



# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 153 – January 2007

#### Editorial

Hi Everyone,

Many thanks to Simon for submitting another excellent battle report, this time covering the NWS event on board HMS BELFAST this Christmas. It looks like, as usual, a good time was had, and fortunately Simon survived a heavy but unavoidable dropout in players. If anyone else has played any games that they'd like to report here please send them in, as I am always very short of material.

The big naval wargaming event of 2007 so far has been the publication of "Victory at Sea" by Mongoose Publishing in the UK. VAS takes a "Flames of War" approach to naval wargaming, with simple rules and an emphasis on game play rather than strict accuracy. As such it has received a fairly mixed reaction from established naval players. However, it appears to be doing very well (the first print run has sold out in a couple of weeks) and, more importantly from our perspective, seems to be drawing in new players to naval wargaming. The Mongoose forum is certainly full of new players commenting on how many fleets they'll be ordering from Navwar! Hopefully we will have a review of VAS in the not too distant future.

Unfortunately it appears that we were unable to stage a game at PAWS in Plymouth this February. If anyone would like to volunteer to run a naval demo or participation game at their local show and would like help and support please contact me or one of the other committee members.

Yours aye,

DM

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## North Cape 2006 Report

*by Simon Stokes*

### **Introduction**

It was with some trepidation this year that I loaded up the car the day after boxing day and set off for HMS *Belfast*. A last minute collapse in numbers, worthy of the England cricket team, meant that instead of the six attendees we'd had lined up just a week previously there was now just Rob Hutton and myself. Gladly my worst fears proved unfounded as, greatly assisted by Nick Hewitt (HMS Belfast Interpretation Officer) who was able to spare us more of his time than we had any right to expect, we managed to run two very successful demo games, field enquiries from the general public and also find time to catch the North Cape play.

### **Thursday Game**

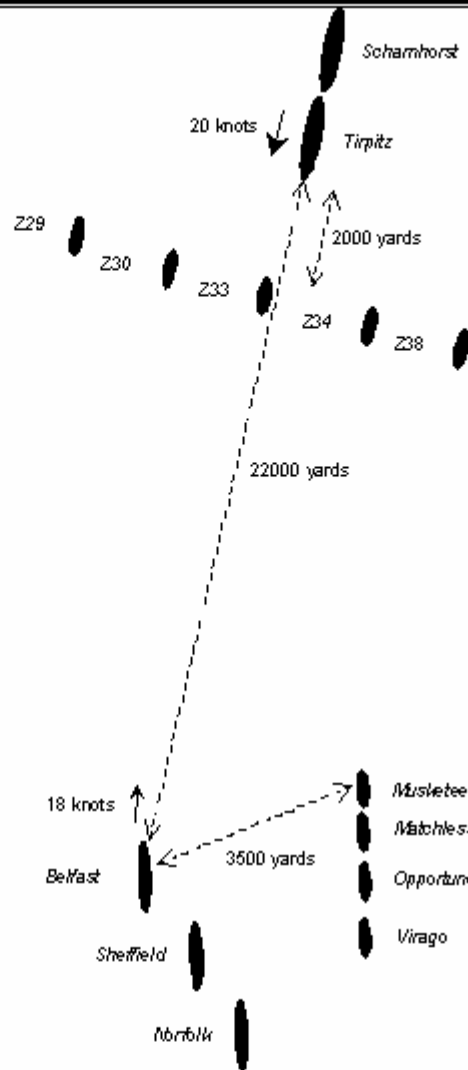
This was a "what-if" scenario based on the battle of North Cape, where we tried to discover whether, with both *Tirpitz*, *Scharnhorst* and escorting destroyers, Admiral Bey could have forced his way through to JW55B when it was covered only by its destroyer escort and Burnett's cruisers. Admittedly on the face of it this was a very one sided scenario, but we had a back up encounter where the British battleships *King George V* and *Duke of York* intercepted the German raiders on their return journey should they blast right through and sink the convoy before lunch. In the event we didn't need the back up scenario.



