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Small Arms Training

Volume I, Pamphlet No. 11

Pistol (.455-inch)

1937

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By Authority H. J. GREEN, Govt. Printer, Melbourne.

By Command of the Army Council,

H. Greedy

THE WAR OFFICE,
31st March, 1937.

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GENERAL

1. The pistol is the personal defensive weapon of all officers and such other ranks as are armed with it. In pistol training, therefore, they must reach a standard which will ensure effective shooting in war, whether on foot, mounted or from a vehicle.

2. The correct handling of the pistol in war calls for cunning, initiative, determination and a knowledge of the characteristics of the weapon. This is particularly the case in fighting in enclosed country, such as villages, woods, trench systems, etc. Handling the weapon in war requires confidence on the part of the firer to hit an adversary at close quarters.

3. The characteristics of the pistol are :—

i. A one-handed weapon used without support to hand or arm. Therefore :—

(a) It is unsuitable for firing by deliberate aim.

(b) Correct holding and trigger pressure are of increased importance.

(c) The firer must be able to fire with either hand.

ii. A short barrel, which :—

(a) Aids quickness in shooting at surprise and moving targets.

(b) Restricts the range at which accurate shooting is possible.

(c) Makes the weapon dangerous if carelessly handled, since it can so easily be pointed or discharged in the wrong direction ; safety precautions are therefore necessary at all times.

iii. A high rate of fire combined with the stopping power of the bullet, giving it special advantages in close-quarter fighting.

4. The occasions on service when a pistol is likely to be used are rare but, when the necessity does arise, it is essential that shots should be delivered accurately and very quickly. The pistol should, therefore, normally be used at close range, *i.e.* 25 yards or under, and the instinctive action of a man suddenly confronted with an opponent within this distance is to fire instantly by sense of direction. Under such conditions, the quickness with which one or more effective shots can be

fired is more important than the close grouping of the shots. The pistol is effective up to 50 yards, but considerable skill is necessary to hit an adversary at this distance.

5. Since the instinctive action of firing by sense of direction combines quickness with sufficient accuracy, it follows that the main purpose of pistol training will be to produce effective shooting by this method.

Although sights are fitted to the pistol, they will only be used in firing the preliminary grouping practices or in firing from the loophole of an armoured fighting vehicle.

6. In working round cover, the pistol should be carried in the outside hand in such a manner that an opponent can be dealt with without exposing more than the hand and head. A change of direction will necessitate changing hands, and this change should be practised until it can be done quickly and cleanly.

7. The pistol should be reloaded whenever the opportunity offers, and an advance should never be resumed with only two or three unfired rounds in the chamber.

8. Any form of trench system can be made to provide good practice in handling the pistol in cramped localities. If a pistol trench as described in S.A.T., 1931, Vol. V, is available, use can be made of it to give practice with dummy drill cartridges.

9. The system of training, therefore, based on the characteristics of the weapon, together with the requirements of service shooting, is designed to develop in the individual the ability to:—

- i. Handle the pistol with safety.
- ii. Hold it correctly.
- iii. Use it with either hand.
- iv. Press the trigger correctly.
- v. Use his instinctive pointing sense.
- vi. Shoot quickly by sense of direction.

10. The standard required is that an efficient firer should be able to place a bullet in a 16-in. by 12-in. rectangle at ten yards in one second.

11. Five minutes at the end of each lesson should be set aside in order that men may be exercised in the strengthening of those muscles directly used in holding and firing the pistol, particularly in the actions of instinctive pointing and speeding up. Such exercises are left to the discretion of the instructor, who may include any lessons previously taught.

LESSON 1.—SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND CLEANING

1. Introduction.—

Explain briefly paras. 1-7, 9 and 10 (pages 5 and 6).

2. Safety precautions.—

Explain that the following safety precautions will be read out on all pistol training parades until each man knows them thoroughly.

