



---

# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 230 – DECEMBER 2013

---

#### VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

December 2013

Chairman: Stuart Barnes-Watson

Stuart Barnes-Watson Chairman  
Simon Stokes Membership Secretary & Treasurer  
Norman Bell Editor 'All Guns Blazing'  
Jeff Chorney Editor 'Battlefleet'

Having personally had a good month, I thought I'd begin with the downside. Despite AGM's and emails the club website is still poor. The committee's feelings are that we should go professional; to be paid for by manufacturer sponsored AGB and Battlefleet. I can't see a problem with this, as it will keep us informed of model ranges and keep membership fees to a minimum.

The upside is that locally we've had a great month. First up we fought a Russian Civil War scenario with the historic Red Russian attack on Tallinn in 1919. The first action (historical) lead to both sides being wiped out (First time I've seen this in 30 years of naval gaming). We fought a 'nearly' battle in the Baltic 1914. The result was a Russian victory, more details of which will feature in the next Battlefleet. More importantly, how would this have affected German naval dispositions??? The pre dreadnought division at Jutland has been sunk, the crews lost. Older pre dreadnoughts are available, but no crews! With the Russians surging through Germany on land, and the British having just declared war??????

The beauty of our hobby is that no battle, campaign or period is unavailable. Contact me for latest 1/1200 ship lists.

It's Xmas, time to treat yourselves, build those navies!

Stuart

PS My Xmas gift? Mel Wright's convoy game, I'll use this as a campaign map for an Argentine assault on the Falklands 41 .....hell in the South Atlantic.....ummmm.

For members in the South West, games commence regularly on Thursday afternoons, Lee Bay Village Hall, near Ilfracombe.

Your Battlefleet editor has put out a call for more articles. Please contact Jeff via email on [chorney.jeff@gmail.com](mailto:chorney.jeff@gmail.com).

LYNX HELICOPTER AND HMS DRAGON HAVE THEIR OWN VERSION OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.



Image courtesy of Lockheed Martin Corporation.

**This is what the Royal Navy's next-generation carriers will bring on the battlefield of the future – a tank turned into a metal carcass, thanks to the F35 Lightning II.**

A whirlwind of sand, dirt and iron devours an M60 tank on a range in California – the first time a guided weapon has been dropped by the new strike fighter. Some 25,000 feet above the Mojave Desert, an F35B – the jump jet variant which will be flown by Royal Navy and RAF aviators from the decks of HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales – released a 500lb Paveway guided-bomb.

Thirty-five seconds later, laser seeker and fins attached to the bomb – which did not contain any explosive on this test – guided it on to its target, an old Patton tank on the 'precision impact range' at the legendary Edwards Air Force Base, about 100 miles north of Los Angeles. The test was carried out by the US Marine Corps – which is carrying out Lightning II trials and training alongside British air and ground crew.

The Paveway is a standard air-to-ground weapon used by the UK's fast jets – Fleet Air Arm and RAF Harriers until they were decommissioned in 2010 and RAF Tornados and Typhoons. On the Lightning II, however, the bomb isn't slung on a pylon beneath the wings, but held in an internal weapons bay, which reduces the strike fighter's radar signature and enhances its stealth. During the test bombing in California pilot Major Richard Rusnok of the US Marine Corps identified, tracked and finally guided the Paveway on to

the tank using the F35's electro-optical targeting system. The moment of impact, he said, *"marks the first time the F35 truly became a weapon system."*

Three F35Bs are in UK hands and undergoing trials, with Royal Navy and RAF pilots and ground maintenance teams working with their American counterparts to introduce the fighter-bomber to front-line service. The Lightnings are due to begin trials with the 65,000-tonne HMS Queen Elizabeth in 2018.



Image courtesy of Lockheed Martin Corporation.

#### Royal and Russian Navy exchange call signs on high seas

Royal Navy frigate HMS NORTHUMBERLAND has had a chance encounter with a Russian battlecruiser while practising flying training off the West Coast of Scotland.

The Devonport-based warship had been working with her Merlin helicopter in waters between the Shetlands and Faeroes when the Kirov Class Pyotr Velikiy (Russian for 'Peter the Great') appeared on the horizon. As NORTHUMBERLAND sped to meet the battlecruiser, the Captain of the Pyotr Velikiy approved her request to hold a co-ordinated approach with the Merlin capturing the two ships sailing together.

The Commanding Officer of HMS NORTHUMBERLAND, Commander Tristram Kirkwood, said: "I am very grateful to the Captain of the Pyotr Velikiy for allowing this exchange, and while HMS NORTHUMBERLAND is only half the size, from the air we looked like a formidable pair".





HMS NORTHUMBERLAND has recently returned from a seven month deployment to the Middle East and East Coast of Africa where they travelled 45,000 miles, crossed five time zones and visited 11 countries. With the Merlin helicopter from 829 Squadron and embarked detachment of Royal Marines, the Boarding Teams from HMS NORTHUMBERLAND held 71 boarding operations, one of which resulted in the capture of bails of cannabis resin with an estimated street value of £5.5M.

**DRAGON's got TALENT as destroyer and submarine hunt each other in the Med.**

HMS DRAGON swapped tracking aircraft for submarine hunting as she joined three American destroyers searching for HMS TALENT in the Mediterranean. The Type 45 and her American cousins did their utmost to set up an 'underwater barrier' to halt the hunter-killer's progress.

