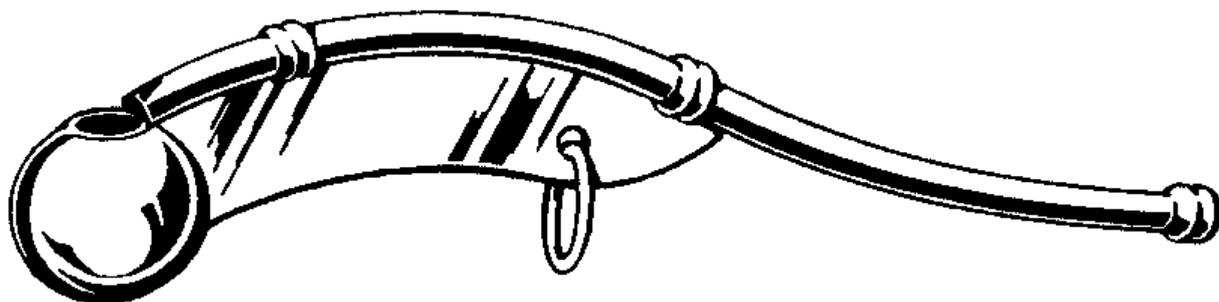


# The Sea Cadet Corps



## THE BOATSWAIN'S CALL



## HANDBOOK AND CERTIFICATE

SHORT TITLE – BCH  
FOURTH EDITION  
FEBRUARY 1999

The Boatswain's Call

**YOUR NOTES**

## THE BOATSWAINS CALL

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Piping is a naval method of passing Orders and information, and every Sea Cadet should know how to use a “**Boatswain's Call**” (the Call) and how to pipe an order. Orders passed are known as “**Pipes**”. The expression “**to pipe**” means to make the sound of the boatswain's call and to give the spoken order which may qualify it. Some pipes are orders in themselves and do not require any verbal addition.

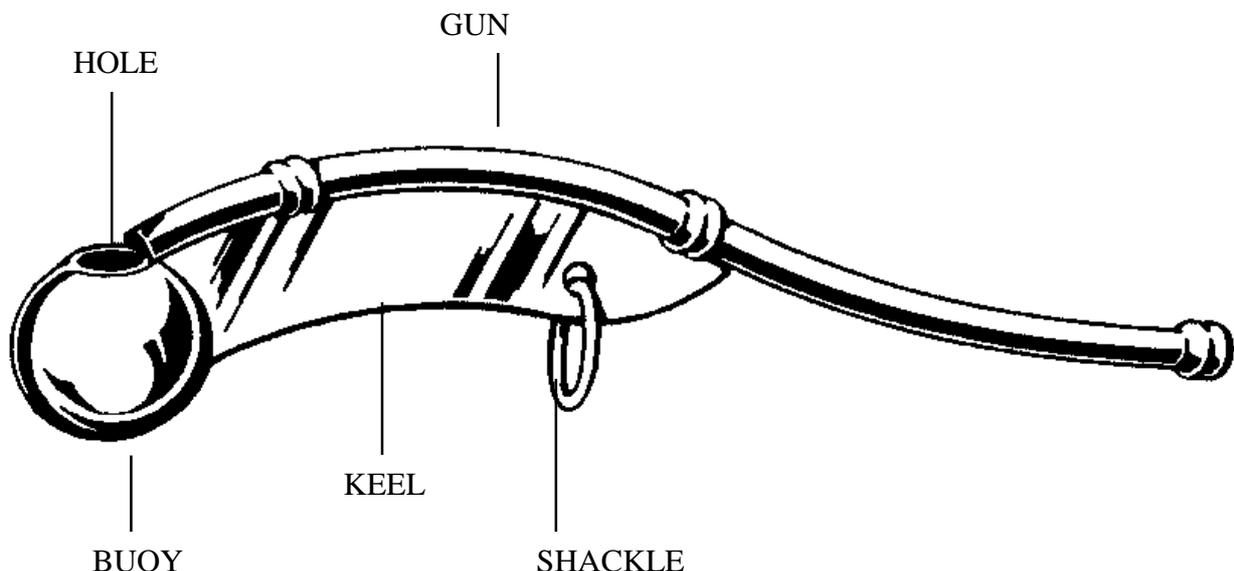
### 2. THE HISTORY

The use of the Boatswains Call in English ships can be traced back with certainty to the days of the Crusades, AD 1248. In former days it was worn in English ships as an honoured badge of rank, probably because it had always been used of passing orders. As long ago as 1485 it was worn as the badge of the Lord High Admiral of England and was worn by his successor in office up to 1562.

