



# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 247 – MAY 2015

#### EDITORIAL

Welcome to new member Philip Beeley. Hopefully the beginning of many years of enjoyment.

By the time you read these words some of you will have been to “Salute” at the Excel Centre, Canary Wharf. Thank you Simon for again taking the lead and running the NWS Game. No doubt you had some helpers whose names I am currently unaware of; well done to you all.

Try and get to the Explosion Museum in July; two days of wargames and a chat with some old friends – or make some new friends.

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

Norman Bell

#### HMNB Clyde - Home of the UK Submarine Service



HMS Ambush, the Royal Navy's newest attack submarine, recently marked a first when it hosted six students from the UK's Submarine Command Course.



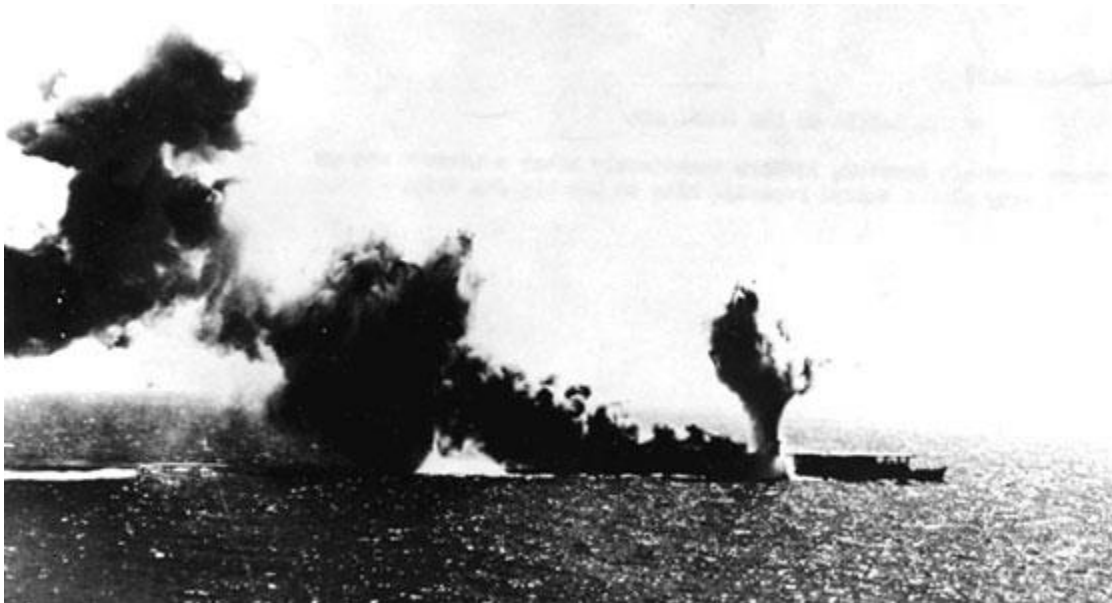
The students, who are at the start of their five-month intensive training, are the first to undertake the entire course on board one of the navy's new Astute Class submarines.

The Command Course, also known as “Perisher” because of its challenging nature, is one of the most intense military training and assessment courses in the world. Only 70 percent of the officers undertaking Perisher succeed, while those who fail can never serve on board submarines again. On Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, HMS Ambush invited the students, and “Teacher” as the course leader is called, Commander Irvine Lindsay, for a familiarisation visit ahead of the start of the course. Welcoming them was Commander Justin Codd, the Commanding Officer of HMS Ambush. The Astute Class represent the future of the Royal Navy submarine service, so it is vital that those who wish to become submarine commanders are fully familiar with the vessels. While parts of previous courses have been undertaken on board an A-Boat, this will be the first time the entire course has been run on an Astute Class submarine.

Of the six students, four are from the Royal Navy, one from the US Navy and one from the French Maritime Nationale. Sailors from allied navies have been involved in Perisher from the time of the Second World War onwards, reflecting the high-regard in which the course is held internationally.

