



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 162 – October 2007

Editorial

Hi Everyone,

Chaos reigns at Manley Towers. We have survive dour house move (just), the kiddies are settled into their new school and I've got a new job (sort of). Unfortunately the wargames room construction hasn't started yet, so I'm not anticipating getting back into the swing of things until at least the New Year ☹

On the "new releases" front the new supplement for "Victory at Sea" has been announced for release in November. I'm sure it will be as controversial as the original rules. I'd hoped to have received the WW1 version of GQ3 by now but apparently ODGW have yet to appoint a printer so I fear we are in for a long wait!

Anyway, some of you are still playing out there, so this month's centrepiece is a battle report from Richard Wimpenny.

Yours aye,

DM

david.manley@btinternet.com

THE BATTLE OF ZANTE: TROUBRIDGE VERSUS THE GOEBEN

By Richard Wimpenny

I'm sure I have read somewhere that the word 'if', loaded as it is with boundless possibilities, is considered by many to be one of the 'biggest' words in the English language. Although this *may* be true in the real world, it is *definitely* true in that world of back-turned clocks inhabited by the naval wargamer. That world where the cry of, "But what if?" can be heard as frequently as, "Where's my ruler?" One of my particular favourite 'What If' scenarios (and one I should think close to the heart of many members of our Society) is if Troubridge and the 1st Cruiser Squadron had actually engaged the German battlecruiser *Goeben* on the morning of August 7 1914. Apart from being a fascinating game to both run and play, it also provided me with an opportunity to introduce my life-long friend and wargaming pal Michael Dowd (known to those of you who read my series 'Fleet Action Imminent' as Mike 'Jellicoe' Dowd) to the wonders of the American rule-set 'Seekrieg 5'. As any of you who have spoken to me recently will know, I'm a big fan of these rules, and my review should appear in 'Battlefleet' shortly. This engagement was ideal for Mike to get the hang of things, as he only had two ships, *Goeben* and *Breslau*, to control. Meanwhile, I took on Troubridge's 1st Cruiser Squadron and the various light cruisers and destroyers as (and if) they came into play. The forces with the potential to engage were:

GERMAN:

Rear-Admiral Wilhelm Souchon with the *Mittelmeerddivision*: the battlecruiser *Goeben* (Flag) and light cruiser *Breslau*.

BRITISH:

Rear-Admiral Ernest Troubridge with the 1st Cruiser Squadron: *Defence* (Flag), *Black Prince*, *Duke of Edinburgh* and *Warrior*.

Captain W A Howard Kelly in *Gloucester*.

Captain John Kelly in *Dublin*, accompanied by the destroyers *Bulldog* and *Beagle*.

Weather conditions for August 7 1914 were taken from the scenario 'The Troubridge Decision' that can be found on the Seekrieg website (www.seekrieg.com) and were very calm:

Beaufort Number 0

Sea State 1 foot

Wind variable 2-3 knots

Visibility Code 8 (In SK5 this means that *Goeben* could spot Troubridge's cruisers at 20,400 yards, but due to her poor coal, *Goeben* herself could be spotted by Troubridge at 31,000 yards.)

Although, as I just mentioned, there is a prepared scenario on the SK5 website for the action, I wanted our game to be more wide-ranging, and to cover all eventualities I had prepared three campaign maps for the game. A 'theatre' map that covered from Sicily to the west coast of Greece; an operational map that stretched a hundred miles west of Cephalonia and Zante; and finally I drew out a fifty square mile map for on-table action and movement just off. Sounds a trifle complicated, I know, but it wasn't really and we did know where everything was and, importantly, where it was heading when we 'scrolled' the playing area. The game set-up had *Goeben* and *Breslau* (10,000 yards astern) some seventy miles south-west of Zante, on a course of 124° at 18 knots. Troubridge was twenty miles to the north-east of the German squadron, with his four cruisers in line ahead, on a course of 170° also at 18 knots. Neither commander could spot his enemy as yet, but Troubridge had the advantage of the redoubtable Captain Howard Kelly, whose exemplary cruiser work in the *Gloucester* was a credit to the Service. This tenacious officer clung to the Germans, refused to be shaken off and—unlike most of his brother officers at Jutland—sent regular reports of *Goeben's* course and speed; he begins the action 20,000 yards astern of the *Breslau*. As though one 'Kelly' wasn't enough, the equally-able brother, Captain John Kelly commanding *Dublin* and the two destroyers, was in hot pursuit, though still thirty miles behind the Germans. Just to round things off, Admiral Berkley-Milne and the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron was marked on the Theatre Map seventy-five miles north-west of Malta and their position updated occasionally; they were unlikely to get into action...but you never know.



