CHAPTER 13

PLAYING THE BUGLE

SECTION 51. — BUGLE TECHNIQUE

Introduction

1301. This chapter outlines the basic technique for playing the bugle. The technique, like the instrument, is quite simple and the only difficult part is training the facial muscles to form the embouchure, particularly for the upper notes. Despite the simplicity of the technique and the ease of application of it, there have been many methods expounded in the past, both in training depots and in published bugle tutors, that are totally incorrect. In many cases these techniques have been handed down from one generation to another, each totally unaware of the deficiency of the method they have employed. Worse than this, some training establishments have remained resistant to change in spite of advice of an informed nature being given.

1302. Anyone can pick up a bugle and blow it to produce noises, but in order to perfect a good tone and build stamina for prolonged playing (e.g., when on the march) the correct technique must be employed – the technique outlined here has been proved in service and, though perhaps not the producer of quick results, will certainly pay dividends later.

Producing a Sound

1303. In Chapter 5. — Understanding Sound, it was explained that a bugle produces its sound by a vibrating column of air, and that the column of air is set in motion by the player vibrating his lips against a cup shaped mouthpiece. A good deal of time must be spent on the art of vibrating the lips against the mouthpiece as this is the most basic and critical part of the technique.

Posture

1304. Before beginning to learn the basic technique it is important to be comfortable and relaxed. Whether standing or sitting the posture should be the same for the upper body and arms. The player should be in an upright and comfortable position (not rigid) and should hold his shoulders back, without straining. The right arm should be held with the elbow away from the body, the left arm may be rested in a comfortable position (usually hanging naturally at the side).

Forming the Embouchure (Stage 1)

1305. This part of the technique may be practised without the mouthpiece or instrument. The lips should be drawn back in a half smile as if pronouncing the sound "Mmmm". Keeping the lips firmly together in this fashion, a stream of air should be blown through the centre of the lips by sharply pronouncing the syllable "Tu". The aim of this exercise is to cause the tensioned lips to vibrate (rather like a double reed) and to produce a sound as if blowing a raspberry. This is not difficult to achieve but it does require some practise in order to sound every time. The player should continue to produce this sound in groups of eight to

ten trying to make each single sound last for approximately one second each; rest and then repeat the exercise.

Forming the Embouchure (Stage 2)

1306. Once the first stage exercise can be carried out efficiently, then the second stage may begin. Simply, this entails carrying out the Stage 1 lip exercise but with the mouthpiece placed over the lips.

1307. There is some difference of opinion as to the best positioning for the mouthpiece. One third top lip and two thirds bottom is often quoted; half top, half bottom too seems popular and even two thirds top and one third bottom has been suggested. Some account should be taken of the players' teeth formation. As far as this book is concerned the 'half and half' positioning is recommended if for no other reason that its proven success.

1308. The player should begin the second stage as for the first and once he is producing consistent sounds the mouthpiece should be placed gently over the centre of the vibrating portion of the lips. The raspberry sound should then be transformed by the mouthpiece to a higher pitched sound. The mouthpiece should be held by the player between the tips of thumb and forefinger. Under no circumstances should he press the mouthpiece hard against the lips.

1309. Repetitions should be carried out as for Stage 1 with short rests between each.

Forming the Embouchure (Stage 3)

1310. If by now the player is producing consistent, accurate sounds from the mouthpiece, the time has come to assemble the mouthpiece into the bugle.

1311. The services of an instructor are essential, since a good deal of time may be saved by 'mutual' aural training. Some instructors regard this as teaching 'parrot fashion' in the "I'll sound it first and then you copy it" mode. Indeed, if the extent of instruction goes no deeper than this idea, then it is to be frowned upon. However, 'mutual' aural training should always have allied to it a visual training aspect. In simplified terms this means that the instructor should sound the note required for the player to identify and copy, and should relate the sound to the written note on the blackboard. With the restricted harmonic series of five notes for the bugle, the full range may be learned comparatively quickly, depending upon the ability of the novice player.