As well as becoming familiar with the Royal Navy’s newest attack submarine, the students also had an opportunity to tour the oldest in order to fully appreciate how much things have changed. Teacher organised for the group to attend the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport where they visited “Holland 1” the first submarine commissioned by the navy back in 1901. The UK Submarine Command Course is in four phases, mixing practice ashore on high-tech simulators with practical experience at sea on board submarines. At the end of the course the students are put through their paces at sea during realistic exercises designed to test them to the very limit.

May 1942. Battle of the Coral Sea.



**Shoho after U.S. attack on May 7 1942.**

By 1130 the entire vessel was damaged by bombs, torpedoes, and exploding aircraft, records *Shoho's* war diary. A minute later, *Shoho* skipper, Capt. Ishinosuke Izawa orders his men to abandon ship, and he and 201 other *Shoho* sailors survive to be picked up by the destroyer *Sazanami*.

*Shoho*, "Auspicious Phoenix", was converted from a submarine depot ship into a carrier. The very first attack by American aircraft on an enemy aircraft carrier has been a smashing success but on *Lexington* and *Yorktown* approx 160 miles south-eastward no one can make sense of the aviators' radio transmissions, until Lt. Cdr. Robert E. Dixon, *Lexington's* second SBD leader, whoops clearly and loudly: "Scratch one flattop! Dixon to carrier, scratch one flattop!"

Some of you may have the "Coral Sea" expansion to Avalon Hill's "Midway" or Avalanche Press's "Coral Sea", the introductory level boxed game for their *Second World War at Sea* series of games. If so, why not write an after action report or a review for AGB or Battlefleet? The Avalanche Press Web Site includes a four part write up about the Coral Sea battle by award winning journalist, David H Lippman, which I enjoyed and recommend. <http://www.avalanchePress.com/gameCoralSea.php>



*Yamato* running trials, 30 October 1941.

As usual the sea quiz comes courtesy of Rob Morgan.

Sea Quiz 41....Answers.

1. This, says 'The Navy' was The Texel 1673, with 143 British and French warships and 115 Dutch involved. Many a retired Admiral and Captain begged ( loudly) to differ, and a range of options were given!
2. HMS's Scorpion and Wyvern in 1865, both Confederate builds originally, and Thoroughbred in the USA make superb model in 1/600<sup>th</sup>.
3. It's Benbow, the others were built for foreign navies.
4. As late as 1878 at the Congress of Berlin.
5. This is a 'Gay' Class boat.

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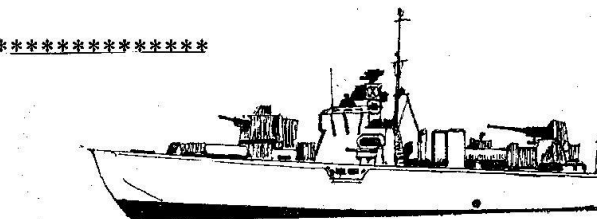
SEA QUIZ No.42.

A couple of odd ones this time, but do remember that question one appeared in 1949, *before* the 'Ton' Class of Minesweepers.....!

1. Name ten British warships names ending in ON.
2. The First Royal Navy warship lit by electricity?
3. What did Parry, Franklin and McLintock all do?
4. Give the latitude of Greenwich.
5. Another Fast Patrol Boat, from what Class?

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The following article from "The Mariner's Mirror" January 2015, is from Rob Morgan.

## Note

### Commerce Warfare in the Atlantic, 1917: SMS *Moewe*

Readers conversant with the history of the New Zealand Shipping Company may be puzzled by the statement on page 335 of the August 2014 *Mariner's Mirror*, that the auxiliary cruiser *Moewe* was withdrawn from Atlantic waters in the autumn of 1916. SMS *Moewe* was very much in evidence in the area in March 1917. I know this because my father, Roland L. H. McNish, was chief officer of the New Zealand Shipping Company's SS *Otaki* when she fought a gallant but one-sided action against *Moewe*, on 10 March 1917, 350 miles east of the Azores.

