

SPEAR IN THE ARMY

by Master Roland de Mounteney

The spear has the longest reach of the weapons available to the army and as such, is primarily an offensive weapon that relies on other weapons for its protection.

SPEAR TARGETING

The most efficient use of a spear is to take targets of opportunity. The highest chance of success is to find a target who doesn't realize he is open. In line engagements, the person directly in front of the spear should not be the primary target. Use your peripheral vision to identify targets to either side and try not to telegraph your intentions. Mind you, if the person in front gets distracted, cheerfully thank them by stabbing them with your spear.

In general, the spear should be targeting areas that will catch the point. The cup of the shoulder and hip are locations where the shots will tend to stick and not glance off. Depending on relative angles, the stomach can also be a safe place to land a shot. The face is an obvious target, but remember that the Society standard for force is for only a touch to the face. This also needs to be kept in mind when throwing a shot at the upper chest as shields can deflect shots to the face or the target can attempt to lean back to avoid the shot and move the impact point from the body to the face. With the shape of a heater, the leg sticking out would seem a natural target, but it can be difficult to get the shot to stick and for fighters to recognize you are hitting their leg.

TEAMWORK & COMMUNICATION

Spears work best when in teams of 2 or more. This provides one spear to open the target and the other to take the kill. A spear is most open to being killed when throwing a shot. A key purpose of the team is to provide protection during this time. A useful tactic is to have one spear feign an attack (or actually attack) to get an opposing spear out of position by attempting to kill the attacking spear on your side, so the teammate can neutralize the opposing spear.

Communication with the spears (and other protecting weapons) around you cannot be stressed enough. If they know when and where you are going to strike they can protect you and vice versa. They can also exploit when someone tries to kill a spearman who is exposed after throwing a shot, such as illustrated in Figure 1.

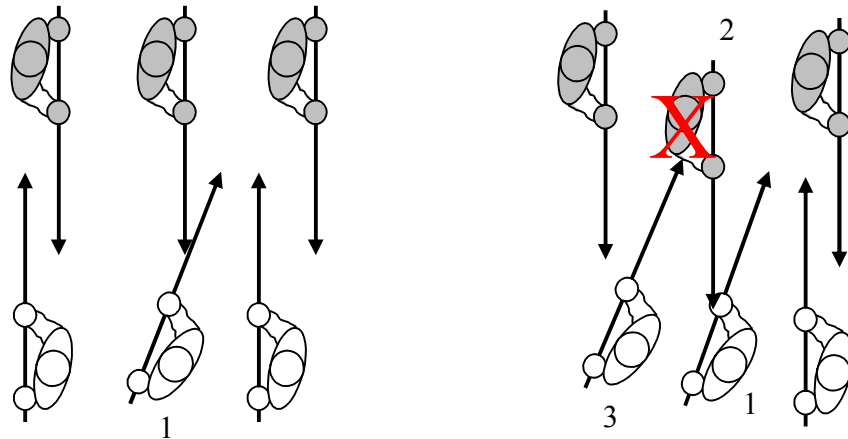


Figure 1 - Center Spear draws opposing center spear out so left spear can kill

As for opening shields, it is useful for one spear to strike a corner of the shield to move it out of position and open up the enemy fighter while the second spear takes the shot. If timed properly, the second spear should be launching the shot before the first spear has connected with the shield. The target locations are summarized in Figure 2. This reduces the likelihood that the enemy shield can close the hole in time. In particular, pay attention to where the arm is located behind the shield to use it as a pivot. Strike the shield where it is not supported by the arm - it will move more easily, and more wildly. This should open a larger opportunity for your partner. Strike the shield where it is supported by the arm only when you want to bodily move your entire opponent. A lot more effort will be required for this, and that's more than is necessary just to open the shield for your partner.