- i. The pistol will always be proved (*i.e.* open and inspected) when drawn from the case or picked up.
- ii. The pistol will always be proved when given to or accepted from another individual.
- iii. The pistol will always be kept in the case, except when drawn for a definite purpose.
- iv. No indiscriminate snapping will be allowed ; snapping at another man's eye will not be practised with dummy cartridges in the pistol.
- v. When out of the case and not in actual use, the pistol will always be carried at the " rest " position and not hanging at the side pointing to the ground.
- vi. The pistol will never be opened or closed with the hammer cocked.

3. Names of parts and examination of bore and cylinder.—

Demonstrate, naming the parts :—

- i. *The bore.*—The cylinder will first be removed by completely unscrewing the cam-lever fixing screw and pressing down the cam-lever. The bore will then be examined in the same manner as is taught for the rifle.
 - ii. *The cylinder.*—The chambers will be examined for fouling ; the extractor and spring for dirt and rust ; the extractor pin for damage. The cylinders of pistols will not be exchanged ; the number of each is stamped on it and must agree with that on the body and barrel.
- To assemble.*—Care must be taken that the cylinder is home, and the cam-lever fixing screw is securing the cam-lever in position, before an attempt is made to close the pistol.
-

- iv. When a pistol is being opened or closed, the hammer must be down. Otherwise :—

Injury to the trigger mechanism and pawl may occur. If the pistol is loaded, a premature explosion may occur.

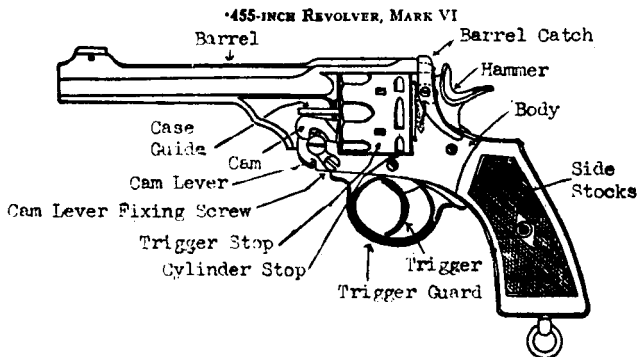


Fig. I.

4. Cleaning materials.—

Explain.—

The cleaning rod will be inserted from the muzzle end of the barrel. The pistol will always be opened when the cleaning rod is used. Flannelette and oil as for rifle.

5. Cleaning.

Explain and demonstrate, with squad imitating :—

- i. *Daily*.—Clean the bore and chambers with slightly oily flannelette. The exterior and working parts will be cleaned and slightly oiled.
- ii. *Before firing*.—Remove oil from the exterior, bore and chambers.
- iii. *After firing*.—Remove the cylinder. Remove fouling from the bore and chambers and then oil. Clean with dry flannelette until no more fouling comes away and lightly oil. Oil the outside and working parts, paying attention to the trigger stop, cylinder stop and pawl and the hole for the hammer nose. This cleaning is necessary for 4 or 5 days after firing.
- iv. *After gas attack*.—After a gas attack the same method of cleaning will be employed as with the rifle (see Rifle, Lesson 4).

6. Give conditions of test.

" Loading " Position.



FIG. 4.

LESSON 3.—HOLDING AND TRIGGER PRESSING

Instructor's Notes

Squad extended.

Dummies will not be used in this lesson.

1. Instinctive pointing sense.

Explain and demonstrate :—

- i. Pointing at a mark with both eyes open, the finger, when raised, comes directly on to the mark.
- ii. A correct hold with either hand ensures that, when a man raises a pistol quickly to fire at a mark on which his eyes are fixed, the barrel is correctly aligned on that mark.
- iii. Practise squad pointing at a mark and note that the finger points directly at it. Question squad.

2. Holding.*

Explain and demonstrate the correct hold with squad imitating (*see* Figs. 5 and 6).