*Moewe* was an armed merchant cruiser, equipped with four 5.9-inch, a single 4.1-inch and two 22-pounder guns, plus torpedo tubes. On her current cruise during the winter of 1916-17 she had already sunk 24 vessels, a greater loss than that achieved by her predecessor SMS *Emden*, and the result of an earlier mine-laying cruise had been the sinking of the battleship HMS *King Edward VII*.

*Otaki* was on passage to New York when at 2.30 in the afternoon of 10 March 1917 her master, Captain Archibald Bissett Smith, sighted the German raider through fierce rain squalls. He made up his mind that he would ignore the enemy's signal to stop; maybe because of the weather. By skilful manoeuvring, Captain Bissett Smith reckoned he had a good chance of escaping. He increased speed to 13 knots and kept *Moewe* stern-on, but the latter closed the range and opened fire at 2,000 yards. *Otaki* replied at once with her stern mounted 4.7-inch gun, manned by two naval reserve gunnery ratings, an apprentice, and other members of *Otaki*'s crew. The action lasted 20 minutes, with *Moewe* having to turn broadside on to bring all her main armament to bear. *Otaki*'s gunners scored several hits on the raider, killing five of her crew and wounding ten others; and starting a serious fire near the German ship's magazine, which took three days to put out. Meanwhile *Otaki* had been hit 30 times, killing four of her crew, including apprentice Basil Kilner manning the gun, and wounding nine others.



Figure 1 Portrait of Captain Archibald Bissett Smith, VC, RNR; master of SS 'Otaki', New Zealand Shipping Company, 1917. Painted in oils by Stanley Pellett. (Reproduced by kind permission of P&O Heritage Collection, [www.poheritage.com](http://www.poheritage.com))

*Otaki* was now seriously on fire and sinking, so the master gave the order for the boats to be lowered so that the crew, including the wounded, would have a chance of surviving in the heavy seas. But *Otaki* was not completely abandoned; remaining on the bridge were the master, Captain Bissett Smith, Chief Officer Roland McNish and the carpenter. As the water rose the chief officer and carpenter jumped into the sea, expecting their captain to follow; but he was not seen again and it is assumed that he returned to his cabin and went down with his ship, her ensign still flying.

My father and the carpenter were picked up by the ship's boats and taken aboard *Moewe*, and eventually were imprisoned at Holzminden in north Germany. My father took part in a mass escape of 29 officers in July 1918 but was recaptured by police dogs.

An official letter of appreciation to the New Zealand Shipping Company stated:

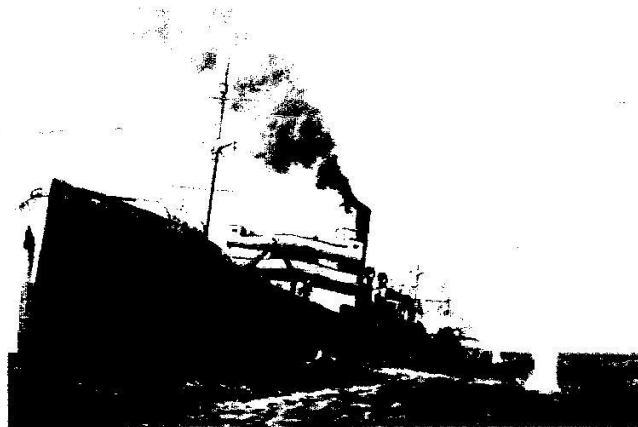


Figure 2 'Otaki fighting to the last', SS 'Otaki' in action with SMS 'Moewe', 10 March, 1917. Painted in oils by Stanley Pellett. (Reproduced by kind permission of P&O Heritage Collection, [www.poheritage.com](http://www.poheritage.com))

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty consider this was a very gallant action. They consider that if the *Otaki* had had a little more luck she would have sunk the raider against almost overwhelming odds.<sup>1</sup>

The action was recognized by the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Captain Bisset Smith, who was gazetted RNR. His widow received the award from the king at Buckingham Palace. The citation stated that it was for 'conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy'. My father received the DSO and was made RNR in recognition of his 'zeal and devotion to duty'. He never spoke to me of the action so I assume that the DSO was in recognition of co-ordinating the actions of the ship's company throughout the incident. Years later, a small shell splinter exited from below his eye having taken over 40 years to travel up through his torso.