Thereafter it was used throughout the English fleets for passing Orders, and since 1671 it has always been known as the Boatswains Call. Nowadays the “**Boatswain's Call and Chain**” is the badge of office of “The Chief Boatswains Mate, Quartermaster and Boatswains Mates”. In the Sea Cadet Corps, the office holder would be the “Quartermaster” and the “Boatswains Mate”.

### 3. THE BOATSWAINS CALL AND CHAIN

Cadets who are awarded the Boatswains Call Badge may wear **The Boatswain's Call and Chain** in Full Blue uniform, when **NOT** on duty, **with the Commanding Officer's permission**. The Boatswain's Call and Chain is not to be worn by cadets attending National Courses or Camps, or parading with cadets from other Units. The Boatswain's Call and Chain should be worn by Piping and Side parties. It may also be worn by Quartermasters, Boatswain's Mate and Gangway Sentries at the discretion of the Commanding Officer. The Call should be worn on the end of a chain. The chain is worn round the neck, (under the collar) replacing the lanyard. The call is tucked into the inside uniform pocket. The chain is allowed to hang down in easy loops either side of the collar.



#### **4. THE BOATSWAIN'S CALL BADGE INSTRUCTION AND TEST**

Boatswain's Call Badge instruction may be given by any instructor who the Commanding Officer considers knowledgeable, but must be examined by an approved examiner. The Commanding Officer will present the badge after the "Boatswain's Call Badge Certificate" has been signed by the examiner.

The Boatswain's Call Badge test will include:

- a. Naming the parts of the Boatswain's Call.
- b. Brief history of the Boatswain's Call.
- c. Demonstrate to the examiner the following note and pipes:
  - (1) Notes:
    - (a) Plain, high and low.
    - (b) Trill, high and low.
    - (c) Warble.
  - (2) Pipes:
    - (a) Still.
    - (b) Carry On.
    - (c) Pipe the Side (and an understanding of its origin).
    - (d) Call the Boatswains Mate.
    - (e) Lash up and Stow (including verbal order).
    - (f) General Call (including a verbal Order).
    - (g) Dinner Call.
    - (h) Pipe Down.

#### **5. THE POSITION OF ATTENTION**

When making a pipe, the piper will stand to attention, pipe at the ready in the right hand, the left hand at the side of the body. No salutes are ever given by the piper in a Piping Party.

#### **6. TIMING**

Whilst it is important to maintain the correct timing of the pipe, particularly when piping as a team or as a piping party, it will be recognised that in some cases breathing control and lung capacity in the smaller cadets can not be maintained. It is important however, that the correct sequence and spacing between the notes of the pipe are accurate and the sound clear and distinctive.

## 7. TUNING THE BOATSWAIN'S CALL

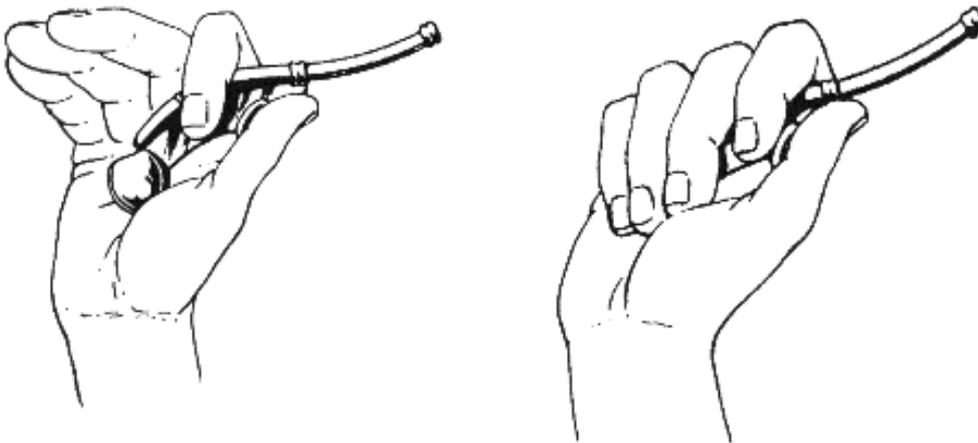
A Boatswain's Call can be tuned by scraping away and enlarging the wind edge of the hole on the buoy, until the note sounds sharp and clear. This can be achieved with a fine grade emery cloth. A shriller note can be achieved by closing the top of the lip of the hole a little, on the buoy. **CARE MUST BE TAKEN WHEN TUNING A CALL** and should **NOT** be attempted without supervision.

