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# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 219 – JANUARY 2013

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#### VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

#### HAPPY NEW YEAR 2013!

As Chairman of the NWS, I'll admit that last year was a stinker! We lost Richard Wimpenny from AGB (a massive loss), the guy who offered to take it over had heart problems then vanished, and now Norman has bravely stepped into the breach. Chris White is standing down as editor of Battlefleet due to work commitments. Jeff Chorney in Canada has volunteered to take over, and as a Kiwi and fellow member of the Commonwealth, I'm delighted by his offer, and it's great to know that our appeal is international. Our long out of date website is under a total revamp thanks to John Curry at Bath University. Once this has been achieved, I will be looking to improve links with model providers, hopefully making this the one stop website for naval models, rules and games.

My thanks go to all members for your loyalty, this has been a tough time, but we appear to be heading in the right direction.

However, loyalty alone does not grow a club. The Royal Navy's motto is "The team works". Serving aboard HMS Argyll, I saw this at first hand. With crews at a minimum, everyone has a vital job to play, no one is expendable.

The same is true of the NWS. We need everyone to do their bit, tell our editors about it, and stimulate the membership and our hobby. We need everyone to promote the club, as naval wargaming is popular.

We are the only society that caters for naval wargames, and the current main stream magazines are not interested in naval articles.

But, like a warship, the society is only as good as its members, and the crew needs to perform to its best capabilities.

Tell us about your battles, modelling tips, queries, and sales. Historically most sea battles in the last 100 years have been between cruisers, destroyers and light craft. The same can be said of frigates in the age of sail.

Explore the unknown, and let us know. We have the club, the model availability, the uniqueness....we just need to add to the membership by our actions.

I ask that your New Year's resolution is to do something for your club, it will be appreciated. Get friends/the club to join (it's cheap enough!!), tell us about your battles, ship wants, sales of models, books, games...

Mini ship shows will be on:

Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> March: Theale village hall near Reading, Berkshire RG7 5AS

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> May: Explosion Museum, Gosport, Hants

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> July: Theale village hall

Sun 28<sup>th</sup> July: Welton village hall near Lincoln, LN2 3LU

Also

Sat 6<sup>th</sup> April: The South West Ship Show, Portishead Leisure Centre nr Bristol

I will be at Plymouth Wargames Show on Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, trading as the Anchorage. We could do a Pearl Harbour game in 1/1250 if members can attend, and no doubt get new members. Any volunteers?

Full Steam Ahead!

Stuart

**The Prime Minister has welcomed Sir John Holmes' review into the rules and principles governing the award of military campaign medals.**

As part of his review, which was requested by Mr Cameron, Sir John Holmes has recommended new medals for veterans of the Arctic Convoys and Bomber Command Second World War campaigns. The Prime Minister has agreed that there is a case for the new medals. Veterans of the Arctic Convoy campaigns will get recognition with an Arctic Convoy Star medal. Meanwhile, the aircrew of Bomber Command who played such a vital role in the war will be awarded a Bomber Command clasp.



*View from the cruiser HMS Sheffield during an Arctic Convoy escort patrol, December 1941 (library image) [Picture: Lieutenant R G G Coote, Royal Navy. © IWM (A 6892)]*



*An underwater detonation erupts next to HMS Ashanti during a convoy to Russia in September 1942. The destroyer HMS Eskimo is seen in the foreground. Merchant ships are in the background (library image) [Picture: British Newsreel Pictures. © IWM (A 12022)]*

**Arctic Convoy heroes to finally receive medal, 70 years after risking their lives to keep supplies open in a frozen hell**

Britain is finally to award medals to Second World War veterans of the Arctic Convoy missions. The government had previously refused to provide recognition of the sailors' bravery in keeping supply lines open to the Eastern Front, because the conflict was too long ago.



Frozen hell: Sailors chipping away the ice and snow from the deck of H.M.S. Vansittart while on convoy escort duty in the Arctic in February 1943



Appalling cold: Snow and ice covered the upper works of all ships

More than 66,000 British sailors and merchant seamen braved sub-zero temperatures and ran the gauntlet of German warplanes and U-boats to keep the Soviet Union supplied on the Eastern Front. Winston Churchill once described them as having made 'the worst journey in the world'.

Only around 200 veterans are still alive today - a fifth of the number a decade ago. Many wanted a medal as their 'dying wish'.



