

consequence, the basic training of the army was counter-productive and—as we shall see below in our discussion of wartime training in the field and of the tactics actually attempted by British regiments in action—it was often pernicious.

ADDENDUM

MARCHING IN STEP

Professor Michael Roberts, in his paper *The Military Revolution, 1560–1660* (Belfast, n.d.), 11 n. 1, quite rightly noted that ‘the matter of marching in step needs proper investigation’, stressing that the question is a very material one in the history of tactics.

Close scrutiny of the English drillbooks from the Restoration through to the 1760s leads to the conclusions described in our text above. Remarks such as ‘The Souldiers must always begin to March with their left foot first, which is observed to conduce most to keep the Ranks even’ (1682 *Regulations*, 85–6), are a commonplace in the later Stuart drillbooks, and they remained so until the 1750s; but these remarks are always confined to sections dealing with the simple evolutions, countermarches, and—among the manoeuvres—those occasions when the ranks had been closed up tight prior to wheeling or to advancing a short distance in line, both of which were performed very slowly and with much dressing. Paces were counted out by the men, and music was never used on these occasions to set a cadence. Whenever the rank intervals were opened—as they *had* to be to perform most movements and marches—marching in step was clearly laid aside; and the NCOs, who ‘have no place assigned them in Marching’, were ‘to be moving up and down, to observe that the Ranks and Files be at their due distance’ (ibid.), there being no other means known of accomplishing this.

The best and most influential of the early eighteenth-century writers, Humphrey Bland, had no notion of the cadenced step; he drilled and manoeuvred his troops, in his 1727 *Treatise of Military Discipline*, at open rank-intervals just as his predecessors had done. Bland likewise described the slow and careful movements performed in step at the simple evolutions; but

when he suggested extending movement made in step to include some others of the evolutions, he admitted that this would 'appear so difficult, that it will deter a great many from attempting it'. He added that the 'common Objection against it, is, that it looks too much like Dancing'; and he felt obliged to argue that with 'Time and Practice' it would come to appear 'easy and genteel' (ibid. 12-13). Nor did the experienced and professional Richard Kane, writing in his *Campaigns* shortly before 1736, conceive of using music to set a marching time—and this despite the fact that he gave over six pages (pp. 115-20) to the proper 'use of the Drum in Action', a 'Thing, hitherto overlook'd by all'. He used it for signals, as did his contemporaries.

The first appearance of the fife in the army—and of the notion of cadenced marching and manœuvring—was noted by Francis Grose in his *Military Antiquities . . . of the English Army*, 2 Vols (1786-88), ii. 248-9. He wrote:

The fife was for a long time laid aside, and was not restored till about the year 1745, when the Duke of Cumberland introduced it into the guards; it was not however adopted into the marching regiments, till the year 1747: the first regiment that had it was the 19th, then called green Howards, in which I had the honor to serve . . . Fifes afterwards, particularly since the practice of marching in cadence, have been much multiplied.

During the 1750s several references to the slow but steady spread of the instrument can be found: in July 1750, for example, the reviewing officer who saw the 20th Foot in Scotland noted the absence of '3 Drummers at Berwick learning the Fife' (WO 27/1). By the late 1750s and early 1760s experienced and learned observers could still express surprise and excitement upon seeing the efficacy of the cadenced step. During the summer of 1759 William Windham saw the 67th and 72nd of Foot at Hilsea drilling 'to the sound of the fife; keeping the most exact time and cadence'; and, he added, 'The effects of the musick in regulating the step, and making the men keep their order, is really very extraordinary; and experience seems fully to confirm Marshal Saxe's opinion; who asserts, that it is the best and indeed the only method of teaching troops to march well' (*Norfolk Militia* (1759), Pt II, 61). As late as 1763, Lt. John MacIntire in his *Marine Forces*, 172-7, was still obliged to

devote many pages to explaining and justifying the new concept of marching in step to fife and drum. 'Marching in *Cadence*', he wrote, 'was followed by the *Romans*, and has been revived by the King of *Prussia*, and is now practised by some of the British Troops' (note 'some', not yet all). McIntire had not only to invoke the Romans and Frederick II to impress his fellow British officers, but Marshal Saxe too, who 'plainly shews the Absurdity of our common Method of marching'. See also Campbell Dalrymple, *op. cit.* 52-4, and Fawcett's translation of Saxe, *op. cit.* 15-18. The reduction of rank intervals and the consequent expansion of tactical horizons can be followed in the regulations and private publications of the later 1750s and 1760s.