*Tirpitz with Scharnhorst in the background*

The map below shows the starting positions. Note that as well as those ships shown on the map, JW55B also had the following destroyers that formed part of the close escort : *HAIDA, HURON, IMPULSIVE, IROQUOIS, ONSLAUGHT, ONSLOW, ORWELL, SCOURGE, WHITEHALL, WRESTLER.*

Daylight  
 Visibility : Poor (17,000 yards)  
 Sea Condition : Gale  
 Snow/Squalls



JW55B

Merchant ships and escort DDs arrive 1 per turn on alternate turns

Convoy sailing order:

11 Fort Newcastle, 12 Ocean Valour, 13 John J Abel  
 21 Bernard N Baker, 22 Fort Vercheres, 23 Cardinal Gibbons, 24 John Wanamaker  
 31 Fort Kullyspell, 32 Nbrlys, 33 Brockholst Livingston, 34 John Vining  
 41 Thomas U Walter, 42 British Statesman, 43 Ocean Messenger  
 51 Harold L Winslow, 52 Ocean Pride, 53 Ocean Gypsy  
 61 Ocean Viceroy, 62 Will Rogers

8 knots



The two sides closed rapidly, the destroyers of both forging on ahead as best they could in the appalling weather conditions. The destroyers engaged each other though with little success in terms of scoring hits. More by way of drawing their attention away from Fisher's destroyers, Burnett's cruisers engaged the German Battleships, *Belfast* and *Sheffield* on *Tirpitz* and *Norfolk* on *Scharnhorst*. The Germans returned fire concentrating on the lead British cruiser HMS *Belfast*.

*Tirpitz* gunnery proved to be very accurate and quickly found the range to *Belfast* despite the evasive manoeuvring she was taking. It was not long before the first 15" shell hit home, piercing *Belfast's* belt armour with ease and detonating a magazine of 4" shells. A great gout of flame erupted skywards from amidships,



hurling a 4" gun mount into the air and wrecking an engine room. Five more 15" shells landed in quick succession, knocking Burnett's flagship out of the fight. Her guns were still firing, but her engine rooms were flooded (she had 5260 tons of water on board) and was listing 12° to starboard.



*Belfast leading Sheffield and taking 15" shell hits*

Johannesson's and Fisher's destroyers had by this time closed to torpedo launching range, and as the British swung round to port and the German's to starboard, torpedoes were launched from both sides. The British destroyers continued their turn to try and out run the German torps, but the Germans settled on a line ahead formation - they had saved some torps for the British cruisers and were keen to get themselves into a position from which they could best launch them. This proved to be a mistake as first Z30 and then Z33 were struck by British 21" torpedoes on their port side. In both cases the detonation set off the 5.9" magazines of the destroyers and they broke in two and sank. Fisher was more fortunate, and only his own destroyer *Musketeer* failed to out-run the German torpedoes that were sent after them. One struck on her starboard side flooding an engine room and giving her an 18° list, but she was still able to make 12 knots which was enough to limp away from the action.



*Destroyer screens engage ahead of Tirpitz*

Meanwhile Burnett's cruisers and the German capital ships pursued their unequal struggle, lobbing heavy calibre shells over the intervening destroyer melee. *Sheffield* took up the baton dropped by *Belfast* and landed many hits on *Tirpitz*. All of these burst on *Tirpitz's* armour without penetrating, and did no damage to her. *Norfolk* similarly scored hits on *Scharnhorst*, but even her larger 8" shells couldn't find a way through *Scharnhorst's* armour and she was similarly undamaged. The German gunnery accuracy seemed to desert them at this point and no hits were scored by *Tirpitz* or *Scharnhorst* with their main armament, and the few secondary 5.9" hits that landed failed to penetrate the cruisers belt armour. *Scharnhorst* at least had the excuse that she was forced to take evasive manoeuvres to get herself clear of the remaining British torpedoes launched earlier by the destroyers and set to run long to try and catch out the German capital ships.



