

Leadership The Rifles Way



Swift and Bold

The Definition of The Rifles

The Rifles is a forward-looking infantry regiment relying on mutual respect, self-discipline and a relentless desire for innovation.

The Definition of a Rifleman

'The thinking, fighting man'. Regardless of rank, a Rifleman demonstrates professional excellence and fighting spirit through self-discipline and initiative. It is a point of pride to say "I am a Rifleman".

Ethos

The Rifles ethos¹ is to be innovative and forward-looking. Riflemen are expected to think for themselves and to be swift and bold in rising to any challenge. This is encapsulated in the ideal of *the thinking, fighting man* who aspires to serve at the forefront of military thought and action at home and overseas.

Regimental Centre of Gravity

The quality of our young officers is the regimental centre of gravity. Unlike our soldiers, they are recruited nationally, on merit and are selected to sustain variety and excellence.

Regimental Objectives

The Colonel Commandant has set six Regimental Objectives to take the Regiment forward.² The Regiment must:

- Reinforce the significance of the collective identity of the Riflemen.
- Use our historical characteristics to exploit developments in modern warfare.
- Strive to realise the potential of every Rifleman.
- Maintain close ties with the places we come from.
- Build a strong family using all 5 Pillars of the Regiment.³
- Reinvigorate our Regimental Characteristics.

COLONEL COMMANDANT'S FOREWORD

This updated edition of "Leadership The Rifles Way" describes our Regimental doctrine in a way that is designed to be relevant to our young officers and junior commanders. But it is much more than this; it is a very private expression of what we continue to strive to be, seven years since our formation. As a Regiment we have no divine right to be special, but we are different. This booklet points the way to transforming 'different' into 'special'. We cannot set a higher entry standard than other infantry regiments and so a distinctive approach to leadership, particularly by our young officers, is the key to getting the very best out of our subordinates in the most challenging circumstances. This pivotal role of our young officers is the reason that I have designated them as the Regimental Centre of Gravity.

We have to develop the potential of every Rifleman in barracks and on training, and then exploit this on operations. Each man will have different strengths and weaknesses; "Leadership The Rifles Way" will ensure that we get the very best out of our most precious resource – our Riflemen. Only by doing this will we be able to innovate, be confident enough to take risks and to achieve decisive success in the most challenging circumstances. If we can get our leadership right we can be a truly special regiment. This is a considerable challenge for our young officers and junior commanders; this booklet sets out the path that they should follow and is important.

Swift and Bold

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Carter." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

General Sir Nicholas Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen
Colonel Commandant, The Rifles
December 2014

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet explains the philosophy underpinning The Rifles approach to soldiering and provides some practical advice to young officers and junior commanders. It is a statement of how we, as Riflemen, expect business to be done and interpret the Army's Core Values. It is written principally for young officers at platoon level, but is intended to be understood and applied by commanders in The Rifles at all levels.

The Rifles aspires to be an innovative and forward-looking Regiment, yet we continue the traditions and follow the example of our forbears. Our antecedent Regiments were awarded 913 Battle Honours and 120 Victoria Crosses; this guide takes pride in drawing on our regimental history to illustrate our proven and enduring ethos.



2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade fording the River Alma, 1854 by Louis A Johns.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE RIFLES

The Rifles was formed on 1 February 2007 from the four regiments⁴ of the Light Division. The formation of The Rifles took place against a background of change and uncertainty in the international security environment, as well as in the Army. The forming regiments saw this as an opportunity to create a Regiment designed to excel on the operations of the 21st Century, rather as Sir John Moore did two centuries ago when he formed the first force of light infantry and riflemen which later became the nucleus of Wellington's famous Light Division. The intent was to create something new that, while it would draw on the traditions and example of the past, would be forward looking and adaptable to a dynamic operational environment.

These principles set out the ethos and characteristics of The Rifles, and the path down which the Regiment is travelling, recognising that the Regiment must have room to evolve in the future. The Regiment must guard against complacency and seek to reinvigorate its characteristics for they form the bedrock of the Regiment's success.