## 8. HOLDING THE BOATSWAIN'S CALL

The Boatswain's Call is held in the right hand between the index finger and the thumb. The buoy lies in the hollow of the right hand, the keel braced against the fleshy pad of the thumb with the hole of the buoy looking upwards. The thumb should press upwards against the keel, usually just by the shackle, but not wedged in the shackle, the index finger crooked over the top of the gun. The other three fingers are used to create the notes by closing and opening the airway of the hole of the gun over the hole of the buoy.

## 9. BEFORE YOU START TO BLOW

Make sure the Boatswain's Call is held securely and the hole is left free. Bend your remaining three fingers over the top of the Call and practice bending them right down until they touch the base of your thumb and then straighten them again. Unless you have very long fingers, you will find you block the hole, bend your fingers over from the first joint and keep the joint next to the finger tips straight. If you do have long fingers, you may well be able to get a good note by curling them over the Call so that the middle finger rests on the buoy. It is important that the Call is held firmly between the thumb and the index finger. This position will ensure the note does not alter, whether the other fingers are closed down or free.



## 10. HOW TO MAKE THE VARIOUS NOTES ON THE CALL

Hold the mouthpiece just inside the lips, do not grip it with your teeth. Let your fingers come well away from the buoy and blow, not too hard, but with sufficient strength to produce a LOW clear note. To produce a HIGH note, bend the other three fingers down until they touch your thumb (make sure they are closed together), closing over the buoy and blow much harder. You should produce a much shriller note than when the fingers were raised. It is important to practice these two simple exercises before you go further. Once your instructor is happy that you are able to produce these two notes, practice holding a LOW note and follow through to a High note in one breath, then from a High note to a LOW note in one breath. It may be necessary to concentrate on these exercises for two or three lessons. With practice, it will become easier.

## 11. THE TRILL AND THE WARBLE

a. **The TRILL** – To obtain a Trill, put your tongue to the front of your mouth, the tip curled up behind the teeth and “role your R’s”. Try it without a Call. With the Call at the ready, at the same time as you blow into the Call, “role your R’s”, the result will be a **TRILL**.

b. **The WARBLE** – The warble is produced by blowing in a series of jerks, which results in a warble similar to that of a canary. Starting with a LOW note, work quickly to a high note then back to a LOW note, to a High note to a LOW note, and so on. Do this six or eight times continuing to blow all the time, getting quicker each time, always ending on a LOW note. The result will be a **WARBLE**.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Before you continue to learn the various pipes, it is important to master all these exercises. These are the basic sounds necessary to play a Boatswain's Call. Good piping is achieved by good posture, good breathing and a good sense of timing.

## 12. THE PIPES

The “Still”      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

**HIGH**      

**LOW**

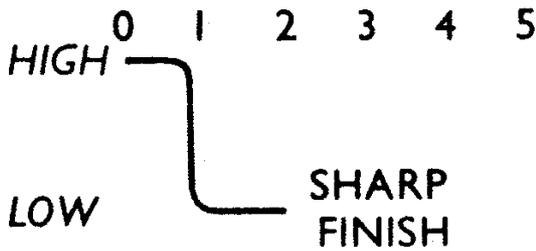
Fingers closed over the hole, blow as hard as you can for eight seconds, the whole note must be on the same high note and stop blowing abruptly at the end of the eight seconds. The note must be the highest you can get, a high pitched piercing note.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** - The “Still” is used to call all hands to attention as a mark of respect, to order silence, to give an instructor or an order. It is **ALWAYS** followed, after an interval, by the “Carry On”.

**NOTES:** Four occasions which the “Still” is or might be used.

- a. Can be used in the vicinity of work to avert an accident.
- b. At Colours and Evening Colours before the Ensign is hoisted and lowered.
- c. As a mark of respect on the arrival or departure of a visitor who it is wished to honour but is not entitled to be piped over the side.
- d. When it is necessary to give detailed Orders which requires absolute quiet.

