

Formations of the Music

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Brief History of the Music

The process of people beating on a drum to form a cadence originated from “Ancient Egypt where the wall-carving show men tapping their long skin-covered drums with the armed soldiers all keeping step.” The rhythm beat by the ancient drums was a designed aid to the soldiers as they marched from position to position. It could also be speculated that the rhythm would help occupy the minds of the soldiers while on the march.¹

Traditionally the Ancient Pagans considered the sounds of the drum “the voice of a spirit.” The Drum “was taken into battle ‘to give victory over enemies,’ and the warrior had but to rub it on his thighs, and he was immediately endowed with irresistible strength, whilst the voice of the god or spirit was found most efficacious in creating fear and dismay in his enemies.”²

At a later stage of development, the horn arrives, which man finds more frightening than the Drum. The horn, which is the forerunner to the trumpet, frequently occurs in Greek art, where it serves to distinguish the barbarians from the Greeks. The Greeks used the Trumpet for signaling to each other, and the flute for marching. Later, the Romans regarded the ideas of military music very highly. They supported several warlike instruments, the most important of which were the tuba (straight Trumpet), the Baccina (a curved Trumpet), and the Curnu, horn. The musicians who played these instruments were called *Æneatores*. The *Æneatores* marched in front of the legion, and played the music while marching.³

Fortescue makes the statement that the British army copied the aspects of military bands from the Saracens, and placed them a part of the regular duties. Fortescue mentions the duties of the music in the battle situation. “In their armies trumpets and drums, the latter decidedly an Oriental instrument, were used to indicate a rallying-point; for though at ordinary times the standards sufficed to show men the place of their leaders, yet in the dust of battle these were often hidden from sight; and it was therefore the rule to gather minstrels (such was the English term) around the standards [colors] and bid them blow and beat strenuously and unceasingly during the action. The silence of the band was taken as proof that a battalion had been broken and that the colours were in danger; and the fashion lasted so long that even in the seventeenth century the bandsmen in all pictures of battles are depicted drawn up at a safe distance and energetically playing.”⁴ A note to be made, the passage is contrived from a source dealing with the end to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

¹ Carmen, Richard Simkins uniform of the British Army

² Farmer, The Rise and Fall of Military Music

³ Farmer

⁴ Fortescue, The History of the British Army

By the Year of our Lord 1590, the drummers were not the mere signal-makers that they are normally associated with. At this point they served as communications with the enemy forces, and required to possess not only discretion but some skill in languages.⁵

My first point of research shows that Drum calls first appear in 1645. At which point in time, the drum calls consisted of six different calls. Much easier than the 18th Century's 20+. Those calls were, Troop, March, Call, Preparative, Battle, and Retreat.⁶

The position of the Fifer was carried on many rosters during the early half of the seventeenth century; however, Oliver Cromwell dismissed fifes, which are not seen again in ranks until the beginning of the restoration period. But since the fife had to be paid for by the Captain; they often were placed on the rosters as Drummers, but carried the Fife instead.⁷ In 1745 the Duke of Cumberland restored the fife in the Guard, but it was not until 1747 that the marching regiments adopted it.⁸

The drum-major first appears in the establishment of the British Army on November 1647. Ten year later, in 1657, the drum-major "disappears from the Scotch and probably the English establish" too. Shortly after the restoration period, the position of drum-major was reintroduced in the military music.⁹

"Bands had been allowed from the earliest days of the Regular Army, but no public money had been provided for their creation or upkeep." Finally in 1757, as the orders of the Duke of Cumberland, which he gained permission for six enlisted musicians in each battalion. These six were usually, two hautboys, (known today as an oboe), two French Horns, and two bassoons. In 1759, two fifes were added to the ranks of grenadier companies.¹⁰

⁵ Fortescue,

⁶ Fortescue,

⁷ Carmen

⁸ Houlding, Fit for Service : Training of the British Army 1715-1795

⁹ Firth, Cromwell's Army

¹⁰ Rogers, The British Army of the Eighteenth Century

Clothing, Accoutrements, and Recruitment of the Music



The Former pictures are pictures of two different Drummers. The one on the left is a picture of a Drummer of the old 42nd Regiment of foot commanded by General Ogethorp; the picture on the right is a picture of a drummer from the 60th Royal Americans. A quick note, the picture of the 42nd Drummer pre-dates the 1751 clothing; however, at close inspection of the uniform, it has the 1751 changes add to it.