The Rifleman

At the centre of The Rifles' philosophy is an understanding of the partnership, collective identity and unity of purpose that are all implied in the term Rifleman - as it is applied to all ranks. Usage and understanding of the term has three aspects – an expression of collective identity based on individual qualities which delivers a common approach to the conduct of operations:

Collective Identity. All who serve in The Rifles are Riflemen, regardless of rank. The term Rifleman is an expression of common and united identity, embodying a close bond of comradeship rooted in the Regiment's core value of mutual respect, trust and pride, and forged through shared experience, common cause and hardship. It invokes a spirit of equality, within the hierarchy of command, which recognises that good ideas can, and will, come from everyone. The Regiment is a brotherhood of Riflemen that delivers the unity of purpose and mutual understanding that makes mission command a natural and effortless method of operating. We always aim to set the highest professional standards and through our actions we aspire to be known for our excellence, but also for our strong sense of decency and our all-embracing sense of comradeship. We are forward looking

and promote freedom of expression, aiming to contribute significantly to the development of military thought. We encourage informality and a relaxed, good-humoured rapport amongst all ranks.

Individual Qualities. Riflemen are expected to demonstrate individual characteristics and professional qualities that set the standard for infantry soldiers. This is encapsulated in the definition of a Rifleman as, “*the thinking, fighting man*”. The Rifles carries forward the professional excellence, fighting spirit and discipline of its forming regiments. We place very high value on the unique contribution of the individual. In character we value: self-discipline and courage; decency, integrity and loyalty; quickness of mind, word and deed; suitable ambition, determination and robustness.

Operational Distinctiveness. Our historical characteristics, ethos and the nature of Riflemen themselves should be utilised to exploit developments in modern warfare. They form a shared and distinctive approach to the conduct of operations and we are committed to the unrelenting pursuit of excellence:

Delivering Operations. Under the highest standards of leadership, individual Riflemen combine to form exceptionally effective teams, from fire teams to battalions. This collective effect is uniquely powerful because, although Riflemen act in concert, we are never just cogs in a machine. We think and act independently, guided by a clear understanding of the purpose of our team’s mission. Riflemen should embrace mission command, demonstrate agility and independence of thought and action, and be ready to seize opportunity. We are expected to embody our motto: “Swift and Bold”.

Developing and Innovating. We always try to anticipate developments, aiming to be at the forefront in all our operational roles. We have the potential to do this because we think for ourselves and adapt without waiting to be told, and we do it to ensure success for all. We are committed to being in the vanguard of purposeful change within and for the Army.

Responsibility on Operations

As a young infantry commander on operations you have a huge responsibility to both your Riflemen and to your chain of command. To my Riflemen my responsibility was significant: securing their welfare needs; maintaining high standards of discipline and professionalism; and encouraging cohesion and morale. My greatest responsibility was ensuring their safety and mitigating as much of the risk that they faced as possible through careful operational planning. By doing this I was also able to deliver on my key responsibility to my chain of command: providing a combat effective platoon, capable of achieving mission success in all environments.

I have found that Riflemen look to their leaders to make difficult decisions. As a Platoon Commander I was regularly challenged with making those decisions, all of which had potential life-changing effects on people. Decision making is a responsibility borne from rank and position of authority; it was imperative that I stood accountable for every choice I made. By making those choices, sometimes in the face of our enemies, I generated trust between the Riflemen and myself. I found that an essential part of taking responsibility on operations was simply being able to put my hand up and admit that I had made a mistake. Having the integrity to take responsibility when things went wrong generated trust and learning from those mistakes was an essential part of maintaining that trust.

Responsibility on operations as a young infantry Platoon Commander was challenging, exhilarating and, at times, emotional. It is part of a privilege second to no other: commanding Riflemen on operations.

Rifles Platoon Commander, 2011.



1 RIFLES on patrol in Afghanistan, 2009.

Command

Command in The Rifles can be very challenging and enormously rewarding. The Regimental ethos means that strong, confident and knowledgeable leadership, combined with subtle yet sure control, are essential to release the full potential of every Rifleman. This holds throughout the chain of our command. The three principal rank groups within the Regiment (the officers; the warrant officers and serjeants; and the junior ranks) operate in a spirit of utmost mutual respect and co-operation.