Hero: In perilous conditions a sailor frees chains, wires and bollards from the ice



Unsung: One of 78 convoys that braved frozen seas to help win the war



Those who took part in the British Arctic convoy ran a gauntlet of U-boats and vicious weather conditions to bolster efforts on the Eastern Front

A total of 78 convoys delivered four million tons of vital cargo and munitions to the Soviet Union – allowing the Red Army to repel the Nazi invasion. The cost in lives was horrific. More than 3,000 UK seamen were killed in the treacherous waters of the Arctic Ocean as they undertook the terrifying trips to keep Russia supplied and fighting on the Eastern Front. In total, 85 merchant and 16 Royal Navy vessels perished between 1941 and 1945. Over four years, the convoys delivered 7,000 warplanes, 5,000 tanks and other battlefield vehicles, ammunition, fuel, food, medicine and further emergency supplies. Because Norway and the Baltic states had been captured by Germany, the only way to get the goods to Russia was through the northern ports of Murmansk and Archangel, both inside the Arctic Circle.

#### A French Fleet in Mexico.c1840.

#### A Note by Rob Morgan.

One of my colleagues based in Normandy has sent me a copy of a French Navy Ship List dating from 1838 which in part answers some questions I had about that short but interesting naval war between Mexico and the Republic of Texas. I'll return to that conflict later, but this gives a list of what must have been the most powerful Squadron active anywhere in the Americas at that time. French troops had of course landed at Veracruz in 1838, and the US Navy did not interfere, in this post-Monroe Doctrine era. Even though six Mexican Brigs based at Veracruz had been deployed against the fledgling, vigorous Texan force of schooners, brigs and privateers. An interesting small naval campaign in itself.

These six brigs were immediately seized by the French, and though the following list doesn't indicate that any of the seven Brigs listed were the Mexican warships, it would be remarkable if the original expedition consisted of such a high proportion of Brigs compared to other vessels.

The French fleet in Mexico was commanded by Vice-Admiral Baudin, who flew his flag in the Frigate *Neriede* (52). Five frigates in all constituted the strength of the fleet, with a single Corvette, 7 Brigs, 4 bomb vessels, 2 auxiliaries, an

armed transport and 3 armed steamers. A substantial force. The Frigates were *Nereide* (52), *Iphegenie* (60), *Herminie* (60) *Gloire* (52) and *Medee* (46). The Corvette *Creole* (24) was commanded by the Prince de Joinville. The Brigs were a mixed bunch, which perhaps indicates that some were Mexican captures re-named. *Alcibiade* (20), *Voltigeur* (20), *Cuirassier* (18), and the smaller *Eclipse* (10), *Dupetit-Thouars* (10), *Laurier* (10) and *Zebre* (10). The four bomb vessels were *Cyclope*, *Volcan*, *Éclair* and *Vulcain*. The auxiliaries *Caravane* and *Fortune*, have no armament listed, nor has the transport *Saumon*. The three armed steamers were *Veloce* described as on a temporary mission to Mexico, and paddlers *Phaeton* and *Meteore*.

The list gives the date of service in Mexican waters, all from 1838 and the landings at Veracruz, but there are a few exceptions. The Frigate *Herminie* was present in June 1835, while the 20 gun Brig *Alcibiade* was there in January 1837, and so were the three small Brigs *Eclipse*, *Dupetit-Thouars*, and *Laurier*. The steamer *Meteore* is also listed as present off Mexico in late 1835.

All of these warships can be found as very reasonably priced attractive models in the 'Tumbling Dice' 1/2400<sup>th</sup> range. ASN 6 and ASN 7 will provide the 60 and 52 gun Frigates, ASN 12 the Corvette, ASN 16 the bombs, and ASN 13, 21 and 22 the Brigs. For the few 'gaps', especially the transport *Saumon*, I turned to the Magister Militum list, which has the 'Figurehead' range in 1/2400<sup>th</sup>, and these are very compatible with 'Tumbling Dice'. From this I used FM-1 large merchantman from the Napoleonic series and for the steamers the same source, Fe-28 Screw/sail steamer for *Veloce*, and FE-27 for the two paddlers. The same 'Tumbling Dice' range will provide a small Texan naval force for commerce raiding, and for the 'commerce' 'Figurehead's' FM-3, coastal craft.

French reinforcements in the South Atlantic, as listed, if needed, would be the Frigate *Minerve* (58) at Brazil, under Rear-Admiral Leblanc, with the Frigate *Junon* (46) and the Corvettes *Sappho* (32), *Camille* (20) and *Perle* (18). Leblanc also had the Brigs *Alerte* (20), *Adonis* (20) along with *D'Assas* (20), and *Badine*, *Sylphe* and *Lutin* (10 guns each). This sizeable second French force also had the auxiliary *Bonite*, transports *Indienne* and *Expeditive* but no steamships.