**DRAGON'S got TALENT.**

Or, more likely, TALENT's got DRAGON because the destroyer isn't designed to hunt submarines, whereas a boat views anything which floats as a target. The Portsmouth-based Type 45 nevertheless gave it a go during a large-scale anti-submarine exercise involving three American destroyers in the Med, with the Royal Navy's hunter-killer boat as their prey.

The aim of the four surface ships – Arleigh Burke-class destroyers USS Gravely, Stout and Barry completed the quartet – was to block HMS TALENT's progress through the Med during a 12-hour game between hunters and hunted.



Given DRAGON's *raison d'être* of shielding a task group against air attack – which she's recently practised working with RAF Typhoons in the eastern Mediterranean – TALENT proved to be an elusive adversary. The hunt was aided by the British destroyer's own 815 Naval Air Squadron Lynx and Seahawks from the American trio, which used their dipping sonars to look for the Trafalgar-class submarine ahead of her anticipated route.

Missile news from Peter Colbeck.

## **MBDA's Sea Ceptor Air Defence System Selected for Royal New Zealand Navy's ANZAC Frigate Upgrade**

The New Zealand MoD has confirmed its preferred tenderers for the Royal New Zealand Navy's (RNZN) ANZAC Frigate Systems Upgrade project to include MBDA as the provider of Sea Ceptor for the Local Area Air Defence (LAAD) system; subject to the New Zealand (NZ) Government's final approval to proceed. Sea Ceptor will equip frigates *HMNZ Te Kaha* and *Te Mana* with the latest generation naval air defence system capable of protecting not only the host ship but also combined joint allied forces in the vicinity.

Commenting on the New Zealand selection of Sea Ceptor, Dr Andrew Murrison MP, UK Minister for International Security Strategy, said: "The UK Government is pleased that the New Zealand Ministry of Defence is pursuing the procurement of Sea Ceptor, the same system that the Royal Navy has procured for their Type 23s and plans to cross deck onto the Type 26 Global Combat Ship. The UK is immensely proud of this product - it is a real example of UK innovation and will form the bedrock of air defence for the Royal Navy for decades to come. This decision by New Zealand further demonstrates the strengthening of our maritime security cooperation."

The UK will replace the Seawolf missile system in their Type 23 frigates with Sea Ceptor before migrating it to their new build Type 26 frigates.

## **MBDA'S BRIMSTONE SIMULTANEOUSLY DESTROYS MULTIPLE ATTACK CRAFT IN SALVO FIRING.**

MBDA's combat proven, UK developed, Brimstone missile carried out the world's first surface to surface salvo engagement of multiple Fast In-shore Attack Craft (FIAC) threats with a single button push. The success of the trial has shown Brimstone's unrivalled ability to swiftly strike numerous individual vessels without the need to laboriously designate each target, thereby demonstrating its prowess as a fire and forget maritime surface attack weapon.

Three millimetric wave operational Brimstone missiles were launched in a rapid salvo of less than a second against a simulated attack formation of five representative FIACs. The three missiles independently acquired and engaged their respective targets at a distance between 4km and 5km (constrained by range safety); direct hits resulted in extensive structural damage to the three leading vessels, including one travelling at around 20 knots. The missiles were launched from a surface trials platform using a Brimstone triple rail launcher in conditions of sea state 3.

This web site of interest is suggested by Dave Manley – that Facebook is getting everywhere.

<http://www.facebook.com/OperationLustyKids>

## **War Films? The Top Ten?**

I notice that the Guradian\*, sorry Guardian, newspaper has recently published its readers 'Top Ten War Films'. So I looked at the list, oh dear. The usual suspect were on it, 'Where Eagles Dare' ( which proved that the German MP40 smg could fire

twenty five second burst without changing a magazine), 'The Deer Hunter' ( nice music), and the number one war film of all time was... 'Apocalypse Now'.

Hm?

All but two of the films chosen were WWII or later conflicts, and only one was set before 1900. Interesting eh? Nothing naval at all.....nothing.

No 'Sink the Bismarck', no 'Above us the Waves', nor even the excellent 'The Sea Shall Not Have Them'. Everything was 'land' or army based. The concept of war in the air gets the same treatment of course. For the greats in naval terms, 'Midway', and 'The Battle of the River Plate' totally ignored, as was the 'Yangtse Incident', and 'Das Boot', well everything else too for that matter.

I wrote in, but my letter's gone unpublished. I suppose admitting that I hadn't seen three of the films on the list of 'must's' sealed my epistle's fate on the editorial spike.

I wonder how many Guardian readers realise that they live on a group of islands?

Rob Morgan.

November 2013.

\*Just in case there is anyone out there that does not know – the Guardian has a reputation for spelling errors.

Ospreys for Spring! The new catalogue's arrived and with it information about forthcoming naval items, all to be published between March and June 2014. These include...

NVG

211 "US Cold War Aircraft Carriers" by Brad Elward. March

NVG 210 'US Heavy Cruisers 1941-45 ' by Mark Stille. (April)

and one I'm looking forward to particularly...

NVG 212 "Axis Midget Submarines 1939-45" by Jaime Prescott and Mark Stille. (June)

I'm wondering if like the Confederate title this one will include all of the submersible and 'suicide' craft used in the late war period. The only other naval title, and they do seem thin on the waves this time, is

DUE 57 "Q Ship vs U-Boat. 1914-18" by David Greentree. This one's in February.