Officers. Officers command. They must take the lead in every sphere, educating, coaching and inspiring their Riflemen. We need officers who have the potential to excel in command and lead Riflemen on operations. So, we seek to draw upon only the best. They must be able to lead by example in order to release the independent spirit, action and potential of Riflemen. This requires intelligence, insight and a capacity for lateral thought. It demands strength of character. It also calls for a natural gift for communication, style, and a sense of humour and fun. Officers must understand above all, that their Riflemen come first.

Getting the balance right – avoiding over familiarity and the unrelenting pursuit of excellence

A relaxed relationship and pursuing operational excellence are not mutually exclusive. A strong fraternity enhanced the performance of my platoon on operations and, by sticking to common sense, I did not find it a significant challenge to walk the line between formality and over-familiarity. The greater challenge in pursuing excellence lay not in maintaining discipline and formal relationships amongst rank – my Riflemen were mature enough to understand who was in charge – it was in not allowing our close bond to subordinate the mission to our camaraderie. Riflemen must be left in no doubt as to the priorities: my mission, my team, myself.

Riflemen need and respect boundaries and as a commander it is important to make these fair and unambiguous from the outset. In Afghanistan, my platoon occupied an austere Check Point partnered with 15 Afghan National Army warriors. Whilst we shared stories, letters and practical jokes (often at my expense) like friends, soldiering was always to the highest standard; patrol checks completed, weapons oiled and sentries inspected regularly. When Riflemen deviated they were corrected immediately, firmly, and with an explanation if necessary, ensuring continuous high standards and reinforcing the rank structure.

Twice daily patrols against a dangerous and unpredictable enemy created a shared experience whose challenges could make or break a team. The formality of in-barracks life could not have survived this close living environment. We created an environment where we could relax and forge relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Each man was expected to do his job to the best of his ability and to do what he was told, when he was told. I always treated my Riflemen as adults, and they appreciated that respect. As a commander I enjoyed the freedom to choose how to pitch my leadership. Provided a Rifleman understands who is in charge and does the right thing when not watched then the balance is right and operational success will follow.

Rifles Platoon Commander, 2011.

Warrant Officers and Serjeants. The Regiment's warrant officers and serjeants support and advise their officers and hold much of the Regiment's experience. They are master tacticians and guardians of standards, experienced and technically expert in so much that obtains at the tactical levels of war and operations. They contribute significantly to the development of junior officers. They too lead by example and nurture Riflemen junior to them. On operations they assume command when the situation so demands. Their personal example should be inspiring, and they underpin discipline – intelligently, respectfully and firmly – but always seeking to promote self discipline over rigidly imposed collective control.

Corporals and Riflemen. Success on operations comes at the point of contact and delivery; this falls mainly to the Corporals and Riflemen. Riflemen work to deliver a decisive and overwhelming effect, usually under the direction and leadership of their commanders. But there may be occasions when they find themselves alone. Under such circumstances they are expected to work things out for themselves, use initiative. So each Rifleman thinks for himself in the interests of the whole. He can speak up, to add his thoughts at the right moment. This demands good judgement and absolute self-discipline; it demands the very highest standards of professionalism.

Service in The Rifles is challenging – seldom easy and never dull.



4 RIFLES on patrol in Iraq, 2007.

A National Regiment, Connected to its Places of Origin

The Rifles is a National Regiment, one of strong regional ties. It knows that it is of its Counties, Cities and Towns. Its diversities actually serve to enrich its unity founded upon common values and utmost commitment to a shared professional ethos. The Regiment strives to maintain close ties with its places of origin and build a strong family using all 5 Pillars of the Regiment.

The Integrated Regiment. Regular Riflemen are posted across the Regiment according to operational demands and the need for career development, balanced with personal preferences. This process integrates all battalions of the Regiment. Our shared ethos is the key to making this succeed. All Riflemen should feel at home, and are welcomed and treated as such, in any battalion of the Regiment. Each battalion celebrates the history and achievements of all the forming regiments. The belt badge marks this.

