

Orders on the Irish Establishment

Townshend.

We do hereby direct and Require you to cause two Sergeants' Fuzils and thirty-nine of the New Short Arms for Light Infantry to be delivered to each of the Commanding Officers of Regiments of Foot in the Margin mentioned for the use of the Light Companies of the said Regiments, etc."

[Regiments listed in the margin] 5th 24th, 27th, 34th, 38th, 40th, 42nd, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 50th, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 57th, 63rd.

Given &c the 17th Day of July 1772

To The Master General and Principal of His Majesty's Ordnance."

Found in the "Historical Records of the 40th (2nd Somersetshire) Regiment" by Capt. R.H. Raymond Smythies, 1894, pg 552.

"Rules and Orders for the Discipline of the Light Infantry companies in His Majesty's Army in Ireland.

Townshend.

"The Light Infantry Companies are always to be drawn up two Deep with a space of Two Feet between the Files.

Marching in a Wood upon any Service of a Secret Nature, they are to be taught to lower their arms in two motions and carry them in a diagonal Position, with their hands on the swell of the firelock and they are to shoulder in three motions. They are to perform all Evolutions by Files and never to wheel any part of the Circle by Platoons or subdivisions much less by a larger Body. When marching through a Wood or any Strong Country by Files and ordered to form a Front to the Left, the Right Hand File is to face to the left and the others to run up briskly and dress by it, If to form a Front to the Right the Right Hand File is to face to the Right, and the other Files are to form briskly to the Right of it; and then the Rear Rank of the Detachment becomes the Front, when a few Files are formed the Commanding Officer is to order an Irregular Fire to begin, and to Continue untill the signal shall be given for Ceasing. It is to be particularly observed that each file has an entire dependence upon itself and that the Firelocks of the front and rear Men, are never to be unloaded at the same time, when the front Rank Man Fires, the Rear Rank Man is to make Ready and step up briskly before his Comrade, but is by no means to discharge his Firelock untill the other has loaded, and then he is to step briskly before the Rear Rank Man, and this to be followed untill a signal shall be given for ceasing to Fire. This Mutual Defence and Confidence is one of the most Essential Principles of Light Infantry. The Men when in a wood are to be taught to Cover themselves with Trees by placing the Right Foot about six inches behind the left, and presenting to the Right of the tree, and after firing to step back two paces, and give Room to the Rear Rank man to come up to the same Tree and to fire alternately, according to the directions before mentioned."

All Officers Commanding Companies, or any body of Light Infantry, are to fix upon signals for extending their Front to the Right or to the Left, or to both Flanks, or to Close to the Centre, to retire, or to advance, and these signals must be made by a loud whistle, a posting horn, or some other instrument capable of conveying a sufficient sound to be heard at a considerable Distance, and the stoutest of the Drummers is to be taught to sound these Instruments by directions from the Commanding Officer, who is to give the strictest Orders to the Men to be silent and attentive without which it is scarce possible that any action in a wood can be successful."

"The posting of guards depends upon the ground yet in general, Officers who command Light Infantry, must never place their outposts at too great a distance from the Main Body. if it should be necessary to occupy an height, which Commands the Country, Care must be taken to post other guards near to the most advanced, which may Aid its retreat."

"When a Corps of Light Infantry is composed of Companies from different Regiments they must do Duty by Companies with their own officers, and as double Centries are always to be posted, the file must mount together; to be relieved every hour Messes are to consist of a Non-Commissioned officer and three File and where it is necessary to detach a Corporal's Command the Men are to go together."

"The Light Infantry must also be taught to take Advantage of large stones, broken Inclosures, old Houses, or any strong feature which presents itself upon the face of a Country. But they must take particular Care not to run in Crowds to these objects."

"When a Corps of Light Infantry shall be employed in this Kingdom a small Waggon loaded with Intrenching Tools will be Ordered to attend it, and the officers are therefore to make themselves acquainted with the usual Method of Constructing Redans, Square Redoubts, and other parts of Field Fortification, likewise the Manner of felling and Freizing Trees for making abattis D'Arbres and to turn their Thoughts upon fortifying Church Yards and making Creneaus in Houses."