The two naval members of her gun crew each received the DSM and two apprentices and the carpenter were mentioned in despatches. Captain Bisset Smith's VC is now held in the P&O Heritage Collection.

At a press interview in 1919 my father described the final phase of the action. The master had sent him round the ship to check on

its condition and any remaining crew members. He and the carpenter found a trimmer on the foredeck with his leg shattered and semi-conscious. By then the ship was sinking so they put the trimmer in a life jacket, tied a lifebuoy round him and lowered him into the sea. He was picked up by the boats and survived, having had his leg amputated.

Two of the five boats had been smashed by *Moewe*'s gunfire. The remainder were lowered with crew members and wounded on board. One was instructed to remain secured to the ship, but had to cast off due to the speed of *Otaki* through the water. She was also in danger of being sucked into a very large hole 'as big as a motor-car' in the vessel's side.

The fact that all the ship's company, other than the master, the four killed and the chief steward (drowned), were safely evacuated, including nine wounded, indicated a high standard of seamanship and discipline among the ship's company, and reflected well on the New Zealand Shipping Company and the Mercantile Marine generally.

My father had never intended to go to sea. As he approached the age of 15, my grandfather asked him what he would like to do in life: army, navy, the church, the law etc. None seemed to appeal to him. Then my grandfather's

his imagination; it sounded like merchants in the City! Returning to Emmanuel School, Wandsworth, he was surprised when his headmaster greeted him with, 'So you are going to sea, McNish.' 'No, Sir', he replied. 'But you are', his head responded, 'and we are going to get your kit!' My father was apprenticed to Shaw, Savill and Albion and with that company, under sail, he learnt his trade. Achieving his master's ticket in sail in 1911, he transferred to the New Zealand Shipping Company and steam. He admitted he had enjoyed his years in sail, rounding the Horn a number of times. Heights, and working aloft, never worried him.

My father went on to command steamships between the wars, and fast motor vessels during

the Second World War. In that second conflict he had no brushes with the enemy until taking part in the last Malta convoy, in December 1942, when they were ineffectively attacked by Italian aircraft. Retiring in early 1944 he joined Civil Defence as a warden in his home town of Eastbourne, just in time to cope with the effects of V1 flying bombs. He admitted to being scared stiff when invited to Clydeside for the launching of a new *Otakei* in 1952. As an honoured survivor he was asked to stand up – but not to speak!

ROBIN MCNISH  
CHICHESTER

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2015.994878>  
© Robin McNish

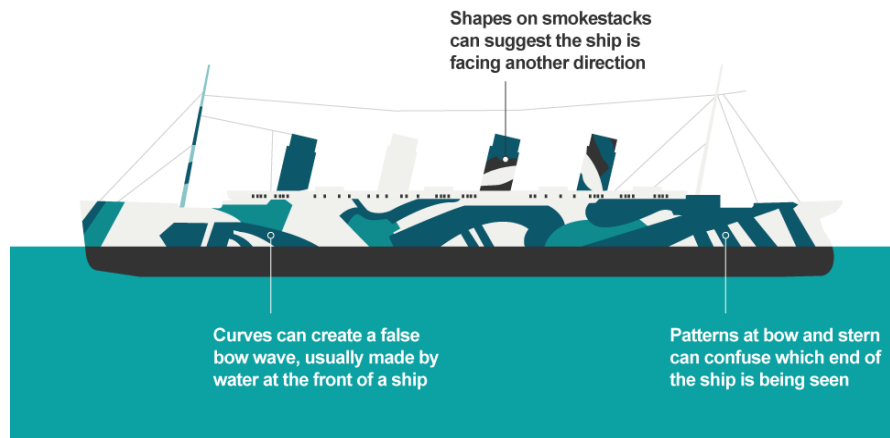
Come on you other members! Don't let Rob Morgan do more than his fair share month after month.