Nurturing Our Roots. So much that we hold in common derives from our roots, our Counties, Cities and Towns. We hold in trust the faith and hopes placed upon us by our communities, our places of origin. It is essential therefore that we remain always profoundly close to them. This closeness is about very much more than recruitment – it is mostly a matter of holding ourselves to account, to our Sovereign and the people we serve. But recruitment represents the lifeblood of the Regiment. For this reason, after operations, recruiting is The Rifles' day-to-day priority. It is conducted locally and in a way that reinforces the sense of community between the Regiment and its places of origin. As this is a challenge for the entire Regiment, we do this through The Rifles' Council, The Rifles' Headquarters with its County and City Offices, the County and City Colonels, and The Rifles' Family – Regular battalions, TA battalions and companies, cadet forces, old comrades and dependants. The Rifles' Headquarters directs all Regular and TA Rifles battalions (and TA companies in other battalions) to support local Regimental recruiting and public relations activities as necessary.



**The last eleven of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment at the Battle of Maiwand
Afghanistan, 1880 by Frank Feller - 1884.**

Dress, Music and Traditions

The Regiment's uniform, symbols, music, customs and traditions are drawn from all the forming regiments, but the overall impression reflects particularly the unifying military ethos of Sir John Moore's original force of light infantry and riflemen, which later expanded and was proven in the Peninsular War, a campaign in which all the founding regiments served with distinction, sharing battle honours. The uniform is Rifle Green with black buttons and accoutrements, and with elements of red, recognizing the heritage of the line regiments. The symbol and cap badge of The Rifles is the bugle. Our distinctive appearance contributes to the sense of pride and belonging shared by all Riflemen, irrespective of place of origin.

Battle honours are not worn on working dress. Instead, the selected symbols of our past are carried forward on parade uniforms. As a rifle regiment, battalions of The Rifles do not carry Colours. Instead, battle honours are entrusted to each Rifleman, who wears a representative selection of battle honours from all the forming regiments on the cross belt or belt badge. All our officers, warrant officers and serjeants wear cross belts with the Inkerman whistle and chain, used in the past, with the bugle, to communicate with and direct Riflemen. The bugle is central to our musical traditions but music has been carried forward from all our forming regiments. Daily routine in the battalions is marked by bugle calls, and so The Rifles sound, rather than beat, Retreat.

The traditions and customs of all forming regiments are shared by The Rifles in their entirety, and so the Regiment celebrates the Battle of Salamanca, 1812 on the 22nd July as its annual Regimental Day.



The Rifles Belt Badge

Conclusion

The Rifles is a Regiment of excellence. Founded upon the inspiration of the past, The Rifles aspires to be forward thinking. A National Regiment, rich in its diversity, strengthened through shared values, The Rifles will serve The Crown ever faithfully.

THE CORE VALUES OF THE ARMY

*'(The) spirit which inspires soldiers to fight ... derives from, and depends upon, the high degrees of commitment, self sacrifice and mutual trust which together are so essential to the maintenance of morale.'*⁵

The British Army's ethos is embodied in the Core Values of: selfless commitment, courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty and respect for others. The Rifles' ethos is set in the context of the Army's Values and Standards; there is no conflict between them. We are bound to lead Riflemen according to these Values, but we interpret them in accordance with our Principles.



28th (North Gloucestershire) Regiment of Foot in a square at Quatre Bras attacked by French lancers 1815 by Lady Elizabeth Southerden Butler 1875.

Selfless Commitment

*'From the start, Riflemen came to respect their Officers and model themselves on their standards. Chivalry, forbearance, consideration for others and a refusal to put oneself forward before one's comrades and the Regiment were the indispensable qualities of a good Officer and had to be learnt by everyone who aspired to be one.'*⁶

The idea that officers serve those under their command is not a new one. From the very beginning of an officer's career he is expected to 'Serve to Lead'⁷. A Rifles officer must always put his Riflemen's welfare before his own. He should not eat, drink, or shelter on the battlefield until provision has been made for his Riflemen. Moreover, he must be prepared to do at least all that he expects of his Riflemen; usually more.