- i. The second finger should be close up behind the trigger guard and third and fourth fingers round the butt so that, on raising the pistol to point at a mark, the barrel is aligned on it without undue bending of the wrist.
- ii. The trigger finger will be on the trigger.
- iii. The inner side of the part of the thumb between its first and second joint must be firmly in contact with the top of the left stock on the shoulder of the butt, with thumb fully extended or bent at the first joint, according to its individual size. The tip of the thumb must not be in contact with any part of the pistol.
- iv. The hand and fingers on the butt should maintain a firm but not excessive hold. The pressure of the thumb should balance that of the trigger finger. It is important to hold the pistol always with the same grip. The correct hold should be practised until it is learnt by sense of touch.
- v. On raising the pistol to the mark, the arm and wrist will be kept straight but not rigid.

* There are two sizes of stocks, side, for the .455.

Correct Hold (Side View).

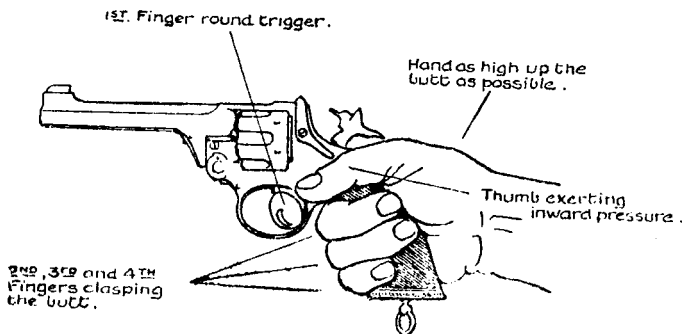


FIG. 5.

Correct Hold (Top View).

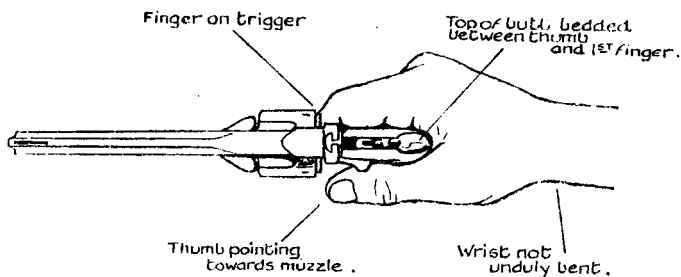


FIG. 6.

3. Adjustment in holding.

Demonstrate :—

- i. To adjust the grip, withdraw the pistol slightly from the pointing position and, grasping the barrel with the free hand, alter as necessary the position of the butt in the hand holding the pistol. Once the hand has gripped the butt of the pistol, that grip should be retained. Any tendency to ease the grip and jerk the pistol about in the hand will be checked.
- ii. Practise squad finding correct hold with either hand. Instructor in the kneeling position checks each man, who will raise the pistol to the instructor's eye.

- iii. Demonstrate drawing the pistol from its case and raising it quickly to the mark, **emphasizing the importance of grasping the butt correctly while the pistol is in the case.** Practise squad.

4. **Trigger pressing.**

Explain and demonstrate, with squad imitating :—

- i. The importance of trigger pressing.
- ii. With the hammer cocked, **the trigger will be pressed by a squeeze of the whole hand so that the hammer falls without disturbing or checking the pointing of the pistol.** This will be carried out by the first finger pressing towards the thumb, **which should exert a downward and inward pressure while the second, third, and little fingers exert an even squeeze on the butt.** There is no independent action of the first finger.
- iii. The first finger must release the trigger fully after each pressure to avoid faulty manipulation, which results in missfires.
- iv. Practise squad using each hand. With the pistol in the "Rest" position note a spot on the ground in direct **alignment** with the eye and the tip of the barrel. Apply squeeze so that the position of the barrel remains undisturbed.

LESSON 2.—DRAWING AND RETURNING PISTOLS. LOADING AND UNLOADING

Instructor's Notes

Squad extended in single rank. Dummies will be used.

1. Drawing and returning pistols.*

Demonstrate and repeat with detail, squad imitating.

i. "For inspection—draw pistols."

Bring the left hand to the case and unbutton it.

Draw the pistol with the right hand.

Bring it to the vertical position in front of the body, muzzle downwards.

