



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 221 – MARCH 2013

EDITORIAL

Well done to the contributors and producers of the latest "Battlefleet". I'm still taking it all in.

Thanks to David Manley and Steve Blease for this link.

<http://www.icv2.com/articles/news/25011.html>

Failure cannot happen in your life without your permission! These wise and deep words come from Jeff Chorney. I immediately had a mental list of the top five Admirals that could have had these words on a plaque in their sea cabins.

Thanks to Simon for this link. China's new stealth frigate.

<http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-21590331>

New Member Tim Moore supplies these words: "In the past I've run lots of Napoleonic and similar games using a slightly cut down version of FLoB that lets us play Trafalgar in a 4 hour club night with 8 to 10 players. FLoB is a simple rule set to start with but if you are going to play with 8 players each with a squadron of 6 ship-of-the-line you need to get through the turns rapidly. I have designed a couple of play aids and a suitable play sheet. The proof is in the outcomes. People even enjoy the Nile or Copenhagen".

"I have run quite a few map based WW2 games including carrier actions and other search based games. They went down well. I still have some of that stuff 20 plus years later".

Sounds good, if only I could think of what FLoB is the abbreviation for. (Form Line of Battle I'm guessing?)

More new members: Welcome to Tim Drewett, Tim Moore, John Kavanagh, Bruce Potter and Jay Stribling. USA, Australia and the UK represented.

Somewhere in the World, the Sun is over the yardarm.

Norman Bell

normanpivc@gmail.com

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

March 2013

Chairman: Stuart Barnes-Watson

Is looking good! My personal recruitment efforts have resulted in fortnightly naval wargames, and the ability to game in 1/1200 the German invasion of Norway, April 1940. This will form a large article in Battlefleet, but more excitingly, the players have recognised the part played by both the Norwegian Navy and Army. Plymouth Show was inspirational. My local club from Bideford stunned as ever, an ACW battle in 1/200 scale, all hand built. Phil the benevolent farmer dressed in CSA rig and roaring defiance. The other game that took my eye was sci-fi dystopian wars.

Whilst I'm a keen Middle Earth wargamer, that is it as regards non factual wargaming. Jeff Crane introduced me to Men O War by Warhammer many years ago, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. So, can any of our members do an article on the Dystopian wars?

With a third of our membership in Canada and the USA, it would be great to hear from you. Battle reports are always welcome as they inspire battles, museums of naval interest equally so.

It's my aim to make the society the information hub for naval wargaming, to achieve this; we need input from the crew. Don't let your inhibitions deter you from writing. Our editors are sure to help.

HMS ARGYLL has left Plymouth to conduct counter-narcotic operations across the Atlantic.



HMS ARGYLL sails past Plymouth Hoe

[Picture: Leading Airman (Photographer) Joel Rouse, Crown Copyright/MOD 2013]

The Royal Navy frigate will undertake a range of tasks in support of British interests worldwide, including supporting the counter-narcotics effort in the West Africa region. She will also provide reassurance to UK territories and partners around the world. Since completing her previous deployment only 10 months ago, ARGYLL has been extremely busy conducting operations in home waters, including representing the Royal Navy at last year's Armed Forces Day and at a highly prestigious UK Trade and Investment initiative in Hamburg. On completion of her tasking in the Atlantic, the ship will undertake a number of high profile regional engagement visits in the Caribbean before returning to Devonport later this year.

Naval Warfare in the 3rd Century BC: Rams, Warships, and Officials

Monday 8 April 2013, 9.30am – 5pm

A one day colloquium hosted by the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford, to discuss the finds of the Egadi Islands Project (Sicily). The project, under the co-direction of Dr Jeff Royal (RPM Nautical Foundation) and Dr Sebastiano Tusa (Soprintendente del Mare, Regione Siciliana) has so far yielded a total of 10 ancient bronze warship rams, mostly recovered from the sea-bed off the western coast of Sicily, and marking the site of the final battle of the First Punic War (241 BC).

For more information on the project, see: <http://rpmnautical.org/sicilian.htm>

Venue: Main Lecture Theatre, Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, 66 St Giles', Oxford, OX1 3LU

Google map here: <http://goo.gl/maps/rVvJn>

Participants include:

Dr Sebastiano Tusa (Soprintendente del Mare, Regione Siciliana)

Dr Jeff Royal (Director, RPM Nautical Foundation)

Prof. William M. Murray (University of South Florida)

Dr Fred Hocker (Vasa Museum)

Prof. Tommaso Gnoli (University of Bologna)

Prof. Boris Rankov (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Prof. Phil Schmitz (Eastern Michigan University)

Dr Andrew Burnett (British Museum)

All are welcome.

There is no formal registration, but indication of intent to attend would be useful for planning purposes.

There may be a small charge for lunch.

For more information or to register your intent to attend, please contact the organiser, Dr Jonathan Prag, Merton College, Oxford OX1 4JD / jonathan.prag@merton.ox.ac.uk

A full programme will be circulated nearer the day.

Cris Alvarez.

KAISER'S KORSAIRS cont.

Move 14

Acting on a (bribed) tip off to the British consulate in Venezuela (Caribbean), the armoured cruisers Berwick, Lancaster and Essex were sent to investigate a suspected German supply ship that has spent the war laid up in a coastal inlet. This ship turned out to be the KM Rio Negro.....caught recoaling the light cruiser Karlsruhe. With both ships caught bow on re coaling, the end was swift, no damage being incurred. The Karlsruhe had sunk 14 allied merchant ships.

HMS Pegasus (protected cruiser), guard ship Cape of Good Hope, intercepted 2 unidentified warships heading West into the South Atlantic. They proved to be Scharnhorst and Gneisenau! Unable to outrun her adversaries, Pegasus was rapidly sunk but not before signals were exchanged with Simonstown warning of their presence. All merchant sailings were hurriedly stopped, and coastal guns manned.

Konigsberg made her presence felt at Penang in the Straits Settlements, sailing boldly into the port and sinking 5 ships and shelling oil installations before cutting out a small coal victualing ship. Warnings have been sent to all allied merchant vessels, but the Governor of the Straits Settlements is furious with Admiral Jerram for leaving this port unprotected.