The Drums are to be made of wood. The front of the Drums are to be painted with the colour of the facings of the regiment, with the King's Cypher and crown with the number of the regiment under it.¹¹

“The musicians were considered something apart from the common fighting man. They were often part of the captain's personal retunie and as such were given a dress to distinguish themselves.” Often times, the uniforms of the music would be decorated with the livery of famous families. “In the Norwich accounts of 1587-8 is the information that a drumemr's coat was made of ‘grene carset (kersey); embellished with eleven yards of lace and ‘VI yard of poynting.’”¹²

Whenever a new drummer and fifer was brought into the ranks of the Drum Major, he begins a process of training to his duty. The Drummer or Fifer is to receive no more than a privates pay until the Drummer of Fifer can performs his duties at a tolerable manner. In the recruitment of a Drummer, one needs to search for a handsome young

¹¹ Simes, The military guide for young officers

¹² Carman, British Military Uniforms from Contemporary Pictures

individual, no younger than the age of fourteen. A Drummer beneath the age of fourteen, unless extremely stout, would be unable to burden the weight of a full drum while on the march. In the search of a fifer, any of the finest children can be an extremely good choice; for this duty, since a fifer has little or no laborious duties.¹³

The following is an extract from the Warrant dated 1st of July 1751:

“The Drummers of all Royal Regiments are allowed to wear the Royal Livery, viz. Red, lined faced and lapelled on the Breast with Blue and laced with a Royal lace. The Drummers of all the other Regiments are to be clothed with the colour of the Facings of their Regiments line, faced and lapelled on the breasts with Red, and laced in such manner as the Colonel shall think fit for distinction sake, the Lace however, being of the Colours of that on the Soldiers’ Coat.”¹⁴

In 1751, as a part of the clothing warrant, an amendment was added to state, Drummers are to have caps, “the front of the cap was to be colour of the facings but the little flap was to be red (as was the back of the cap). The front was embroidered with the badge of the regiment or a trophy of flags and drums, while the little red flap had the white Horse of Hanover and the motto ‘Nec Aspera Terrent’. On the back of the turn-up of the cap was embroidered a drum and the number of the regiment.”¹⁵ Cutherbertson says a painted linen-cover should be given to each drummer to be worn over the caps while on the march, while the weather is wet, or during any other time in which the cap could take damage.¹⁶

The wings to a Drummers coat should be of an oval shape instead of the square, which is dictated in many photos. The Drum carriages should be made of a white leather, and sling around the neck. Also, Cutherbertson mentions that Drummers are to carry swords, of the same design of a non-commissioned officers sword; however, the musician’s sword should be slightly shorter.¹⁷

The Drum-Major’s uniform was more elaborate and ornate than the uniforms of the ordinary drummer or fifer. The Drum-Major’s uniform could cost the same as two months pay for a Private Soldier.¹⁸

¹³ Cutherbertson, System for the complete Interior Management and oeconomy of a Battalion of infantry pg. 12-13

¹⁴ Royal Clothing Warrant of 1751

¹⁵ Carmen

¹⁶ Cutherbertson

¹⁷ Cutherbertson

¹⁸ Pompus, The Drum-Major

Duties, Ceremonies, and Positions

The infantry, of the British Army, usually consisted of two drummers per a single company; however, old pictures dictate that the music could be employed as a single drummer and a single fifer.¹⁹ In the case that a Battalion has ten companies, the Battalion would consist of twenty drummers, under the command of the Drum-Major.²⁰

Redmon states that the duty drummer should beat taps upon the orders of the night officer.²¹ Shortly after Taps, the Reveille is to be played “as soon as it is light enough to read writings.” On days when the Regiment is to march, the Reveille is to be replaced with the General, and it is to be played at a specific time appointed by the commanding officer.²²

A note that needs to be added; since Benjamin Franklin didn't suggest Day Light Savings Time until 1784²³ it can be concluded that sun rise was different between summer and winter, as well, the time of sunrise is not completely same now, so it is safe to assume that the sunrise was different each day.

Windham mentions five more calls. The first of which is the assembly. Windham says the assembly is to be beat shortly after the General, and is the signal for the troops to “draw up at the appointed posts of their respective companies, or where else they shall be ordered.” Next is, To Arms, “which is the signal for the whole to take arms; or for the battalion to stand to their arms, if they have grounded them.” The Troop is the same beating as the assembly, “and it is to be beat at the head of the battalion...before it marches off, to call the officers...to their posts.” The Troop is also a signal for when the Grenadiers march off for the colours, and when they return with the colours. It can also be used when guards are relieved, at which, “the officer is to order the guard to club, and the drummers beat the troop in marching back to the parade.” The last two Windham mentions is the Retreat, “which is to be beat when the battalion is to retreat, and then very slowly : and also at sunset, at some fixed post, by the drummers of the guard, in order the men to assemble, for the rolls of the companies to be called, and for the officers to read and deliver, what orders they have received for the men of their respective companies.” Finally, Windham mentions the Tattoo, in which he states is “to be beat at an hour appointed by the commanding officer, (generally at eight in the winter, and ten in the summer:) by all drummers. This is the signal for all the men to be in their quarters, and the serjeants to go around and see that they are so.”²⁴

