



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 195 –July 2010

EDITORIAL

Firstly, gentlemen, let me apologise for this edition of *AGB* being a trifle late, as I warned you all last month I've been awfully busy work-wise, etc, etc. Anyway enough of the excuses, on with the show! Well it's not been all work, I suppose, as early last month I was able to enjoy a short sea voyage. Ok, so it was only the Dover-Calais ferry, but it was still exciting to be sailing from such a famous port. I don't think Nelson would have been too impressed by the fact that the vessel was a *Sea France* ship, or with the fact that I came back on the train! Calais to central London in less than an hour—Napoleon would have loved it!

A couple of weeks ago I came across an interesting piece in one of the naval internet discussion groups regarding the old ironclad, *Cerberus*. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I had no idea that she was still in existence, albeit at the other side of the world. Funds are being raised to try and save her, and I would like to thank the Group for giving me permission to include just a little of the fascination information on their site.

"Built in Britain in 1868 Cerberus is the last Ironclad Breastwork Monitor in the world, she was the first major British Warship to dispense with sails and formed the pattern for the pre-dreadnought battleships c. 1870-1905. She was the second warship to go through the Suez Canal. The former flagship of the Victorian Colonial Navy, of which she is the last survivor, she is also the oldest surviving warship to have served in the Royal Australian Navy, formed in 1911. She features two of the only three Cowper Coles gun turrets in the world and the only two with the original RML guns available.

This ship should be preserved and restored as a priceless heritage treasure, an educational centre and a tourist attraction. Whether you live in Australia or elsewhere in the world, there has never been a better, or more important, time to show your support for our maritime and Naval heritage. Join Friends of the Cerberus (website link below) and let's save the ship! To succeed in this project we need your help, please join us, both paid and free memberships are available..."

Should you want to know more, visit <http://www.cerberus.com.au/>



Although a tad late, this is still a fun-packed issue: Simon Stokes's excellent report of the Society's ACW game that took place at 'Salute' in April, some very nice photos taken by Norman Bell and one or two other bits-and-bobs.

Yours Piping 'Up Spirits'

Richard Wimpenny

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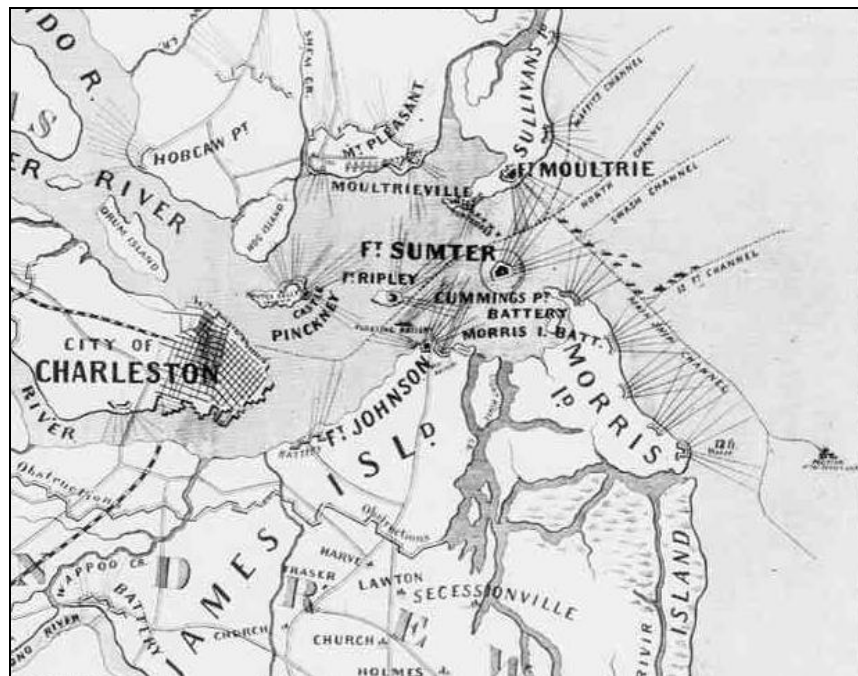
Attack on Fort Sumter
Participation Game presented by NWS at Salute 2010
After Show Report
(Simon Stokes)