There should be plenty of wargame material in that one! Incidentally those of you with an Ian Allen shop nearby should look out for a large number of bargains on the shelves, including naval and naval aviation titles.

Rob

Morgan.

November 2013

### Answers to Sea Quiz 26....

Rather a mixed bag of questions in July 1952! Here are the answers...

1. HMS Carysfort was first a Corvette, then a Cruiser and finally, a destroyer.
2. It was (allegedly) Admiral Sir George Tryon of course. Oops!
3. The ship's boats are the responsibility of the carpenter... I knew that one!
4. The two 'Half-Boats' were the rams HMS Hero and HMS Conqueror.
5. And the picture question...

From left to right they are..... The Monitor Lord Clive, One of the Grafton Class (with bulges), Campania as a balloon ship, and Pegasus as a seaplane carrier.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Sea Quiz 27.

No picture question this time. But I came across an odd one in 'History Today' earlier, while I was looking for this list. 'What was the largest naval battle of the eighteenth century?' Surprised me, it was Rodney's victory over De Grasse at Les Saintes 1782. I always thought it was the Glorious First of June.

Here we go, it's 1952 by the way.....

1. What is the armament of HM Submarines Explorer and Excalibur?
2. Which two 'Dido's' were different and why?
3. Name twelve British Warships beginning with ME....
4. To which Commonwealth navy does 'Investigator' belong?
5. On what date exactly did the Marines become Royal?



Well done to Jeff Chorney and all the contributors to Battlefleet. You have set such a high standard, can it be maintained? Well of course it can. Here is a taster of the next edition, already being prepared.

### **The Anglo-Spanish War of 1796-1808**

By Drew Jarman.

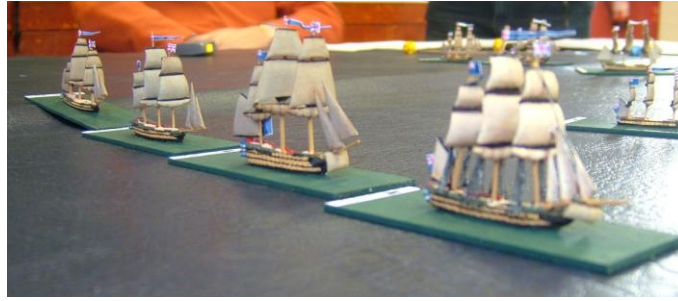
In May 1804 there was an uneasy peace between Britain and France [as well as its allies]

The British Government had been advised by their agents in Cuba that the Spanish were sending a large treasure convoy from South America via Habana and then onwards to Spain following the North Atlantic trade winds. To this end they ordered the Admiralty to try and capture this treasure convoy to prevent it from being given to Napoleon to help finance his invasion of England.

The game was played out using an amended version of Grand Fleet Action in the Age of Sail by A&A Game Engineering [available from Wargames Vault as a download]. The picture below shows the British sailing down from the north with the wind heading SE with the Spanish deployed nearest to the camera.







**The Blue squadron pulls ahead of the CinC to try and cut off the Spanish.**

The full article includes many lovely photographs and comments on obtaining and making the (stunning) models. A good day must have been had by all that were there. Well done to Drew. I feel sorry for readers that you will have to wait until the Spring to see the complete article for yourselves.

'Tactics of Sixteenth-century Galley Artillery'

Recently, I reviewed an article by Dr Joseph Eliav on the subject of the gun and the corsa of the Mediterranean galleys of the 1500's and 1600's, that was in 'The Mariner's Mirror' ( Vol 99:3, pp 262-274). Now in the following issue of the Society for Nautical Research's journal (Vol 99:4. November 2013. Pp 398-409) comes a second illustrated article. The author promises to become a very useful source of material on the galley warfare of the Renaissance or 'early modern' period, and this is an extremely useful article for both the wargamer and general naval historian.

In a relatively short piece, Eliav considers the long held idea that the Galley's centre-line forward battery was a one-shot close combat volley used before boarding. He describes the tactic of long range galley fire, and of multiple rounds being fired. His hypothetical 'fighting instructions' to a galley captain are of great interest to any wargamer using oared fighting ships in this era.

The article deals with the feasibility of multiple firing of the bow guns, range, the complexities of reloading under fire, and the guns' potential effectiveness in battle. A short note on the artillery fire of galleys in the Christian fleet at Lepanto (1571) is of great interest, and for the wargamer the ensuing concept of 'manoeuvre and shoot' which the author examines, even more so.

This is a valuable contribution to what in recent years has been steadily developing naval interest, and one that's highly recommended, indeed I find myself wondering where this naval scholar will turn next. In a sound list of references, Eliav gives not only the expected Guilmartin, Hall and Lambert, but also Beltram and Redella's magnificent 'Ships and Guns' ( Oxford 2011), a volume yet to be reviewed in these pages, and several Italian titles with which I'm certainly not familiar.

Do read it!

Rob Morgan.

November 2013.

Snake? or 'Esnecca'?