The Japanese fleet has anchored off Rabaul, and following a short bombardment, Rabaul has fallen. The only Pacific Island still in German possession is Samoa.

Move 14

Rabaul and the Solomons have been invaded by the Japanese. Only German Samoa remains unoccupied in the Pacific.

Karlsruhe and Rio Negro have been destroyed by the armoured cruisers Berwick, Lancaster and Essex whilst recoaling off the coast of Columbia. The British Press is making the most of this victory, and praising the Columbian Government for their assistance in locating these vessels. Neutral South American governments are being offered considerable rewards in reporting axis shipping.

Gneisenau and Schamhorst encountered the Cape of Good Hope guard cruiser HMS Pegasus and sunk her without damage to their selves. Concerns are that a radio message may have been despatched before sinking. Both ships have successfully made Walvis Bay for recoiling next move.

Konigsberg's daring raid into Penang, Malaya resulted in the sinking of 5 allied merchant vessels. The French SS Bon Homme (3500ton), SS Dorinda (12000ton), SS Newland (2500ton), SS Dibble (120ton) & sailing ship Wadebridge (700ton). The harbour collier 'Nancy' (250ton) has been captured and is in tow. Ammunition is expended, enough remains for only 3 salvoes. Further supplies may be available in the Rufiji River (MC) or Walvis Bay (CGH).

Leipzig sinks the SS Celtic Star (260ton) off the Gulf of Panama and sights **Dresden**.

Dresden sinks the steamer SS Jackal (1100ton) off the Gulf of Panama and sights **Leipzig**.

Move 15

The arrival of Admiral von Spee in Walvis Bay, German South West Africa (CGH) is the latest dismal propaganda Press. The Boers have been promised assistance from the Kaiser to rise once again against the Cape Colony, and the arrival of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau in the captured port of Walvis Bay was the incentive required for revolt. The fear of the power of the Royal Navy has been exorcised. If S&G can make it, then assistance is very likely.

On top of that, the Russian Protected Cruiser 'Askold' signalled to say she was under attack by the Dresden whilst coaling off the Galapagos Islands. Caught in the mid-day sun with crew resting from coaling, she was eventually sunk by torpedo but not until a hard fight had ensued. Considerable damage visible on Dresden. Final confirmation of sinking sent by 'Bolivar'.

In the Cocos Islands the Australian light cruisers Melbourne, Sydney and Pioneer caught sight of the fighting tops of the raider 'Konigsberg'. With half their crews involved with recoaling, none could attempt to engage, as the German swiftly fled away to the West.

Move 15

Schamhorst & Gneisenau's arrival in Walvis Bay, German South West Africa, was greeted by great jubilation. The arrival of the Boer commando leader from Orange Free State has led to the promise of a Boer Revolt in South Africa, assisted by German South West Africa regulars. Discussing the problem of **Numberg**, the Consul General has allocated a captured British collier (SS Basil, 1800 ton) to the fleet. Both armoured cruisers successfully recoaled and replenished. There have been no reports of Allied warships off the Cape of Good Hope.

Leipzig continues to find success off Tehuantepec, Mexico, sinking the British steamers SS Alsatian (1500 ton) and SS Dibble (1200tons).

Dresden sights the Russian Protected cruiser 'Askold' (6500tons) recoaling off Central Galapagos Island. A very powerful adversary, but at a temporary disadvantage. Dresden decides to attack, keeping bow to bow on the stationary Russian. The Chilean collier 'Bolivar' is moored shore-side of Askold. The Russian fire is erratic, but punishing given the weight of the 6" shells. Dresden's 4.1" shells are hitting constantly but with little apparent damage. Sweeping past the 'Askold', Dresden launches her starboard torpedo, but a punishing salvo ruins her aim at the vital moment of launching. Using the 'Bolivar' as a shield, Dresden turns and closes the bow of 'Askold' in order to launch her port torpedo. Once again it misses, the torpedo gunnery officer over cautious in fear of hitting 'Bolivar'. The situation was now critical, Dresden having taken heavy topside damage with little serious damage being observed on the 'Askold'. Heading away stern to bow of 'Askold', Dresden's captain decided to try once more.....

Turning back to pass close in, shore-side to 'Askold's' bow, both ships suffer repeated shell hits. The order to launch the reloaded starboard torpedo tube is given, and hearts go into the sailors mouths. Dresden can't take much more topside damage, funnels riddled, some guns destroyed. A large fountain of seawater celebrates a hit on the bow of the Russian. Panic is seen to set in with her crew, choosing to abandon ship rather than obey their furious officers. Dresden enters the inner bay, shielded by 'Bolivar', and observes the slow demise of 'Askold', which settles bow first into the warm Pacific sea.

The Chilean collier 'Bolivar' initially refuses German wishes to purchase the coal, but force of arms brings the neutrals to heel. The collier is no longer full, but can supply 4 coal boxes. The Russian sailors are rescued from the sea and ordered to Galapagos Island. A leading telegrapher confirms that the attack was signalled successfully to allied warships.

Konigsberg once again visits the Cocos Islands, only to sight the masts of the Australian light cruisers Melbourne, Sydney and Pioneer. All three are anchored and recoaling, but the combined weight of firepower and shortage of ammunition is too much for Konigsberg's captain. The light cruiser reverses course and makes best steam away from the enemy.

Move 16

In the South Atlantic, Falklands, Allied naval forces unite. Admiral Jerrams ships Ocean, Goliath & Swiftsure recoal, whilst Admiral Craddock arrives with his fleet. The Japanese armoured cruiser 'Idzumo', alone manages to make Walvis Bay, German South West Africa, CGH. Shortly after 3pm she sights funnel smoke from 2 warships with 4 funnels, heading due North. At maximum range, Idzumo opens fire at the lead warship, and radios her intent in open. As the enemy were clearly capable of out running 'Idzumo', the captain decided to close the range on a continuing converging course, keeping abreast of full salvos from

Gneisenau at the rear, knowing this was near suicide. Further reports indicate numerous hits on the lead ship, believed 'Scharnhorst'....but then reports end. No further contact.