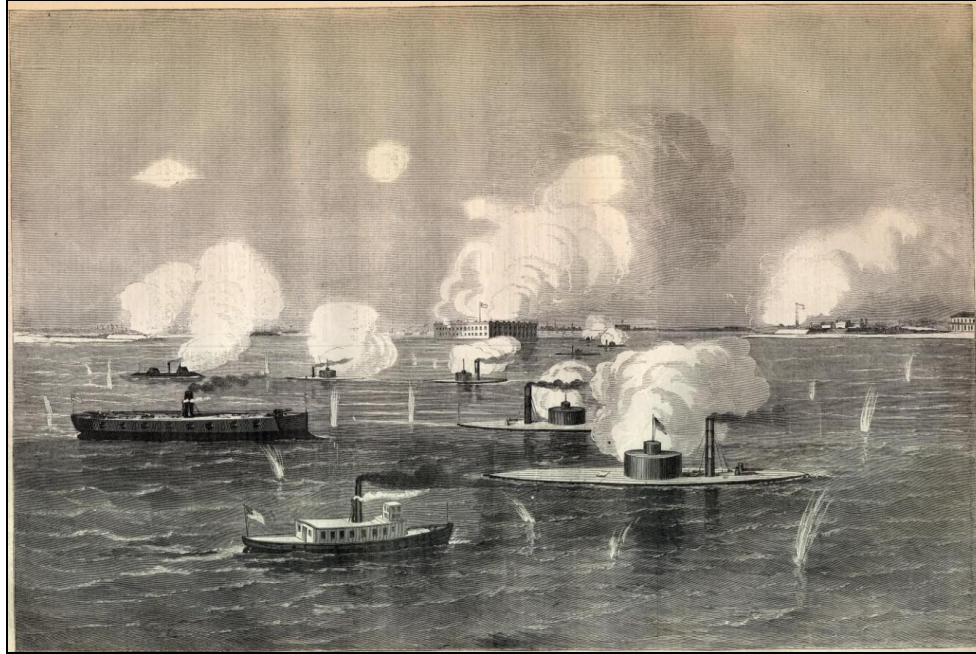
Historical Background

Named after General Thomas Sumter, a Revolutionary War hero, Fort Sumter was built following the War of 1812, to guard Charleston harbour, which the site dominates. The fort was a five-sided brick structure, 170 to 190 feet long, with walls five feet thick, standing 50 feet over the low tide mark.

On April 12, 1861, not long after the American civil war began, Confederate batteries opened fire, firing for 34 straight hours on the fort. On April 13, the fort was surrendered and evacuated. In the famous diary of Mary Chesnut, she describes Charleston residents sitting on balconies and drinking salutes to the start of the hostilities.



Union efforts to retake Charleston Harbour began on April 7, 1863, when Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont, commander of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, led the ironclad frigate *New Ironsides*, the tower ironclad *Keokuk*, and the monitors *Weehawken*, *Passaic*, *Montauk*, *Patapsco*, *Nantucket*, *Catskill* and *Nahant* in an attack against the harbour's defences. Great things were expected of the revolutionary new monitors following the original monitor's recent victory at Hampton roads, however the attack was unsuccessful; the Union ironclads fired only 139 rounds, while receiving 2,209 from the Confederate defenders. Du Pont wrote the day after the attack "*I attempted to take the bull by the horns, but he was too much for us. These monitors are miserable failures where forts are concerned...*" What was worse, due to damage received in the attack, the *Keokuk* sank the next day 1,400 yards off the southern tip of Morris Island.



Over the next month, working at night to avoid the attention of the Federal squadron, the Confederates salvaged the *Keokuk*'s two 11" Dahlgren guns, one of which was placed in Fort Sumter.