Black and white photographs of ships with dazzle camouflage make it easy for us to miss the fact that colour played a part in the details behind the whole idea. The Imperial War Museum has a collection of original colourful models which were viewed through periscopes when testing of different paint schemes were investigated.

The BBC's "I wonder" web pages include several covering different aspects of The Great War. Here is a cut and paste extract:

## Painting the fleet

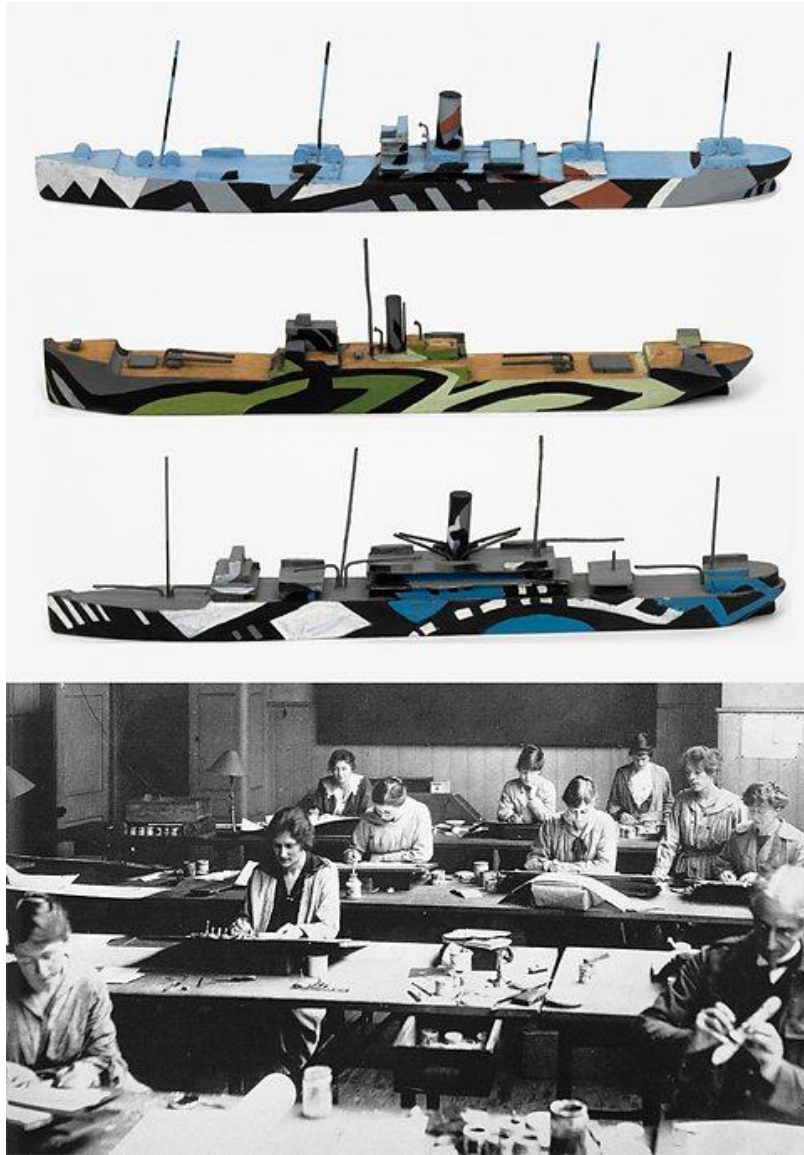
### HMT Olympic in dazzle camouflage



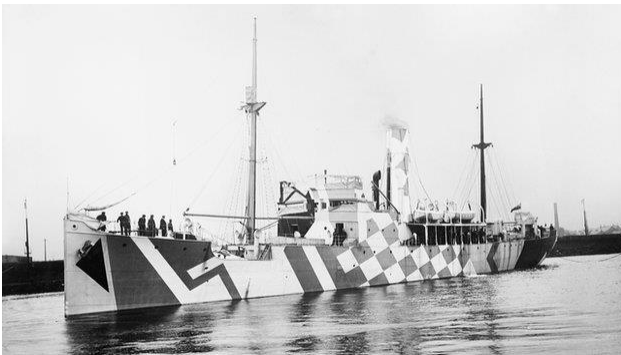
Norman Wilkinson's Dazzle Section developed hundreds of camouflage schemes, for large ships and small. Each side of a ship had a different pattern. One vessel was the enormous Olympic – sister ship of the Titanic. Olympic became a troop ship during WW1 and was repainted in dazzle. She shows some of the techniques used by dazzle designers. Bold shapes at the bow and stern break up the form of the vessel. Angled lines suggest the distinctive smokestacks could be leaning in another direction. And curves on the hull could be mistaken for the shape of the 'bow wave' – created by water at the front of a fast-moving ship.

The Admiralty experimented with various camouflage ideas during WW1. They had considered similar proposals by US artist Abbot H Thayer and the Scottish zoologist John Graham Kerr. However, it was Wilkinson's scheme that won them over. After the war the Royal Commission on Awards to Inventors awarded him £2000 and recognised him as the creator of dazzle.





Top: Original WW1 ship models painted to test dazzle camouflage schemes (© IWM).  
 Bottom: The Royal Academy of Arts Dazzle Section at work in Burlington House in 1917.



WW1 ship painted in dazzle camouflage. I wonder what the colours actually were.

Following on to the article in April's AGB:-

Mick Yarrow 1/3000<sup>th</sup> US Fleet Train.

This second group of nine models all priced at 80p each is now available, and very much worth a look at. Added to the previous eight models this provides a substantial opportunity to create a reasonably priced Pacific War support group for island campaigns, and especially for Kamikaze actions.

The models are.....