All Allied warships capable of reaching the Narrows (N) are ordered to converge immediately. All ships in South Atlantic (SA) can rendezvous, the light cruisers at Rio de la Plata (RDLP) need recoaling. Madeira (M), Windward Isles (WI) and Mouth of the Amazon (MoA) have confirmed assistance.

Acting on a belated reported 'sighting' of a suspicious ship from a French inter island schooner, the detached cruiser squadron of 'Sydney', 'Melbourne' & 'Pioneer'(SIO) sailed to the uninhabited French Island of the Isle d'Amsterdam. Emerging from a tropical rain squall, the bay appeared uninhabited. But as Sydney slowed and turned to starboard, the jungle seemed to erupt in fire and flame. Repeated hits were received, and Sydney swerved further to starboard in order to launch torpedoes. By now Melbourne was adding her forward salvoes to the battle. The port torpedo was launched, and against a static target, scored the decisive hit. Nurnberg seemed to rise from midships as if by a giant hand, then settle back into the water, broken in half.

Survivors confirmed that the cruiser had sunk 7 ships, but was forced to seek refuge here due to lack of coal. The bulk of the crew was taken off in Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, leaving the gunnery, radio and cook sections with the ship. The Terror of the Tasman was no more.....sunk by Australian warships. No evidence of other raiders using this island was found by the landing party. A French flag was hoisted over the foremast of the wrecked Nurnberg, and three cheers for France rang out! This act has led to the French fleet in the Madeira's (M) heading to block the Narrows (N).

We seem to have lost Konigsberg in the Indian Ocean and Dresden in the South Pacific. As for Leipzig?????

Move 16

Scharnhorst & Gneisenau up anchor as soon as coaling is completed, and in the midday sun sail due South West out of Walvis Bay, German South West Africa. Crowds throng the beaches with gay farewells, both ships fire saluting guns in reply. This course is taken to encourage the Boer Revolt and throw the British spies off the scent. Once out of sight of land, Von Spee reverses course and heads due North for the Gulf of Guinea, and the German Kameroun, currently under severe attack from both French and British troops. A warship on a converging course is sighted to the North, crossing the squadrons bow. As any warship in these waters is going to be hostile, Battle-stations are ordered. Before a shot can be fired, the enemy cruiser straddles Scharnhorst. As the ranges decrease, the enemy cruiser, now positively identified as the Japanese armoured cruiser 'Idzumo' 9750 tons, proceeds to punish the flagship.

Skilfully, the Japanese captain always manages to present only a partial broadside to Gneisenau, but the partial broadside was the first to hit home on Idzumo. As the range closed still further, both Scharnhorst and Idzumo suffered greatly. The Japanese gunnery had been excellent, but now her guns had ceased firing, her topsides and funnels were trashed, only torpedoes remained, and this dubious given her list from numerous waterline hits. Another broadside from Scharnhorst hit home, but still the gallant Idzumo, afire from bow to stern, steamed ever closer. To the palpable relief of the crew of Scharnhorst, Gneisenau's next partial broadside seemed to lift Idzumo out of the water. She split in two, and sank rapidly. Neither ship stopped for survivors, of which few were seen.

Cruising up into the Gulf of Guinea, no ships have been sighted.

Damage Report: Scharnhorst can now achieve 21 knots max, and half her fire power is reduced. Admiral can transfer flag to Gneisenau.

Nurnberg's idyll at the Isle d'Amsterdam came to an abrupt end when the Royal Australian Navy's cruisers 'Sydney', 'Melbourne' & 'Pioneer' were sighted heading into the bay sheltering Nurnberg. Thanks to a tropical squall, and the Nurnberg's clever camouflage, the German was able to open fire at an advantageous range and immediately cause damage to Sydney. However, shortly after, Nurnberg's radio reports ended abruptly, and it must be believed that she has been sunk by the Royal Australian Squadron.

Dresden, Leipzig and Konigsberg encountered no sightings, Dresden being pounded by storms in the Eastern Pacific.

Move 17

Battle of Recife, Craddock hammers Von Spee

The arrival of Von Spee in the Narrows had been correctly guessed, and the armoured cruiser HMS Carnarvon found the German armoured cruisers and wisely shadowed, remembering the fate of Idzumo. Radioing ahead to Admiral Craddock, a show down off Recife ensued. The British fleet was headed by the flagship HMS Good Hope, followed by Otranto, Canopus, Glasgow and Monmouth. The Admiral allocated his best ships for speed fore and aft of his line to prevent the Germans escaping at speed. Von Spee turned to starboard to head off the Good Hope and exploit the apparent weakness in the RN line. Carnarvon raced to close the enemy from the port side. The RN fleet gave a full broadside, all ships firing, but with little effect. An early salvo from Scharnhorst reduced the light cruiser Glasgow to a shambles, and she pulled out of the line. The Germans turned to port and raced bow on towards Canopus and the centre of the line, hoping to make a smaller target. But at last Canopus's gunners scored a devastating hit on Scharnhorst. Her speed halved and her gunfire ceased. The Germans then turned to port again to clear the rear of the Allied line, Gneisenau being ordered to act independently. Carnarvon and Monmouth were both involved in a duel with Gneisenau, all parties taking heavy punishment until Carnarvon closed to torpedo range and successfully torpedoed Gneisenau. The German cruisers speed was rapidly reduced, but she carried on firing with considerable accuracy. As the Germans bore on, Craddock turned to port in line abreast to head off and re-cross the German T, Monmouth and Carnarvon tasked with engaging the enemy. A heavy fire fight ensued in which Gneisenau attempted to torpedo both Carnarvon and Monmouth. Fires were seen to break out on Gneisenau but were quickly extinguished. With Carnarvon and Monmouth in close attendance, the RN line gradually crossed the German T. First to go was Scharnhorst, the bow guns of Canopus sending her to her doom. Then came a free for all as the RN fleet crossed Gneisenau's bow. The German continued to cause severe damage to both Carnarvon and Monmouth, but a close range torpedo hit by Monmouth on Gneisenau finally sent her to the bottom.