I'm often drawn to mention items in 'The Mariner's Mirror', quarterly journal of the Society for Nautical Research, but I suppose a fair number of NWS members are also aboard that august vessel! Anyway, another of the articles in the November 2013 issue (Vol 99:4 p 394) is by Susan Rose, the doyen of medieval warfare at sea. The article, much which is beyond the scope of this newsletter, is entitled 'Maritime Logistics and Edward I's Military Campaigns'. It focuses on the 1299-1300 campaign and that of the following year in Scotland. The large number and large size of the Cinque Ports ships is mentioned, some six of them were Cogs, but....one, a ship of Rye, appears in the Rolls as being called a 'snake' or 'esnecca'. Now I wondered if this had any similarity to the Norse vessel called a 'Snekke'? About three hundred years along from the great Viking era, but not impossible I suspect. A design or ship type, kept in service for its value. Oared, shallow draft and fairly small in size? Ideal for working along, or surveying the rugged coasts of Scotland and for fighting a West Highland Galley or 'Birlinn'; maybe even suitable for an escort role? The King had scores of transports carrying men, and supplies, including his very valuable big siege engines northwards.

Anyone have any knowledge of this ship type? I recall that Rus Jackson of 'Kremlin' made a 1/300th scale Viking 'Snekke' a few years ago.

Rob Morgan.

The recent assistance by HMS DARING AND HMS ILLUSTRIOUS in the Philippines is the latest in a long line of the RN helping out around the World. Here are a few pictures of Tristan Da Cunha taken from HMS Jaguar when we were sent to the Island to help the Population when the Volcano blew in December 1961.

Those in most need were evacuated to Simonstown in South Africa and then the Ship went back to help with the clear up in April 1962. The first three pictures show the fish canning factory being engulfed in Lava this was completely pushed into the sea.





The next picture is the Quarterdeck of the Jaguar showing the effect of the ferocious winds.



Article and Pictures from the archives of "The Navy News".

***Veterans and today's Navy celebrate the centenary of Britain's greatest battleship  
HMS Warspite 27 November 2013***

More than 200 people gathered on the slipway in Devonport Naval Base where the Royal Navy's greatest battleship was built – 100 years to the day HMS Warspite was launched. The ship saw action in almost every major action the RN fought in the two World Wars – from Jutland to D-Day – earning more battle honours than any other individual vessel in the history of the Senior Service.



*Friends and family of HMS Warspite's sailors admire a new replica of the battleship. Pictures; LA  
(Phot) Joel Rouse*

**THE centenary of the launch of what many consider to be the greatest British warship ever built was honoured at a service of celebration and thanksgiving in her birthplace of Plymouth.**

No individual ship in Royal Navy history saw more action – and earned more battle honours – than battleship HMS Warspite. Over a 30-year career spanning both World Wars, the Plymouth-built castle of steel fought in almost every one of the RN's key actions: the titanic clash with the German Fleet at Jutland in 1916, the destruction of the German destroyer force at Narvik in 1940, the mauling of the Italians at Matapan, the invasions of Sicily and mainland Italy, the pounding of enemy defences in Normandy on D-Day and finally supporting the Royal Marines storming ashore at Walcheren in the autumn of 1944.



*Warspite veteran Tony Elliott listens to the memorial service*

To celebrate those achievements, more than 200 guests gathered at No.3 Slipway in HM Naval Base Devonport – where Warspite was built – in a ceremony designed to mirror the super dreadnought's launch on November 26 1913 (an event attended by 30,000 people, including Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty).

Among those attending the centennial celebration, Warspite veteran Tony Elliott, who lives in Weston Mill in Plymouth.

"I'd never dreamed of this day happening," said Mr Elliott, who served aboard Warspite in the Med from 1941 to 1943.

"I am very proud to be here. It is a fantastic day. I have happy memories of the ship and was in the swimming and boxing team and other sporting teams on board."



*Warspite's guns hammer away at Axis defences on Sicily in July 1943. Picture: Imperial War Museum*

"We have kept the name of Warspite alive all these years through the Warspite Association and held reunions of those who served in her and other ships and submarines that bore her name later. There aren't many of my crowd left. But I am appreciated when I come to Warspite Association events and have become a standard bearer for her."

RN chaplain Rev Bill Gates led the memorial service with a recital by Burraton Male Voice Choir and music from HMS Drake Volunteer Band. The highlight for many attendees was the unveiling of a new scale model of the battleship.



*Cdre Graeme Little, Devonport Naval Base Commander, tells guests about Warspite's importance to the Navy and nation*



“This is a celebration of the Navy today and in the past, the shipbuilding skills of Plymouth, the ship and her four sister ships, and the Cold War submarine that bore the same name,” he said.

“This is a mark of our appreciation of the shipbuilders’ skills and the sailors who served in the battleship Warspite during three decades of distinguished service in war and peace.

“The battleship is not only of great significance to Plymouth, but also to our nation’s history. This is an occasion befitting a mighty warship of historical significance.”



*A blast from Warspite's forward 15in turrets during gunnery practice*

Although mostly associated with Plymouth, the battleship was based in Portsmouth from the 1930s – and manned by sailors of the Chatham Division.

Plymouth naval historian and the chronicler of Warspite's inspiring story Iain Ballantyne said the ship and her four sisters – Queen Elizabeth, Valiant, Barham and Malaya – were the most potent battleships fielded by any navy in the Great War and were “the backbone of the Royal Navy through some of the darkest days of World War 2”.



*Warspite aground at Prussia Cove in Mounts Bay in 1947. Picture: Imperial War Museum*



He continued: "Warspite's amazing life is also the story of a Navy and a nation, for she was created and launched when Britain was at the zenith of its imperial power and she last saw action when the empire was in decline.

"The Warspite turned out to be a tremendous success – a remarkable vessel."

Even when she was paid off at the war's end Warspite proved defiant. While being towed to the breaker's yard she ran aground on rocks at Prussia Cove in Cornwall – where she remained for three years – before she was beached at nearby Marazion and broken up in the 1950s.