1312. The first note that the player should be taught to sound will of course be bottom C.

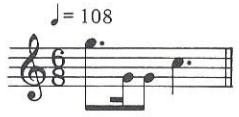
Controlling the Embouchure (Lip Flexibility)

1313. The process of increasing the range of notes to eventually encompass the full

harmonic series, will depend greatly on the ability of the novice in forming and controlling the embouchure. To achieve the notes above bottom C it will be necessary for the novice to fully understand the overblowing technique. As explained in Chapter 5. — Understanding Sound, overblowing tricks the instrument into vibrating a shorter column of air than it actually has. This is done by increasing the velocity of air and therefore the frequency of the vibrations at the mouthpiece. This is not accomplished by blowing harder or by increasing the pressure of the mouthpiece to the lips (two techniques that, strangely, have some popular support) it is accomplished by tightening the muscles of the face to cause the lip tension at the embouchure to increase; decreasing the hole through which air passes and increasing the frequency of the vibration of the lips and subsequently the column of air in the tube. In short, the higher the note required, the tighter the 'lip tension'.

1314. This tightening and relaxing of the embouchure takes place fairly rapidly throughout, say, a routine bugle call. The following calls illustrate rapid changes of 'lip tension'.

Signallers Call



Warning for Parade

1315. In the first example the change is indeed rapid, ranging from top G (the highest note) and drops immediately a full octave to lower G.

1316. The second example indicates a progressive change or series of changes over six bars where, having begun at bottom C the player must make rapid adjustments to his lip tension so that he can pitch each note right up to top G.

1317. This rapid alteration of lip tension is termed 'lip flexibility' and requires considerable practise to master. There are some excellent initial exercises contained in 'Trumpet and Bugle Calls for the Army' (Army Code No. 14163) some of which are reproduced in the next section.

Tongueing

1318. There is one other aspect to bugle technique so far not covered—that of 'tongueing'. This technique is explained in Chapter 12. — Playing the Flute. The application is the same for bugle although probably more difficult to execute on this instrument. It should be incorporated in the daily practice schedule.

Conclusion

1319. As with any instrument, learning to play is fairly easy – mastery comes only after

extensive practice. The method outlined here does not achieve rapid results but it will produce good buglers providing that the instructor employs it correctly.

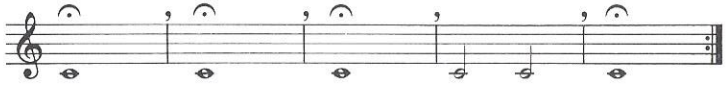
1320. If the techniques have been taught correctly a bugler should be able to sound routine calls with the bugle supported only by two fingers; one under the mouthpiece and the other under the forward coils of the instrument.

SECTION 52. — BUGLE EXERCISES

Single Note Exercise (C and G)

1321. ***Long Notes (C).***

a. *Tone, Pitch and Breathing.* Breath marks are indicated by a comma.

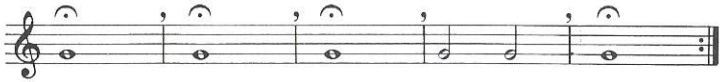


b. *Tone, Pitch and Counting.*

c. *Tone, Pitch and Counting.*

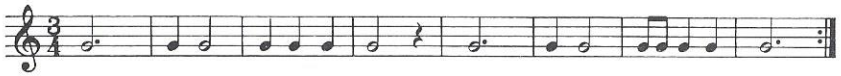
1322. ***Long Notes (G).***

a. *Tone, Pitch and Breathing.*



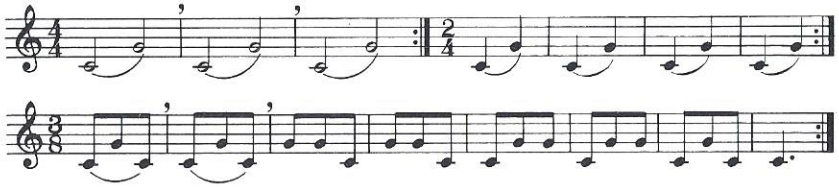
b. *Tone, Pitch and Counting.*

c. *Tone, Pitch and Counting.*



Two Note Exercise (C and G)

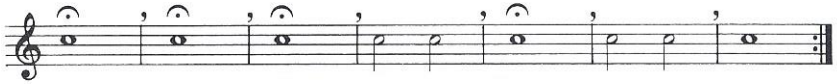
1323. ***Lip Flexibility and Tone.***



1324. ***Lip Flexibility and Counting.***

Single Note Exercise (Middle C)