1st Cruiser Squadron Belching Smoke!

Thanks to the *Gloucester*, Troubridge (that is, me!) had some knowledge of the German position and ordered 19 knots at 0530, and fifteen minutes later a ten-degree turn to starboard towards the clouds of black smoke on the horizon. As I carried out another ten-degree turn at 0558, Admiral Souchon spotted my leading cruiser, *Defence*, and at 0604 he ordered the *Breslau* to close to 3,000 yards. This immediately put the spanner in the works as far as my plan was concerned. I had hoped to be able to reach a position somewhere between the two German ships, and if I could threaten *Breslau* enough, I hoped *Goeben* would have to turn back to protect her and come within range of my guns. Well, we all have high hopes at any battle's opening! Thus far, although we had been on-table with everything except the *Dublin* and her destroyers, we had been using six minute game turns and using a quick 'verbal' order system that allowed us to pass through forty minutes of exciting 'jockeying for position' quite quickly; but now the game was well and truly 'afoot', we began to fill in the order section of the SK5 ship logs and use the standard two-

minute turn.

At 0612 *Goeben* turned to starboard to open her gunnery arcs, and with a metaphorical snarl at her pursuers 13,500 yards away fired twelve 11-inch shells at *Defence*. They all missed, but two minutes later she managed to hit *Defence*'s main belt; however, being an SAP round it failed to penetrate (A Class C hit, in SK5 language). Next turn, and after a judicial change to APC, *Goeben* hit again and knocked-out two of *Defence*'s starboard 7.5-inch battery. This hit also caused *Defence* to cross a Damage Tier (this represents the more gradual build up of damage, such as that from splinters) that led to progressive structural damage rendering three of her port 7.5s out of action too! So, first blood well and truly to the Germans.

By this time (0616), *Goeben* had managed to wind herself up to 22 knots, which wasn't as easy as it sounds. Although her official top speed was 27 knots, *Goeben* was suffering technical problems in August 1914 that reduced her maximum speed to just 24. Furthermore, in game terms, every time she wanted to increase 1 knot above 21 knots, a 01-15 had to be rolled on percentage dice. This of course could mean that with luck Troubridge could close the range, to a point where his four cruisers could overwhelm *Goeben* with sheer weight of fire. ('Could' seems to be gaining a literary reputation of 'if-like' proportions in this article!)

At 0618 *Goeben* steamed right across the British T, 'all guns blazing' to coin a familiar phrase, the consequence of which was a brilliant piece of German gunnery: five devastating 11-inch APC hits on *Defence*, that put the after 9.2-inch gun turret out of action and ruptured some steam lines that led to a 1-knot loss of speed. This damage was subsequently repaired by *Defence*'s damage control parties, but a potentially devastating hit on the fore turret forced a flooding of the magazine and, therefore, just as the action was reaching a critical point my flagship was without main armament! These hits coupled with a flooded prop shaft forced her out of the line after only eight minutes. In return for her pounding, *Defence* had got off twenty-one rounds of APC at *Goeben*, but with no hits.