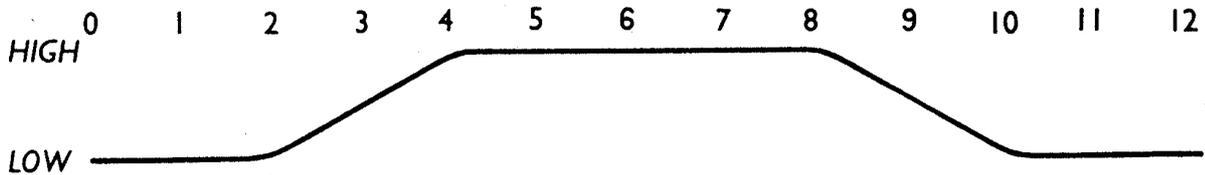
**The “Carry On”**



Blow the high note for one second then drop to the low note for one second and finish abruptly. Do not let it trail away.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** The “Carry On” is used in conjunction with the still and may follow a verbal order.

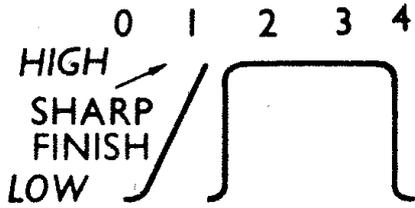
**“Piping the Side”**



Start low and work up to the high note gradually, continue the high note for four seconds and gradually return to the low note.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** – In years gone by, when gangways were much more cumbersome and “wooden” ships’ decks were high above the water-line, the only method of coming aboard when the ship was not alongside, was to climb ropes or a rope ladder. This was not considered suitable for Captains and Senior Officers, many of whom were portly and generally unfit. It was therefore necessary to hoist these personages in-board into a boat or a special chair. Orders were passed to the seamen manning the falls (ropes for lowering or hoisting the chair) by the “Boatswain” on his Call to hoist and lower. Nowadays, ships carry gangways which can easily rigged, so the need to hoist has ceased but the custom of piping still remains.

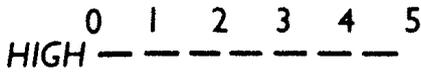
**The “General Call” or “General Orders”**



Start LOW and work quickly up to the highest note, then break off abruptly, which will take a second, again start at the LOW note, work up quickly to the high note which should be continued for two seconds, then come down quickly to the low note and finish abruptly.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** - This pipe will require a verbal order. This is known as “passing the pipe”, literally the word pipe refers to the spoken word. This pipe is NOT followed by the Carry On.

**“Call the Boatswains Mate” or “The Hail”**

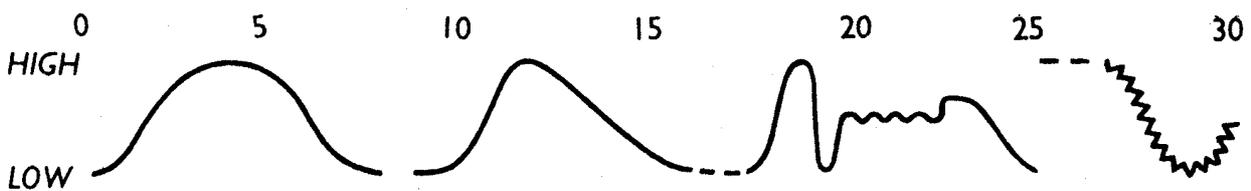


LOW

Sound six short sharp HIGH notes.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** – Used to call the Boatswain’s Mate, it may be used to attract the attention of a particular person in an unobtrusive manner, for example the coxswain of a boat, other members of the gangway staff or to call the Officer of the Day (OOD).