Grip the barrel with the left hand, the thumb pressing against the case guide and cylinder fluting, and open the pistol, keeping the left hand and barrel stationary.

ii. "Return pistols."

After the pistol has been inspected and the inspecting officer has passed the next file, close the pistol by raising the butt to the barrel, keeping the left hand stationary. Then return the pistol to the case with the right hand. Button the case with the left hand. Return to position of attention. Stand at ease.

iii. Practise squad.

2. Proving pistols and rest position.

Demonstrate and repeat with detail, squad imitating.

i. "Prove—pistols."

Draw the pistol as already taught and, keeping the elbows stationary, turn the breech of the pistol towards the instructor.

* 1. (For Royal Tank Corps and mechanized cavalry regiments only.) Pistol practice will not be carried out from the loopholes of A.F.Vs. unless the barrel is suitably protected. Wooden loopholes can easily be made within the unit for both empty pistol practice and range practices, thus avoiding the necessity for using A.F.Vs. for either purpose.

2. This does not apply to cavalry armoured car regiments, in which the procedure for drawing and returning pistols laid down in Armoured Car Training, Vol. I, 1930, Sec. 65, will be followed.

" Draw Pistols " Position.

Thumb pressed against
cylinder fluting.

Pistol vertical
in front
of body.

Left hand
gripping
the barrel.

Elbows close
to the sides.



FIG. 2.

" Rest " Position.

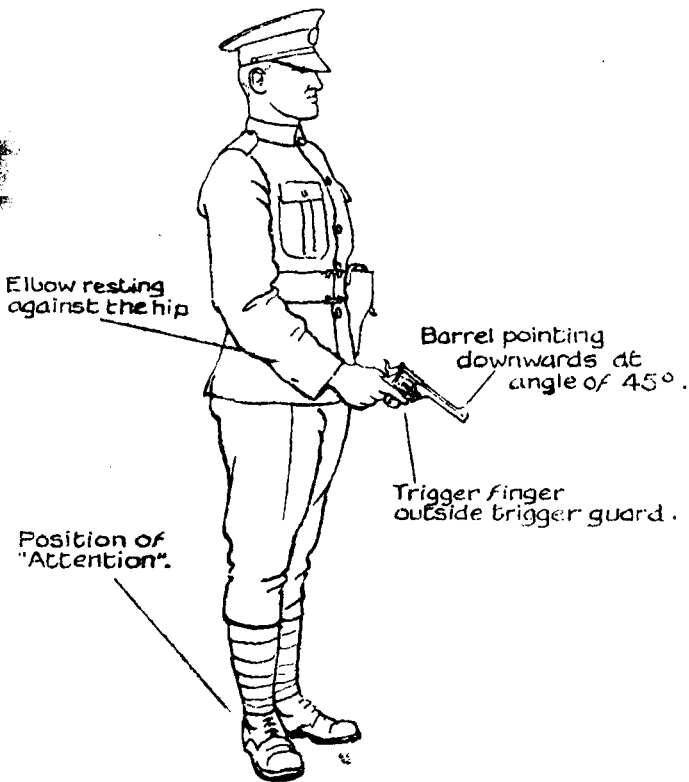


FIG. 3.

ii. " Rest. "

Close the pistol and come to the position shown in Fig. 3.

iii. Instructor explains that during empty pistol instruction, on the command " Draw—pistols, " the pistol will be drawn from the case, proved and closed, and the " rest " position adopted.

iv. Practise squad.

3. **Change hands** from " Rest " position.

- i. Demonstrate and repeat with detail, squad imitating.
" **Change hands.**"—Transfer the pistol to the other hand, taking care not to release the pistol with the one hand before a correct grip has been obtained with the other. If the command " Change hands " is given when in the " ready " position, the pistol will first be brought to the " rest " position before changing.
- ii. Give conditions of test.
- iii. Practise squad.