**The Stand of 2nd Devons at the Battle of Bois des Buttes 1918
by William Barnes Wollen - 1920.**

Courage

Courage can be both physical and moral in nature; a leader needs both. A commander's courage to grip poor standards in camp when it is easier to look the other way is just as important as the courage he needs to do his job amidst the terror and chaos of battle.

It is human nature to avoid personal hardship and to look for the easy option. That said, few genuinely cannot distinguish right from wrong and most of us know in our hearts what it is that we ought to do. It takes moral courage to do the right thing when it would be easier to do the wrong thing. The old cliché that the right thing to do is often the hardest thing to do is as true today as it has always been. A leader of Riflemen must always strive to do what is right, irrespective of the consequences, although deliberately avoiding comfort or pleasure for himself and those he leads for no purpose is stupid and demoralising. Riflemen will take their lead from the example that they are set, so the standards of their leaders must be beyond reproach. Leaders who display courage earn respect which may lead to popularity. But the leader who seeks popularity first and for its own sake runs the risk of compromising his moral authority, and will never be respected.



Captain McCabe's (Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry) last sortie at Lucknow, 1857 by WB Worren.

Discipline

Field Marshal Earl Wavell said that discipline was:

'the teaching which makes a man do something which he would not, unless he had learnt that it was the right, the proper and the expedient thing to do. At its best, it is instilled and maintained by pride in oneself, in one's unit, in one's profession; only at its worst by fear of punishment.'

In The Rifles, we live by the idea that the best form of discipline is self-discipline. The aim is the prevention rather than the punishment of crime and poor conduct; it comes from the example of others, encouragement, pride and mutual respect. Even so, the ideal of serving in a regiment where discipline comes purely from self discipline is, unfortunately, unrealistic. Whilst the majority will flourish under such a system, there will always be some that will not. For them, discipline must be firmly but fairly administered. They must understand what it is that they have done wrong and, if punished, should be dealt with promptly, proportionately, and lawfully.

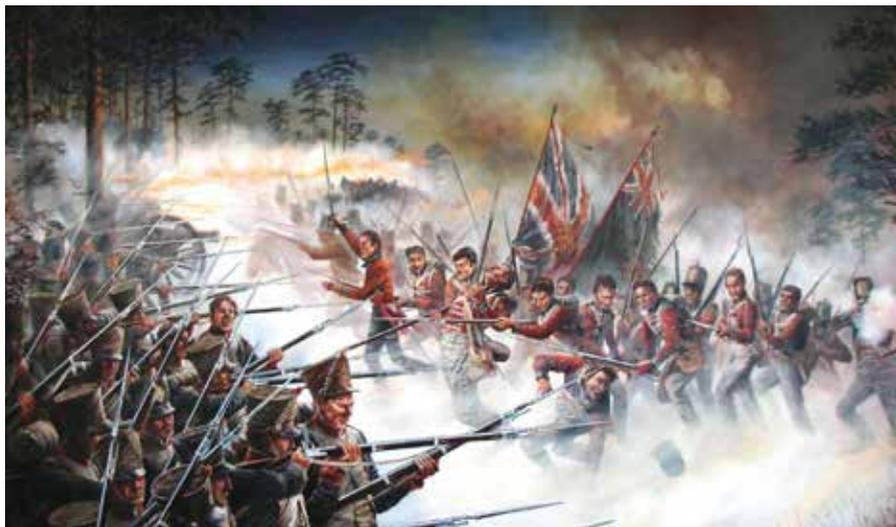


Sniper from 2 RIFLES, Iraq 2007.

Leading with a light touch requires a tight grip. This is an element of Rifles discipline which is often misunderstood. The standards of a platoon, both in camp and on operations, directly reflect those of its platoon commander. The same applies at section, company and battalion level. Only the highest of professional standards should be accepted, with officers unfailingly leading by example. Failure to set high standards and then enforce them in a consistent way will erode a commander's stock of moral authority and leave the Riflemen unsure as to where they stand. Things must be done properly all of the time; there is no room to cut corners during training or in barracks because there is no room for it on operations.