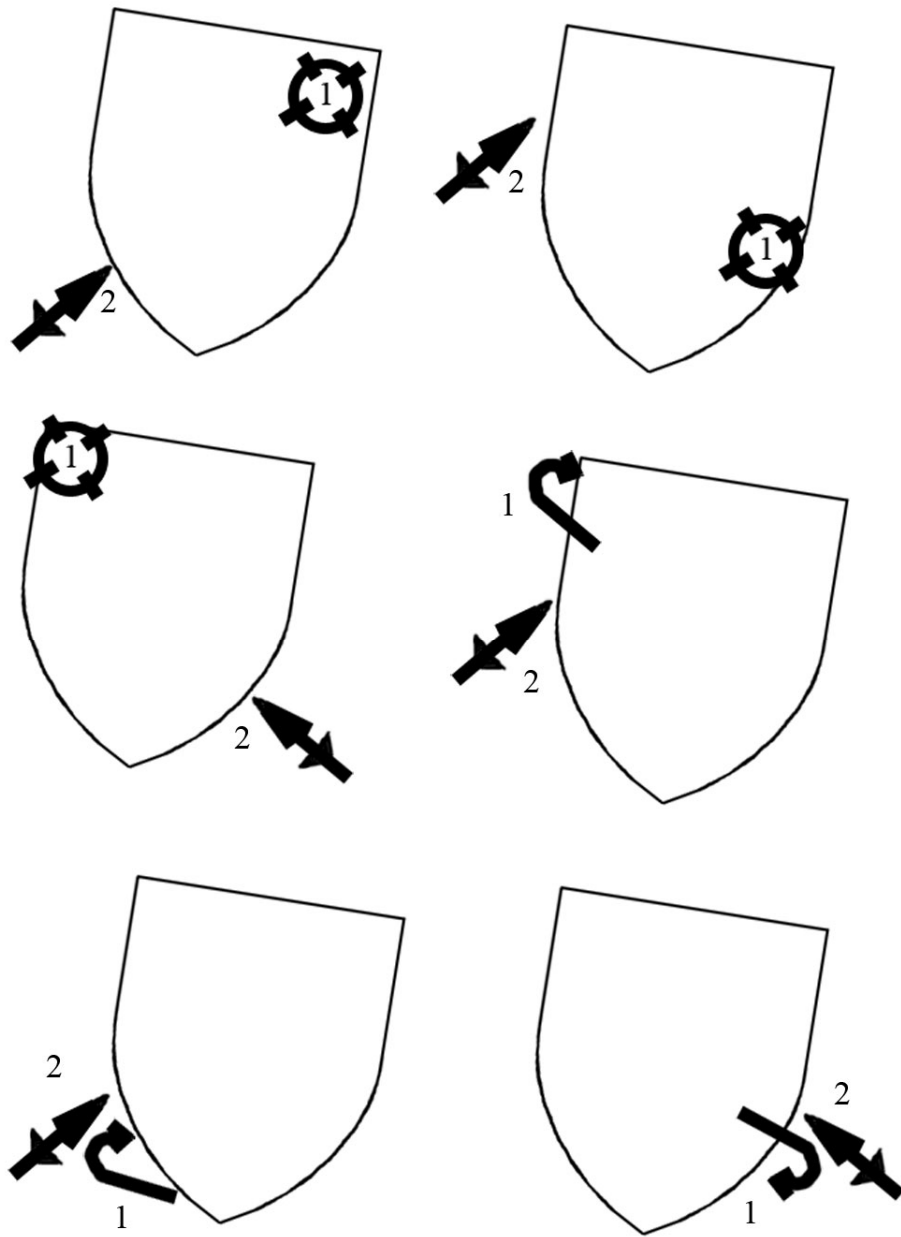


Figure 2 – Shield opening tactics

Obviously, a left-handed shieldman involves the opposite angles as a right-handed shieldman.

To hook or not to hook

Whether or not to include a spear hook on your weapon is a subject of contention by many people. By including the hook, you open up additional options in manipulating shields and opposing weapons. The downside is that they tend to increase the width of

the spear in certain directions thereby preventing the spear from being able to penetrate some small openings. It is possible to build a spear with a reinforced heavy leather disk at the back of the head to eliminate this problem, as the hook is effectively the back of the spear head instead of protruding out the side. A hook can also decrease the longevity of the weapon, as it requires reinforcing the spear head sufficiently to withstand strong force in the direction of the hooking. A hook can also be exploited by attentive opponents by using it to help trap your spear.

Spear snatching

An advanced topic for spearmen is snatching your opponent's weapon, exposing him to attack and eliminating his ability to harm you and your friends. What this entails is grabbing your opponent's spear and pulling it out of their hands. If you are a large individual, you may be able to accomplish this just by locking your gauntlet just behind their head and pulling while your opponent is slightly off balance after throwing a shot. It is best if they have only one hand having a grip on their weapon. If you can get a little twist on the shaft while you pull, it can help break their grip on the weapon. For more moderately sized people, if you can grab the shaft and pull it to under your armpit and lock your arm down so you have the tip at your shoulder blade, you can then just sit back and the spear will likely come with you. It is up to the opponent whether he wants to get dragged out of his line to be stabbed by your friends or even into the range of your bored shieldman protectors, or to just let go and be weaponless.