## **Battle of Matapan**

### **After Action Report**

**Simon Stokes**

#### **Introduction**

For November's game at the Northants regional group, I dug out a scenario I'd pulled together some time ago based on the battle of Cape Matapan. The player's weren't told that the battle was Matapan however; they were just presented with briefings based on the historical positions as at dawn on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1941.

#### **Background**

The British ships of the Mediterranean Fleet were at sea covering troop movements to Greece, operation Lustre. The Italian force, alerted to the presence of the convoys, sailed to attack them. The British however knew of their sailing due to the efforts of the code breakers at Bletchley Park.

The Allied force (A) was the British Mediterranean fleet, consisting of the aircraft carrier HMS Formidable, the modernised World War I battleships HMS Barham, Valiant and Warspite. The main fleet was accompanied by two flotillas of destroyers. 10th Flotilla with: HMS Greyhound and Griffin and HMAS Stuart commanded by Commander "Hec" Waller, RAN. 14th Flotilla consisting of: HMS Jervis, Janus, Mohawk and Nubian commanded by Philip Mack. Also present were HMS Hotspur and Havock.

A second force (B), under Admiral Sir Henry Pridham-Wippell, consisted of the British light cruisers HMS Ajax, Gloucester and Orion, the Australian light cruiser HMAS Perth and the British destroyers HMS Hasty, Hereward and Ilex. The Australian HMAS Vendetta experienced engine problems and eventually had to return to Alexandria.

In addition, Allied warships attached to convoys were available, such as: HMS Defender, Jaguar and Juno waited in the Kithira Channel and HMS Decoy, Carlisle, Calcutta and Bonaventure and HMAS Vampire were nearby.

The Italian fleet was led by Iachino's vessel, the modern battleship Vittorio Veneto. It also included almost the entire Italian heavy cruiser force: Zara (under Vice-Admiral Carlo Cattaneo), Fiume and Pola; four destroyers of the 9th Flotilla (Alfredo Oriani, Giosué Carducci, Vincenzo Gioberti and Vittorio Alfieri). The heavy cruisers Trieste (Vice-Admiral Luigi Sansonetti), Trento and Bolzano were accompanied by three destroyers of the 12th Flotilla (Ascari, Corazziere and Carabiniere), plus the light cruisers Duca degli Abruzzi (Vice-Admiral A. Legnano) and Giuseppe Garibaldi (7th cruiser division) and two destroyers of the 16th Flotilla (namely Emanuele Pessagno and Nicoloso de Recco) from Brindisi. The 13th Flotilla of Italian destroyers, with Alpino, Bersagliere, Fuciliere, and Granatiere were also involved screening the flagship.

On 27 March, Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell, with the cruisers Ajax, Gloucester, Orion and Perth and a number of destroyers sailed from Greek waters for a position south of Crete. Admiral Cunningham with Formidable, Warspite, Barham and Valiant left Alexandria on the same day to meet the cruisers.

The Italian Fleet was spotted by a Sunderland flying boat at noon, depriving Iachino the advantage of surprise. The Italian Admiral also learned that Formidable was at sea, thanks to the decryption team aboard Vittorio Veneto. Nevertheless, after some discussion, the Italian headquarters decided to go ahead with the operation, both because they wanted to show the Germans their will to fight and because they were confident in the higher speed of their warships. On 28<sup>th</sup> March, an IMAM Ro.43 floatplane launched by Vittorio Veneto spotted the British cruiser squadron at 06:35. At 07:55, the Trento group encountered Admiral Pridham-Wippell's cruiser group south of the Greek island of Gavdos. The British squadron was heading to the southeast. Thinking they were attempting to run from their larger ships, the Italians gave chase, opening fire at 08:12 from 24,000 yards. The Italian guns had trouble grouping their rounds, which had little effect. The rangefinders also performed poorly, with the exception of those of the Bolzano. The three heavy cruisers fired a total of 535 rounds of 8" ammunition. After an hour of pursuit, the Italian cruisers broke off the chase, as the distance had not been reduced, and turned northwest under orders to re-join the Vittorio Veneto. The Allied ships also reversed their course, and followed the Italians at extreme range. Iachino's plan was to lure the British cruisers into the range of Vittorio Veneto's guns.

An officer eating a sandwich on Orion's bridge remarked to a companion, "What's that battleship over there? I thought ours were miles away." The Italians eavesdropped on Orion's signal that she had sighted an unknown unit and was going to investigate. At 10:55, Vittorio Veneto joined the Italian cruisers, and immediately opened fire on the shadowing Allied cruisers. She fired 94 rounds from a distance of 25,000 yards, all well aimed, but again with an excessive spread of her salvos. The Allied cruisers, until then unaware of the presence of a battleship, withdrew, suffering slight damage from 15" shell splinters.