Du Pont was relieved of his command not long after the attack whereupon command was eventually devolved to Rear Admiral John A Dahlgren, and a new strategy was devised to tackle Fort Sumter. This new strategy involved the Federal army and navy co-operating in an attack upon Morris Island at the southern approaches to Charleston harbour, and it's major defensive system known as Fort Wagner. This strategy was put into action during late June and July 1863, and to begin with the attacks went well, but soon bogged down with heavy losses (1515 men including Brig Gen Strong) when the assaults were repulsed with the considerable help of flanking fire from Fort Sumter. Still the Federal Army had won a foot hold on Morris Island which allowed them to bring up heavier artillery which could then bring fire on Fort Sumter itself whilst continuing siege operations against Fort Wagner. It took some weeks to get the breaching batteries in place but on 17th August 1863 the bombardment began in earnest, supported by Dahlgren's ironclads. During the next 7 days Fort Sumter was systematically reduced to rubble, though the confederates clung on and dug into the rubble creating arguably stronger defences, for the infantry which were now the sole defenders of the fort, the confederates having gradually withdrawn the artillery over the preceding nights.

After the bombardment on September 7th Admiral Dahlgren sent a message to Major Elliot at fort Sumter demanding the surrender of the fort which Elliot refused. The refusal brought about another monitor attack on Sumter, but when the *Weehawken* ran aground between Sumter and Morris Island the remainder of the fleet turned their guns to cover the stricken vessel. *Weehawken* was recovered and the following day the fleet concentrated a tremendous bombardment upon Fort Moultrie guarding the northern approaches to Charleston harbour. The Federals though determined to launch a boat assault on Fort Sumter for the night of September 8–9, 1863.

Cooperation between the Army and Navy were poor, Dahlgren refusing to place his sailors and marines under the command of an army officer. Two flotillas set out towards Fort Sumter that night. The army flotilla

was detained off Morris Island by the low tide. By the time they could proceed, the navy assault had already been defeated and the army flotilla returned to shore.

The Navy's assault involved 400 sailors and marines in 25 boats. The operation was a fiasco from beginning to end. Poor reconnaissance, planning and communication all characterized the operation. Commander Thomas H. Stevens, commanding the monitor *Patapsco*, was placed in charge of the assault. When Commander Stevens protested that he "*knew nothing*," of [the assault's] organization, "*and made some remonstrances on this grounds and others.*" Dahlgren replied "*There is nothing but a corporal's guard* [about 6–10 men] *in the fort, and all we have to do is go and take possession.*" This underestimation of the Confederate forces on Dahlgren's part may explain why he was hostile to a joint operation wishing to reserve the credit for the victory to the Navy. Less than half of the boats landed. Most of the boats that did land landed on the right flank or right gorge angle, rather than on the gorge where there was a passable breach. The Union sailors and marines who did land could not scale the wall. The Confederates fired upon the landing party and as well as throwing hand grenades and masonry. The men in the boats that had not landed fired muskets and revolvers blindly at the fort, endangering the landing party more than the garrison. The landing party took shelter in shell holes in the wall of the fort. In response to a signal rocket fired by the garrison, Fort Johnson and the Confederate gunboat *Chicora* opened fire upon the boats and landing party. The boats that could withdraw withdrew, and the landing party surrendered. The marines lost 120 men whilst the Confederates did not suffer any casualties.