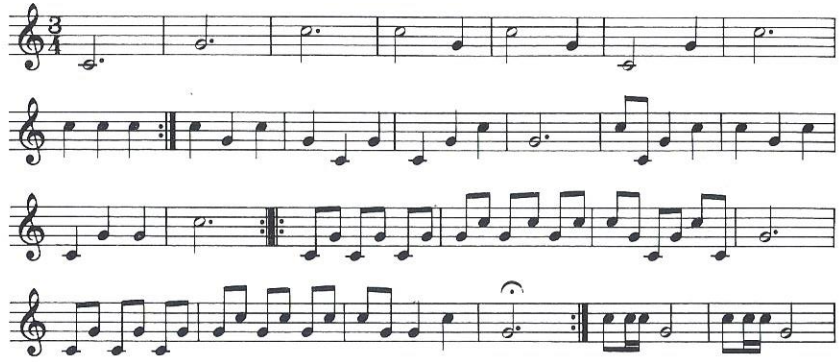
1325. ***Long Notes (Middle C).***



1326. Repeat the single note exercises in paragraphs 1321 and 1322.

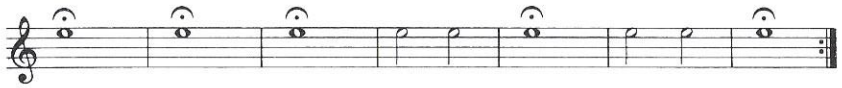
Three Note Exercise (C, G and Middle C)

1327. ***Lip Flexibility and Tone.***



Single Note Exercise (E)

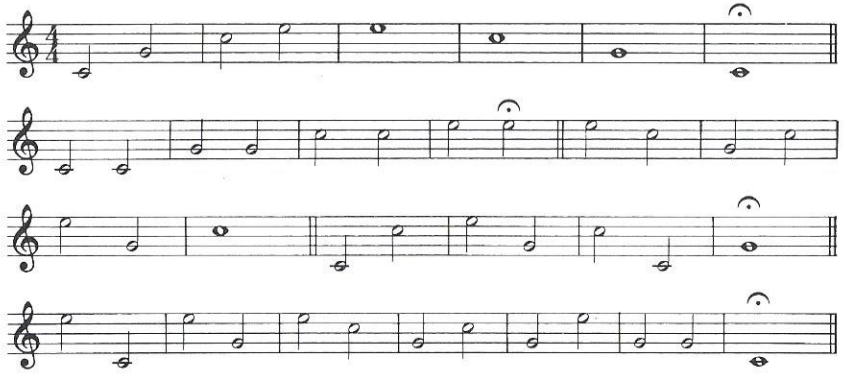
1328. *Long Notes (E).*



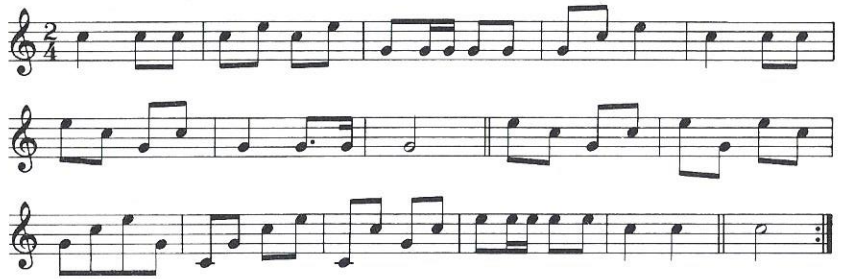
1329. Repeat the single note exercises in paragraphs 1321 and 1322.

Four Note Exercise (C, G, Middle C and E)

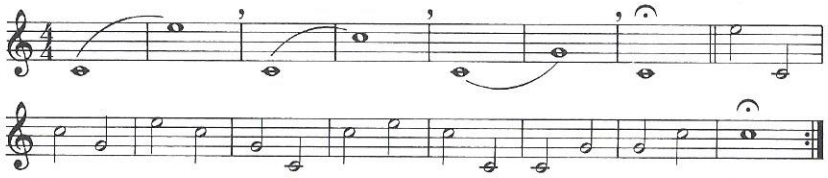
1330. *Time and Embouchure.*



1331. *Flexibility.*



1332. *Tone, Pitch, Embouchure and Ear.*



Simple Bugle Calls

1333. *Men's Meal Call.*

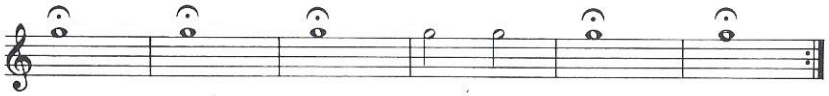
1334. *Lights Out.*

1335. *Orderly Corporals.*

Note. $\frac{6}{8}$ time has only two beats to the bar, *see* Chapter 15, Section 58, Paragraph 1570.