*Sheffield and Norfolk sweep past the disabled Belfast*

We wrapped the game up at that point with only 15 minutes of game time actually played, which on the face of it was disappointing but was in fact testament to sheer number of visitors we had through wanting to know about what we were doing and about the history behind the game. We also tried to involve the younger visitors in both this game and the Friday game, getting them to control the snow squalls by giving them fist fulls of cotton wool balls to "hurl at the Nazi boats to blind them from shooting at the *Belfast*". It was good fun, and often meant that models were all but hidden under piles of cotton wool snow.

The game was far from reaching a conclusion, but with a depleted destroyer screen it would have been a difficult task for the Germans to fend off a concerted attack by the remaining British destroyers once they'd been reinforced by the ten that were coming up in support from the convoy local escort. It was however also looking very dicey for Burnett's remaining cruisers, none of which were capable of standing up to either *Tirpitz's* or *Scharnhorst's* heavy calibre guns for long.

### **Friday Game**

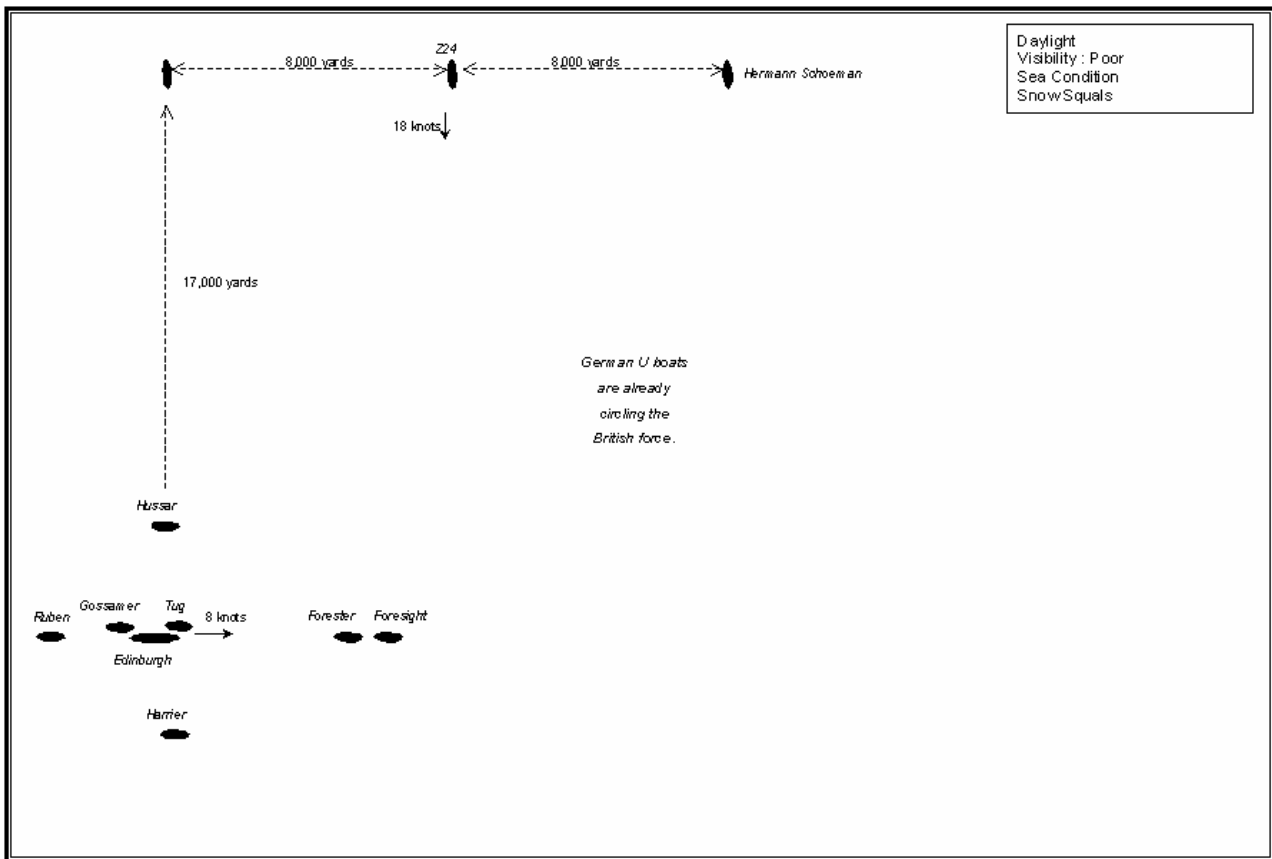
This scenario was not based on the battle of North Cape, but did take place in the same geographical area. Instead this was the attempt to get HMS *Edinburgh* (HMS *Belfast's* sister ship) safely back to Murmansk after she had been torpedoed on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1942 by U-456 while, as flagship of Admiral Bonham-Carter, she was escorting convoy QP11.