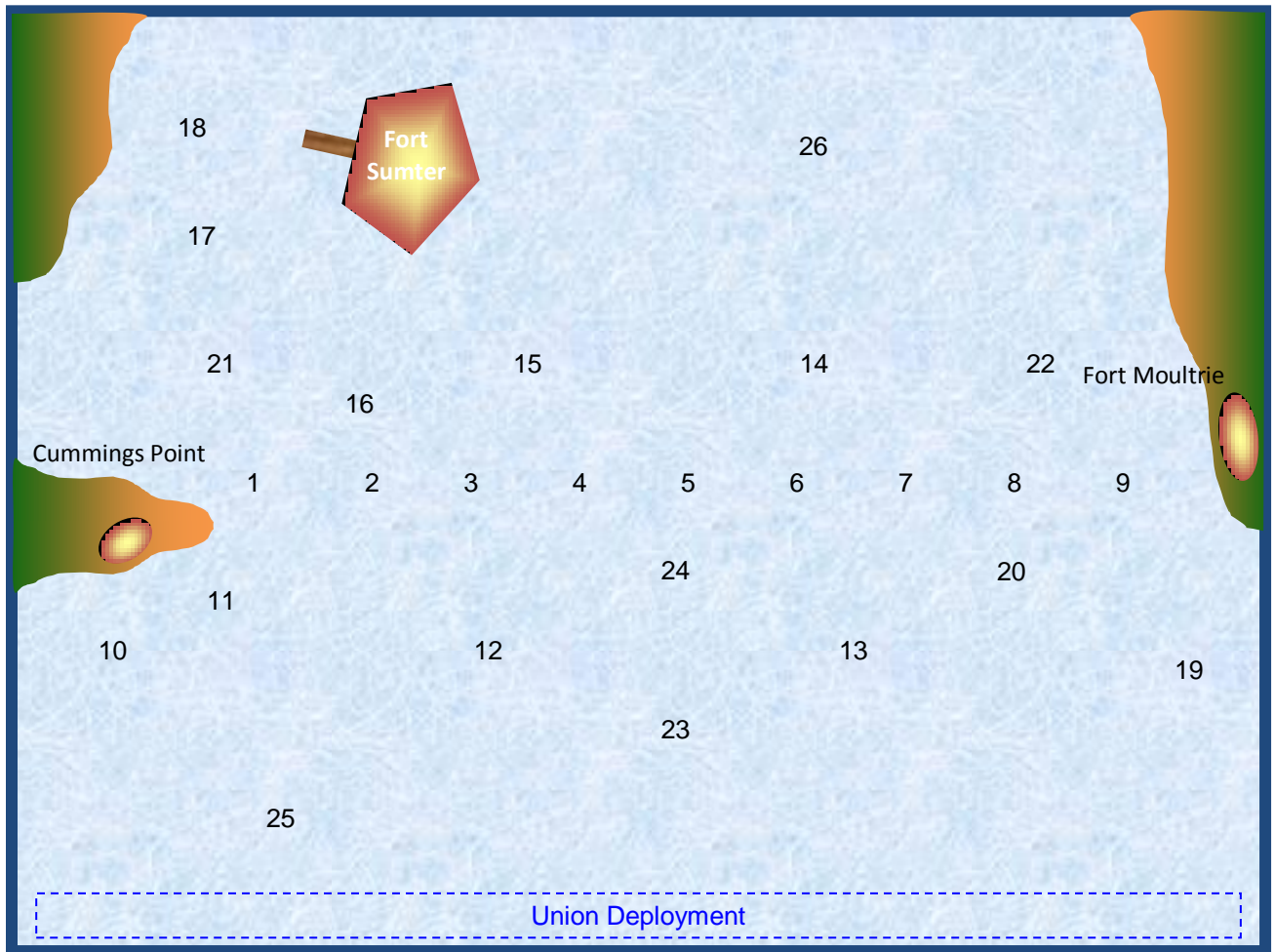
After the unsuccessful boat assault, the bombardment recommenced and proceeded with varying degrees of intensity until the end of the war. The Confederacy never surrendered Fort Sumter, but General William T. Sherman's advance through South Carolina finally forced the Confederates to evacuate Charleston on February 17, 1865 and abandon Fort Sumter.

The Game

The game presented was an amalgamation of the above historical events condensed into a single action set one night in August 1863. Players each commanded a Union ironclad and 5 boats of marines assaulting the fort.

For the rules we used David Manley's as yet unpublished "Victory on the Rivers" fast play ACW set. The models were Peter Pig's "Hammerin' Iron" range superbly painted and rigged by Rob Hutton. The terrain was from Terrain Mat, and Fort Sumter was again from the Peter range and loaned to us by Stuart Barnes-Watson.

The table was laid out as per the map below, with a number of coded "events" marked on both the map and the playing surface, which the players uncovered as they proceeded on their chosen route to attack the fort.



Obstacles Key

● Boom	● Spar torpedo boat attack
● Boom	● Spar torpedo boat attack
● Gap in the Boom	● Calcium Lights
● Boom	● Calcium Lights
● Boom	● Shallows
● Boom	● Shallows
● Boom	● Calcium Lights
● Boom	● Spar torpedo boat attack
● Boom	● Spar torpedo boat attack
● Shallows	● Picket Boat
● Shallows	● Spar torpedo boat attack
● Picket boat	● Shallows
● Picket boat	● Hunley

Deployment

Players each had command of one union ironclad and 5 ship's boats packed with Marines, 1 section per boat. These they deployed on the table in the designated union deployment area. The ships boats were classed as small low aspect targets and moved at 3 knots under their own oar power but could be towed behind the ironclad at no penalty to the ironclad's movement. Any gunnery hit on a boat destroyed it. The aim of the game was for the union players to land their marines on fort Sumter in order to take the fort by storm but to do this the ironclads needed to make a breach in fort's walls for them to gain access to the fort. A wall was considered breached when its defence points were reduced by 25% or more.