In the Caribbean, the French navy maintained the Frigate *Astrees* (46) in the Antilles, under the command of Rear Admiral de Moges, who also had with him the Corvette *Thisbe* (32), Brigs *Bisson*, *Oreste*, *Cygne* (20 guns each) and *Inconstant* (16), and *Fabert* (10). Also in the Antilles were the 800 ton auxiliaries *Adour*, *Oise*, and *Aube*, the small transports *Lionne* and *Recherche*. At Haiti the 24 gun Corvette *Naiade*, and Brig *Griffon* (20), and at Guadeloupe the small gunboat *Alsacienne* (4) completed a rather substantial French presence in American waters. Over fifty warships and auxiliaries not to mention three Admirals, in a small corner of the world, in the latter months of 1838. There's the recipe for more than one wargames campaign in there *mes amis*.

Rob Morgan.

#### The Making of the Bulgarian Navy.

Few, I suspect, of the readers of this splendid newsletter, are familiar with the maritime monthly 'SEA BREEZES' which graces the shelves at Smiths and other good newsagents. Even this enthusiast, dedicated to war at sea, barely glances at its contents as I pass by.

The June 2009 issue however, contained a rare delight, a four page illustrated article on the subject of the creation and development of Bulgaria's fleet during the 'Liberation War' against the Ottoman Turks in 1877-1878. The article, by Kaloyan Pancheliev, is entitled '*The SS.OPYT*' after the first paddle-steamer warship donated to the new state of Bulgaria by Russia in 1879. As an account of the development of a small European fleet it's interesting, touching briefly on the events of the 1877-78 War, on the important yet brief Serbo-Bulgarian War of two weeks in 1885, and the tense relations with her bigger neighbours until the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. All viewed through the perspective of a small man of war, later a Royal Yacht which would be little thought of in most European navies of the time.

If you can find a copy, say through the British Library document access scheme at the local library, it's very well worth a little time reading. Pancheliev certainly provides information on the value of river and coastal communications in war. It also informed me of that in October 1877, '*Opyt*' took part in what must surely have been the last ever attack by fire-ships in history, during a raid by the Russian flotilla against the Ottoman ships in the port of Silistra. Now there's a 19<sup>th</sup> century naval wargame for you! Incidentally, if you want a model of the ship, then in the Navwar 1/1200<sup>th</sup> scale series, ACW64 'Mars' a British built paddle steamer blockade runner looks almost identical to '*Opyt*'.

Rob Morgan.

The third instalment: KAISER'S KORSAIRS

MOVE 8:

The Melbourne Times reports:

Patey Pastes Von Paigntonburg

Epic sea battle off Rabaul, Royal Australian Navy's First Victory!

The London Evening Standard reports:

The Royal Navy's Reply, Revenge off Rabaul.

In line abreast, with only masts in sight, the Australian fleet in the Solomon's tracked the route of the enemy squadron. Warrego was the first to site them, steaming at just 9 knots, Prinz Eitel Friedrich to the rear of a 5 ship line. Hasty signals were exchanged, and Warrego lead her sister destroyers into the front of the enemy line. Keeping outside of enemy range, they waited until Australia fired her salvos to announce the battle. The initial salvos landed squarely on the rear ship, Prinz Eitel Friedrich. Ablaze from bow to stern, she settled and sank to starboard. Upon seeing this, the enemy squadron broke ranks. Kaiserin Elisabeth increased speed straight ahead. Emden turned away to starboard, together with Geier, both increasing speed. Titania turned fully away. Ignoring Titania, Australia's next salvos were aimed at the large gunboat Geier. The gunboat disappeared under the splashes.....and when the water subsided it revealed a shattered white hulk, settling bow first. In order to get across the bow of Kaiserin Elisabeth, the Australian destroyers raced ahead, closing the range. A fierce firefight ensued, with Parramatta on numerous times appearing to have been sunk, only to emerge unscathed. Following Australia was the cruiser Melbourne, who now turned to chase Titania. Australia turned her guns on the next in line, Emden. It was clear from her firepower and condition that she was in need of repair. An accurate 12" salvo made that repair impossible. Emden sank stern first, her stern severed. Ignoring the on rushing battlecruiser, the armour being too strong, von Paigntonburg concentrated on the nearest adversary, Parramatta. Her luck finally ran out, Parramatta sank quickly bow first. Retribution was swift. Australia's first salvo landed squarely amidships the Kaiserin Elisabeth. She seemed to lift out the water as if by a giant hand, then break in two and sink within a minute. Melbourne's salvos proved equally accurate, as her bow 6" tore into the fleeing Titania. The German captain ordered his ship to stop, scuttling charges were exploded, and she settled beneath the waves. Intelligence gathered from enemy survivors. Nothing on Von Spee. Kaiserin Elisabeth sank 8 ships: Cruisers Dartmouth, Psyche and Pyramus, destroyers Itchen, Kennet and Parramatta, steamer Gaynor off Dutch East Indies and sailing ship Irish Lady off the Gulf of Thailand. Von Paigntonburg went down with his ship. Emden sank 3 ships: the cruiser Philomel, steamer Horsfield in the Gulf of Thailand and sailing ship Pakeha in the Dutch East Indies. Badly fire damaged from the Carolines Battle at time of sinking. Geier sank the sailing ship Penang in the Gulf of Thailand. Prinz Eitel Friedrich sank the steamers Fair Isle and Patia in the Gulf of Thailand and Dutch East Indies.