We noted that the musical cadence, once adopted, became fairly quickly a training aid only. Typical of the difficulties that could result were those seen at a review of the 25th Foot, held at Winchester on 18 June 1777. The reviewing officer noted that the corps's timing was slow (at sixty-four paces to the minute in the slow march, and ninety-four at the quick); and he found that 'the Men got into a run whilst the Fifes were playing a regular redoubled time which did not govern their steps', and that consequently the battalion 'sometimes opened & floated a little' (WO 27/36).

Amherst's 1778 *Regulations*, recognizing these problems, laid it down that henceforth all infantry manoeuvres were to be performed by vocal commands only, and that 'Drums should be used as little as possible in manoeuvring of Regiments & Musick [i.e. bands] never'. All subsequent regulations concurred.

AIMED FIRE

It is interesting to note that none of the plates attached to the various drillbooks, illustrating the posture of the soldier at 'Present' and 'Fire', shows him actually taking aim down the barrel of the piece; he is, instead, invariably shown with the butt of his firelock pressed to his shoulder but with his head held erect. Nor do front-rank men, kneeling, support the weight of the piece by placing the elbow on the knee. George Grant, *op. cit.* 7, noticed this in 1757; and in his drillbook he remarked quite correctly that 'Any Commander that desires His Men to

hold up their Heads when they fire . . . was never a Marksman himself; and in such Case, you may set Blind Men a Fireing as a Man that can see.' Writing in 1751, the experienced lieutenant-colonel of the 8th Foot stated that he wished that British troops

were accustomed to take Aim when they Present, no Recruits want it more than Ours, few of them having fired or even handled Fire Arms before enlisted; the explanation of the word Present in the Manual Exercise, is very different in my opinion from what Men shou'd do when Firing at an Ennemy, this gives them a Habit of doing it wrong, and I have room to believe that the Fire of our Men is not near so considerable as it would be, were any pains taken to make them good Marks men. (Cumb. Pprs, Pt 4, ii, fo. 5)

There were no rear sights on the longarms issued to the eighteenth-century army; and the bayonet lug near the muzzle, which served as a guide, was no longer visible once the bayonet was fixed. The directions on 'presenting', in all of the regulations, were no more specific than the plates; at best (as in the 1764 *Regulations*) they offered simple and unsatisfactory descriptions. As late as 1807 the wise John Macdonald, in his annotated translation of *Conduct of Infantry on Actual Service*, penned a fifty-page critique of the current British regulations, calling among other things (i, p. lxviii) for the addition of a good section on target shooting.

The value of target practice with ball ammunition was sometimes stressed—although marksmanship was not necessarily the priority. Thus the lieutenant-colonel of one battalion said 'firing ball at objects teaches the soldiers to level incomparably, makes recruits steady, and removes the foolish apprehension that seizes young soldiers when they first load their arms with bullets' (J. T. Findlay, op. cit. 271). By the early summer of 1757 the 15th Foot, moving towards Barham Downs camp, was profiting from large wartime issues. 'We have three field days every week', reported its lieutenant-colonel, 'Seven rounds of powder and Ball each, every Man has fired about eighty four rounds, and now load and fire Ball with as much coolness and allacrity in all the different fireings as ever you saw them fire blank powder'—and this 'hitherto without the smallest accident' (Kent RO Amherst MSS 013/4).

LOCKING

During the 1720s, the British foot began to 'lock' up their ranks for firing—that is, the front rank knelt down, the second moved slightly to its right, and the third moved a half-pace, thus making of each file an echelon with the firelocks of the two rear ranks levelled through the file interval. Locking was considered important (as witness the repeated comments of the reviewing officers throughout WO 27) because it not only made firing by the rear ranks easier and safer, but made possible the use of narrow file intervals and thereby effectively increased the volume of fire being delivered on any chosen frontage.

Most authorities argue that Marlborough's battalions 'locked' their ranks for firing—most recently, E. Belfield in his *Oudenarde, 1708* (1972), 7; D. Chandler, in his *Marlborough as Military Commander* (1973), 92, and again in his *The Art of War in the Age of Marlborough* (1976), 118–19. The earliest contemporary reference to locking that I have seen, however, was made by Bland in his 1727 treatise. The 'discipline practised in Flanders', which Ingoldsby had Parker introduce into Ireland in 1708–10, did not teach locking but simply had the centre rank stoop low so that the muskets of the rear rank would clear their heads (Cornwall RO DD.RH.388, fos 11, 13, and *passim*). Marlborough's orders given out through Orkney, as late as 1711, make no mention of locking (BL Add. MS 29, 477). Brig.-Gen. James Douglass, writing in 1728, described Flanders practice as 'ye wholl Body at ye word Make Redy: kneels stoups and Stands', and that no doubt was how Marlborough's men fired (BL Add. MS 27, 892, fos 209–55, *passim*).