*Edinburgh* had been hit by two torpedoes on her starboard side. One entered the forward boiler room, causing extensive flooding, the other hit aft blowing her stern off, destroying her rudder and making her two inner propeller shafts useless. Her quarterdeck was also folded back over Y turret like an opened sardine can. U-436 and U-456 continued to shadow HMS *Edinburgh*, but were kept at bay by the destroyers *Foresight*, *Forester*, *Gremyashchi* and *Sokrushitelni* which were detached from the convoy escort to cover *Edinburgh*. A tug, the Russian patrol vessel *Rubin* and the minesweepers *Gossamer*, *Harrier*, *Hussar* and *Niger* were dispatched from the Kola inlet flotilla to augment *Edinburgh's* escort, arriving on 1<sup>st</sup> May, though by this time the two Russian destroyers needed to depart to re-fuel which they did in company with *Niger*.

Once watertight doors were shut, it was possible for *Edinburgh* to steam at 8 knots, though all attempts at steering her using the engines alone failed as she would inevitably turn up into the wind. Attempts at towing her also failed as the towing hawsers parted each time it was tried. Eventually it was found that with *Gossamer* secured aft on her port quarter and the Russian tug secured forward on her port side she could travel in a straight line under her own power. In this manner she proceeded slowly on the 250 mile journey back to Murmansk.

The Germans however had not been idle, and following receipt of the U-boat reports Kapitän Schulze-Hinrichs put to sea from Kirkenes at 1:00 on 1<sup>st</sup> May with the destroyers *Herman Schoemann*, *Z24* and *Z25*. They first made contact with QP11, but were repulsed by Commander Richmond's four remaining escorting destroyers after a series of brief actions in which neither side suffered anything more than splinter damage. Schulze-Hinrichs then headed East during the night, intending to attack *Edinburgh* from the North, and therefore upwind, using the snow as cover. Approaching in extended line abreast, at 06:15 on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, *Z25* reported a vessel ahead - it was the minesweeper *Hussar*. The situation was therefore as shown in the map below, which is where we started our game.





The attack on HMS Edinburgh - position at 06:30 on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1942.

Hussar spotted the approaching unidentified vessels and raised the alarm. Gossamer and the Russian Tug cast off from Edinburgh and the escort vessels surged ahead to meet the threat. Devoid of her tethered supports Edinburgh would now randomly go either in a straight line or turn 1 point to port. Initially all three German destroyers were in sight so Foresight and Forester engaged Herman Schoemann and Z24 respectively whilst Hussar, Gossamer and Edinburgh engaged Z25.



U456 waits for a chance to get at the wounded Edinburgh while avoiding the escort vessels.