"When there is appearance of service the Men must be instructed in the Use of the Intrenching Tools and to make Fascines and Gabeons of different sizes."

"The Light Infantry must be Carefull not to fall into Ambuscades when they are marching through a Wood or any inclosed Country and Care must be taken to Advance a Guard, and to detach flanking parties. The flanking parties to March in front and the Files to move at the distance of ten yards from each other, when either of these parties shall discover an Enemy, They are not to run into the Main Body, but to take posts immediately and begin an attack according to the directions before mentioned, and the Commanding Officer is to form his Detachment to the flank that is Attacked and to support his party by sending a few Men under the Command of a Subaltern Officer, and to repeat this reinforcement as frequently as the Exigency of the Case may require. He is also to be very Carefull that the Men do not Crowd, and that the Enemy do not turn his flank, when there is any likelihood of that being the Case he must Order a Signal to be Sounded for extending the Front. If he should Command a Considerable Corps he should keep a small Reserve disengaged as long as possible."

"The success of any Engagement in a Wood or Strong Country depends upon the Coolness and presence of Mind of the Commanding Officer, and the Silence and Obedience of the Men fully as much as upon their Bravery."

"The Light Infantry are to be taught to fire at Marks, and each Soldier is to find out the proper Measure of Powder for his own Fire-lock and to make up his Cartridges accordingly."

"The Arms of every Soldier should be always kept in good Order, But the Light Infantry Man, in particular, must not neglect his Arms, his Ammunition or throw away his Fire, as his Existence may depend upon a Single Shot's taking place. The Light Infantry must consider that the Service upon which they are likely to be Employed, is very different from that of heavy Troops, The former being always to Engage in open Order and the Attack may frequently become personal between Man and Man, It is therefore necessary to be particular in selecting Men for this Service not only of Activity and Bodyly Strength but also of some Experience and approved Spirit."

"Each Man must have a sufficient Number of Cartridges made up, But as it may be necessary to have recourse to the Horn, The Men taught to load from it. Every part of the Accoutrements must be kept in Constant repair, the Tomahawks Sharp, and fit for Use. The Hatchet Men of the Light Infantry Companies must be able Active Men and they should know how to Make Use of their Axes. When a considerable Corps of Light Infantry is to march through a Wood or inclosed Country that can admit of it, The Commanding Officer may Order it to move from the Right or Left of Companies by Files the Companies are then to March in parallel Lines, but the flanking Companies must march in Front and form flanking Parties."

"An Officer Commanding a Corps of Light Infantry and marching into an open Country may shorten his line of March, or move them in whatever manner he may think best."

"Should any of the Enemy's Cavalry appear near a Corps of Light Infantry they must endeavour to retire to a Wood or some Strong Ground in good Order and with a firm Countenance. But if that cannot be effected they must disperse by Files, at Considerable distances from one another, fix their Bayonets, take great Care not to throw away their Fire untill they are shure that a shot shall take place, still endeavoring to gain a Hedge, Broken House, Arvin or Wood or large Stone, Cavalry seldom attacks Infantry in this dispersed situation if Men are resolute and determined not to throw away their Fire, and the files are attentive to the directions before given. The Light Infantry Companies are to practice Marching very frequently in quarters."

"Besides what is before directed the Light Infantry Companies are to be instructed in the manual and every other Evolution which the battalion may be ordered to perform."

"And Officers Commanding Regiments may employ the Light Infantry Company in the manner which shall appear to them most proper, for the safety and protection of the Battalion whether upon a March or in the Field. And We do hereby direct and require the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Forces in this Kingdom to cause these Rules and Orders to be duly observed and executed and he is to direct the Adjutant General to send Copies thereof to the General Officers upon the Staff and to the Commanding Officer of every Regiment of Foot upon this establishment."

Given &c the 15th Day of May 1772.