The landings at Tanga in the MC have not been successful, although the sea blockade appears effective.

The Cameroons convoy is now under escort of Madeira based cruisers, to be relieved by Admiral Cradock upon arrival in the Narrows (move 9).

Concern is growing over Von Spee's whereabouts. The Admiralty considers the Pacific coast of South America to be most likely as it is unprotected. Dresden is known to be operating in these sea lanes, possibly with Leipzig. In the Atlantic both Karlsruhe and Kronprinz Wilhelm are known to be at large. Strasburg may also be active. Konigsberg is last believed to have

been seen in the Cocos Islands, Indian Ocean.

Well done chaps! And a medal Admiral Patey!

## **Move 8**

### **Battle of Rabaul**

**Kaiserin Elisabeth, leading Emden, Geier, Titania and Prinz Eitel Friedrich** are spotted by the Australian destroyer **Warrego** heading west towards the German base at Rabaul, Solomon Islands. She is rapidly joined by her sister ships **Yarra** and **Parramatta**, which sensibly keep out of range. Tied to **Titania's** slow speed of 9 knots, the squadron proceeds west, until the fighting tops of a battlecruiser are sighted by **Prinz Eitel Friedrich**. The initial 12" salvoes are deadly accurate. **Prinz Eitel Friedrich** is engulfed in flames and sinks rapidly to starboard. The **Kaiserin Elisabeth** orders all ships to disperse and escape, whilst increasing speed and heading straight on herself. The battlecruiser **Australia** now concentrates on **Geier**. A punishing salvo leaves her totally wrecked and she serenely slips beneath the waves. **Kaiserin Elisabeth** is now engaging the Australian destroyers who are heading her off with their superior speed. **Emden** is fleeing to starboard. To no avail. Another crunching salvo takes her stern away, and she sinks stern first beneath the waves. **Titania** is also fleeing West, with **Melbourne** in hot pursuit, salvos crashing into her. **Kaiserin Elisabeth**, knowing the end is near, concentrates on her inferior opponents. The destroyer **Parramatta**, having lived a charmed life, is obliterated by another accurate Austrian salvo. The celebrations are short lived. **Warrego** and **Yarra** pull away, allowing **Australia** to close. Under a deluge of 12" shells, **Kaiserin Elisabeth** breaks in 2 and sinks rapidly, taking her legendary captain with her. The captain of the **Titania** acknowledges the futility of escape, stops engines, places scuttling charges and abandons ship. **Melbourne** picks up survivors.

In German East Africa, the Allies invade at Tanga and invest Dar es Salaam. German forces cause a defeat, but are still forced to retire into the hinterland.

**Leipzig** sinks the steamer **SS Renfrew** (2100 ton) and sailing ship **Mercedes** (600 ton) off Tehuantepec.

**Karlsruhe** sinks the sailing ship **Mary Clarke** (700 tons) off the Windward Islands.

**Kronprinz Wilhelm** sinks the steamer **SS Vickery** (1600 ton) off Jamaica.

No sightings for the other ships.

**Tsingtao** is still blockaded but in German hands. In Rabaul, the German colonists begin to accept the hopelessness of their situation.

