



Development Info Sheet

<http://boys.brigadeaustralia.org/qld>

Protocol of Colours and Flags

Without doubt, Colour Drill is the most formal and ceremonial of Brigade activities. To be a member of the Colour party and the Colour bearer, should be the goal of every Senior. To be so appointed is a privilege without equal. Colours, together with standards, guidons and banners, are the identifying symbol of a unit. The guns are the Colours of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. The tradition of Colours is that the Company members should be familiar with their Colours, as opposed to the Colours of another unit. The addition of a Company's Colours on parade – just as would a military unit's standards, guidons or banners – provides a prestige not available in any other way, simply because they are the identifying symbol of the Company. In the chaos of battle, not least due to the amount of dust and smoke on a battlefield, soldiers needed to be able to determine where their unit was. Colours are generally presented to a Company by a dignitary, such as a Battalion or State President, Mayor, Member of Parliament, or Patron during a ceremony. Colours are treated with reverence as they represent the honour and traditions of the Company. When too old for continued use or when the Company is closed, Colours are laid-up in churches, museums, or other places of significance to the unit. Please, read this Info Sheet in conjunction with the BB Australia Drill Manual (1996).

Description of Colours



Colours are usually made of silk and measure approximately 90cm on the pike by 113cm on the fly. They often include a 5cm fringe and a pike pocket. Colours differ from flags not only in size, but in that Colours are dedicated through prayer to God. The Queen's Colour is always the senior Colour on parade. Some have designed their own Company Colours. In Australia, many BB Companies have adopted a design that features the Australian National Flag in the top-left corner with BB anchor and Company title on the fly. This is a true Colour, as opposed to an Australian flag that, often, has been provided by the Federal Member of Parliament. The Colour is attached to a pike which is usually 245cm long. A gilt Brigade crest finial is often attached to the top of the pike. A cord and tassels may be used to attach the Colour to the pike. The pike is held steady by a leather baldric / belt, worn over the left shoulder, so that the socket (or holster) is positioned centrally in front of the body. The belt is adjusted in length so that the lowest corner of the Colour is held with the right hand, adjacent to the mouth when the pike is held vertically.

Composition and movement of Colour party

A Colour party is comprised of one or more Colour bearers (or Ensigns) and Colour escorts. In The Boys' Brigade, Colour bearers are usually Non-Commissioned Officers, but may be Officers where no suitable NCOs exist. The senior Colour bearer carries the senior Colour, e.g., the Queen's Colour, and is the commander of the Colour party, giving the words of command to execute movements. The number of escorts will vary according to local circumstances. Usually a single Colour would warrant two escorts, one on each side of the bearer. A third escort would parade where two Colours are being used, one between the two bearers and two covering the bearers from behind. Where a third Colour is present – as in a combined Colour party with the GB Company – it is best to remain with three escorts, each covering a Colour bearer, who would stand abreast. Alternatively, assemble as separate Colour parties. Escorts are usually NCOs or older Seniors. Remember, selection in the Colour party is always an honour. To ensure dignified carriage of the Colours, all members of the Colour party ought to be well trained in ceremonial drill. Run a course towards the Skills Award. It is not dishonourable for a Boy to be omitted from a Colour party if he is simply not up to it, however, it is dishonouring to the Colours – and, therefore, the integrity of the Company – to include a Boy who cannot perform at the required level. It is better to leave Colour Drill off the programme if members are not yet ready.

Changing direction to the left or right is achieved by means of forming. Where the party comprises one Colour, there is conjecture that the members may turn about. Technically this is incorrect as the About Turn will have reversed the in-line formation as the escorts will have swapped positions in relation to the Colour bearer. Better to conduct two successive Forms. Within the confines of a church building, small variations are permissible, providing movement is performed smartly and correct protocol is respected. Should separate Colour parties be used, the party bearing the Queen's Colour is always senior, and goes first or on the right of other parties. Movement of the Colour party within

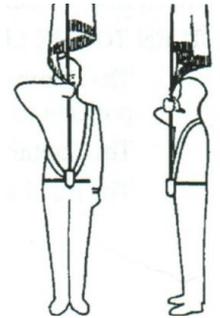
a building, such as church, is given space to allow for the ambiguities of the building, e.g., ceiling height, overhead fans or beams, width of aisles.



Positions

The position of **the Order** is used when the parade is Standing at Ease or during the Benediction. When at the Order, the base of the pike is placed on the ground in line with and against the outside of the right toecap, with the pike held perpendicularly. The Colour and pike are held with the right hand at the full extent of the right arm. The left arm is held by the side. Colour bearers Stand at Ease by moving the left foot, but hold their left arm by the side. Stand Easy is not used by the Colour party, who remain ready at all times. When stepping, e.g., re-aligning in preparation for procession inside the church building, the pike is raised off the ground no more than 3cms. This is known as **the Supported Order**. This procedure is also adopted where the junior Colour bearer is required to Right Dress.

The primary position of Colours on parade is **the Carry** used when marching on and off parade, and when standing at Attention. At the Carry, the pike is carried vertically in the socket of the baldric. The lowest corner of the Colour is held in the hand, which also holds the pike adjacent to the mouth, with the back of the hand to the front. Wrist and forearm are held parallel to the ground. On occasion, Colours are **Let Fly** whilst in the Carry position. In Quick Time, bearers swing their left arm in Quick Time, whilst holding the Colour at the Carry with the right arm. Escorts march as per elementary drill, swinging both arms.



BB used **the Slope** in its formative days when route marching to camp. We use the Slope today when moving cased Colours between their place of storage and the edge of the parade. At the Slope, the pike is placed on the right shoulder and held with the right hand, the elbow close into the side and the forearm parallel with the ground. Whilst there are no drill movements for the actual uncasing and casing of the Colours, this function should be performed with dignity. It is best for the Colour bearer to hold the pike across his body whilst an escort removes the cover. Unroll the Colour, taking care that it not touch the ground, and assume the position of the Order. To store the Colours, reverse the procedure.

Lowering the Colours is an extension of Let Fly and a specific drill movement performed when marching past a Saluting Base or during a General / Royal Salute. It is a common error and slight of protocol to carry the Colours in a lowered state on other than these occasions. Bearers must always remain vigilant to carry the Colour pike perpendicularly. Should a BB contingent be assembled on parade before an Admiral of the Fleet, a Field Marshal or a Marshal of the Air Force then it would be appropriate to lower the unit Colours, i.e., Company, Battalion, State, etc. The Queen's Colours would be lowered in respect to a member of the Royal family.



Whilst one dilemma of using a 180cm Australian flag as a Colour is that the above General Salute movements cannot be performed, an even greater dilemma is that protocol governing use of the Australian flag – as indeed most, if not all, National flags – states that the Flag should not be held to the pike, but allowed to fly freely. So, as a flag, it ought to fly freely, but as a Colour it is held.



References

- BB Australia Drill Manual (1996) pp9.3-9.5, 12.1-12.2
- BB Ceremonial Manual (1954) pp18-38, 64-68
- Australian Army LWP-G Drill Manual, chapter 10, Colour Drill
- Australian Army Ceremonial Manual annex C, Flag Protocol.

**The adventure begins here – in developing a BB that
Partners with Churches
Supports Leaders
Engages Boys**