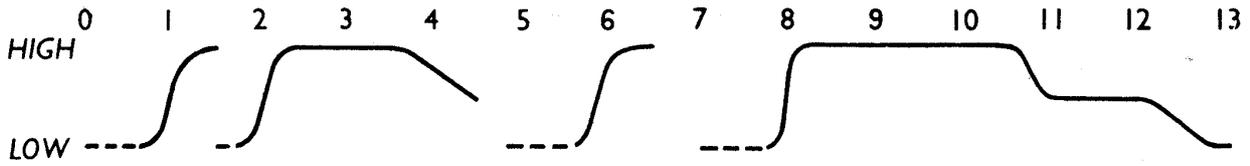
**The “Dinner Call”**



This pipe is for the experts. It is long and requires plenty of practise and breathing control if it is to be piped well.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** - The pipe is sounded for Officers Dinner. It is NOT Followed by a verbal pipe. For the lower deck, for breakfast, tea and supper times, the “General Call” will be piped followed by a verbal pipe such as “Hands to Breakfast, Tea or Supper”.

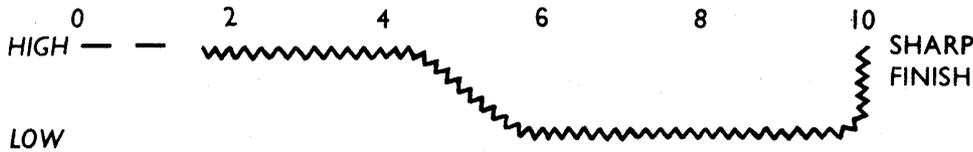
**The “Stow” or “Special Call”**



This pipe is also for the experts. It is long and requires plenty of practise and breathing control if it is to be piped well.

**REASON FOR THE PIPE** – Precedes the “Calling of the Hands” and is followed by the order “Heave Ho, Heave Ho, Heave Ho” (or “Heave Out, Heave Out, Heave Out”) - “Show a Leg!” – “Rise and Shine, Rise and Shine”, “Heave Ho” (or “Heave out”), “Lash up and stow”. It may be followed by a short description of the weather, such as “Gales and Rain”, “Ice and Snow” or “Warm and Dry” to warn those below to put on suitable clothing.

**“Pipe Down”**



Although the two notes before the long trill are only short notes, they should be sounded with great emphasis to attract attention to the rest of the pipe.

**13. PERSONAGES ENTITLED TO BE PIPED OVER THE SIDE**

a. **Her Majesty the Queen**

b. **The following when in Royal Navy or Royal Marines Uniform:**

- Members of the Royal Family
- Royal Navy Officers of Flag Rank
- Royal Navy Officer in Command of HM Ships and Shore Establishments
- Foreign Naval Officers
- The President of the Sea Cadet Association
- The Commodore of the Sea Cadet Corps (CSCC)
- The Director of Training (DoT)
- The Area Officer (AO) (or Deputy Area Officer (DAO) at Pre-RNI's)
- Staff Royal Marines Officer (SRMO) (as an Inspecting Officer)

c. **Sea Cadet Officers when in uniform:**

- District officers (DO) (or Assistant District Officers (ADO) when representing the District Officer)
- Commanding Officers (when arriving and leaving their own Unit or when calling on another Unit at pre-arranged times)

## 14. OCCASIONS AND METHOD OF PIPING THE SIDE

a. **Afloat** – The pipe is sounded twice as follows:

(1) **First Pipe**

As the bow oar is brought inboard or as the boat comes alongside. In either case the pipe should have ended by the time there is no “way” on the boat. Do not wait until the boat is actually alongside.

(2) **Second Pipe**

As the personage ascends the accommodation ladder, the pipe should end the moment the person being piped aboard steps onto the deck.

**NOTE:** Piping the Side is NOT used in Naval Establishments, except on very rare occasions. Sea Cadet Units however, continue with the tradition.

b. **Ashore (in Units)** – The pipe is sounded twice and depending on the method of arrival of the personage, should be piped as follows:

(1) **First Pipe**

(a) If by car – as it draws alongside the Unit and comes to a stand still.

(b) If on foot – as the personage draws near to the Unit, normally at a pre-determined point adjacent of the building.