## **Move 9**

### **The Times reports:**

#### **Von Spee's Revenge! Sydney harbour attacked**

The German Asiatic Fleet raids Sydney. At night, using the unsuspecting merchant ship **Flimwell** as distant guide, the blacked out light cruiser **Nurnberg** raced into the harbour approaches. Spotting her bow wave, the guard ship monitor **Cerberus** signalled her to slow down and identify, turning on her searchlights. A hail of 4.1" was the reply, doing little damage to the heavily armoured monitor. Searchlights from Forts North Head and South Head swept the remaining harbour entrance as a fierce gun dual ensued. Suddenly **Cerberus**, under the glare of **Nurnberg's** searchlights was deluged in large shell splashes, **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau** opening up from the blackened sea. Gallantly, **Cerberus** went down under this barrage. The Shore batteries now turned their attention on the armoured cruisers muzzle flashes, whilst **Nurnberg** closed **Flimwell**, ordering her to proceed at maximum speed. The gallant merchant ship's captain refused, and attempted to ram. Avoiding this with ease the **Nurnberg** raced on without the minefield being activated due to the close proximity of **Flimwell** and a lack of orders. **Flimwell** went on to beach herself on North Head.

The colonial cruiser Protector, moored off the entrance to Port Jackson now took the Nurnberg by surprise. The response was swift, a torpedo from Nurnberg swiftly sending Protector to the bottom. The cruiser now swept north into the Middle Harbour, being hotly engaged by Fort Middle Head. Undeterred, Nurnberg wrought havoc with the anchored merchant ships, sinking 4 and damaging 2. Meanwhile Scharnhorst and Gneisenau withdrew out of range of the outer forts guns, and blasted the 4" batteries on South Head into submission. Nurnberg now retired, Fort Middle Heads 4" batteries causing a brief fire on board, before steaming past the silenced South Head batteries. Without the aid of the destroyed searchlights, the mine field was activated visually on her bow wave, the decision to set it off en masse being deferred due to the presence of the armoured cruisers, who were now engaging Fort North Heads 9.2" batteries at distance, silencing a gun. Leaving huge explosions in her wake, she met up with the armoured cruisers then headed off into the twilight....

Panic is now reigning in the ports of Australia and New Zealand. First they read of the High Seas Fleets attacks on Scarborough, now this!

In the Cocos Islands, HMS Clio's shore party discovers the remains of a concealed coal dump, and attempt to repair radio station. Whilst duly engaged, the light cruiser Konigsberg surprises the anchored sloop. There has been no further transmission from Clio, which is assumed sunk.

There are no other reports of enemy sightings, Admiral Craddock now having been joined by the Cameroon invasion convoy in the Narrows.  
The French gunboat Zelee confirms no sightings of enemy ships off Tahiti.

Coaling status: several ships are getting low and players will have to plan ahead.

## **Move 9**

### **Raid on Sydney**

*Von Spee orders a raid on Sydney harbour. His captains meet to discuss how this can be achieved. The dangerous battlecruiser Australia is now known to be operating in the Solomon's, which leaves negotiating the harbour defences. The entrance to the harbour is protected by Fort North Head (9.2") and Fort South Head (4"), with a controlled minefield the whole width of the entrance. Once in, Fort Middle Head (4") awaits, with other forts guarding the entrance to Port Jackson to the South, but none protecting the Middle Harbour to the North. Clearly, a daylight attack is out of the question. Also night is short in November, and the Australians are known to have submarines and coastal torpedo boats.*

*It is agreed that Nurnberg will attempt to force the entrance at speed (good charts are available) whilst the armoured cruisers engage the two entrance forts. Once in, Nurnberg will attack shipping in Middle Harbour, before attempting an escape. Supremely risky, but a massive morale blow to the Allies, with small loss to the Axis. The support ships were to stay a further mile offshore, taking no part in the action.*

*Midnight. As luck would have it, a merchant ship was sighted entering the Harbour. Recognition signals were flashed and a searchlight from the guardship HMAS Cerberus (monitor) illuminated the visitor. Taking advantage of this, the German squadron raced towards the entrance, Nurnberg leading with Gneisenau astern to port, Scharnhorst astern to starboard, all lights extinguished.*

*Sighting the Nurnberg's bow wave, Cerberus ordered her to identify and slow down. The reply was a hail of 4.1" and the blinding glare of the light cruisers searchlights. A fierce fire fight ensued, with little damage being done against the monitor's armour, Nurnberg's starboard torpedo tube being smashed. Both Forts now opened up and turned on their searchlights.*

*This was the cue for the armoured cruisers to open up from the darkness, an accurate salvo from Scharnhorst sending Cerberus to the bottom, extinguishing her searchlights. Guided by the muzzle flashes, the forts now turned their attention on the armoured cruisers, allowing Nurnberg to close with the merchantman Flimwell. Holding fire, Nurnberg's captain ordered Flimwell to increase speed. The response was a gallant attempt to ram, easily avoided by the agile light cruiser. But the result was perfect; no mines were exploded for fear of sinking Flimwell.*