Command quality and crew quality

Each union vessel needed to roll for both command and crew quality, as detailed in the rules, but no initiative rolls were required unless and until any confederate vessels were sighted.

Night Visibility

3D6 were rolled at the beginning of the game. The result was the maximum night time visibility in inches. This was re-roll every 10th game turn, adding an extra D6, in order to model the approach of dawn.

Night Movement

At the end of each movement phase 1D4 plus a direction dice for each group of vessels within visual contact of each other was rolled. The result indicated the direction and distance the group were to be moved to recreate errors in the navigator's dead reckoning through absence of visual landmarks and the unpredictable tidal currents.

Notes:

1. Ships boats were too small to get a visual fix on for the purposes of grouping vessels.
2. If any vessel in a group had a visual fix on land then no roll needed to be made.

Obstacles

Boom

Heavy rope floated on beer barrels, with shorter strands of rope streaming out from it designed to entangle wheels and propellers of vessels attempting to cross it.

Only vessels travelling at 3 knots or less may choose not to run over the boom. For those vessels that do run over the boom roll 2D6 and subtract the ships target number, add 1 if the vessel is moving at 6 knots or more.

If the result is 3 or more then the boom is breached.

If the boom isn't breached the vessel takes above waterline damage equal to it's speed.

If a double 1 is rolled then the vessel's propeller is entangled in the rope and it must come to a halt until the obstruction is cleared (roll 1D6 +/- crew quality, freed on 5+)

Gap in the Boom

An opening 300 yards wide was left in the boom next to Fort Sumter so that confederate ships who knew its location could pass.

Shallows

For a distance of 6" around this point there is shallow water. Small vessels may pass over the shallows without penalty, but for larger vessels, only those travelling at 3 knots or less, and stating that they are checking for depth, may choose not to run into the shallows.

For those vessels that do run into the shallows they will ground and must roll 1D6 for every knot of speed they were doing, 1 point of flooding damage resulting for each 6 rolled. Any vessel that grounds during movement cannot fire that turn.

A vessel may attempt to back off at the beginning of the next or subsequent turn. Roll 1D6 +/- CQ, the vessel can then back off if the result is 6+. A vessel cannot fire whilst backing off.

Picket boat

Any vessel that comes within visual sight of this point is spotted by a picket boat which immediately lets off a warning rocket to alert the defenders.

Only once a warning rocket has been set off or a confederate battery has opened fire will the confederate rams, spar torpedo boats, calcium lights and the *Hunley* become active.

Spar torpedo boat attack

If the alarm has been raised then this point is patrolled by a spar torpedo boat which will attack any union vessel it sees.

Calcium Lights

If the alarm has been raised then an area 6" around this point is being swept by a calcium light mounted on the shore, which will fix upon and illuminate one Union vessel in this area.

Any union vessel within range of the calcium light may attempt to engage it. Target number of the calcium light is 10, but any hit will put it out of action.