Integrity

Integrity is the value without which one cannot be a true leader of men. It means that a leader must be genuine and utterly sound, be honest to himself and others, and have no trace of hypocrisy. It involves taking responsibility for things that are his fault. It means not betraying a trust, even when it may now be an accepted part of civil society's culture or norm to do so. It is unshakeable soundness of moral character. Rifles leaders are expected to know what is right and wrong and instil this value within their commands.



The 11th (North Devon) Regiment at the Battle of Salamanca, 1812 by DJ Rowlands 1985.

Loyalty

Loyalty is the unreserved investment by the leader in those that he leads and the organisation that he works for. Its essence is the willingness to be devoted to something other than personal interest. This means the acceptance of personal sacrifice for the benefit of others. Officers and non commissioned officers have a right to expect loyalty from their Riflemen and the chain of command above them by virtue of their rank and appointment. But continuing loyalty is reciprocal; leaders earn loyalty by being loyal to those they command.

Respect for Others

In 1808, Rifleman Harris of the 95th Rifles noted in his book, *Recollections of a Rifleman*,⁸

'It is singular how a man loses or gains respect with his comrades from his behaviour. The Officers too are commented upon and closely observed. The men are very proud of those who are brave in the field and kind and considerate to the soldiers under them.'



5 RIFLES deploy by helicopter, Iraq 2008.

In The Rifles there is no place for discrimination, bullying, racism or initiation. These would undermine our strength and our cohesion. We should encourage and exploit diversity since it brings with it advantages such as wider cultural understanding and it encourages innovation. Our respect for others is not restricted to The Rifles family: representatives of Allies, members of other units, the populations we protect, interpreters and captured enemy combatants, for example, should be treated with respect at all times.

Leaders in The Rifles and those they command represent the Regiment, the Army and the country, whether on or off duty. By maintaining the highest standards when dealing with civilians in camp and the wider community, leaders and Riflemen alike learn the conduct required to deal with people decently on operations. Increasingly, the way we conduct ourselves amongst the populations of the world, including at home, is crucial to operational success.



Pegasus Bridge D+6. Captured by D Coy, 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in a coup de main operation on 6 June 1944.

LEADERSHIP

*'When the blast of war blows in our ears and the situation is bloody dangerous, you need instinctive, exemplary, innovative and inspirational leadership...Such leadership requires individuals who are not easily intimidated, who display both character and confidence...Your character: your conscience, your principles and your honesty, are the basis of your ability as a leader. It's your individuality, your single-mindedness, your integrity, humility and your desire to be damned good at what you do that is important.'*⁹

Leadership is ultimately about the projection of personality and character. As such it is personal by nature and as the leader gains experience, so his style of leadership develops. Rifles officers are expected to lead with a light touch, a sense of humour, style and a spirit of adventure; but without pomposity, fuss or unnecessary formality. It is a style based on mutual confidence, mutual respect, mutual affection and a love of soldiering. The light touch should be underpinned by a tight grip; a difficult trick to pull off, but essential if relaxed efficiency is not to descend into relaxed inefficiency.

A platoon commander must learn all there is to know about his Riflemen and their families. He should go beyond the basics that might be established in a

quick interview and try and understand what it is that makes them tick. He should know who their friends are and what they do in their spare time, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and find out what it is that concerns them and their plans for the future.

This cannot be done overnight and Riflemen will often test a young officer with pipe dreams, but with patience and a genuine interest in their welfare will come their trust and honesty. Officers should develop and encourage appropriate ambition to gain skills and responsibility in their Riflemen; many are far more capable than they think they are, and the Army offers them enormous opportunities which must be exploited.

An officer's care and dedication for those under his command should be obvious but not overstated. His commitment to them is for their benefit, not his own. He must always be honest with them, even when the truth is not what they want to hear.