4. **Loading and unloading.**

- i. Demonstrate, and repeat with detail, squad imitating :—
" **Six rounds—load.**"—Assume position as shown in Fig. 4.
Open the pistol, lowering the butt from the barrel without allowing the barrel to move.
Take either one or two rounds, holding them by their bases, and insert them in the chambers, first round placed in 10 o'clock chamber. Continue to load anticlockwise until all chambers are filled.
Close the pistol by bringing the butt up to the barrel. Return to the " rest " position.
- ii. " **Unload.**"
Adopt the loading position. Open the pistol slightly. Place the butt on the hip, open fully, and sharply eject into the right hand. Close the pistol ; adopt the " rest " position.
The barrel must be kept pointing throughout in the direction of the target.
- iii. Practise squad.

5. Practise squad in the complete lesson.

6. Final five minutes (*see* para. 11, page 6).

LESSON 4.—FIRING SINGLE ACTION, USING SIGHTS

Instructor's Notes

As for Lesson 3.

Stores required.—Fig. 2 or Fig. 3 targets.

Dummies will be used.

During instruction, firing will be carried out for six shots at a time and not for an indefinite number of consecutive shots, in order to prevent fatigue of muscles, which will lead to faulty trigger pressing, and also to instil the instinctive habit of counting the rounds fired.

The following are common faults :—

- i. Snatching the trigger or anticipating the shock of discharge, causing shots to go low left, or, when firing with the left hand, low right.*
- ii. Deflecting the barrel by faulty trigger pressing causing shots to go right or left.*

When sufficient practice has taken place, men will fire grouping practices (see Annual Pistol Course) before being taught Lesson 5, provided time and ranges are available.

1. Ready Position.*

Explain and demonstrate with squad imitating :—

Assume the position shown in Fig. 7.

Press the trigger finger forward against the inside forward part of the trigger guard.

Place the ball of the pistol-hand thumb on the comb of the hammer.

Draw the hammer back to the full-cock, retaining the positions of the three fingers on the butt.

Return the thumb to the butt, and the forefinger to the trigger.

2. Ease Springs.

Explain and demonstrate with squad imitating :—

Remove the forefinger from the trigger.

Place the thumb on the comb of the hammer.

Press the hammer firmly back.

* (For Royal Tank Corps and mechanized cavalry regiments only). When assuming a "Ready" position inside an A.F.V., to ensure greater safety the pistol will not be cocked.

" Ready " Position.

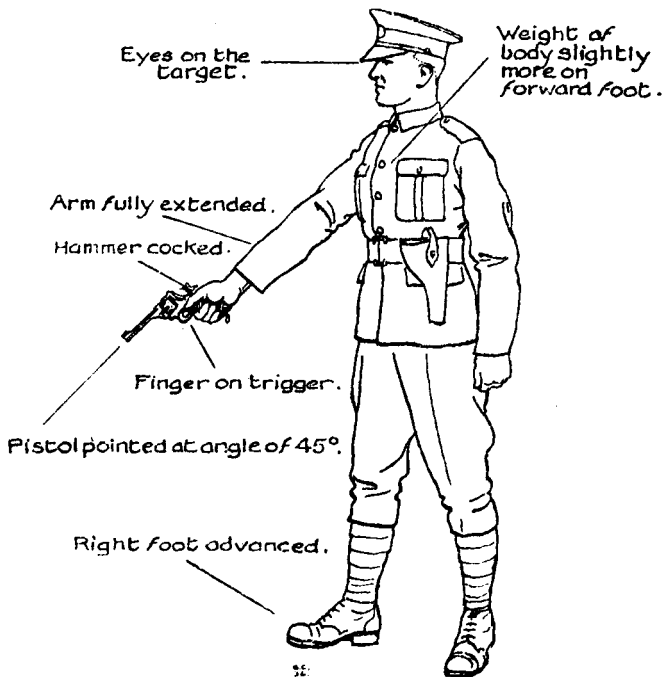


FIG. 7.

Return the forefinger to the trigger and press the trigger. As the hammer begins to move forward, release the trigger, and allow the hammer to go slowly forward under control, return to " rest " position.

3. Practise squad by word of command Loading, Ready Position, Ease Springs and Unload.

(For left-hand practice substitute left for right in above.)

