



## RE-CREATING THE DRILL OF THE 95<sup>TH</sup> RIFLES

### ***The Hope:***

The Holy Grail for all Riflemen re-enactors was the infamous 'Green Book', as it was believed this would be the drill book and solve all our problems. But alas when the original text came to light this didn't prove the case. The book was titled, 'The Regulations for the Formation of the Rifle Corps.' A very interesting read, but not what we were looking for in regards the fundamentals of the drill of the period. Though great detail in how one should form a new Regiment.

### ***The Journey:***

It all began when I first joined the unit in 2000. The unit was doing a basic form of Light Drill from rough photocopied pages of the work of, 'Capt. T.H. Cooper, 56th Regt. Infantry, A Practical Guide for the Light Infantry Officer, 1806.' That had been passed down to our then Serjeant, to his credit he got us moving in the correct direction.

With my thirst for knowledge and wanting to know more about the drill we did, I bent the Sjt's ear to find out where I could get this book called Cooper's. To my luck I attended a book fair in London that year and managed to pick a copy up for £5.00. An absolute steal I was later to find out. I was then to be found at events and in my spare time to be devouring every page and absorbing every detail and be heard spouting, "you'll never guess what lads, we can do it from the left too!" and then demonstrating that finding with the lads.

A few years later our good Sjt left the unit for pastures new and I became the Sjt of the unit and made the period drill my goal in life and the rest as they say is history.

Since purchasing Cooper's Instructions, I had then gone onto purchase, '*Regulations for the Exercise of Riflemen and Light Infantry, 1798. -Published by Authority. De Rotenberg, translated by Fawset.*' and '*Capt Barber's, The Duke of Cumberland's Corps of Sharp-Shooters, Instructions for the Formation and Exercise of Volunteer Sharp-Shooters, 1804.*' Bits of both books were incorporated into our drill and the first edition of, 'Blakey's Drill', came into effect.

All three of these books were Light Infantry/Rifleman drill books. But the opening paragraph in De Rotenberg's book caught my eye. "*WHEN a company or battalion of riflemen is to act with closed ranks and files, the same regulations which are given to infantry in general serve for them. And before the soldier is instructed in the manoeuvres of light troops, he must be taught how to hold himself, to march, face, wheel, &c. as in regular infantry.*" What did this mean to us Riflemen, as I had always been told from the start of my life as a Rifleman, that we didn't do line drill, but this comment clearly states we did.

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Thus my research started again, I had to get a copy of what is known as Dundas. “*Dundas's, Rules and Regulations. For the Manual and Platoon Exercises, Formations, Field Exercise, and Movements of His Majesty's Forces, 1807. -Published by Authority.*” Having got a copy of this manual, my understanding of drill became crystal clear. Dundas is how you get about the field, i.e. march from A to B and conduct yourself in manoeuvres of the platoon/company/battalion and brigade. Light drill came into effect the moment you extended from close order. The lights bulbs were starting to come on for us all at this point. Blakey's second drill book came into effect then and all thought that was the end to our journey. But alas things come our way that make us think and act upon them.

A friend of the family came across a book that was being sold called, “*Sir John Moore's System of Training, by Colonel J.F.C. FULLER, D.S.O, late 43<sup>rd</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Light Infantry, printed in London by: Hutchinson & CO. Paternoster Row, 1924.*” Now knowing that Sir John Moore was the father of the Light Division at Shorncliffe Barracks, I knew I had to get this book.. A few hundred pounds and weeks later I was now the proud owner of this wonderful text. This book was to prove the actual ‘Holy Grail’ I was looking for. Col Fuller had access to the original text and Sir John Moore's diary, which have since sadly been lost. The book broke down the training and covered all the individuals involved. Col Cote Manningham 95<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps, Lt Col William Stewart 95<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps, Capt Campbell 54<sup>th</sup> Regt. of Foot and General Jarry Commandant, Royal Military College at High Wycombe. Each had there own input under the guidance of Moore to produce the men and skills he needed to serve the King.

### **The Facts:**

With Fuller's book read and devoured I was able to record that De Rotenberg was used as the basis for the Rifleman, with further instructions added by the Officers of the 95<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps, Manningham and Stewart. Campbell was responsible for the instructions given to the 43<sup>rd</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup>. De Rotenberg's book only covered the manual exercise with the rifle and the duty of Light Troops in the field. Which Manningham put to good effect in hi Military Lectures. Stewart then added the finer points of field manoeuvres, which are basically Dundas in their design, but more complicated. Campbell was to use De Rotenberg also, but with a lesser degree of manoeuvre to the Rifles as his men were only to be armed with muskets.

But it wasn't as simple as that. As the original manuals were no longer available, the question still was; what is it they actually did? Thankfully Fuller has an appendix, and in this appendix he records the Chapter headings that formed each part of the respective manuals. And further states that Cooper's and Barber's instructions, both surviving texts in his time and still available to me; have copied very heavily from these earlier manuals, to produce their own.

As I already own those texts and many of the memoirs of those involved in the War's with France, I was able to produce a definitive book that we could use and for all to read.

The third incarnation of, ‘Blakey's Drill’, came to be. I make no claim to having created it, but merely researched the facts and recorded them in one volume that can be easily used and

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referenced. (Plans are to have this work published and is being work with under the guidance of Richard Rutherford-Moore, the Historical Interpreter to the Sharpe TV series.)

The re-created drill book; we now use in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 95<sup>th</sup> Rifles. This book forms the basics of all the drill we do and every likely to do. But as in their day, tweaks and adjustments were made for whatever situation we/they found themselves in. This has been helped greatly by the surviving 1823 British Infantry Manual, that carries a foreword stating, *“From the lessons learnt with our recent wars with France, HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS therefore orders that every Sergeant of Cavalry and Infantry shall provide himself with a copy of this book; and he further orders, that the rules therein laid down for the instruction and drill of the Soldier, the Platoon and Company, shall be strictly followed and observed, and no alterations made therein.”*

### ***My Findings:***

I have been able to determine from all that I have learnt. That Dundas forms the basis of the drill use by the British Army circa 1800-1823. And the Light Troops and Riflemen developed their own from those basic formations.

From that learning I can say without any hesitation that all British re-enacting groups should be doing ‘Dundas’ and all Light Troops, ‘Light Drill’, as laid down by Regulation. This drill would then form the basics of how the Army moves and operates in the field. Though we are not the size of the units we represent from the period. We can all do the basics, platoon and company manoeuvres. Our experiences with this drill in the field against the old foe will enable the commander to make changes from the basics where necessary. An example of this is: All advances and fire in extended order where done by the entire rank as a whole. But during the Peninsular war this was found to be insufficient, so the officers of companies amended it to include advancing and firing by alternate files in rank. This enables the company to keep pressure on the enemy. Though not included in the earlier manuals, is included in the 1823 manual. So shows that adaptation of the basic formation occurred, but it came from a point already observed and adhered too.

So in the production of said manual that we now use, it has everything we will ever do, everything we are likely to do and everything we will never do. The reason for this being so, is that we will never operate as a Battalion or Regiment, but only as a Company.

That is why the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 95<sup>th</sup> (Rifle) Regiment of Foot, does the drill it does when you see them.

*(Original Signed:)*

Complied by:

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C/Sjt

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