Hunley

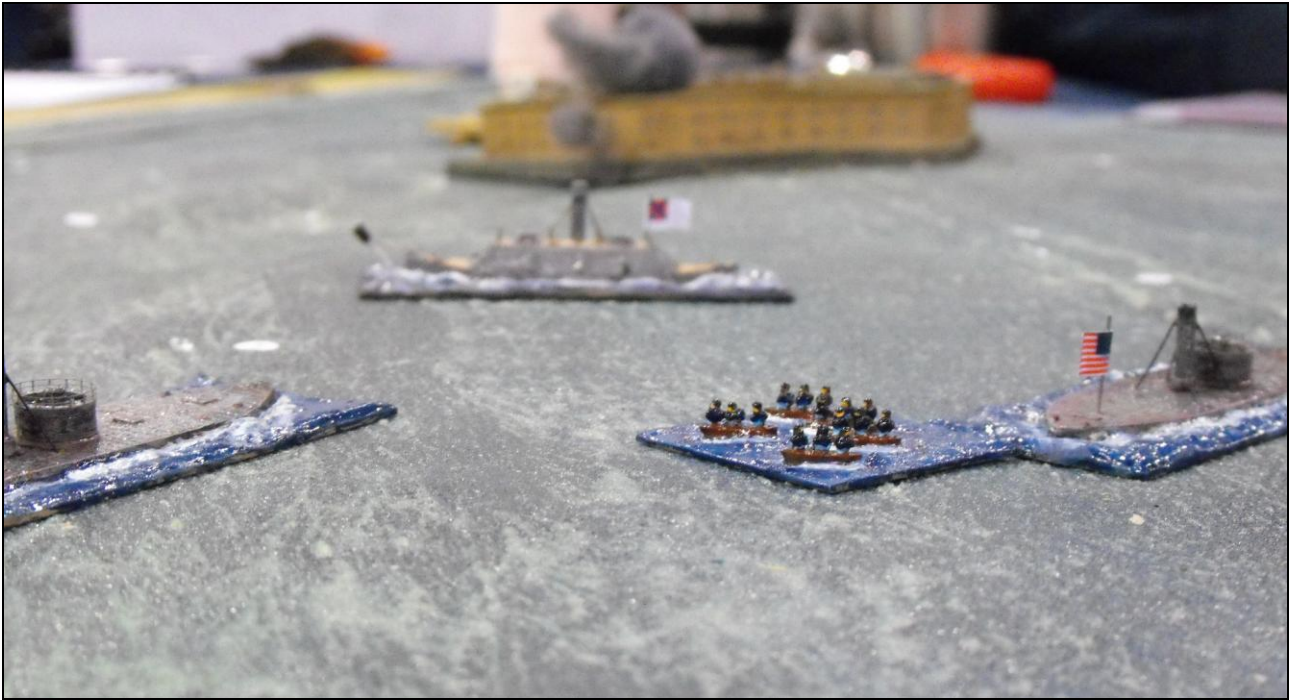
H. L. *Hunley* was one of the world's first ever military submarines. Almost 40 feet long, *Hunley* was privately built at Mobile, Alabama, and launched in July 1863. She was shipped by rail to Charleston on August 12, 1863.

If the alarm has been raised then any union vessel that is stationary within visual sight of this point will come under attack by the *Hunley* which will move unseen at 3 knots towards the target in order to deliver a spar torpedo attack on the vessel.



We ran the game twice during the day.

During both games the boom and the shallows played most havoc with the players plans, and in the first game especially the *New Ironsides* got entangled on the boom and took an age to break itself free only then to fall victim to the confederate rams that had chosen that moment to sortie and pounce on the unsupported union flagship, though both rams were eventually sunk by the combined effects of the New Ironsides defensive fire and the late arriving support from the Union monitors.



On both occasions the union forces managed to get at least a proportion of their boat loads of marines landed on fort Sumter, and both times they were repulsed, though the second of the two games came within an ace of taking the fort, only the staunch defence of the outnumbered confederate infantry eventually repelling the attackers.

Conclusion

The game looked great and played out really well, there being plenty to challenge the union players, though of course less interesting for the NWS volunteers who commanded the confederate forces very few of whose vessels had much freedom of movement.