Damage Report:

Good Hope: no damage.

Otranto: no damage.

Canopus: no damage.

Glasgow: only 210 points from 2400 remaining topsides, gunnery halved. Return to UK for major repair.

Monmouth: Only 584 points from 4900 remaining topsides, gunnery halved. Return to UK for major repairs.

Carnarvon: Only 566 points from 5425 remaining topsides, gunnery halved. Return to UK for major repair.

To replace the damaged ships, HMS Kent (armoured cruiser) and HMS Bristol (light cruiser) have been added to Craddock's command.

There has precious little news of the other light cruisers, believed to be operating in the Indian Ocean (Konigsberg), and off the Pacific coast of South America (Leipzig & Dresden).

Admiral Patey. Relieved of convoy duty, track down and destroy Konigsberg. German Samoa has yet to be invested, and maybe a lair for the raiders.

Admiral Jerram. It is your duty to assist both Admirals Patey and Craddock in destroying the remaining enemy raiders

Admiral Craddock. Hunt for the raiders off the Pacific coast of South America. And receive the Order of the Bath.....

Move 17

Scharnhorst & Gneisenau headed north to the Narrows between South America and Africa. Smoke was sighted coming from a warship on patrol, HMS Carnarvon, an armoured cruiser. She wisely kept out of range sending continuous radio messages of her quarry. At midday numerous smoke clouds were sighted, crossing the German T. Large plumes of water provided evidence of a British pre-dreadnought. Gradually the British fleet was identified as that of Rear Admiral Craddock; HMS Good Hope (armoured cruiser), Otranto (Armed merchant cruiser), HMS Canopus (pre dreadnought), HMS Glasgow (light cruiser) and HMS Monmouth

(armoured cruiser). First in range of Scharnhorst's main guns was Glasgow. And true to form, the gunnery was superb, Glasgow being forced to pull away North out of the line. Von Spee knew that the only chance of escape was to out distance the enemy, and so the damage to the faster ships was vital. Being unable to prevent the T being crossed, Von Spee now turned to port to head straight on for the enemy, making a smaller target. Gneisenau began to engage Carnarvon which had finally closed to range. But the German luck couldn't hold. With Monmouth and Carnarvon hotly engaging Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, a full broadside from Canopus finally ended all hopes of Von Spee escaping. Scharnhorst was reduced to just 10 knots and with only torpedo tubes still operable, Gneisenau was ordered to act independently. Both turned again to port to cross the weakened rear of the British line. Carnarvon and Monmouth now engaged Gneisenau. The German gunnery was excellent as usual, both British cruisers taking heavy punishment. But with range short, Carnarvon successfully torpedoed Gneisenau. Her speed reduced to 11 knots, a slight list to port. The end was now certain. Craddock brought the rest of his line back to cross the bows of the Germans. A salvo from Canopus put an end to Scharnhorst, and Gneisenau was soon to follow. Both Monmouth and Carnarvon had taking a very heavy beating, but now Good Hope, Glasgow and Canopus were ranging in on Gneisenau. She launched torpedoes at both Carnarvon and Monmouth but without success. Ironically it was a torpedo from Monmouth that finished the action. Survivors were rescued by the British ships, Von Spee and his captains were not amongst them.

Konigsberg successfully recoaled in the Chagos Archipelago. Ammunition is the problem, German South West Africa (CGH) the only solution.

Dresden successfully recoaled in the Eastern Pacific, the Chilean collier 'Bolivar' retuning to Chile.

Leipzig sighted nothing off Palmyra. Coaling now essential.

Next month, the Korsairs comes to a conclusion.

The Shetland Bus.....

One of my colleagues passed me a copy of *'The Historian'* yesterday. It's the magazine of the Historical Association, published quarterly. It rarely contains much of interest, but in the Winter 2012 issue, No. 116, there's a splendid four page article on this unusual naval campaign of WWII, written by a young historian called Henry Widgely.

The 'Shetland Bus' of course operated between those islands and Norway, supplying resistance groups like Milorg with weapons, dropping and retrieving agents for most of the war. The service originally operated 14 fishing boats from several bases, and the 'flotilla' was commanded by an Army Major! There were heavy losses, the first boat "*Siglaos*" was lost in October 1941, and after the flotilla's 'flagship' "*Aksel*" disappeared with all hands, and losses had amounted to 13 boats, the Americans were approached for the loan of three 110' sub chasers, which were capable of around 22 knots and well armed. These duly arrived, and were named '*Mitra*', '*Vigra*' and '*Kersa*'. The first of these three incidentally is still afloat as a museum ship, there's a photo of her in the article, but her whereabouts are not mentioned. For the remainder of the war the 'Shetland Bus' service was a success, and of course helped to pin down ten German divisions in the North, strength which could have been used elsewhere after D-Day.

A short article, interesting, and with the makings I feel of a map game if not a table-top action with models. Worth reading if you can find it in the library.

Rob Morgan.

The ACW riverine ships were made, and in balsa with dowel funnels, by my old Solo Wargames friend Mike Crane of Arkansas. They are 1/1200th, and made in just the way that Don Featherstone suggested more than forty years ago in 'Naval Wargames', and though the ships are light, they seem robust enough, and can be handled without problems. I've used them quite often in solo games lately, and they do work.



The Science Fiction model with the big gun forward is "Thor".

Rob Morgan.

Sea Quiz 21 Answers...

1. Rear Admiral Blagrove.
2. There were 103, a hundred and three before the axe fell!
3. Those little gatherings between the Dutch and English were led by Blake and de Ruyter in 1652-53.
4. KGV, Duke of York, Anson and Howe were to go.
What was left? Just one.... HMS Vanguard.
5. They are from the left:
 - a. Admirals' Class.. ' Sans Pareils', 'Trafalgars', 'Royal Sovereigns', 'Hood', 'Barfleurs.'
 - b. Renown', 'Majestics', 'Powerfuls'.
 - c. Lord Nelsons', 'Defences' and three 'Britannias'.
 - d. Malaya'.
 - e. Effingham'
 - f. Gorgon'and the easy one...
 - g. The 'Bay', 'Loch' and 'Castle' classes.