To avoid having your spear snatched, try not to overextend your shots. You want to have sufficient balance and stability of your stance to pull the spear away from the snatcher. You also want to make sure you have a good grip on your weapon. If you suspect someone is going to try to snatch, you may even want to make sure you have both hands maintaining a grip on your spear, but recognize this cuts your range some.

ENTERING A LINE

A spear fighter will invariably be entering an existing line of battle at some point. For maximum threat, it is usually advisable to identify threats and viable targets before actually stepping into the slot on the line, so that a shot can be thrown immediately to provide a higher probability of catching someone off guard, as well as making sure the same is not done to you upon reaching the line.

BRIDGE/CONSTRAINED OPERATIONS

Open order

Spears are most effective in an open order line in front of an enemy shield wall or spear line, such as illustrated in Figure 3. The spears should have sufficient space behind them to maneuver and avoid enemy spear shots. Usually to get enough spears on the line, side

to side maneuverability is limited so the primary means to defend involves parrying and voiding back out of range. It is key that the supporting shield line does not crowd the operating line of spears. If they do, the spears will die.

Remember not to crowd the line. If there are already enough folks on the line, wait your turn. If you are tired on the line, pull yourself back calling for a replacement and let someone else have a turn.

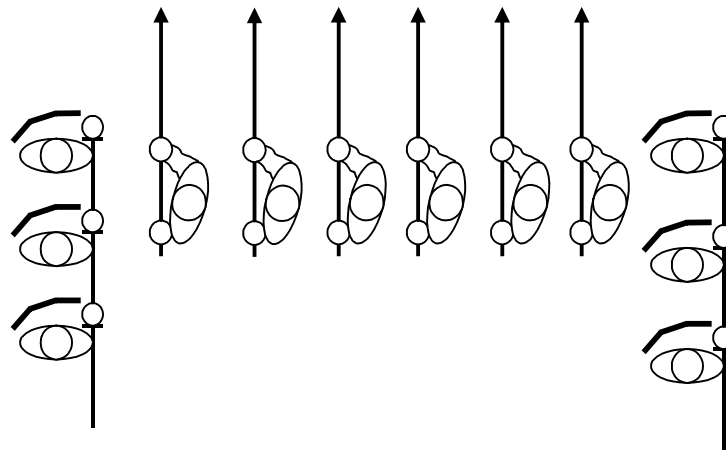


Figure 3 – Open order

Normally there should be some command element coordinating the spears such that replacements are available as needed. There should also be a command element coordinating the shield units to determine when they need to be sent in and finding replacements after a shield unit is deployed.

Behind shield walls

When operating behind a shield wall, the spear is likely in a high ward trying to kill targets over the heads of the shields, as illustrated in Figure 4. If the opportunity arises, a few of the spears may want to crouch low and look for targets under the shield wall.

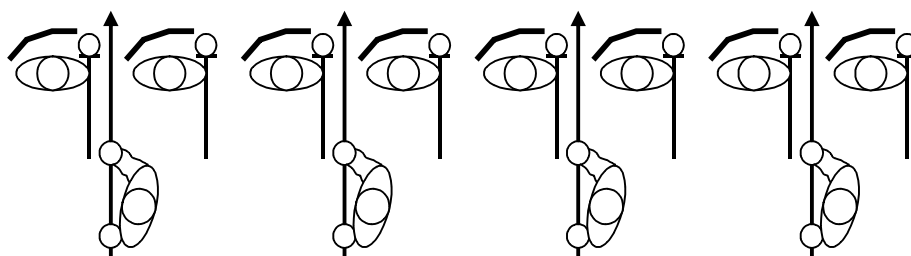


Figure 4 – Working behind a shield wall

Killing cup

If available, it is desirable to utilize choke points in terrain to allow for localized numerical superiority. By laying out the spears in a concave arc, more spears can be brought to bear on target than the enemy, as shown in Figure 5.