From the beginning the gunnery of the British escorts was remarkably good. Foresight hit Herman Schoemann with almost her first salvo, demolishing her wheelhouse so she was unable to change course until temporary repairs could be effected, while Forester and even Hussar managed to straddle Z24 and Z25 respectively. Edinburgh's gunners took a long time to find the range to Z25 however (probably due to fatigue) and scored no hits or straddles in the first phase of the game. The Germans were closing fast though and would soon be in torpedo launch range unless something were done quickly. Soon however visitor induced snow obscured both Z24 and Z25 from view, leaving only Herman Schoemann available as a target for the non-radar equipped

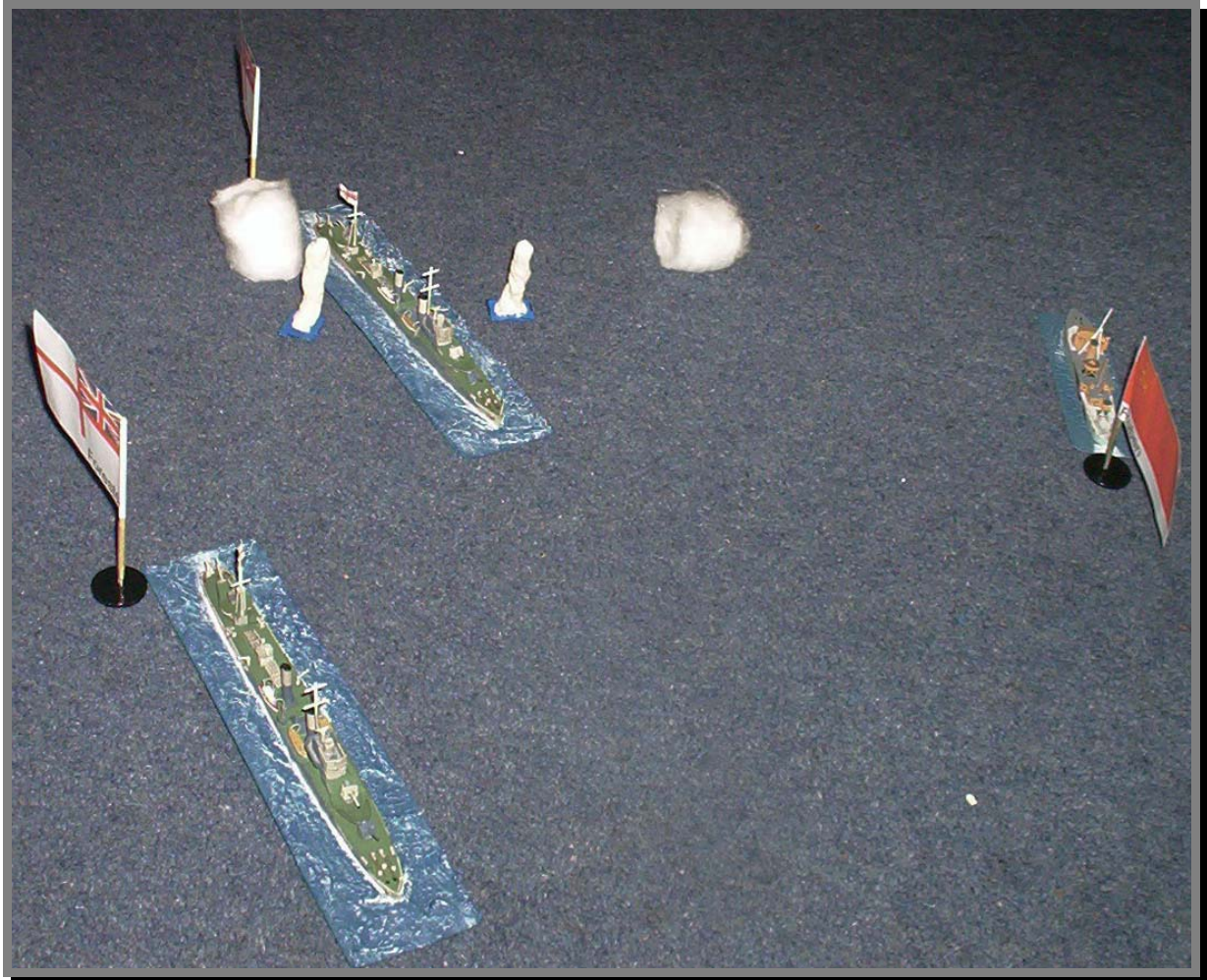
escorts. She was hit repeatedly by 4.7" shells from the quick and accurate firing *Foresight*, wrecking crew and storage areas below decks and starting fires, but missing her vital machinery spaces and weapon systems.



