

Deploying from battalion column forward into line

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Part III of the R&R contains three main ways to deploy forward when the battalion is in open column of companies: by filing, by echelon, and by obliquing.

(1) **By filing.** Lead company stands fast. Remaining companies in the column simultaneously file to the pivot flank; when opposite their place in line companies successively turn and march up to the line. (Officers lead pivot flank while filing, shift to reverse flank at turn.) This movement is intended to be used when the battalion is in **close column**, but may also be used for an open column by first closing the column (S.104, S. 144)

Note that deployment from closed column is the only method of forward deployment featured in the R&R's 19 formal review movements, which strongly suggests the closed battalion column was the preferred formation for deploying into line. Our Battalion, however, tends to deploy from an open column of companies.

S.104 notes two methods of direct deployment forward from **open** battalion column:

(2) **By echelon.** Lead company stands fast. Remaining companies in the column half-wheel to the rear on their reverse flanks. Companies march forward at this new angle, in quick time (officers on reverse flank, covering sergeant on proper pivot flank); when opposite their place in the line, company commanders bring their companies successively on to line by shoulders forward. Intended to be performed when the column is **halted**. (S. 104, S.127, S. 158, S. 159)

The echelon column is employed in a number of movements as an interim formation to change line position. Deployment on the column's lead unit is just one of many options.

(3) **By obliquing.** Lead company steps short. The remaining companies in the column simultaneously oblique up to their position in the line, dressing and conforming to the line as they successively arrive. Intended to be used when the column is **moving**. To perform this movement requires a distance of at least the length of the column between the lead company and the intended position of the line. (S.104, S. 129)

I believe this to be the only movement in the R&R which utilizes the oblique step.

Comment

Currently the Battalion uses the **obliquing** method exclusively for forward deployment. I have observed it seems difficult to sustain the oblique step while maintaining unit order for the period required to come onto line, especially for those units in the rear of the column that have the most distance to travel to reach their line position. This method also is rather slow. It can be speeded up by having the line march at ordinary and the obliquing done at quick time, but likely at a cost of additional unit disarray.

I propose the Battalion explore the other two methods of deployment.

Filing has the advantage of being simple—all changes are perpendicular. For our purposes it may be done from open as well as closed column. It is a method we should at least be acquainted with, and can be easily added to our repertoire. Drawbacks: deployment is slow, as companies march further to get to their positions than they would if they took a diagonal path instead; also, filing requires use of both the lock step and the turn, which some units may find awkward.

I believe deployment forward by **echelon** has the most advantages. Companies march the shortest distance from their position in column to their position in line, which makes this method the most efficient of the three. Marching is conducted using the direct step, which facilitates the option of using quick time with minimal unit disarray.

The Battalion previously practiced echelon movements for the Chrysler's Farm bicentennial, so some of us may still remember how to do this. Familiarity with the echelon deployment should make it easier to revisit other echelon movements such as change of position or the march in echelon.

Finally, I propose that the Battalion consider adapting the echelon method for **deploying forward while moving**, in this manner:

1. Lead company continues forward at ordinary time;
2. Remaining companies shoulders forward to achieve the half-wheel, then march to their place in line at quick time;
3. Shoulders forward into line, pick up step and dressing.

I believe this method would facilitate forward deployment of the Battalion with increased order and efficiency.

May 2017

Sources

War Office, *Rules and Regulations for the Formations, Field-Exercise, and Movements, of His Majesty's Forces*. London: T. Egerton, 1811.

(1) Filing

S.104 Changes of Position of a Battalion

The column arriving behind any part of its ground, may also move up to close column, and form by its deployments on the front, the rear, or on a central division.

WHEN THE BATTALION CLOSE COLUMN OF COMPANIES (THE RIGHT IN FRONT) DEPLOYS INTO LINE.

S. 144. *On the Front Division.*

Fig. 67. { The column being halted with its front division in the alignment, and all the others in their true situations parallel, and well closed up to it, a point of forming upon and dressing is taken, in the prolongation of that division (and corrected from it) just beyond where the left of the battalion is to extend D. —A CAUTION is given that the line will form on the front division.

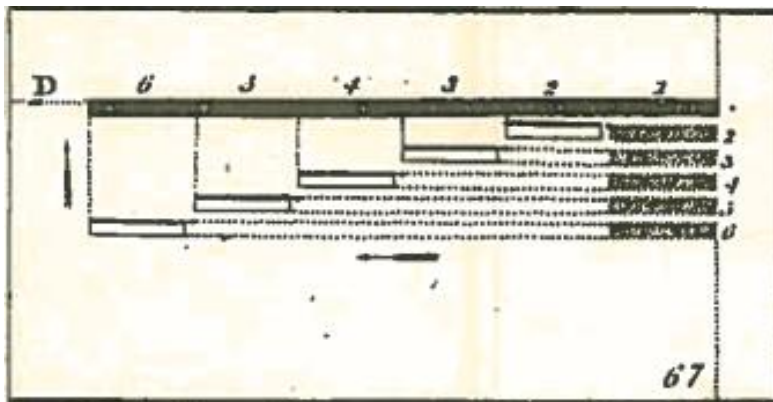
LEFT, FACE. { At the word to the LEFT, FACE, the front division stands fast, its officer shifting to the right, and all the others face.—At the word MARCH, they step off with the heads dressed, moving parallel (not oblique) to the line of formation; the files also are close and compact, without opening out.