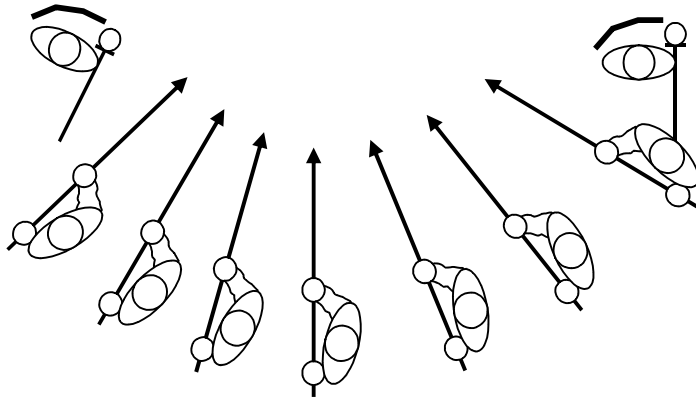


Figure 5 – Killing cup

OPEN FIELD OPERATIONS

The key to spear in the open field is to remain mobile and to not focus too long on any particular target. **A LONE SPEAR IS VULNERABLE AND NEEDS TO MAINTAIN AWARENESS OF NEARBY SUPPORTING FIGHTERS.** If a target is taking too long to kill, either find support to help or abandon the target and move on.

SHIELDMAN INTERACTIONS

Spears need shields for defense. Spears are vulnerable to shield charges, so it is useful to have shields nearby. This is normally accomplished by stacking shields in depth about 2 steps back from the spear line in certain locations (usually along the sides in a constrained area like a bridge), as shown in Figure 6a. This provides the space for the spears to fall back from the charge, while providing room for the shields to charge forward and wheel out to counter charge. If the enemy charge achieves any penetration into the ranks, the polearms should start engaging and dealing with them. The spears should continue to back out of the way, if possible. This is illustrated in Figure 6b.