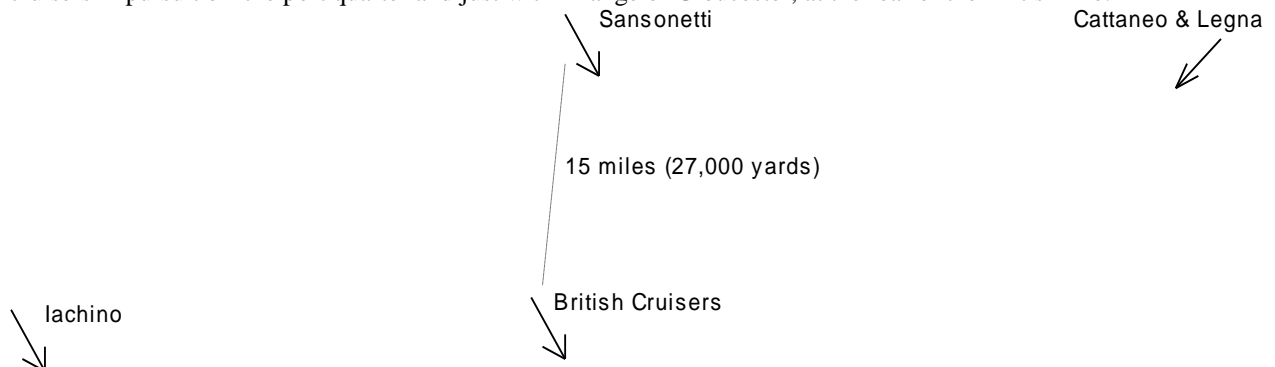
At this point, Cunningham's forces, which had been attempting to join up with Pridham-Wippell's, had launched a sortie of Fairey Albacore torpedo bombers from HMS Formidable at 09:38. They attacked Vittorio Veneto without direct effect, but the required manoeuvring made it difficult for the Italian ships to maintain their pursuit. The Italian ships repelled the attack, while one of the two Junkers 88 escorting the Italian fleet was shot down by a Fairey Fulmar. A second sortie surprised the Italians at 15:09. A torpedo hit her outer port propeller and caused 4,000 tons of flooding. The ship stopped while the damage was repaired, but she was able to get underway again at 16:42, making 19 knots. Cunningham heard of the damage to the Vittorio Veneto, and started to pursue her. Realising that they might not be so lucky next time, Iachino broke off the pursuit at 12:20, retiring towards his own air cover at Taranto.

A third strike by six Albacores and two Fairey Swordfish from Formidable, as well as two Swordfish from 815 squadron on Crete, was made between 19:36 and 19:50. Admiral Iachino deployed his ships in three columns and used smoke, searchlights and a heavy barrage to protect the Vittorio Veneto. This tactic succeeded in protecting the battleship from further damage, but one torpedo hit the Pola, which had nearly stopped in order to avoid running into the Fiume and could not take any avoiding action. This blow knocked out five boilers and the main steam line. Pola lost electric power and drifted to a stop. Unaware of Cunningham's pursuit, a squadron of cruisers and destroyers were ordered to return and help Pola. This squadron was composed of Pola's sister ships, Zara and Fiume.

At 20:15, Orion's radar picked up a ship six miles to port, apparently dead in the water; she was the crippled Pola. The bulk of the Allied forces detected the Italian squadron on radar shortly after 22:00, and was able to close without being detected. The Italian ships had no radar and could not detect British ships by means other than direct sight. The resulting military doctrine did not envisage night actions and the Italians had their main gun batteries disarmed. They managed to spot the Allied squadron at 22:20, which they thought to be Italian ships. Therefore the British battleships Barham, Valiant and Warspite were able to close to 3,800 yards unnoticed by the Italian ships from where they opened fire. The Allied searchlights illuminated their enemy. Some British gunners witnessed the cruiser's main turrets flying dozens of metres into the air. After just three minutes, two Italian heavy cruisers, Fiume and Zara, had been destroyed. Two Italian destroyers, Vittorio Alfieri and Giosu  Carducci, were sunk in the first five minutes. The other two, Gioberti and Oriani, managed to escape, the former with heavy damage. Towing Pola to Alexandria as a prize was considered, but daylight was approaching and it was thought that the danger of enemy air attack was too high. Pola was eventually sunk with torpedoes by the destroyers Jervis and Nubian after her crew was taken off, shortly after 04:00.

## Game

The game was set up as a stern chase with Pridham Wippell's cruisers in the centre of the table and Sansonetti's cruisers in pursuit off the port quarter and just within range of Gloucester, at the rear of the British line.



N  
|  
+

Dave Sharp took on the role of Cunningham, Rick the Role of Pridham Wippell, Norman the role of Iachino, Rob Hutton Cattaneo's and Legnani's commands and Jeff Sansonetti's.