The Drum and Fife-Majors with all the drummers and fifers off duty, are to beat the troop, retreat, and taptoo beatings every day. Also, no drummer or fifer is to beat or play after tattoo, or before reveille beating, on pain of severe punishment, except with the orders of the Commanding-officer.²⁵

While on the march, the Regiment was not to march in step, and the interval between the ranks was to be kept open to avoid confusion. In 1740, the idea of Drums and Fifes keeping cadence was being used in some regiments, but it isn't until the end of

¹⁹ Carman,

²⁰ Redmon, Note On Drums and Drummers in the British Army During the Seven Years War

²¹ Redmon, A Day in the Life of a British Regiment of Foote During the Seven Years War

²² Wingham, A plan of discipline for the use of the Norfolk Militia

²³ Britannia 2001 Standard Edition CD-Rom

²⁴ Windham

²⁵ Simes

the Seven Years War that the idea of marching in step with a cadence became standard practice. “The cadence, once it became adopted, became fairly quickly a training aid only.” At the review of the 25th Regiment of foote on the 18th day of July in 1777, the reviewing officer notes that the cadence is a slow 64 beats per a second, and at 94 beats per a second for the quick step.²⁶

“There are Six several Beats generally used that are Points of War. 1. A Call, 2. A Troop, 3. A March, 4. A Preparative, 5. A Battail, 6. A Retreat. The call is the order to prepare to hear present Proclamation, or Orders, to repair to your colours. By a Troop, you must diligently March as the Officers direct. Be March Beaten, you are to take your open Order in Rank, to shoulder your Firelock, and to March either Quicker, or Slower, according to the Beat of the Drum. By a Preparative, you are to Close to your due Distance, (for an engagement) both in Rank, and File, and to make Ready that you may execute upon the first Command. By the Battail, or Charge, understand the Continuation, or pressing forward in Order of Battle; not lagging behind rather with the highest Pitch of Courage, stepping forward, into the Place of him that fall Dead, or Wounded : And let your Courage, and Prudence be so joyn’d, that you may perform, and attain things Noble and Great. By a Retreat, observe an orderly Retiring, either for Relief, for advantage of Ground, or for some other Political End ; as to draw the Enemy into some Ambushcade, or otherwise to compleat your Commanders Intentions.”²⁷

In forming a company, the Drummers are to be posted on the right flank of the company, and to the outside of the eldest Sergeant, in line with the front rank. When the company marches off, the Drummers are to fall in between the front and center ranks of the first division. The Drummers are to be beating the March. In forming the Battalion, the Drummers are to pull out of being in between the front and center rank, and are to form up a rank of musicians behind the Battalion, six paces behind the rank of Sergeants.²⁸ Now according to the Drill Manual, when the companies wheel into formation, “the drummers are to move out of rank, while beating the troop march forward about twelve paces beyond where the front-rank is to draw-up ; then face to the right-about continuing to beat till the Officers are at their posts; when they are to cease.” After the Captains report to the Adjutant, the officers are ordered to take post in the battalion, and one half of the Drummers are to face to the right, and the other half faces to the left, and two Drummers, who are the Orderly Drummers, are also to be formed together. When the order March, is given, the two divisions of Drummers march off until they clear the flanks. They then face to the right/left, and march even with the front rank. The two orderly Drummers post themselves to the right of the Major, and the Grenadier Drummers march to their own company. Upon the order of halt, the Drummers, as do the Officers, Sergeants, and Pioneers, face to the front.²⁹ The exert from the platoon Exercise, “the Drummers are to fall back behind their Divisions: In all beatings, when the battalion is formed for Firing, the orderly drummers are to beat very loud, and the other Drummers are to beat low taking the beating from their orderly Drummers, to whom they must be very attentive.”³⁰ According to the platoon exercise, “When the battalion

²⁶ Houlding

²⁷ Gent, Militia Discipline.

²⁸ Cavan, A new system of military discipline, founded upon principle.