Sea Quiz 22.....

A rather simpler selection this month, matelots, another amazing illustrated question next month....mind you, question two's an oddity, and I couldn't get it, and by the way, the words are precise, from sixty years ago!

1. Why were tripod masts fitted in HMS Captain?
2. Which RN ship, not a carrier, still operates an aircraft?
3. In this British fleet name the odd one out....
Bulwark, Centaur, Drake and Ceylon.
4. The world's second largest navy in 1900, was....?
5. The Japanese Escort No. 75 was the last what...?

That's it, no 'three pipe problems' this time. More next month.

Rob Morgan.

HMS Victory.

Back in the early sixties, Airfix made some magnificent waterline ships, entirely suitable for wargaming with. This one obviously made it into the top ten. If you remember Phil Dunn's book on naval wargaming written in the seventies, the model, not by then a waterline warship, was still about and he made fleets of them, some converted into '120's' others into two deckers. A lovely model, the photos in the book are impressive. There was also a model of the frigate 'HMS Shannon', suitable for frigate duels, but not to serve alongside the 'Victory'. I also had a small group of rather chunky 'Santa Maria's' (Columbus' ship) which again fitted in with nothing else in the little two shilling range, but made for a good game in the late medieval period. The 'Golden Hind' was yet another waterline model, and that provided a decent (at least I thought so) 'Armada' era battle. There were a few others in waterline, and I'm told that Brunel's paddler 'Great Western' was issued in this format, but I didn't buy that one, and can't recall the names of any others.

The company turned them into full hull display models before too long had passed, and the chance for an 'off the shelf' quick assembly dirt cheap naval wargame from Airfix was gone. The only constructed example of the 'Victory' surviving from that era in my own little collection is now undergoing some restoration. Well, not really restoration, maybe resurrection. I actually found the damaged remnants in an old 'spares' box (remember those?), and decided that little could be done with it... then I saw an article about the old 'Foudroyant' of blessed memory, and thought of this.

Scale's not perfect maybe, but what's left of her is going to serve as a depot ship, or hulk, or prison ship of the nineteenth or early twentieth century. I'll use her in 1/600th I think, as the centrepiece of a defended harbour, or subject of a raid. All I did, all I could do, with the battered old thing was to tidy her up, and replace the surviving mast, then add a couple of the houses and hotels from a 'Monopoly' set as deckhouses, and it works neatly. Maybe I'll finish her off with a grimy sooty black wash, and even add either a floating jetty or a small flotilla of ship's boats alongside. She could even, with a little imagination be a floating battery.

I have actually kept one of my original 'Victory' kits, and the cover label's shown here along with the contents of the packet, fourteen well moulded parts in all. A remarkably simple model, and it includes a sea base, which isn't unrealistic. The two angular pieces at the bottom right are in fact wall brackets, so that the ship might be mounted and displayed (hm?). One of the remarkable notes in the instructions for assembling the model deals with painting, and this was in pre 'Humbrol' days... "*For colouring use student's oil paint s*". ! The paint jobs going to be a lot different, no doubt about that!





STEPPING ABOARD HISTORY **HMCS SACKVILLE, CORVETTE K181** **HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA**

By Bruce Potter

On a gray, misty and drizzly afternoon in early August 2012 I had the absolute privilege to visit the last Flower Class Corvette in existence. I have had strong affections for this class of ship and respect for the men who sailed them since as a boy reading Nicholas Monsarrat's "The Cruel Sea". The Corvette K181, HMCS Sackville, serves as a floating memorial to the Royal Canadian Navy in WWII.

Why such a strong connection with a non-seafaring American? My father, 1926-2010, was career US Navy and our family always lived near the sea. His combat service began in WWII and ended with Vietnam. One of his assignments was on Malta in the early nineteen sixties. My affinity with the Royal Navy came as a result of being the only Yank attending Royal Naval School Verdala. Those three years on Malta are the fondest of my youth. My Royal Navy memories were of days spent observing and studying carriers and cruisers in Grand Harbour, submarines and minesweepers at Manoel Island and frigates and destroyers at Sliema. Whenever the US Sixth Fleet came into port, there were inevitably my father's old shipmates and acquaintances to visit aboard their current ships.

Now that I am retired from nearly 40 years with the US Army, as both a soldier and a civilian, I can devote more time to the academic study of military history. While in Halifax last summer, one of the highlights for me was the time spent aboard HMCS Sackville. She has been restored to her wartime configuration as she looked while escorting North Atlantic convoys between Newfoundland and Londonderry 1942-1944. Naval ratings from the training station across the harbour are on duty in two-man watches to answer questions during visiting hours. Rather than restate her history here, I would prefer to let the reader view my photos and strongly encourage a visit to the HMCS Sackville website, linked below;

<http://canadasnavalmemorial.ca/>

The website is most excellent, laying out her history including a stirring embedded 12 minute video as well as a complete operational listing.

For further reading on this fascinating topic I recommend the following books (In addition to the obvious "The Cruel Sea" and Buchheim's "Das Boot"):

1. "The Corvette Navy" by James B. Lamb, ISBN 0-7715-9275-2. True stories from Canada's Atlantic war.
2. "Under the Red Duster" by William J. Lewis, ISBN 1-84037-383-0. The Merchant Navy in World War II.

The Royal Navy, Battle Fleet Tactics and a War in the Far East

Andy Field.



When I read Rob Morgan's review of JP Levy's article in 'War in History' it got me thinking about some research I'd done a few years ago on the Royal Navy's inter-war developments on tactics, with regard to a war against Japan. I've attempted to give a brief summary of some of the thinking behind the Royal Navy's tactical developments. I hope it is clear and of some interest to members.

As we know, the Royal Navy finished the Great War in mixed shape; the world's largest navy, but a navy with many worn out battleships.¹ Challenges existed, from the United States, with its 1916 'Second to None' building programme and from Japan, with its '8:8 Programme'. These were the only two countries with navies big enough to challenge the Royal Navy and the Admiralty was faced with the challenges of building bigger and more heavily armed battleships and battlecruisers in reply. That is one of the reasons why the Royal Navy broadly welcomed the Washington Naval Agreement. The Royal Navy only had to scrap the *G3* and *N3* battleship and battlecruiser designs whereas both Japan and the United States had to scrap ships already building. The older battleships were scrapped immediately but the British battle fleet was still the largest in the world, and would be at least until 1931, when the *King George V* and *Iron Duke* classes and the battlecruiser *Tiger* were to be disposed of.