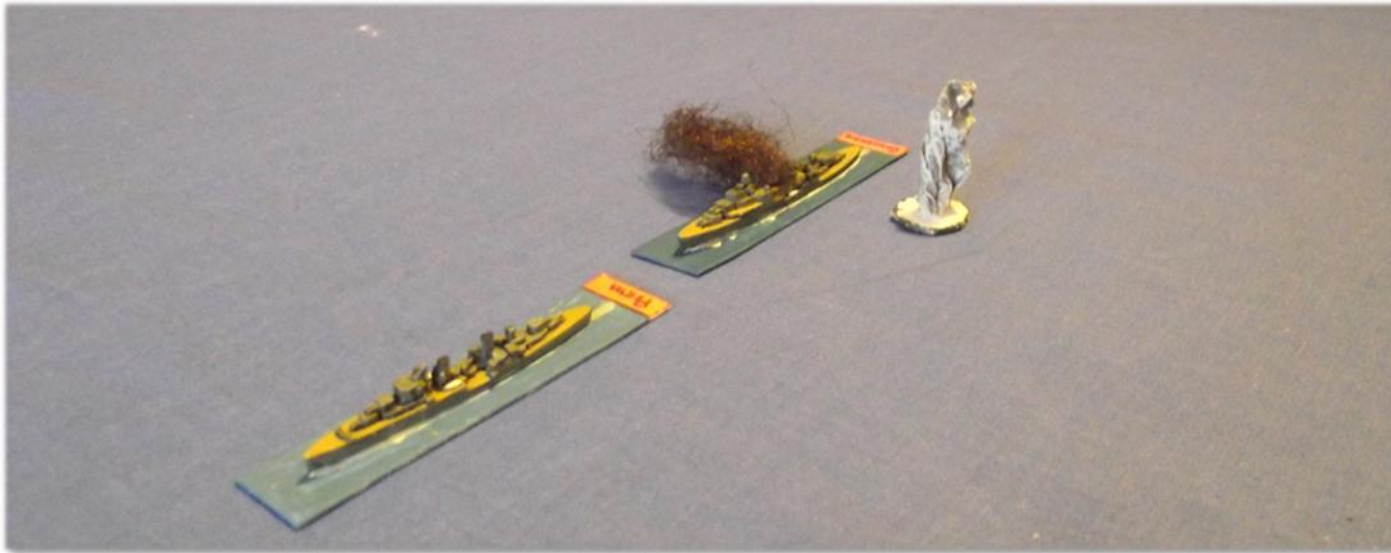
For the British despite, the converging courses of forces A and B, and ordering an increase in speed to 22 knots (the best that the un-modernised Barham could manage) they were 30 turns away to the south east, though Formidable could launch air strikes which took 10 turns to arrive. Formidable had 10 Albacore and 4 Swordfish torpedo bombers plus 13 Fulmar fighters on board. If Pridham Wippell were to turn his cruisers around and head off in the opposite direction for any reason then the distance between Force A and Force B would not decrease at all.

Gloucester and Vendetta were badly in need of maintenance work. For every turn they were travelling in excess of twenty knots, a random roll (2D6, 1 red 1 white, the red deducted from the white) had to be made, a -5 result indicated that they had some major engine malfunction and must drop out of line, come to a dead stop and make a positive random roll to patch up the problem and get the ship underway again.

The British had some additional land based air support from airfields on Crete, and at the beginning of each turn rolled 2D6, a double six indicating a patrol of 1D6+1 Blenheim bombers arrived on the scene from the north east.

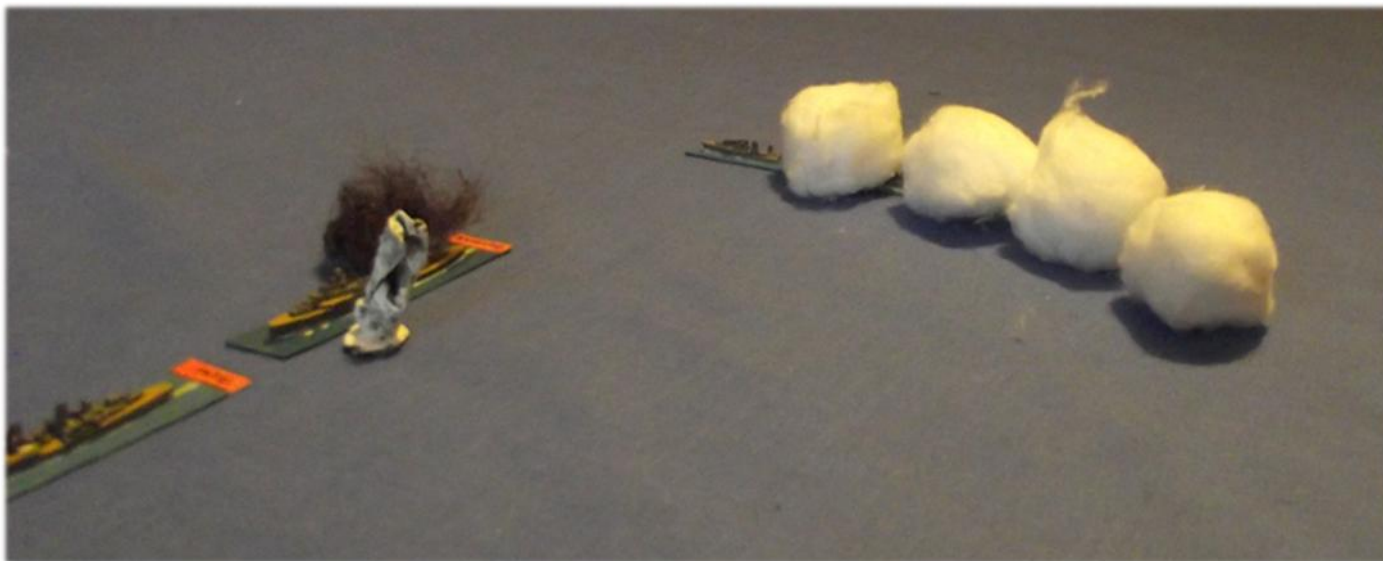
For the Italians Iachino's force would take 10 turns to reach Sansonetti's stated position whilst Cattaneo's and Legnani's would take 15 turns.

Rick with Force B decided that the risk of engine failure would be catastrophic, so set their speed at 20 knots and stuck to that speed, meaning that the Italians steadily managed to close the range, and were soon loosing off salvos at the British cruisers. Very early on Gloucester was hit on the quarter deck by an 8" shell which started a serious fire, that proved impossible for the damage control parties to extinguish and eventually spread to X gun's barbette putting it out of action.