4. Aids to good shooting.

Explain that occasions may arise in war when it will be desirable to aim the pistol, for instance, when

firing from the loophole of an A.F.V. This is not the normal method of firing on service. The use of sights is introduced in this lesson solely to give confidence in the accuracy of the weapon. The following are aids to good shooting :—

- i. Physical fitness.
- ii. Determination to hit the target.
- iii. Concentration on the central part of the target.
- iv. Count the number of rounds.
- v. Ignore the shock of discharge.

5. Aiming :—

Explain :—

- i. The rules of aiming are similar to those for the rifle. One eye may be closed in using the sights. The attention of the firer must be concentrated on the mark at the precise moment of firing—and not on the pistol or its slight shock of discharge.
- ii. The aiming mark in firing on the range or on service will be the centre of the target. At a target moving across the front, aim should be directed at the front edge.

6. Firing :—

Explain and demonstrate with detail from the " Ready " position :—

Raise the pistol quickly to the aim—press the trigger—return to " Ready " position—cock the hammer.

7. Practise squad using each hand.
8. Final five minutes (*see* para. 11, page 6).

LESSON 5.—FIRING SINGLE AND DOUBLE ACTION (SERVICE SHOOTING)

Instructor's Notes

As for Lesson 3. Dummies will not be used.

1. Introduction :—

Explain that on service, when speed is essential, the pistol will be fired by the instinctive pointing sense with both eyes open; there will be no aiming. This type of shooting can only be developed by practice. During training the mark will be either the instructor's or another man's eye (kneeling position). The attention of the firer must be concentrated on the mark at the moment of firing.

2. Firing single action.

i. Demonstrate, from the "Ready" position, firing single action.

ii. Demonstrate again with detail :—

Order "Six rounds—Fire."

With eyes fixed on the target, quickly raise the pistol straight up, applying the squeeze of the hand so that the hammer falls at the precise moment at which the pistol is pointing at the target. With practice this should become instinctive. Lower the pistol to the "Ready" position after each shot to assist in cocking. As proficiency increases, the pistol need only be slightly lowered.

iii. Give conditions of test.

iv. Practise squad in two ranks, about four yards apart, in pairs as "master and pupil," using each hand.

3. Firing double action.*

i. Explain that trigger pressing is the same as in single action, except that the hammer, instead of being cocked by the thumb, is rotated by the pressure of the trigger. Emphasize the importance of fully releasing

* (For Royal Tank Corps and mechanized cavalry regiments only.) In firing from the loophole of an A.F.V., the double action will be used to ensure greater safety. Care must be taken that the pistol is not fired before the muzzle is through the loophole. In firing from the loophole of an A.F.V., the target will usually be close. The loophole should only be opened the minimum amount to enable the muzzle of the pistol to be inserted.

the trigger each time after it is pressed, so that the cylinder may rotate.

ii. Demonstrate and repeat with detail :—

“ **Six rounds—Fire.** ” Direct the eyes and pistol at the target. Fire the first round as in single action. For the subsequent rounds press the trigger each time, so that the hammer falls at the moment the pistol is pointed at the target.

iii. Give conditions of test.

iv. Practise squad in pairs as “ master and pupil,” using each hand.

4. Final five minutes (*see* para. 11, page 6).

LESSON 6.—MOUNTED PRACTICE (Cavalry and M.M.P. only)

Instructor's Notes

(1) *Fig. 2 targets or riding school dummies (see Fig. 9).*

(2) *To accustom horses to the appearance of targets and the sound of firing, practices will be rehearsed with empty pistols and then with blank ammunition (see S.A.T. Vol. IV. (Australia) sec. 23).*

1. Explain and demonstrate:—

On the command "Raise pistols" the weapon will be drawn and raised, the pistol hand level with, and close to, the outside of the shoulder (see Fig. 8).

On the order "Fire" the pistol will be brought down to the mark by fully extending the arm and placing the forefinger on the trigger. Press the trigger as the barrel interrupts the line of sight.