3344a USS Wright...Balloon ship (with balloon on deck) served latterly as San Clemente- see 3348.

3346 USS Hammondsport ... One of 3 Aviation Transports converted in 1941. With two aircraft on deck.

3347 USS Laramie Class Oiler, one of three small WWII oilers.

3348 USS San Clemente...in the mode of seaplane tender late Pacific War period.

3349. USS Samaritan. Hospital ship. Unusual this.

3350. USS Artemis. Attack Transport. Useful small model. One of about 30 built in 1944. Ubiquitous!

3351. USS Cascade. Destroyer Tender. A large model, and looking at the model and a photo I found, rather 'bare-decked' for her type.

3360. Liberty Ship. This has some aircraft fuselages stacked on deck. Looks good.

3361. USS Zaniah. Repair and Supply ship. A small model, of a rare vessel.

These are as usual, not super-detailed, but very decently priced metal wargames models of unusual and useful types.

Recommended.

Rob Morgan.

Pen & Sword.

The new catalogue...'NAVAL 2015' has arrived from this company. I suspect most readers know them already, but this item has a substantial number of very useful books which don't turn up all that often. I liked the look of several titles, including John Asmussen's two volume work on 'German Naval Camouflage' at £28 a volume or £52 for both. Their 'Shipcraft' offers are good too, dealing with classes of warship, 'Kongo', Fletcher' and 'Essex' classes at £12 each. There are about 200+ titles on offer, discounted, and in hardback generally, plenty dealing with the age of sail and indeed before that... I have seen Henderson's 'Frigates, Sloops and Brigs'

dealing with the smaller ships of Nelson's navy, and at £12.50 this now a single volume is well worth it!

The new 'Medieval Maritime Warfare' title by Charles Stanton is one I've sent off for, and may actually get around to reviewing. There's a competition too... to win a copy of Susan Rose's excellent 'England's Medieval Navy 1066-1509'. All you have to do is answer a single question... "What was Admiral Nelson's ship called?" and send it in. If you have been following the Sea Quiz in these splendid columns over the past year or two, I suspect you might find the answer lurking in the little grey cells somewhere!

