the manual of arms with plug bayonets or even pikes and remains a constant throughout the exercise. The final word on this awaits my thorough examination of previous editions of Bland's back to 1727 and the seventeenth century manuals of exercise, which will be sharing in due course. Our modern confusion over terminology perhaps stems from the fact that we start with a firelock, are commanded to fix a bayonet and then to present arms. We should all remember that we'll never see this performed as a correct, full battalion exercise with individual companies drawn up, then divided into platoons and all the sergeants ordered to the flanks and rear.

I humbly submit these thoughts for your consideration.

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