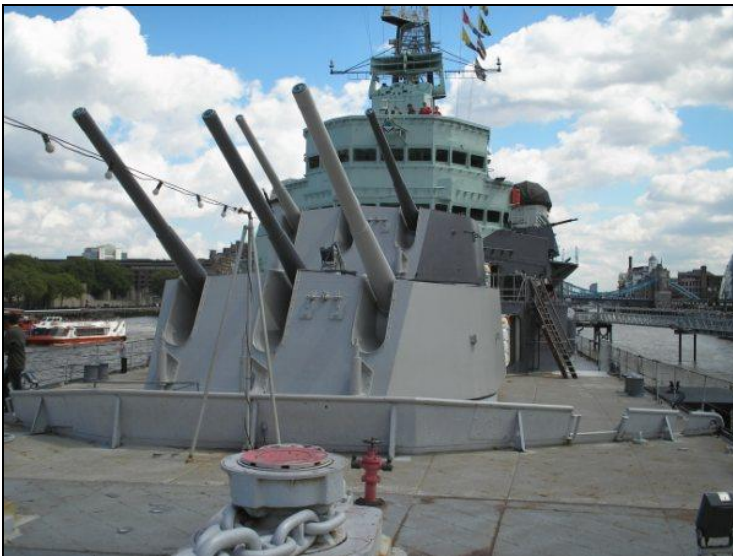
The rules played quickly by normal club game standards, but at just over 1½ hours per game were still a good 30 minutes too long to be ideal for a participation game. However I know David is going to look at a few of the learning points we fed back to him which will make the rules even slicker. Notwithstanding this though, the rules worked well and would be ideal for a time constrained club game.

Many thanks are due to the NWS volunteers on the day (Jeff, Rob, Drew, Dave and Nick) and to David Manley for supplying the rules, Stuart Barnes Watson for loaning us the scenery, Dave Sharp for the wealth of historical sources and information he unearthed for me and last but not least to Rob Hutton for the splendid modelling job he did on the ships (yet another 3am finish on the night before, but the results speak for themselves!).

Simon Stokes

June 2010

NORMAN BELL'S PHOTO GALLERY



HMS *Belfast*, London.



Type 42 Destroyer, Portsmouth.



Type 45 Destroyer, Portsmouth.

NAVAL WARFARE 1815-1914 **BY LAWRENCE SONDHAUS**

(Routledge 'Warfare and History' series. ISBN 0-415-21478-5)
£20.99

Reviewed by Rob Morgan

Few books on warfare exactly encompass the time between Bonaparte stepping aboard '*Billy Ruffian*' and the flight of the *Goeben*, yet Sondhaus's remarkably competent volume does so. It does so with a clarity which so many of the allegedly 'general' books on war and military developments in that rapidly accelerating era fail to achieve.

In nine progressive chapters, the author moves from the 'Twilight of Sail' in the period between 1815-1830, through the ironclad revolution, for such it was, and on to what was without doubt the single most important development in warfare during a hundred years, the creation of the 'Dreadnought'. The references and bibliography are extensive and very useful indeed.

His account of naval decline, mirrored by the fate of armies, is thorough. Such redundancies being commonplace in the aftermath of peace, he deals not merely with the largest powers (France, perhaps surprisingly, had some sixty-nine ships-of-the-line in 1815, and still had fifty-three in 1830), but also with the smaller navies. The virtual demise of Dutch and Spanish power and the strategic changes of the Danes and Swedes in the face of Russian domination in the Baltic are well recorded. The main operations of the period, against North African-based pirates, the revolutionary encounters in the Mediterranean, as well as the sad Spanish attempts in the New World, and the Greek War of Independence are worth reading, though Navarino, the last battle under sail alone, deserves better reporting. Step by step with his historical account, Sondhaus gives a technical report on the rapid developments in technology, the shell gun, the paddle steamer, and the dawning of the steam era. After 1830 the prospect of war over the growing crisis in the Near East brought Napoleonic Allies together again, and the minor, yet far from small-scale, operations of the next decade that are frequently forgotten in the political and economic histories are here vivid pages.

This is an all-encompassing book, and so it travels with the fleets, as the fleets must, to waters far from Europe. Creditably I feel, the author avoids that commonest of traps, that of viewing naval activity in the long century from behind the bulwark of *Pax Britannica*. The Opium Wars, the wars around Mexico, in which a French naval role could have been so decisive, appear here. Though I particularly enjoyed a short section on 'Naval Warfare in the Revolutions 1848-49' and the brief, illusory dawn of a German Navy! Sondhaus sails to the Crimea and naturally to North American waters for the world-warfare changing events of the encounter between the States; a two-sided lesson since the Federal imposition of blockade took so much from the Royal Navy's war against Bonaparte. The remarkable ironclad Battle of Lissa (1866) and the confused war between Denmark, Prussia and Austria are followed by the Franco-Prussian War, the 'naval war that never was' and the developing naval rivalries between European admiralities, based on old hatreds.