[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

Rob Morgan.

### **SIGNAL PAD!**

#### Naval Wargames Show 2015

The 2015 Naval Wargames Show will be held at the Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower, Gosport, Hampshire on July 11th and 12th 2015. Now in its 5th year the show currently features ten games from ancients to WW2 and beyond. There are spaces available for additional games on both days so if you'd like to put on a game at the show please let me know.

Admission to the show is free. Admission to the rest of the museum is at normal rates.

We look forward to seeing you in Gosport in the summer!

David Manley.

Rich Knapton.

News that Rich Knapton of the USA, who edited *'The Reiter'* has died ( and, in fact, died some time ago) is sad indeed. The journal was that of the US Pike & Shot Federation, but with the splendid, fluid approach to periods and games usually found in American war gamers, the maritime world, especially the gunpowder era regularly found its way into the well produced pages, and the later Baroque period did too, the last issue produced was an entirely naval special, with excellent Lepanto Galley rules, an article on super detailing Rod Langton's galleys, and the Wars of Venice and the Knights of Malta. He was planning a Henry VIII special, with oared warships and naval actions (and *Mary Rose*), though that was never completed.

Rich took over the post of Editor about ten or twelve years ago, from the historian John Sullins, and though ill health dogged him, as it had since his service in Vietnam, the quality of the infrequent issues of *'The Reiter'* never failed to astonish me. Rich could draw quality writing from sources previously unimagined, the topics he would propose to me for articles were amazing! Despite the immense size of the USA, the organisation ran league tables of war gamers and regular competitions and gatherings, in which fleets did feature, and Rich's editorship was at the heart of it all. In recent years he was, due to his serious health problems, difficult to contact, and that contact eventually failed... but his mark has been left on a world of war gamers which will miss him sorely.

Rob Morgan.

More from Rob Morgan.

The excellent arms and militaria newsletter 'Basiliscope Mercury' brings a report (late April) of the confirmed discovery of three Royal Navy shipwrecks off the island of Saaremaa, in Estonia. The Light Cruiser HMS Cassandra, and the Flower Class sloops HMS's Myrtle and Gentian were sunk in 1918-1919 by mines while in action with Admiral Sinclair's 22 ship Squadron opposing the new Soviet navy. Not a campaign often gamed, apart from the little CMB actions of course.

There is, apparently, a British naval graveyard in Tallinn, the Estonian capital.

The SNR's 'Topmasts' quarterly newsletter's arrived. In it a comment on the Battles of Coronel and the Falklands in the Great War. The note contains this.....

'In 1927, a film was made of the two battles, and the British Film Institute

has recently re-mastered and re-issued the film in DVD form', to commemorate the centenary, obviously. I haven't encountered it yet, but it may crop up soon, worth looking out for.

There's a small conference in Exeter Museum on 4th and 5th July, entitled 'Heraldry and Piracy in an age of Chivalry'. No price stated, so it may be free....it's dealing with conflict at sea in the Middle Ages. Interesting, about twenty years ago, perhaps longer I was always looked down on for my love of Cogs and Carracks, by my colleagues in the grey 'Dreadnought' brigade, now it's us medievalists who have appeared (yet again) front and centre in naval history!

Details of the conference from [n.ramsay@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.ramsay@ucl.ac.uk)

I notice that the Society for Nautical Research (South) is off across the Channel in a trip between 21-25 September this year, under the banner 'The Royal Navy: The French Connection '. Lots of visits to lots of places, from Normandy to the Cockleshell Heroes raid. Bit pricey for me, at £475, unless the Premium Bonds come up!

## **JOINING THE NAVAL WARGAMES SOCIETY**

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

[www.navalwargamessociety.org](http://www.navalwargamessociety.org).

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

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## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2014**

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

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

Tel: 01324 714248

e-mail: [kenny.thomson@hotmail.com](mailto:kenny.thomson@hotmail.com) - Website: <http://falkirkwargamesclub.org.uk/>

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

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