*The armoured cruisers now concentrated their fire power against Fort South Head, knocking out the 4" batteries and searchlights, staying out of range of Fort North Head.*

*Nurnberg was in, only to be challenged by the anchored colonial cruiser Protector to port and Fort Middle Head to fore. Again searchlights lit up the scene. A torpedo from Nurnberg's port tube slammed into Protector, sending her to the bottom. A good call, for minutes later a shell from Fort Middle Head smashed into the torpedo room.*

*Rounding the headland, Nurnberg now blazed away with all guns at the anchored merchantmen, sinking the steamers SS Wodonga (2341 ton), Tokomaru (2800 ton), Te Anau (1652 ton), and Awahou (400 ton), damaging at least 2 others. A request by the gunnery officer to send a few rounds in the direction of the cricket ground was refused; Kapitän von Fremburg pointing out that this is a place of English sporting disaster!*

*The night being short, Nurnberg now departed the scene of destruction, only to be re engaged by Fort Middle Head. A potentially disastrous fire started amidships, but the gallant crew manfully smothered the flames. Staying as close as the charts permitted to the South Head, Nurnberg increased speed and raced past the silent Fort, onto the minefield. The steamer Flimwell could be vaguely discerned beached on North Head and the Forts big guns opened up, only to be met with a hail of fire from the armoured cruisers. Worse was to follow, as massive water spouts from exploding mines drenched the speeding light cruiser. One hit, and it would all be over!*

*But the hit, when it came, was on Fort North Head, Scharnhorst silencing a 9.2" gun. With the crew holding their breath and crossing themselves, Nurnberg sped out into the gloom to rejoin the flotilla, and retire out of sight of land. The glare from the fires in Sydney could be seen in the distance.*

*The next day, radio reports confirmed the appalling effect on Australian morale, and a relayed communiqué via Rabaul from Berlin the award of Iron Crosses to both von Fremberg and von Spee. Nurnberg's crew has attained elite status.*

*Konigsberg, operating off the Cocos Islands, found the anchored sloop HMS Clio. A shore party was attempting to fix the radio station. A fierce fire-fight ensued, being settled by a torpedo from Konigsberg's starboard tube. A few more rounds of 4.1" put paid to any hope of radio repair.*

*Dresden finally achieves success off the Galapagos Islands, sinking the liner SS Windrush (22900 ton) and steamers SS Johnson (2100 ton) and Zanzibar (1400 ton).*

*Now the top scorer with 11 ships sunk.*

*Leipzig, Kronprinz Wilhelm and Karlsruhe are unsuccessful.*

Thanks to Dave Manley for this book review.

Mussolini's Navy – A reference Guide to the Regia Marina 1930-1945

Maurizio Brescia

Published by Seaforth

ISBN 978-1-84832-115-1

Like many naval wargamers I have always had a fascination with the Italian navy of WW2. My interest was spawned by my brother's 1/1200 scale plastic kit of the Vittorio Veneto (a model I still have today, over 30 years on). So I was interested to hear that Seaforth were releasing a reference guide to the Italian Navy of WW2. As far as I am aware there is no other book, certainly available in English, of its type available anywhere. I have to tell you that this is a most excellent book and possibly the only technical reference that those with less than a very deep interest will ever need. In 240 pages Sig. Brescia covers every ship in the Regia Marina from battleship down to rescue tugs, submarines to "Maiale", including prize ships and others. The book begins with a brief history of the RM from 1861 to the outbreak of WW2, then goes on to describe in detail the various naval bases and key facilities, fleet organisation and operations around the Mediterranean but also the Black Sea, Red Sea and Atlantic, detailed technical descriptions of all naval craft, naval aviation, both ship and shore based, warship camouflage schemes, flags, uniforms and a "who's who" of key Italian naval personnel of the period.

This is not an operational history of the Italian Navy, but is an essential supporting reference that details how and why the RM was organised, assembled and equipped as it was. I have found it to be an invaluable work in some of my current projects and would not hesitate in recommending it to all with an interest in the naval war in the Mediterranean in WW2.

Well, with the entry of the New Year, here are the answers to the last quiz. I'm beginning to get into the rhythm again after that long blip! We're still with 'THE NAVY' and still very firmly in the early 1950's. Here they are....

- \*\* The star question, of whom or what Warspite saved in 1922 seems to have eluded a lot of people. It was the last Sultan of Turkey.