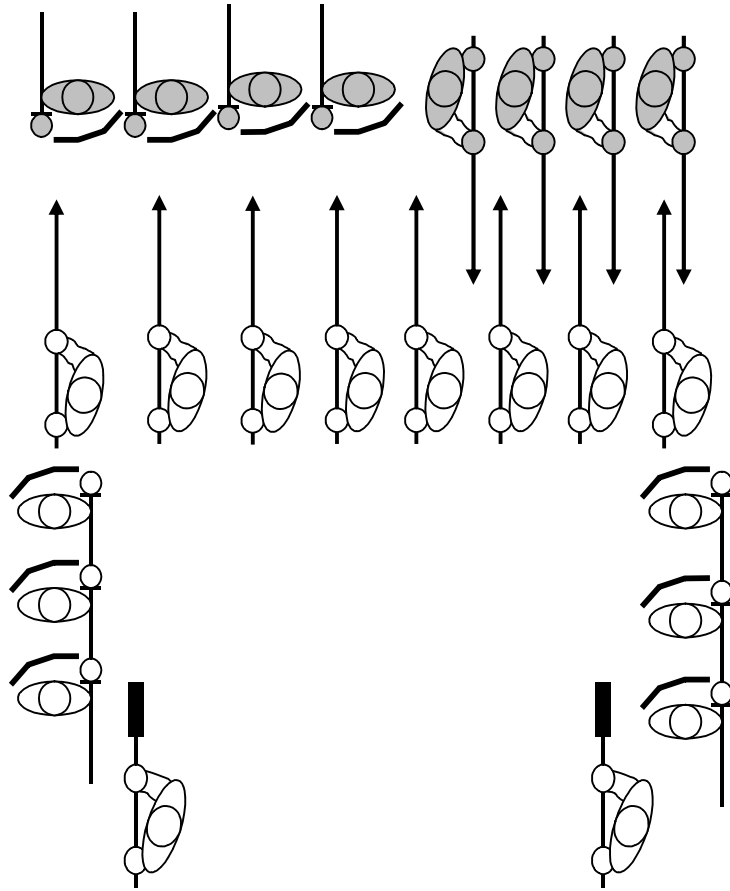


Figure 6a - Normal offensive layout

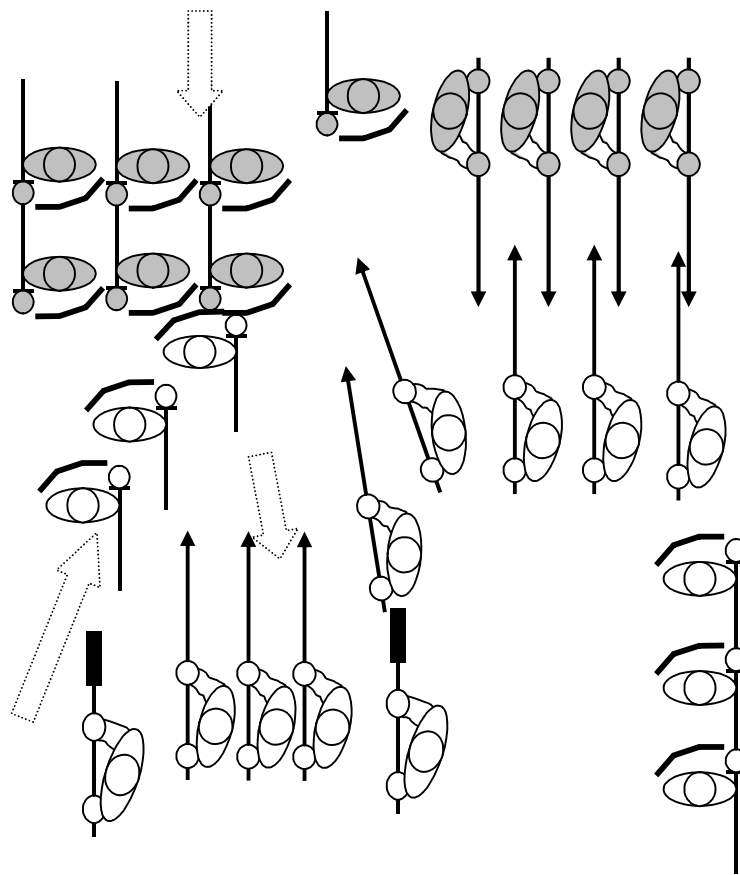


Figure 6b - Affected spears fall back while supporting shields counter charge

Depending on the size of the charge, you may have a full or partial counter-charge. If it is just a partial, then only the spears near where the shields are originating need to clear their path. In these cases, the other spears should be prepared to exploit openings when the shields meet.

ROLE IN A CHARGE

During a charge, the spears should follow the shields in, but stop once in range of the enemy line and start killing targets of opportunity as defenses open up as the shields clash. Remember to let the polearms have room to operate. In confined spaces, they are the more useful weapon. Use your range to stay out of the way, yet tie up and distract or kill the enemy.

During a counter charge, you should be keeping your spear in front of you and recede back through the charge, if they've provided you a retreat path. As you retreat, try to make yourself as 'narrow' as possible, so as not to block advancing fighters (e.g. shields

and polearms) who are trying to get forward. Trail your spear directly behind you, put one shoulder forward, and retreat as best as you can.

If you find yourself in front of the shieldwall during a counter charge, accept your fate and join the charge. Port your spear and join the push. (Porting your spear is holding it at about 45 degrees with your hands about your shoulders' width apart so you can increase the area you are blocking, while still providing yourself some maneuverability over holding it completely horizontal.) DON'T fall down or interrupt the momentum of the charge (unless you've been killed and have no choice and even then try to do it with as little impact to the charge as possible).

When rushed

When charged, the spearmen should consider striking at the elbow location on the shieldman. This can sometimes slow the shieldman down (particularly if you strike right as the shield leg is placed on the ground) which can interrupt the flow of their charge, or lead them into a shield-leg forward stance leaving them more open to attack by your friends. Alternately at times, the charging shield line opens some during a charge and killing or wounding opportunities open up. Killing lead members in a charge is very good at interrupting the momentum of the charge.

To prevent a shield from getting close enough, the spearman has an option of dropping the point between the charging person's feet and lifting the butt of the spear. This uses the shaft of the spear to prevent the shieldman from getting close enough to kill you. This is only really effective against a single shieldman. If there are multiple, you've crippled your maneuverability and will likely be killed by his buddies. Alternately, if the shieldman gets inside your point and you can't get away, the next option is to close to A range and use your spear to pin their weapon. This requires having friends around to kill the person. If you feel particularly lucky and the shieldman isn't being particularly aggressive, you might be able to invert the spear and get the point near your lower hand and you might be able to get a down thrust to their face or chest, but this option usually will just get you killed quicker, as you have to expose most of your lower body to do it. If the shieldman is inside your point, and you have sufficient body mass and stability of your position, you can port your spear and counter-charge their shield in an attempt to stop them or knock them down. If you are in a more open area, it can be useful to brace for impact, yet upon impact to use your spear to roll them off to your side continuing in their direction of motion, while you add a little push to help them and quickly move the other way. If you catch the shieldman off guard, this can yield you enough space to get away and find some friends, or at least get your point back to bear. Getting away is usually a better bet, as you are only going to have one shot before they are inside your point again.

Another option to consider when charged on a bridge or other constrained location where leaving the valid area is considered a kill and you happen to be located near the edge of the confined area is to use your spear to push the charging fighter off-balance sufficient to guide them off the bridge. You aren't going to massively change their direction, but a

charging fighter can frequently be “encouraged” off the bridge with minimal redirection of their movement. This can be accomplished by just shoving their shield to drive them off, or to initiate the shove when their shield contacts your ported spear.

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