But who was the enemy? The German fleet was at the bottom of Scapa Flow, the Russian fleet was decimated

by the Bolshevik Revolutions, and the French and Italian fleets were not regarded as a threat. So the only possible enemies were the United States and Japan. A war against the United States was unlikely, and, in fact, British war games had suggested that, in a war, the British fleet would be inferior to the American fleet. Nor was it possible to keep a fleet repaired and replenished in the harbours near America, Halifax, Bermuda or the West Indies.²

So this just left Japan as a likely enemy. Australia and New Zealand were concerned about Japanese expansion into the Pacific, by taking over the former German colonial possessions, but were unable or unwilling to accept the proposals of Lord Jellicoe's suggestions for an 'Imperial Fleet'. But Britain had been given permission to develop Singapore as a naval base in the Far East, as a forward defence for India, and so attention turned towards how to send and supply a Royal Navy battle fleet from the Mediterranean to Singapore. A strategic plan, *War Memorandum (Eastern)* was developed in 1924, and periodically updated and revised, up to 1937. It was basically a three-phase war plan, with Phase 1 being the transit of most of the Royal navy eastwards, Phase 2, the movement north, including the relief of Hong Kong,

(recognised as impossible to defend without massive, [and prohibited by Washington], improvements in its defences, even in 1924). Phase 3 was to be the seizure of a Japanese island, and attacks on Japan's trade off the coast of China, Japan and the United States, to provoke a battle fleet action.

There would be many similarities between operating a fleet in Japanese waters and the recent experiences of operating in the North Sea, especially the frequent poor visibility and storms. So the Royal Navy could use the recent lessons of

¹ The US had sent a battle squadron to join the Grand Fleet in 1918 and the Japanese had declined to loan their *Kongo* class battlecruisers, so both countries battle fleets were still in sound condition.

² Ironically, naval war games played out by the United States suggested the same thing; that the US battle fleet were inferior to the Royal Navy and without a base in Ireland, it would be impossible to send a fleet to fight Britain.

its fleet operations as guidance, but this, of course, included the controversial lessons of Jutland, fought in 1916. The major criticisms of Jutland had been an over-centralisation of command and a lack of initiative, poor communications and poor gunnery. All of these would need addressing if the Royal Navy was to defeat a Japanese battle fleet.

The British battle fleet would, of course, be smaller³ than the Grand Fleet, which theoretically made it easier to control, but which also made it more vulnerable to being overwhelmed. So there was a lot that the navy needed to consider.

In January 1920, Admiral Drax gave a series of lectures on tactics to the Naval Staff College at Greenwich. (1) It was, he believed, unlikely that both fleets would want to fight a fleet engagement at the same time, and he therefore expected that the British would have to force an engagement on the Japanese, probably by disrupting their movements with a concentrated attack on either the van or rear of their fleet. Essentially this would mean using the fast battleships as a fast division, (rather as at Jutland), supported by aircraft, modern cruisers and destroyers, engaging the Japanese. Battleships would be engaging any targets within range, battlecruisers and cruisers would be trying to drive in the Japanese scouting lines, destroyers would be attacking with torpedoes, submarines would be laying mines in front of the Japanese and attacking with torpedoes, whilst aircraft spotted for fall of shot, attacked with torpedoes, strafed the enemy upperworks and laid clouds of gas and smoke screens. (2) It would be like “dog eat dog” and the Japanese would be overwhelmed by the sheer ferocity of the attack.

Admiral Herbert Richmond (that most dangerous of creatures, a “thinking admiral”) expanded on these ideas in his series of Commandant’s Lectures he gave to the Naval Staff College. Like Drax, he saw the essential tactical principals as the object, the offensive, surprise, concentration of force, economy of force, security, mobility and co-operation. (3) The object – destruction of the enemy – was always clearly defined, but Richmond focused less on the material strength of the fleet, but more on the need for offensive action, high morale, good leadership and organisation to achieve victory. Both Drax and Richmond advocated greater independence for divisional flag officers, to avoid the mistakes made at Jutland by an over-centralised command. Tactical training and promoting the use of initiative in exercises was to be encouraged.

Many of the ideas promoted by Drax and Richmond were seen in the *Atlantic Fleet Battle Instructions*, written for Admiral Madden’s fleet in 1922, revised in 1925 and adopted as *Battle Instructions* for the entire Royal Navy in 1927.⁴ Like Drax and Richmond, Madden envisaged using all elements of the battle fleet to bring about a victory at sea, including aircraft. Madden expected to use aircraft to detect the enemy, undertake torpedo attacks to slow down an enemy fleet, spot for gunnery, and to sink the enemy aircraft carriers to deny the enemy the use of air power as well as defend the British fleet from air attack. Aircraft carriers were an integral part of any fleet action;

“....Fighting aeroplanes and torpedo aeroplanes organised as an air striking force are to attack enemy aircraft carriers and aircraft at the earliest possible moment. The attack will be launched by the Admiral’s order. Subsequently, if torpedo aeroplanes are available for other purposes they will be used against special objectives by the Admiral’s order.....” (4)

Trials had helped to determine the accuracy and effectiveness of aerial weapons. 1922 trials using the radio-controlled target ship *Agamemnon* had shown a bomb accuracy of 8% when dropped from a height of 7,500 feet, rising to 10% from 2,000 feet. (5)

Similar trials in 1923, using the old battleship *Monarch*, concluded that it would need six, direct hits from 2,000 lbs armour-piercing bombs or 30 from 500 lbs semi armour-piercing bombs to sink, or seriously disable a battleship able to manoeuvre and undertake damage control. But these 500lbs bombs would have to be dropped from at least 5,000 feet to have a hope of piercing the armoured deck, and from this height, accurate bomb aiming was almost impossible and the hit rate would be around 7%. And similarly, it would take about eight torpedo hits to seriously disable a modern battleship like *Nelson*, and the *Queen Elizabeth* classes would be reduced to half speed after four torpedo hits, and forced out of the battle line after seven torpedo hits. Aircraft were going to be useful, but at this stage, were not regarded as the battle-winning element. (6)

³ The British intended to send the *Iron Duke*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *R* classes, *Nelson* and *Rodney* eastwards, along with the battlecruisers *Tiger*, *Renown*, *Repulse* and *Hood*, leaving the *King George V* class in Home waters. After 1931, or course, this fleet would be even smaller.