It is human nature to make mistakes, so as they will happen, as far as possible they should be used as the basis for learning rather than a cause for a reprimand. Leaders should be tactful when dealing with people, understanding that most people do not like to be criticised, but be firm in supporting the standard required. In order to facilitate demanding training, commanders should encourage an environment where people learn from their mistakes and accept constructive criticism without taking offence. That said, mistakes should only be made once and those that are the product of idleness or negligence are not to be tolerated.



Lt Col Turner winning the VC, commanding 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade at Kidney Ridge, 1942 by Terence Cuneo.

Joining My Platoon on Operations

The challenge of taking command of your first platoon whilst deployed on operations should never be underestimated. My platoon had lived and fought alongside each other for two hard months of demanding operations in Central Helmand by the time that I arrived. How could I, a brand new second lieutenant straight out of Sandhurst and Brecon, take command of this tight-knit team?

I realised that there were three key areas that I needed to focus on:

- **Gain trust and respect.** It was imperative that I achieve the trust and respect of my Riflemen and do so rapidly. The best and quickest way to achieve this and dispel any uncertainty that the Riflemen may have in me was to lead by example and display professional competence.
- **Understand the Riflemen.** I spent time getting to know my Riflemen: their backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, fears, ambitions and sense of humour. I was mindful to avoid compromising the 'air gap' that enables the command structure to operate effectively in the often more relaxed atmosphere of 'operations'.
- **Develop my leadership style.** The first two factors provided the foundations for me to successfully develop my leadership style based on example, professional competence and approachability. Approachability is particularly important as the impact of Riflemen feeling that they cannot speak to their commander can have lethal effects on operations.

In all of this, the vital ground was my Platoon Serjeant and Section Commanders. Their experience, professionalism and knowledge of the Riflemen were invaluable in establishing my position as their commander. To take advice is not a weakness, particularly when it is coupled with your own experience and judgement to enable a better decision. Indeed, on operations when lives may depend on that decision, your Riflemen will respect you more for doing so.

Rifles Platoon Commander, 2011.

ADMINISTRATION

The maxim “everything that is necessary and nothing that is not” remains as relevant now as it was in Sir John Moore’s day. Sound, efficient administration in the field and in barracks is vital for the Riflemen’s welfare and the platoon’s military effectiveness. It will build confidence in the platoon commander’s leadership as much as good tactics and the effective use of weapons and equipment. In the age of decentralised responsibility; of Joint Personnel Administration, Pay As You Dine, Whole Fleet Management and “Z Type” accommodation, it will require efforts greater than ever to look after Riflemen and a platoon’s equipment properly.



Buglers from The Band and Bugles of The Rifles.

TRAINING

For all commanders in The Rifles, training is the most important and rewarding activity outside operations. The training and effectiveness of a platoon is the commander’s responsibility and it is his imagination, drive and enthusiasm that will make the difference. In a busy battalion, much of the training programme will be dominated by short courses and activities run at a higher level. In this environment it would be easy to accept friction as a reason not to train Riflemen individually and collectively at platoon level, but this would weaken their effectiveness, cohesion and pride.

As far as possible a platoon commander should set and guard a stable structure within his Platoon. As individuals move between courses and commitments, it is all too easy to abandon, but this would be damaging. With hard work and planning it is possible to maintain a degree of stability, which helps to maintain

progress in training. For the Riflemen, it builds relationships, trust, pride and loyalty. It is the basis for teamwork.

The culture of responsibility that platoon commanders set in barracks and during training will reap benefit on operations. It is all too tempting for the commander to try and do everything himself, but this stifles initiative, weakens the chain of command and gives the impression that corporals and Riflemen are not trusted. He should give even the most junior Riflemen the chance to build self-confidence and demonstrate initiative at every opportunity: it will pay huge dividends on operations, where “the thinking Rifleman” really comes into his own. Commanders must demand the highest standards of commitment and professionalism from all ranks, especially subordinate commanders. A platoon commander must require section commanders to know their sections intimately. He should praise them when their section does something well and hold them accountable when it does not. He should allow them to train their sections as he would wish to train his platoon.

If Riflemen are told what to achieve and allowed to work out how to do it, they will often surprise with their ingenuity and show potential. Commanders should explain the importance of understanding and working to their intent and then give the Riflemen the chance to practise it.