Now, on we go...  
Sea Quiz 20.

1. Which Nation named 5 cruisers after its greatest hero, only to suffer the loss of four of them through sale or sinking?
2. In 1952, which was the 'Cadet Training Aircraft Carrier'?
3. And... a real beauty this one... what aircraft type did she operate in that year?
4. What was the name of the (then) sole Royal Canadian Navy Carrier?
5. What wartime US aircraft was still, in the early fifties, in front-line service with the Royal Navy?

Rob Morgan.

[illegible]

# MYSTERY SHIP



Now I am trading in 1/1250 I regularly get surprise parcels from Germany of ships they are not interested in. Germans are ship collectors, not wargamers, and expect a ready made stunning model, not one which you need to paint up! Can you identify this class of Ship before turning to the answer below?

Stuart Barnes-Watson

**Model makers may be interested in the following details that were in the Navy News.**

**Type 45 destroyers are fantastic in plastic as the new Airfix model is available, just too late for the Christmas stocking.** You can now put a Type 45 destroyer on your mantelpiece thanks to a highly-accurate scale model unveiled aboard HMS Dauntless in Portsmouth. Legendary model makers Airfix have turned 8,500 tonnes of battleship grey into a plastic replica, 350 times smaller than the real thing.



**THEY cost the Royal Navy about £1bn a pop, but you can have a Type 45 destroyer for under £60.**

Airfix have turned Britain's stealthy air defence destroyer into a plastic kit in 203 parts. They unveiled the first finished model aboard HMS Dauntless, ahead of the first special gift set being delivered to toy shops and stores. The model replica of a Type 45 which is 436mm (17in) long and 60mm (2.3in) wide... whereas the real thing is 152m (500ft) long with a beam of 21.2m (69ft 7in) and won't fit on your mantelpiece.



The set comes with a 12-page booklet about the Type 45s, plus glue to help stick it together and brushes and eight small pots of paint to give it the sleek grey messenger of death finish.



The set is ranked by Airfix as among the harder of their kits to assemble. It comes with decals (transfers to people of a certain age) so enthusiasts can turn their completed masterpiece into any one of the class from D32 (Daring) through to D37 (Duncan).

A letter from Rob,

Riverine Actions?

My colleague Marco Galandra of Pavia asked me to find him a copy of a set of very basic Franco-Prussian War rules which appeared in 'Miniature Wargames' back in 1985 ( It was issue 25 in June of that year). Through the good offices of the Continental Wars Society, one turned up. The rules were written on a single page (I like that!) and their creator, Stephen Allen, mentioned two similar sets which had appeared in 'MW' sometime earlier. Which means in one of issues 1-24, and in the early 80's. One set by Richard Brooks, called 'Drums along the Watusi' appears to have been 'colonial', but the other short set written by Andy Calan, was "Riverine Actions", which must surely be naval?

I can't find this set anywhere, but of course it may be that Andy Calan is or was a member of the NWS, and reading this. Or that someone among the brotherhood may recall this set of rules, and be able to turn up a copy. Short, and effective, rule sets for naval games are all too rare and I'd like to see this set.

Anyone familiar with them?

Rob Morgan.

A German Preference for a medium Range Battle.

This is the title of an article in the frequently useful and informative (as far as twentieth century naval wargames are concerned) journal "War in History", a title usually found only on academic shelves and this appears in Vol 19(1) pages 33-48. It is subtitled "British Assumptions about German Naval Gunnery 1914-15", written by Matthew Seligmann. It deals with the problems of just how the Royal Navy was planning to come to terms with the skill which German major units had shown at the Falkland Islands battle and with

the detailed intelligence which had come into Britain's possession about the German intention to close for action in order to best use its secondary armament and torpedoes. A very useful article for the Jutland and Dogger Bank buffs among the membership, it seems that nipping in and out of the mist might be the most historically accurate way of handling the Grand Fleet in the North Sea.

Rob Morgan.

Answer to Mystery Ship question.

The ship pictured has been converted, looks like WW1 Italian. Unless you know different.

Thanks to the January sales I have a scanner. The following article from Rob is my first "scan". See below – it is there.

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Thinking about Konigraatz.

Small-Scale Raid Wargames.

One of the most useful of all wargames concepts, and for most periods, is the combined operation, a naval force and a landing party acting in concert. There's a brilliant scenario in Don Featherstone's *'Naval Wargames'* (apart from *"Scouting for Boys"* the finest volume published in the twentieth century) called the attack on the Konigraatz batteries, you'll remember it.