{ The officer of the second or leading division having stepped out to the right at the above word march, allows his division led by his serjeant to go on a space

Halt, Front.
Dress. equal to its front, and then gives his word *Halt, front—Dress*, his serjeant still remaining on the left of the division.—He then, being on the right of his division, immediately gives his word *March*, and the division proceeds at the ordinary step towards its place in the alignement. The officer having in the mean time stepped nimbly forward, places himself before the left flank of the preceding division, and is thus ready to give the word *Halt, Dress*, at the instant his inward flank man joins that division: He then expeditiously corrects his men (who have dressed upon the formed part of the line) on the distant given point, and resumes his proper post in line.

Halt, Front.
Dress.
March.
Halt, Dress. In this manner every other division proceeds, each being successively (by its officer who himself stops on the left flank of the division, which precedes him) *Fronted, Marching up, Halted, and Dressed*, in line: The officers of these divisions, as each approaches within 5 or 6 paces of its ground, then stepping up to the flank of his preceding formed division, that he may the more accurately *Halt, Dress*, his own; and the flank serjeant of each remaining at his point in the line, 'till the succeeding officer having so dressed his division comes to replace him; he then covers his own officer.

(close column, right in front)



(2) Echelon

S.104 Changes of Position of a Battalion

Fig. 52. 78.

No. 6. When the column having arrived perpendicularly or obliquely behind the line at the point where its HEAD is to rest, is there halted.—The leading division may be placed on the line, and each other division be ordered to make such a degree of wheel backwards, as will enable it to march on in front, perpendicular to its proper point in the new line, where each successively arrives and forms.—This is a movement in column, and formation in echelon. (S. 127.)

S. 127. *When the Battalion changes Position, by breaking into Open Column---Marching up in Column to the Point where its Head Division remains placed in the new Position, and which its Rear Divisions enter on, by the Echelon March.*

HALT.

The column will advance to the spot where its leading division is to be placed: It will there receive the word HALT.—The leading division will, if necessary, be wheeled accurately into the new line: Each of the other divisions will wheel back on its reverse flank such number of paces as is necessary to place it perpendicular to its point in the new

MARCH.

line; the whole will MARCH, and successively form up to the leading division, by the echelon movement. (S. 158. 159.)

If the column halts perpendicular (A.) to the new line, its divisions will wheel back 1-8th of the circle, or a half wheel.—If the column halts oblique (B.) to the new line, the divisions will proportionally wheel, so as to be placed perpendicular to their future lines of march.

In this manner the divisions of the column arrive in full front, one after the other, in the new line.

§. 158. *When from Open Column, the Companies wheel backward into Echelon, in order to form in Line on the Head Company.*

Fig. 78. { The head company either remains square to the column, or is wheeled forward on either flank into the intended direction of the line; and on the position given it, will depend the relative one which is taken by the other companies, and which the commander will determine to himself, by his eye, or by immediate trial.

COMPANIES WHEEL BACKWARD { 1. On the CAUTION, that the companies except the head one will wheel back on the right or left so many paces (and which wheel is always backwards, and always on the reverse flank of the column, as being that which after-

— PACES, ON THE — Fig. 78.A.C. { wards first comes into line) the officer moves to that flank, and the serjeant of each places himself with his back to the 8th file of the rear rank, immediately takes his named paces, and halts

Fig. 54.A.B. { fronts with his body turned in the line of the flank man on whom he wheeled.—At the word MARCH, the company wheels back till the 8th file of the rear rank touches the breast of the serjeant, (who gives a low caution to halt,)

MARCH. { it is then halted and dressed by the officer from the standing flank, the serjeant places himself on the outward flank, and the whole are now in a situation to march forward, and form in the line on the head company, as in §. 159.

Halt, Dress.

—*Shoulder forward.*

*Halt,
Dress up.*

—*Shoulder forward.*

When the officer conducting the second company approaches within 7 or 8 paces (and not sooner) of where his leading flank is to join the first company already placed, he gives a word—*Shoulder* (the outward one) *forward*, on which the man next to himself preserving the same step gradually turns his shoulder, so as to arrive on the new line square in his own person; and the rest of the division (who till this instant have marched in their original perpendicular direction) conforming to him proportionally lengthening their step, arrive in full parallel front on the line, so as to have a very small movement to make at the word *Halt, dress up*, which is given by the officer when his leading flank touches the flank of his preceding company: he himself having nimbly stepped forward when at 3 or 4 paces distance, and being then before that flank, instantly halts his men, and corrects them on the distant given point, their eyes being turned towards him, and the former division.