⁴ They were later renamed *Fighting Instructions* and formed the basis of the Royal Navy’s tactical thought, supplemented by the *Naval War Manual* and the annual, *Progress in Tactics* into the start of WW2.

And poor gunnery had been one of the disturbing features of the Battle of Jutland, with hitting rates for the British fleet being as low as 1% - 3%. Grand Fleet doctrine had supported opening fire at extreme range, and at a high rate. In 1917, "sequence" firing had been introduced, pairs of ships firing, in turn, observing fall of shot and communicating range and bearing along the line using range clocks. (7) A concentration of fire was possible with this method, but the more ships involved, the slower the rate of fire, although the 1919 Admiralty War Game Concentration Factors showed a likely improvement in hits. A pair of ships was calculated as achieving an improvement of 2¼% and 4½% for a division of four ships. (8) Further improvements continued to be made and in 1921 the Royal Navy shifted to "master-ship" firing, with one ship controlling the range and deflection for a squadron, firing a salvo approximately every twenty seconds. And from 1925, with the introduction of the Admiralty Fire Control Table Mark 1, master-ship firing became the norm. In his book, *The Ship*, CS Forester has a very good description of the complex workings of a later model AFCT⁵;

".....The three rangefinders in the ship were at work in an instant...Down in the Transmitting Station, a machine of more than human speed and reliability read off all three recordings and averaged them. Each of the other observers in the Director Control Tower was making his particular estimate and passing it down to the Transmitting Station, and down there, by the aid of these new readings, the calculation having been made of how distant [the target] would be in fifteen seconds time. Still other machines had already made other calculations; one of them had been informed of the force and direction of the wind and would go on making allowances for them automatically...each gun had been given its individual setting to adjust it to its fellows. Variations in temperature would minutely affect the behaviour of the propellant in the guns...so one machine stood by to make the corresponding corrections; and the barometric pressure would affect both the propellant and subsequent flight of the shells – barometric pressure, like temperature, varied from hour to hour and the Transmitting Station had to allow for it. And the ship was rolling in a beam sea – the Transmitting Station dealt with that problem as well....." (9)

Shell splashes would be observed, and the results passed to the Director Control Tower and Transmitting Station, and after taking an average, gun elevation was adjusted up or down the range ladder, with the Gunnery Officer also using his own judgement and experience to make adjustments to the information being processed by the AFCT. ⁶ Given all of this it is little wonder that hit rates were so low.

It was anticipated that master-ship firing would be used at the start of an action, shifting to paired firing once the range had closed enough to lessen the discrepancies between the AFCT and the Dreyer Table equipped ships. It was intended that battle would be opened at around 20,000 yards⁷, closing to about 16,000 yards, aiming to overwhelm the enemy line in the act of deploying, with accurate and well-placed salvos. It was recognised that;

".....[t]he great range and large bearing arcs of modern guns render a gunnery concentration by tactical means very difficult to attain, and even if unattained, the mobility of a fleet is so great that the enemy can quickly extricate his van or rear from a position of tactical disadvantage.

Since concentration of fire is still a necessity to ensure the quick destruction of enemy ships at long range, or under difficult conditions of visibility, it is important that full advantage is made of any opportunity for effecting a gunnery concentration.....". (10)

Given this, one can see just why the intervention of aircraft and submarines and the use of initiative by squadron commanders were desirable. Fire was to be concentrated on the van or rear of the enemy until the range closed and more enemy ships became targets. But short of an actual war the only way to test out theories was through exercises between ships and fleets. By 1929

⁵ HMS *Belfast*, moored in the Pool of London, still has her AFCT fitted in her Transmitting Station

⁶ Models and improvements of the AFCT Mk1 were fitted to *Nelson* and *Rodney* as they completed in 1927, and to *Warspite*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant* and *Renown* as they refitted. Older ships kept their older Dreyer Tables and it was expected that in any fleet actions the ships equipped with AFCT would be the master-ships, passing the information to the other ships using their range clocks.

⁷ 20,000 yards was the maximum range of the 13.5" gun, but outside the maximum range of torpedoes running at 25 knots – 15,000 yards.

there existed a comprehensive set of wargames rules and tables to assess damage by gunfire. There were tables for Vital Hits – hits that would explode a target, Speed Hits, which would slow ships down and Non-Vital Hits, where damage would be cumulative.

So, for example, it was estimated to take three minutes to find the range of a target over 15,000 yards, and two minutes if the range was between 10,000 yards and 15,000 yards. A 15” gun was reckoned to have a 1.2% of hitting a battleship and that a similar sized battleship would take 18 Non-Vital hits before sinking. To give an example of the calculations used to determine the damage that could be caused, if HMS *Nelson* was firing on an enemy battleship at a range of 21,000 yards, the calculation would be as follows; With 9 x 16” guns multiplied by 0.031 hits per minute, (0.27), multiplied by the three minutes needed to find the range would give a 0.8% chance of hitting the target. (11)

But with visibility obscured by funnel and gun smoke, signal halyards shot through and wireless aerials down, battle squadrons would be under the control of their own flag officers, although staying in close support of each other. The Fleet flagship would be controlling only her own division and it was not to be expected that the admiral would see all and know all.