²⁹ Exercise of the Foote, 1757

³⁰ A new exercise, to be observed by His Majesty’s troops on the establish of Great Britain, and Ireland.

marches in Grand-divisions, the Drummers are to move up to the right or Left of their respective Grand-Divisions, dressing with the Front Rank.³¹

In the case of sending of the colour, Simes says that the colour escort is to be commanded by the Captain of the Grenadiers, and that the entire music Corp of fifers and drummers are to follow behind the ensigns, while playing the Grenadiers march.³² The Earl of Cavan says the escort is to be commanded by the first Lieutenant of the Grenadiers, with one drummer. The Drummers is to fall in between the front and center ranks of the Grenadiers while beating the Grenadiers March.³³ Simes states that, in reaching the location of where the colours are lodge, the Captain orders the detachment into three ranks with the Sergeants to the Rear. He then orders the Ensign to retrieve the colours, and for the escort to fix bayonets and present their arms. Then the escort marches back to Battalion playing the Grenadiers march. “When the colours reach the left flank of the battalion, the Commanding Officer orders, Present your Arms and face the battalion to the left, the drummers and fifers beating and playing a point of war, and the music ‘God save great George our King.’” The Grenadiers wheels into formation with the Battalion, at which points the music, drummers, and fifers cease playing. The Commanding Officers then orders, to the right as you were. After the Battalion faces to the front, “the Captain of grenadiers followed by his Lieutenant; behind whom the Ensigns with the colours, move briskly to the right; the officers and colours march in front of the line of Officers; the fifers and drummers between the Officers and the front rank of the battalion; the front rank of grenadiers along the rear rank of the battalion. When the Ensigns come to the center of the battalion, they are to fall in, and dress with the line of Officers. The grenadiers having returned to their posts on the right, get the words of command from their Captain.”³⁴ The Earl of Cavan states that, upon the arrival to the location of the colours, the Lieutenant orders to Escort to halt, which is also the signal for the Drummer to cease beating. The Ensigns are then to plant their esponsos, and retrieve the colours. The Lieutenant gives the orders to present arms, at which time the drummer begins beating the march. The escort is to march back to the Battalion, and when with in forty or fifty paces of the battalion, the Major is to orders a short roll of his orderly drummer, all the other drummers then answer. The Major then orders the Battalion to present arms. Once the Battalion presents arms, the orderly is to begin beating the March, which is then mimicked by the other drummers. The Lieutenant of the escort is to shape his march to bring his right flank almost to join the left flank of the battalion, and in the same direction with it. On his approach, the Major is again to say, Battalion, face to the left. When the Lieutenant approaches the flank of the battalion, he is to order them to halt, and face to the right, and March. “On which the Major is again to say, Battalion, face to the right, or to the front. The escort having faced and marched, the men are to march by files, each rank marching in the middle space between those of the battalion, in order that they may the more conveniently join those of their respective company, that is the Lieutenant is himself to march between the line of officers and the front rank of the battalion, his front rank is to march between the front and centre ranks, the Drummer following and beating, his center rank is also to pass between the center and

³¹ Platoon Exercise

³² Simes

³³ Cavan

³⁴ Simes

rear rank, and his rear rank between the rear rank of the battalion and the line of Serjeants. The Ensigns with the colours are to march after each other in the front of the line of officer, keeping at four paces distant from that line, and as many asunder. Each officer is to salute them as they pass by him, by taking off his hat, which is to be done in consideration of the high honour and trust they are instead with, in carrying the colours of their country, and they are, on their part to acknowledge the attention given them, by taking off their hats in return. On their approach to the centre of the battalion, they are to incline inwards, so as to fall into the line of officers, where they are to post themselves four paces from each other, and in the rear of the Colonel and then to face to the front, and to stand in proper order, holding the colours advanced, at which the Major is to order the battalion to shoulder. The lieutenant of the escort is, on having returned and joined his company, to give the following words of command, Serjeants and Drummers, to your former posts. Escort, front. Shoulder. Return your bayonets. Shoulder.” After which the Lieutenant is to face to the front; and then to go up and make his report to the Captain, and return to his former post.³⁵

Since the Drill Manuel of 57 says the musick is to be split into two divisions for battalion exercise; first division on the far left, second divisions on the far right, two order drummers stationed with the Major, and the two Grenadier drummers with their respective company; and this process is completed before colours are to be sent for, it might be able to concluded that the Earl of Lambart’s description of retrieving colours would be more accurate for the 1750’s. Simes didn’t write his book, Military Guide for Young Officers, until 1776 or 1777. As for the Colour according to the description of Lambart, if the Grenadier’s are already posted with their company, then it would seem more logical for the Grenadier drummers to be the only drummers to join the escort, as mentioned by the Earl of Lambart. There for, the only question you have to ask is, whether they both are playing drum, whether one is on fife, or whether they have fifers with them?

In times of battle, Simes gives the orders for the Drummers to remain with their respective companies to help with the wounded.³⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Wolfe, also gives this order to the 20th Regiment in case of a French landing.³⁷

A Note about the Corporal; The Corporal “...should be master of all the beats of the drum and tunes of the fife, and instantly obey them.³⁸

³⁵ Cavan

³⁶ Simes

³⁷ Wolfe, General Wolfe’s instructions to young officers: also his orders for a battalion and an army.

³⁸ Simes

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