*Herman Schoeman surrounded by shell splashes from Foresight.*

*Foresight* was now in a position to launch torpedoes at the approaching German destroyer which was still not under control. Eight 21" torpedoes now dropped into the water and sped toward the onrushing *Herman Schoemann* as both *Foresight* and *Forester* reversed course to close with *Edinburgh* and help keep Z24 and Z25 at bay. At the last moment however *Herman Schoemann* regained control of her steering and managed to deftly avoid the British torpedoes which harmlessly sped past to starboard. Her gunnery and torpedo arcs now finally open she spat her revenge at *Foresight* hitting her with three 5" shells in quick succession and sending four 21" torpedoes in her wake and into the path of *Edinburgh*. The torpedoes were easily avoided, but the shells did do some significant damage to *Foresight*, striking below the water line they wrecked an engine room, let 467 tons of water into her hull and gave her a 12° list to starboard. She was still able to make 28 knots however and headed back to *Edinburgh's* defence despite the damage.





*Forester and Foresight double back to Edinburgh after launching torpedoes at the Herman Schoemann.  
Rubin heads in the opposite direction chasing a U-boat sighting*

Under cover of the increasingly heavy snow squalls Z24 and Z25 had now approached to within torpedo launch range of Edinburgh, who's only defence aside from her own guns were the minesweepers, which now headed into the snow squalls to seek out the German attackers. There now followed a period of violent manoeuvring on both sides as ships appeared suddenly out of the snow and then disappeared back into it again just as quickly after a brief exchange of fire. Several near misses resulted, and despite hits on both sides, it was inevitably the smaller and less well armed minesweepers that came off worst. A 5.9" shell from Z25 slammed home below the water line forward on the starboard side of *Hussar*, letting 240 tons of water into her and slowing her to five knots.



*Gossamer under fire from Z24 and in the background Hussar under fire from Z25.*

Despite the brave action by the minesweepers both Z24 and Z25 managed to launch torpedoes at the helpless *Edinburgh*, and Bonham-Carter could only watch as they approached. Luckily only one torpedo hit her forward, but it was enough to bring her almost to a dead stop (her propellers were still turning and she could make one



knot still but was now down by the head with 7300 tons of water on board). Just as the German destroyers looked to have *Edinburgh* at their mercy they suffered a remarkable reverse. The snow squalls had once again descended on the battle area due to the simultaneous arrival of several young families, and amidst this poor visibility there was one almighty collision. First to collide were *Gossamer* and *Z24* as, under more violent helm movements on both sides, *Gossamer* T-boned the German destroyer at 17 knots embedding her crumpled bows in the German Destroyers flank. No sooner had this collision occurred, then *Z25*, steaming at 34 knots on *Z24*'s port quarter, ploughed into the suddenly stationary *Gossamer*'s starboard beam, slicing her nearly in half. The final near simultaneous blow then fell as a spread of three 21" torpedoes, launched by *Edinburgh* at her attackers, ploughed into the entangled *Z24*, *Gossamer* and *Z25*. *Gossamer* was struck first, sending the already wrecked minesweeper straight to the bottom with the loss of all 121 hands. The two remaining torpedoes in the spread struck *Z24* and *Z25* respectively.