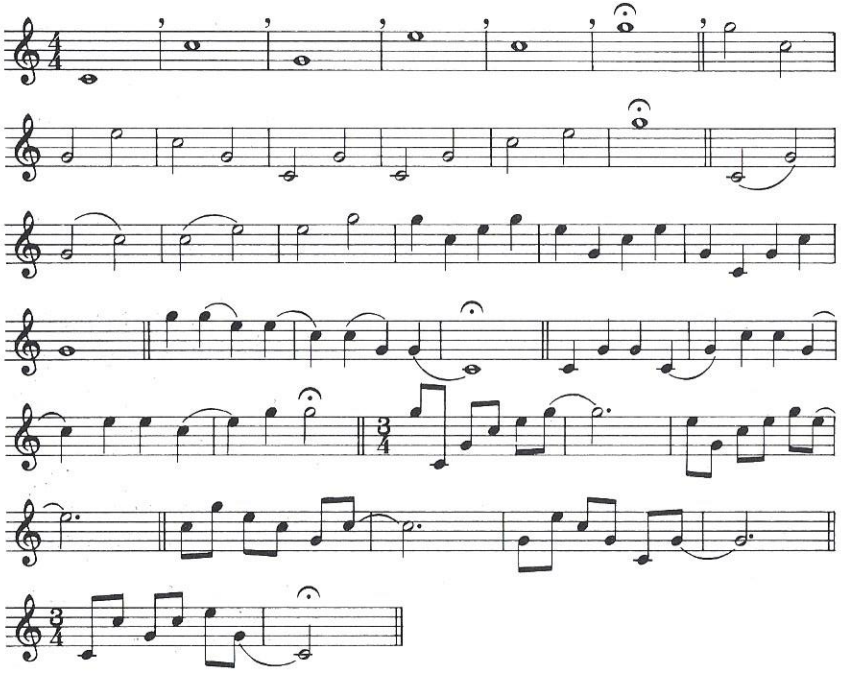
Single Note Exercise (Top G)

1336. *Long Notes (Top G).*



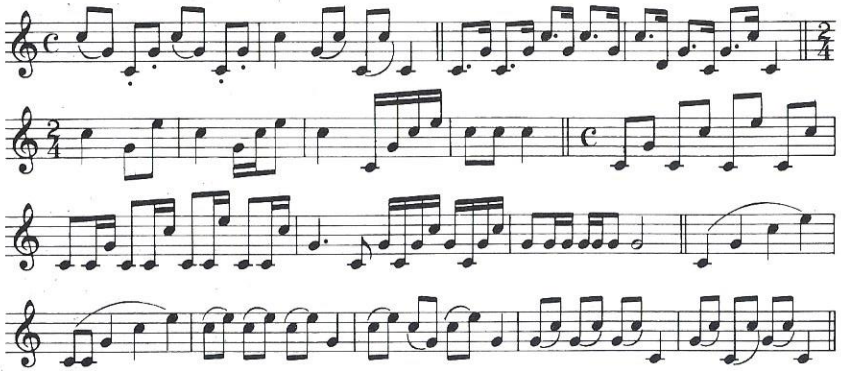
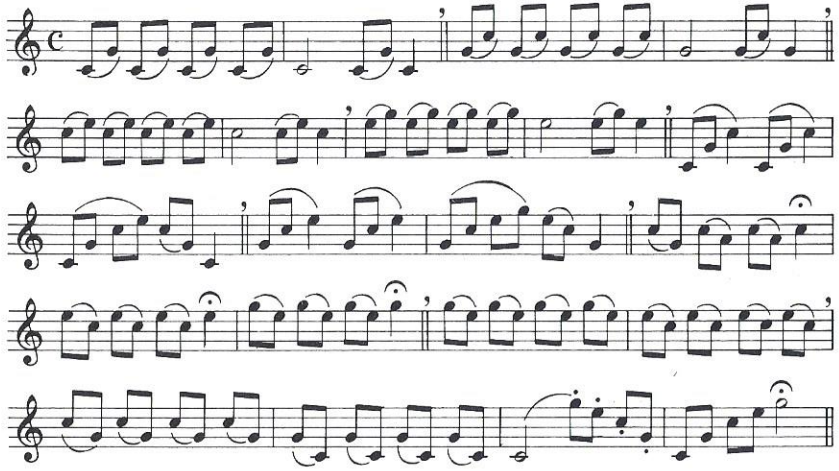
Five Note Exercise

1337. *Ear and Embouchure.*



Exercises from the Bugle Book

1338. *Lip Flexibility.*



1339. *Lip Flexibility and Pitch.*