Barrel vertical

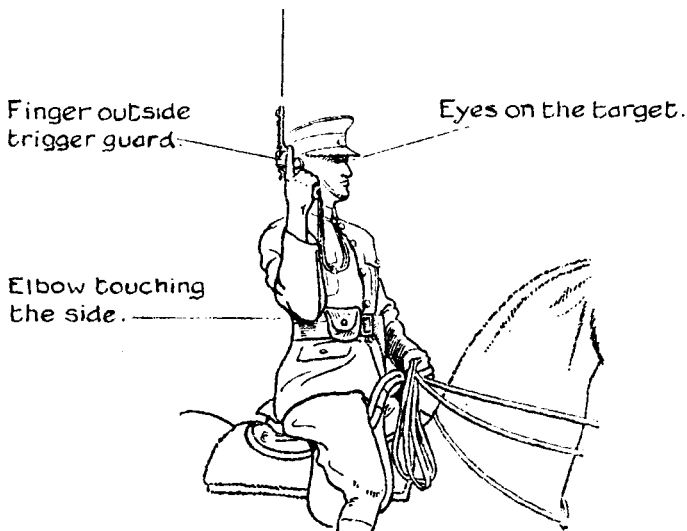


FIG. 8.

2. Practise Squad.

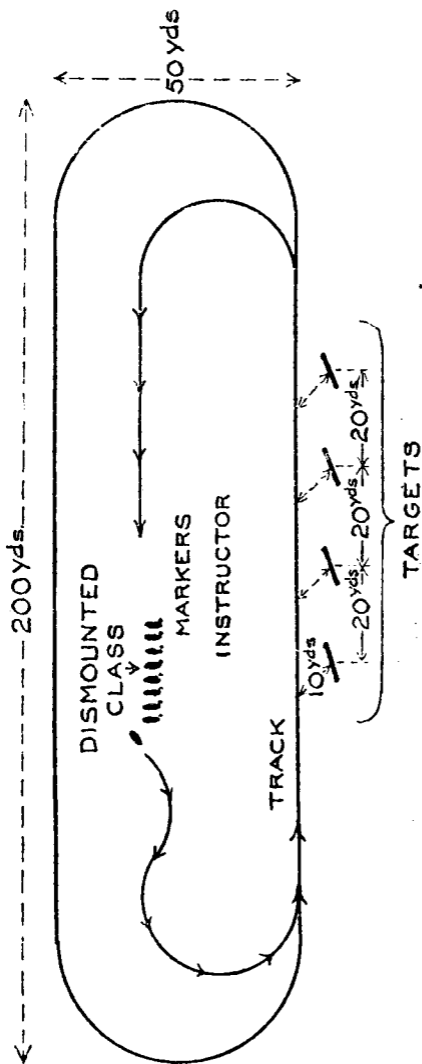


FIG. 9.

The positions of targets are for firing to the *right* front. For practices fired to the *left* front movement will be in the opposite direction to that shown above.

TESTS OF ELEMENTARY TRAINING

There are four tests. Of these Nos. 1 and 2 will be carried out collectively, and Nos. 3 and 4 individually. Dummies will *not* be used during tests of elementary training.

No. 1.—General knowledge of the pistol.

The men will be asked questions on safety precautions, care and cleaning.

Standard.—Three out of four questions to be answered correctly.

No. 2.—Handling the pistol.

Men will be tested in drawing and returning pistols, the "Rest" and "Ready" positions with both hands, and "Change hands." Those who make serious faults will fail.

No. 3.—Single action.

The test should be carried out at a distance of four yards between firer and instructor, the mark being the instructor's eye, the instructor being in the kneeling position. Firer in the "Ready" position—using either hand—a latitude of aim will be allowed proportionate to the service standard, *i.e.* if the instructor considers that the shot would have hit an area approximately the size of his face, the shot will be considered correct. Standard.—Five out of six shots to be correct.—One second for each shot.

No. 4.—Double action.

Carried out as Test No. 3.

Standard.—Six shots in six seconds.—Five out of six to be correct.

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