*Gossamer, Z24 and Z25 locked together after the multiple collision as Edinburgh's torpedoes speed toward the tangle of ships.*

It was at this point that we wrapped up the game, but we couldn't just leave it there and after some debate we later played out the remaining moves to see what would have happened. The result was that *Edinburgh* took yet another torpedo that left her still afloat but dead in the water. *Z24* and *Z25* were both reduced to wrecks before they could crawl away. *Z24* was sunk by gunfire and *Z25* despatched by torpedo from *Foresight* and *Forester* though she was already dead in the water with not a single gun that could fire by the time they caught up with her. *Herman Schoemann* was the one German destroyer that got away.

The result of the game was not too far away from what happened historically, where *Z24* and *Z25* were both obscured by snow so *Edinburgh* concentrated her fire on *Herman Schoemann*, sinking her in fairly short order. Both *Foresight* and *Forester* were quite heavily hit by *Z24* and *Z25* when they eventually emerged from the snow. Unfortunately *Edinburgh* was struck by a torpedo originally launched by the Germans at the British destroyers. This left her dead in the water with all hope of getting her back to Murmansk gone. *Z24* and *Z25* did not press on with the attack, mainly because they mistook the minesweepers for destroyers. *Edinburgh*'s crew were evacuated and she was dispatched to the bottom by torpedo. She took with her 5 tons of Russian gold originally destined for the USA as payment for war material. In 1981 the wreck was salvaged to recover this gold, and as a result the wreck was surveyed and a bronze statuette of her as she is now on the sea bed presented to HMS *Belfast*. This was kindly made available to us for the day and proved invaluable, in combination with some contemporary images of the damage to HMS *Edinburgh* before she sank, in telling the story to visitors and illustrating the destructive power of torpedo hits.

### Conclusions

Popularity of this years North Cape event with the public was the best yet with nearly 2000 people visiting the ship over the two days. It would be wrong to suggest that they all came specifically to see our wargame, the main draw was the superb North Cape play staged three times a day by the wavy navy and a team of professional actors, but we certainly made our own modest contribution to the event's success. Whilst on board we were indeed pleased to see a few NWS members, especially Jack Snary who bought his 1/1200<sup>th</sup> scale scratch built *Belfast* along for us to see. There were the by now usual but always rewarding visits by veterans or their families, for one in particular we were able to point out her dad's action station on *Duke of York*. Evening entertainment was, as always, a laugh in company with the good natured wavy navy chaps. This year they were mainly drinking sloe gin.

IWM plan to run the event again next year, when we hope to be back with a larger number of participants.

### References

Richard Woodman, Arctic Convoys 1941-1945, John Murray 2004

<http://www.hmsedinburgh.co.uk/>

<http://www.halcyon-class.co.uk/>

<http://www.convoyweb.org.uk/>

## Upcoming Events

### Naval Wargaming Weekend, Fort Purbrook, Portsmouth

March 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> 2007

A wargaming conference will be held at based at Fort Purbook in March 2007. The conference is an opportunity for people interested in developing wargames to meet and try out a large number of different types of games. These games may be at any stage of development from prototype to a fully worked wargame.

The conference dinner is on board a submarine on the Friday evening and there are a number of naval games in the programme already (including the Fletcher Pratt Naval Wargame in the Ball Room).

Further details can be found at [www.johncurryevents.co.uk](http://www.johncurryevents.co.uk)

### NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2006

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

Kenny Thomson, 1 Excise Lane, Kincardine, Fife, FK10 4LW, Tel: 01259 731091  
e-mail: [kenny.thomson@homecall.co.uk](mailto:kenny.thomson@homecall.co.uk) - Website: [WWW.falkirkwargamesclub.co.uk](http://WWW.falkirkwargamesclub.co.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)

#### NWS Wessex [Bi-Monthly Meetings]

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

### Other Events

#### "Carronade" Wargames Show

The Falkirk Wargames Club has started a new show in Scotland called Carronade. The show next year will take place on Saturday the 12th of May 2007 at the Forth Valley College Falkirk. If any member of the society would like to put on a game please contact Kenny Thompson on 01259 731091. At this time the club web site is being renewed