**Gloucester is hit on the quarterdeck by an 8" shell starting a fire**

Rick responded by deploying Vendetta and Hereward from the head of his line to double back across the rear of his line to lay smoke in an attempt to obscure his ships from the Italian cruiser's guns.



#### **i Vendetta lays smoke screen**

The Jeff responded by shifting his cruisers' position across the wake of the British cruisers and by launching spotter planes to spot fall of shot beyond the smoke screen. Meanwhile Rob's cruiser's appeared on the eastern edge of the playing area being on a converging course whereas Norman's force was merely keeping station off the western edge of the playing area unable to quickly close the distance to the British.



#### **ii Cattaneo's cruisers appear on the eastern table edge**

In the meantime Dave had been busy with Formidable's strike planes that now appeared on the British base line just as a flight of Blenheims appeared on the eastern table edge. Dave was also fortunate in his sighting roles and managed to



spot Norman's battleship force just off the western edge of the table. He split his strike force accordingly, half the Albacores attacking Sansonetti's cruisers, the other half heading off to attack Vittorio Veneto.

The Blenheim's bombing run was predictably ineffective on moving ships at sea, and scored only one near miss in exchange for one Blenheim shot down by anti-aircraft fire.

The Albacore's torpedo run was more successful but missed its intended target as Sansonetti's cruisers turned towards the torpedoes combing their tracks. The torpedoes however ran on striking Pessagno, one of Legnani's screening destroyers, amidships breaking its back and sending it to the bottom.



### **iii Formidable's Albacore torpedo strike on Sansonetti's cruisers is unsuccessful in its intended target**

The sub flight that attacked Vittorio Veneto had more success however and although two of their number were shot down and one damaged and driven off, of the torpedoes that were launched one hit home towards the stern of the Veneto, damaging the ships propellers on the port side. Listing heavily she could still make 11 knots, but this reduced further to 9 knots when counter flooding was used to restore some trim to Vittorio Veneto. Whilst in no immediate danger of sinking Vittorio Veneto now had no chance of overhauling the British cruisers.



**iv Vittorio Veneto takes a torpedo in the stern on the port side**

Meanwhile however the combined firing of both Jeff's and Rob's cruisers were starting to do some serious damage to Rick's cruisers. Ajax was hit below the waterline and her steering disabled for a while. Her speed reduced she dropped out of the line. Gloucester was also hit repeatedly and by this time her fire was out of control and X turret disabled, though her speed was unaffected. Perth too had been hit but not seriously damaged. The range had closed sufficiently though for the British to return fire, which they did though without significant effect on their Italian tormentors.



**v Ajax drops out of line whilst Gloucester's fire burns out of control**

Dave had now ranged his second strike of Swordfish and Albacore's on deck and launched them with a single Fulmar as escort in the hope of locating and delivering the coup de grace to the Vittorio Veneto. Once again Dave was fortunate with his sighting rolls and managed to re-locate the battleship. The Fulmar easily dealt with the float plane that Vittorio Veneto had put up to defend herself and despite a concentrated anti-aircraft barrage that she and her escorting destroyers put up, most of the Albacores got through to launch their torpedoes on both beams of the Italian flagship. She couldn't comb both spreads of torpedoes and inevitably 2 more torpedoes hit home, this time on the starboard side. The inrush of water was too great for the battleship to bear and she rolled over and sank. By this time Dave's battleships had appeared at the southern end of the playing area and for the Italian's they knew that the game was up, but it didn't stop them from getting off a series of parting salvos as they turned and opened their firing arcs. Inevitably Gloucester was the focal point of most of these salvos and she was hit hard. One 8" shell



penetrated her deck and detonated the main magazine. The resulting explosion blew the ship apart. This dramatic end seemed a suitable point at which to stop the game.



**vi Gloucester's magazine detonates**

## **Conclusions**

This was a fun game that played well and the computerised set of rules that we used allowed us to get through 32 game turns and play the game to a satisfactory conclusion. Although there are many parallels with the historical action, the result turned out to be significantly different. Only Dave accurately identified the historical battle during the game, which was just as well as playing the role of Cunningham he was supposed to be the best informed person on the battlefield. Formidable's aircraft were the decisive factor in the battle, and without them or if they had failed their sighting roles, the British cruisers would have been very hard pressed to hold off the combined Italian cruiser and battleship force for long enough that Cunningham's battleships could have come to their rescue.

## **SIGNAL PAD!**

Are there enough members in the West Norfolk area for regular naval battle get togethers? Drop me an email if you are interested and we will see if something can be organised for 2014.

Norman Bell [normanpivc@gmail.com](mailto:normanpivc@gmail.com)

You know how the BBC discovers "lost" episodes of Dr Who or Steptoe and Son. Well several copies of "old" Battlefleets have surfaced. If you are interested in seeing how it used to be – watch this space. They could be yours for the price of photocopying and postage.

Date for your 2014 Diary – Naval Wargames Weekend at the Explosion Museum, Gosport. Provisional date June 21<sup>st</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

Coming in January's AGB: - lots, including an interesting article seen by Jeff Crane, about Russian WW2 submarines.

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

Membership secretary: [simonjohnstokes@aol.com](mailto:simonjohnstokes@aol.com)

---

---

## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2013**

---

---

### **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](mailto: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 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)

---

---

### **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](mailto:stuart_barnes_watson@hotmail.com)

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

Tel: 01271 866637

---

---

---

---

---

---