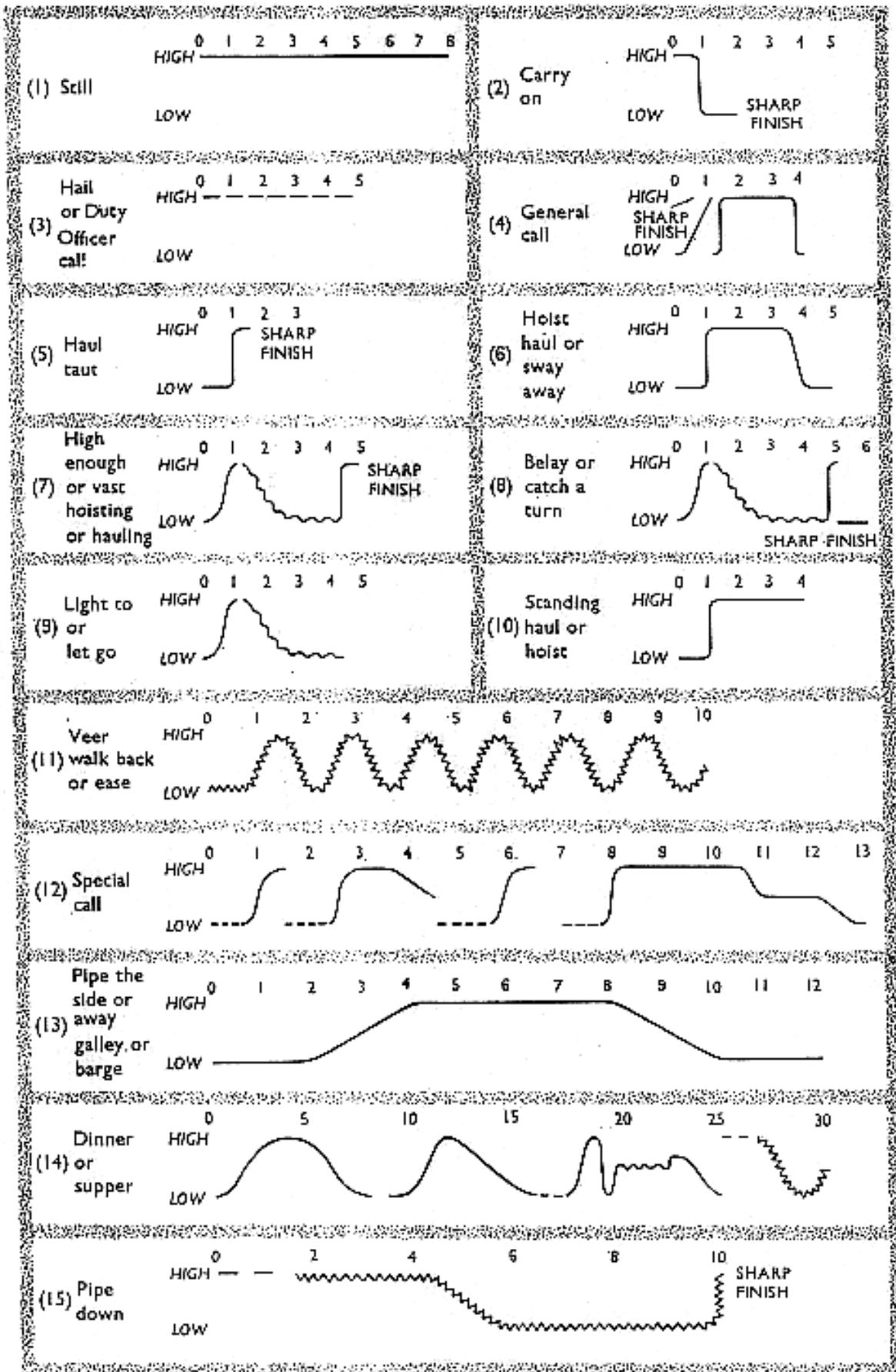
(2) **Second Pipe**

As the personage approaches the gangway of the Unit. The last part of the pipe should coincide with the personage over the gangway (i.e. unit entrance).

c. **Positioning of the Piping Party** - The Piping Party should be stationed so that they are side by side at right angles to the gangway with the senior Piper nearest the gangway, in order to allow him/her to see the personage arriving and time the piping correctly. They may stand on either side of the gangway, whichever is the better angle of the senior Piper to see the arrival of the personage.

d. **Going Ashore** - The procedure is reversed.

PIPING CHART





# The Sea Cadet Corps



## BOATSWAIN'S CALL CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE

This is to Certify that

Of

Unit

Has successfully completed the Boatswains Call Examination and is authorised to wear the Boatswain's Call and Chain when in No.1 Uniform in accordance with Cadet Dress Regulations and may wear the Boatswains Call Proficiency Badge.

Examined by

Rank/Rate

Date