Russia-Turkey, with a vicious naval war in 1877-78, Britain-France, Austria-Italy, and the far off rising sun of Japan, a power with European aspirations and appetites are worth reading in the context of the arms race.

The author is to be congratulated on his interpretation of the *Jeune École*, which affected French and neighbouring nations' strategic approaches for decades to come, and he skilfully links its effects to the development (and in some cases decline) of naval powers in the 'new era' of the torpedo and submarine. The naval arms race reflected that in land warfare, and it accelerated in the 1880s and 1890s; culminating, in the closely-watched and vigorously (if often wrongly) interpreted naval encounter at the Yalu, in the German Naval Laws of 1898-1900, whence started the Great War. The book provides a short yet intriguing analysis of the Spanish-American War of 1898 and its effect upon the balance of naval power thereafter.

In these years around the turn of the century, many European navies, notably Italy and the doomed Austria-Hungary, 'revived' themselves, largely by embracing the *Jeune École*. Austria-Hungary herself possessed some thirteen battleships, fifteen cruisers and thirty destroyers, along with scores of submarines and torpedo boats in 1914; reduced to four small river patrol boats in 1920. Not since Carthage fell had such a massive naval power been so utterly destroyed! The dominating influence of European naval presence in the Boxer war is well accounted for, but naturally the Russo-Japanese War is much better served in better known volumes. In the last decade before the coming of the Great War, the book builds to the inevitable crescendo. War: global, and at sea and on land, and with the soon-to-be-decisive war in the air. The small sea-fights between Italy and Turkey and the Balkan Wars barely reflected what was to come.

Sondhaus's final reflections are upon deterrence, the fact that in terms of power, "The force of armies simply could not be brought to bear in anything approaching the same range of situations, or with the same range of strength as a navy can." He recognizes, of course, the fact that the failure by many European admiralities to embrace and continue to embrace the thoughts of the *Jeune École* led to the folly of the fleet-in-being, with battleship squadrons confined to harbour because they were too valuable to risk. This a valuable account of war at sea: war-that-was, wars-that-might-have-been, and one in which most members will find valuable in attempting to understand the influences and concepts of warfare in the 19th Century.

OPERATION KRONSTADT

Simon Stokes

For anyone who is interested in reading the full story of the CMB raids on the Bolshevik Russian naval base in 1919, which I touched upon in my *Battlefleet* article a while back, I would heartily recommend *Operation Kronstadt*, by Harry Ferguson. The book, which is as much a spy story as it is a tale of naval exploits, is a thoroughly gripping read to boot, all the more remarkable in that it is a true story. It is published in paperback by *Arrow*.

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Operation-Kronstadt-Harry-Ferguson/dp/0099514656/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1277763574&sr=1-1

JOINING THE NAVAL WARGAMES SOCIETY

If you have been lent this newsletter and would like to join the Naval Wargames Society, please follow this link to join our Society:

www.navalwargamessociety.org.

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2009

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

Kenny Thomson, 1 Excise Lane, Kincardine, Fife, FK10 4LW, Tel: 01259 731091

e-mail: kenny.thomson@homecall.co.uk - *Website:* <http://falkirkwargamesclub.org.uk/>

Falkirk Wargames Club meets each Monday night at 7pm with a variety of games running each evening. Naval games are popular with 2 or 3 run each month. Campaign games sometimes feature in our monthly weekend sessions. Games tend to be organised week to week making a 3-month forecast here a waste of time. Please get in touch if you'd like to come along.

- Popular periods – Modern (Shipwreck), WW1 and 2 (GQ), WW2 Coastal (Action Stations), and Pre-dreadnought (P Dunn's rules)

NWS North Hants [Every 3rd Sunday]

Jeff Crane 31 Park Gardens, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hants, 01256 427906

e-mail: gf.crane@ntlworld.com

NWS Wessex [Bi-Monthly Meetings]

The Wessex Group has gone into (hopefully) temporary abeyance for the moment. If anyone living in the Bath / Bristol / Gloucester area (or further afield) would like to take on managing the group please contact myself or any of the other NWS officials.