Breslau had by now succeeded in closing the gap I was hoping to exploit; however, this didn't stop my two rearmost ships, *Duke of Edinburgh* and *Warrior*, from punishing her for coming too close. At 0620, *Duke of Edinburgh* hit *Breslau* on her main belt with a round of 9.2—but it was HE and didn't penetrate! (I believe, "Drat," at the very least, was heard from my side of the table.) Next turn, however, *Breslau* wasn't quite so lucky. A further 9.2 (this time CPC) flooded a boiler room and went on to cause more serious flooding, the net result of which carved four knots off her speed and induced a list that reduced her gunnery ability. *Goeben*'s gunnery, however, continued to live up to that expected of a German battlecruiser. She had shifted her fire from the *Defence* when she fell out of line, and then during ten minutes beginning at 0622, *Goeben* hit *Black Prince* with one SAP and eleven APC from her 11-inch main battery, at ranges from 10,500 yards to as little as 8,000. This was far more than any old armoured cruiser could be expected to take, and with all her fire control equipment wrecked, ablaze from stem to stern and with catastrophic flooding, her captain was forced to order 'Abandon Ship'. Within ten minutes, *Black Prince* turned-turtle and sank. Although Mike had forced *Defence* out of action and sunk the *Black Prince*, he was nonetheless playing a dangerous game. By closing to achieve a greater hit-rate, he risked damage from my smaller calibre guns, and anything that could slow him down could prove fatal.

At 0630 *Breslau* took one of *Warrior*'s shells in another boiler room that slowed her down to just 20 knots, and then the following turn more damage from *Warrior* caused steam leaks that were set to reduce her a knot a turn until they were repaired by her damage control teams. British luck continued to hold at this stage of the engagement (Huzza!), when, after shifting targets, *Duke of Edinburgh* proceeded to hit *Goeben* five times with her main guns (9.2-inch); knocking-out one of her 11-inch guns in turret 'Dora' and starting a serious fire in her 8.8cm ready-use ammo. Indeed, by 0632 the mighty *Goeben* had two serious conflagrations, the smoke from which was starting to cause some problems for her gunnery team. Nevertheless, the weight of *Goeben*'s fire soon had the *Duke of Edinburgh* reeling under a deluge of hits that threatened (20% chance) a total loss of power, knocked-out her WT, caused sufficient flooding to submerge her armoured belt, destroyed two boiler rooms and finally, at 0644, a catastrophic explosion in one of her primary magazines.

With both *Black Prince* and *Duke of Edinburgh* gone and *Defence* out of action this left only *Warrior* in this seemingly one-sided fight. However, things were not going quite all the Germans' way. At 0636, *Warrior* hit the *Breslau* with a 9.2 HE shell that caused a serious fire in a fuel bunker, while Captain Kelly's Gloucester managed to land one of her pretty powerful 6-inch CPCs on her too. The German light cruiser

was now in grave danger, as her damage control parties were completely overwhelmed by fires and flooding, and the extra damage points these inflicted caused her to begin to founder. Another 'Huzza' was heard from *Defence's* bridge, but despite my obvious relief at causing some serious damage to the *Mittelmeerddivision* things had reached something of a crisis point for me as Troubridge. With *Warrior* my only armoured cruiser still in the fight, any chance of crippling *Goeben* in daylight was slipping through my fingers. 'Disengage' was sent up what was left of *Defence's* halyards.

Well, forty-two minutes after the adversaries spotted one another and after a furious cannonade the Battle of Zante was over. Undoubtedly it was a German victory, but Mike had let *Breslau* stray too close to my line and had paid the price; thus *Goeben* was stripped of her 'eyes' for the journey through the Greek islands on her way to Constantinople. Furthermore, *Goeben* had shot off 80% of her 11-inch ammunition, which boded ill if forced into action again; and Mike didn't think that in her fire-blackened state and minus *Breslau* she would cut such an imposing figure, even if she reached the Golden Horn. 'If' seemed just as important to us at the end of our game as it had at the beginning. Nevertheless, we had been keeping track of all the other British forces during the game, and although Berkley-Milne and his battlecruisers were miles away off Sicily, Captain John Kelly with *Dublin* and the two destroyers were only twenty miles away and gaining fast. This fresh force, along with shadowing *Gloucester*, could be expected to make an attack as soon as it was dark—and *Goeben* had no *Breslau* to help protect her. Now if...and...if...were to happen? Hmm, to be continued, perhaps?

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2007

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 - 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: gj.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.