Of course using ships and figures and fortifications and other buildings on a wargame table can be a bit difficult in the larger scales, I can't even imagine trying to place a 28mm scale gunboat or fort, but in 1/600<sup>th</sup> it's entirely possible and very rewarding. At this point I'm reminded of an article in an early issue of *"The Foreign Correspondent"* on Garibaldi's Thousand on Sicily's coasts, in which a landing party would have tremendous value. I'm thinking in European terms initially, but the concept's the same from Montivideo to Salonika.

There are two ranges which are excellent and reasonably priced, and which if carefully combined will allow combined ops to be played from 1860-1914. In the 'Peter Pig' 'Naval Riverine' range there are several useful vessels for this purpose, no.17 USS Fuschia ( £3), No.46 CS Drewry (£3) and No.47 Mortar Schooner (£3) as well as a few paddle steamers. Of course Norway, Sweden and Russia all built Monitors, and No.57 USS Passaic will serve for any of those, should you desire some serious shore bombardment. The 'Tumbling Dice' range, again in 1/600<sup>th</sup> has some splendid small rowing boats and steam pinnaces for landing the soldiery, and if you are in need of a torpedo boat or two, then the US based 'Thoroughbred Models' will come up trumps with a set of four spar TB's. Another 'Pig' vessel you would do well to look at is No.35 Commodore Morris a Ferryboat at £3.50; and don't forget No.60 a balloon barge at £3.

As for the troops themselves, for the earlier period, then Peter Pig's Pack's 39, infantry blocks, 40, cavalry blocks, 41 skirmishers ( particularly nice) and 42 command blocks are all good value at eight for £2.30. There's a pack 10 as well of four 12pdr guns ( no shields obviously) with limbers on a larger base, and these will suit almost any field gun or small howitzer weapon up to 1900 or



beyond, again at £2.30 a pack. For French, Italian, Neapolitan, Austrian or Prussian and ACW ( naturally!)

For the later period say from 1900-1914, then turn to the 'Tumbling Dice' range, in the universal Items, there are packs such as ISL 901, in 1/600<sup>th</sup> of course, Infantry in open order, ISL 902 close order Infantry, and ISL 910, which is cavalry in shako. Nice figures, all at £1.80 a pack, and accompanied by ISL 904, support weapons, which will provide maxims, and early mg's. I like the delightful ISL 918, three artillery limbers with crews, intended for WWI, but generic, and the Supply carts and wagons ( 4 of these) at the same price. For later field guns, the range provides ISL 1 an 18pdr, ISL 101, a German 77mm, and ISL 301 a Russian 76mm, all in packs of 6 with crew at the same price.

For heavier artillery go back to 'Peter Pig' and buy a pack of 10 Carriage guns, which will do nicely for heavier artillery if needed, and they also produce a pack of eight Heavy Fort guns which will do for every imaginable purpose up to Verdun! 'Dice' have a couple of add-on's including ISL 921 Flak guns, which will in fact serve as light anti-torpedo boat weapons, or harbour defence pieces, they look just like 57mm Hotchkiss guns; there's a sandbag gun position too, which will prove useful for a command post, and in ISL 922, the same range provides four early lorries or trucks, intended for flak guns but highly convertible nevertheless. I must say, the later period option's far more attractive to me, British, French, Prussians, Russians, Swedes, for instance, but the two can be blended if you are looking at a less technologically advanced military force facing a better one.

As buildings, Peter Pig have a coastal fort, hefty at £6, and also a street at £5 and a farm at the same price. While a glance at 'Tumbling Dice's' WWI aircraft range will provide a number of pre-WWI reconnaissance craft, don't forget the first air to air combat was in 1912. One or two items from other ranges, such as the Triton 'Narrow Seas' 1/600<sup>th</sup> ships *might* find use in the later scenario. 'Thoroughbred' do have a fair bit of stuff in the list too, but are very expensive in comparison to the others.

Rob Morgan.

## **SIGNAL PAD!**

In February the Kaiser's Korsairs continue the cat and mouse game of hide and seek in the oceans of the World.

More from Rob Morgan, "Pretty Ships"; and another Mystery Ship!

### **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](http://www.navalwargamessociety.org).

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## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2012**

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### **NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland**

Kenny Thomson, 12 Craigs Way, Rumford Grange, Rumford, Stirlingshire, FK2 0EU

Tel: 01324 714248

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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)

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### **NWS North Hants [Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday]**

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

e-mail: [gf.crane@ntlworld.com](mailto:gf.crane@ntlworld.com)

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