Training must be challenging, interesting and realistic. On the whole it should be relevant to the role that the battalion is in, but platoon commanders should also seek to attune their Riflemen to dealing with the new and unexpected. It will be obvious to Riflemen when their platoon commander has put extra effort into their training and they will respond accordingly.



Recce Platoon 4 RIFLES conducting Strike training, 2008.

Commanders at platoon level should concentrate on getting the basics right. It is easy for operationally experienced Riflemen to believe that they know everything and train by simply going through the motions that they believe are expected of them. This is often compounded by instructors who complacently assume that basic skills are sound. This can lead to Riflemen who cannot zero their own weapon, do basic first aid or read a map. Commanders must not allow Riflemen and subordinate commanders to allow this attitude to creep in and must be prepared to stamp it out fast if they sense things slipping.

Training the next generation of JNCOs

Recent operations have demanded more than just the traditional role of JNCOs; their individual actions and decisions can have a profound impact sometimes beyond the tactical level. Training the next generation of our JNCOs is therefore a vital task and unique privilege because it offers an opportunity to both shape the future character and spirit of our Regiment and future operational success.

JNCOs are charged with two primary tasks: to train and lead sections to fight effectively in combat; and to administer and care for the Riflemen under their command. These two tasks are complementary as the best form of care we can provide is first class training. A Potential JNCO Cadre must teach Riflemen to understand this role and their future responsibilities as a leader. Above all else, JNCOs must provide leadership by example, not friendship. Personal courage, integrity, initiative, loyalty and devotion to duty have long been the hallmarks of the Rifleman. These must be joined by effective decision-making and communications. Good decision-making requires skills at assimilating information, analytical ability and decisiveness. Effective communicators have to demonstrate clearly and convincingly the logic of their decisions to their Riflemen.

JNCOs remain the backbone of our Battalions; they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Riflemen are successful. If we are to keep delivering that success on operations we must continue to resource the training of the next generation of JNCOs with our very best NCOs. We cannot afford to get it wrong.

Rifles Platoon Commander, 2011.

CONCLUSION

It is fitting that “Leadership - The Rifles Way” should close with the still relevant words of Sir John Moore, the father of the Light Division. When inspecting the 52nd Light Infantry in 1806 he wrote:

‘I have the pleasure to observe that this Regiment possesses an excellent spirit and that both Officers and men take pride in doing their duty. Their movement in the field is perfect; it is evident that not only the Officers, but that each individual soldier knows perfectly what he has to do; the discipline is carried on without severity: the Officers are attached to the men, the men to the Officers.’



43rd Light Infantry, 52nd Light Infantry and 95th Rifles form the rearguard on the retreat to Vigo, 1808 by Beadle.

End Notes

¹ The Army's ethos is embodied in its Core Values of: selfless commitment, discipline, integrity, loyalty and respect for others. The Rifles' ethos is set in the context of the Army's Values and Standards; there is no conflict between them.

² *The Rifles Regimental Directive 2012*, Col Comdt The Rifles, 19 Jan 2012.

³ The Regulars, Territorials, Cadets, Associations and Communities we come from.

⁴ The Devonshire and Dorset Light Infantry, The Light Infantry, The Royal Gloucestershire Berkshire and Wiltshire Light Infantry and The Royal Green Jackets.

⁵ *Values and Standards of the British Army*, (Mar 2000, subsequently revised Mar 2008).

⁶ *Jackets of Green. A Study of the History, Philosophy and Character of the Rifle Brigade*, Arthur Bryant (Harper Collins, 1972), commenting on the first British rifle troops in the early 1800s.

⁷ Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, *Serve to Lead – An Anthology* (London: HMSO, [Undated]).

⁸ *The Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, Benjamin Harris and Henry Curling, 1848. Republished with notes as *A Dorset Rifleman*, Eileen Hathaway, Shinglepicker, 1995, ISBN 0-9522782-2-7.

⁹ Major General Graeme Lamb CMG DSO OBE, addressing the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2006.