“.....It will be appreciated from the foregoing instructions that it is improbable that the rapid defeat of the enemy can



be attained by adhering to a rigid line of battle although the signal to form line of battle is generally necessary...The squadrons of a fleet vary in gun power and gun range, the intensity of the enemy gun and torpedo fire will also vary in different parts of the line and commanders of squadrons, both in and on the flanks of the line of battle, must take advantage of every incident of

the action to press the enemy; the action will be fought by the squadrons or divisions acting in support of and in co-operation with the squadron or division led by the Admiral, conforming generally to his movements, but only adhering to the rigid line on which the fleet deploys when it is evidently advantageous to do so.....” (12)

And in essence, that would be the battle against the Japanese: Aircraft wheeling around overhead, bombing and launching torpedoes, strafing and laying gas and smoke screens. Battlecruisers and cruisers punching in enemy scouts; battleships concentrating their fire on the enemy van or rear, and light cruisers and destroyers launching and repelling torpedo attacks,

“.....to force the enemy to turn or, if he did not, to cripple him with torpedoes. In battle, destroyers were treated as mad dogs on the leash of the destroyer flotilla commander...Their role was to rush in a tight pack and seize a battleship’s throat if they could, or, as was more likely, to leap and claw and growl at the enemy’s own mad dogs

which had also charged into the fray at a single word from their commander...a squadron of destroyers, bows on with a bone in its teeth was a very visible and chilling threat indeed.....” (13)

In 1929 Drax developed his ideas further, stressing the importance of the offensive spirit and the ability to take damage to achieve the central aim of battle, the annihilation of the enemy. All things being equal, superior tactics should win the day. But things were never likely to be equal and British admirals and fleet commanders needed to be willing to act aggressively, take risks and almost be impetuous once battle was joined.⁸ Fighting at a close range was risky but was more likely to give the results – decisive victory – that the British fleet in the Far East needed. Training and exercises were vital to ensure that future flag officers were fully versed in these tactics and, above all, the aggressive spirit. As Drax stated,

“.....[t]actics in its highest form must always be an expression of the personality of a particular leader. It is therefore obviously impossible to lay down a sealed pattern plan of battle either by day or night. If the leader of any force has a dislike for close action, or a firm disbelief in night action, there is no more to be said. Those methods are not for him, and may well bring disaster to his command if he attempts them.....” (14)

Certainly, in the Sea of Japan, where visibility was often down to 12,000 yards, a fleet might have to react quickly to bring an enemy under heavy, concentrated fire as quickly as possible.

References

- (1) Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge The Drax Papers DRAX 7/2 “Tactics” 1921
- (2) National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London The Richmond Papers RIC 10/2 “Tactics” series lecture to the Royal Navy Staff College, Greenwich, 1921
- (3) NMM The Richmond Papers RIC 11/2 “Tactics” VII
- (4) Till, G *Air Power and the Royal Navy* (Janes Publishing, London, 1973) p13
- (5) Till, G *Air Power and the Battleship* in Ranft, B [ed] *Technical Change and British Naval Policy 1860 – 1939* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1977) p118
- (6) Burt, RA *British Battleships 1919 – 1939* (Arms & Armour Press, London 1993) p36
- (7) Scheihauf, W ‘A Concentrated Effort; Royal Navy Gunnery Exercises at the end of the Great War’ *Warship International* Vol XXXV No2 (1998) p131
- (8) op cit
- (9) Forester, CS *The Ship* (Penguin, London 1971) p74
- (10) The National Archives, Kew, London ADM 186/72 ‘Battle Instructions 1922-1927’ 15/10/27 p31
- (11) Scheihauf, op cit p138
- (12) NA ADM 186/72 p21
- (13) Naval Historical Branch, Portsmouth CB 3016/31 *Progress in Tactics 1931* ‘Letter from the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Fleet, 1931’ p27
- (14) Chll Coll Drax Papers, DRAX 2/2 ‘Battle Tactics’

⁸ Think of Commodore Harwood at the River Plate, Captain Warburton Lee leading his flotilla of destroyers at Narvik or Captain Vian of HMS *Cossack*, attacking *Altmark*, Admiral Cunningham at Matapan and even Admiral Holland attacking *Bismarck*, for just a few examples.

SIGNAL PAD!

Paging Jim Wallman. One of our members is interested in your HMS BELFAST Damage Control game but as he is in the USA and I do not have your contact details; can you or someone pass your details to me (Norman Bell) so I can pass them on.

Several shows and exhibitions are coming up around the World. See if you can attend one.

15-17 th March	Who's Yer Con. www.whosyergamers.org Indianapolis USA.
16 th March	Battlefields. www.proorcon.webs.com Dearborn, MI USA.
17 th March	Skirmish. www.harfields.com Sidcup, Kent UK.
22-24 th March	Hot Lead. www.hotlead.ca Stratford, ON, Canada.
23-24 th March	Sabre. www.panzerangriff.org.au Penrith NSW Australia.
29-31 st March	GOTHCON XXXV. www.gothcon.se Gothenburg, Sweden
29-31 st March	NATCON. www.huttclub.co.nz Hamilton, New Zealand.
5-7 th April	HAVOC. www.battlegroupboston.org Shrewsbury, MA USA.
13 th April	Society of Ancients Battle Day. www.soa.org.uk Bletchley, UK
14 th April	HELLANA. www.gruppoludicoaglianese.it Agliana, Italy.
20 th April	SALUTE. www.salute.co.uk Excel Centre, Canary Wharf, London NWS will be there. Come along and say hello.

Don't forget the Explosion Museum in June. The Shows above are only some of the total out there. If you go to one of these or any other, how about sending in a few words of a review for All Guns Blazing?

Many thanks to contributors to this month's AGB.

Coming in April's All Guns Blazing: - A Confederate River Ram 1864 and a Confederate Floating Battery courtesy of Rob Morgan. Plus some more Plymouth Show pics, if I can sort out some copying and saving problems.

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, 2012

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

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

Tel: 01324 714248

e-mail: kenny.thomson@hotmail.com - 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

Devon and the West Country

Naval Wargames afternoon/evening/all day on a regular basis.

Contact Stuart Barnes Watson to arrange the details.

stuart_barnes_watson@hotmail.com

3 Clovelly Apartments, Oxford Park, Ilfracombe, DEVON, EX34 9JS

Tel: 01271 866637