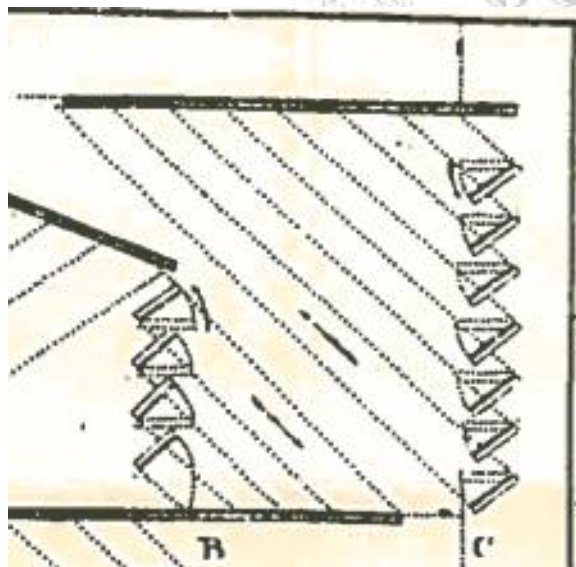
In this manner company will come up after company, (or division of whatever kind after division,) each following one observing to give the word—*Shoulder forward*, when the preceding one gets the word

Halt, Dress up.

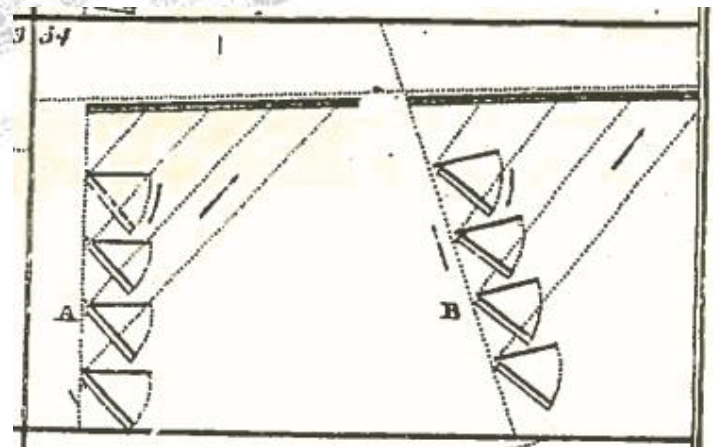
Halt, Dress up, and each officer stepping up to before the flank of his preceding formed company when he is within 3 or 4 paces of it, that he may the more quickly and accurately give his word *Halt, Dress up*, to his own men, which they are to do, preserving the cadenced step of the division, and not suddenly springing backward or forward.—The serjeants will remain in the line till they are relieved by the officers whose places they occupy.

The exact formation to this oblique line depends totally on the companies having wheeled (only) one half of the angle which the new position makes with the old one, for should they at first wheel the whole of that angle, they would be then marching parallel to that line, and arrive in it doubled behind each other; whereas by having the other half of the wheel to complete, when they come near to the new position, each moves in a perpendicular direction, and disengages the ground required by the succeeding one to form upon.

(right in front)



(left in front)



(3) Oblique (Eventail or Fan Movement)

S.104 Changes of Position of a Battalion

Fig. 57. F. { No. 8. The column marching perpendicularly up to the line, and to the point where its HEAD is to rest, and being at least a distance equal to the length of the column from such point. The leading division proceeds at a half pace only; the others oblique from the column, successively move up to the leading division, and the front being thus gradually increased, the whole battalion arrives at the same time on the line of formation. (S. 29.)

S. 129. *When the Battalion changes Position, by breaking into Open Column---Marching up perpendicular to the new Line, and to the Point where its Head is to rest, and forming*
 Fig. 56. 57. E. *in the new Position by the Eventail or Fan Movement.*

TO THE —
 OBLIQUE. { When the leading division (b.) is at least the length of the battalion column behind its point in the new line, it shortens its step one half as soon as the others receive orders to OBLIQUE from the column; this they do 'till opposite their respective places, when each moves forward successively to the leading platoon and to each other, take up the half step, enter the line in front, and the whole HALT.

Forward.
 Half Step.
 HALT.

This movement is performed on the march, and must be begun at a distance behind the line, proportioned to the body which is to oblique and form. It may be applied to one battalion, but hardly to a more considerable body, which would find great difficulty in the execution. It gives a gradual increase of front during a progressive movement.—With justness it can be made on a front division only, not on a central or rear one: In proportion as the leading platoon shortens its step, will the one behind it, and successively each other, come up into line with it.—As soon as the colours of the battalion come up they become the leading point.

Although it is an operation of more difficulty, yet if the leading division continues the ordinary, and the obliquing ones take the quick step, till they successively are up with it, a battalion column which is placed behind the flank of a line, may in this manner, during the march, and when near to an enemy, gradually lengthen out that line.

(left in front)

