



# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 175 – September 2008

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## Editorial

My globetrotting activities continue. Much of August was spent away from the rain-swept UK – first in Florida (dodging hurricanes and torrential downpours) and then Tokyo (which was ravaged by some heavy rainstorms whilst I was there). Summer has therefore been declared an official worldwide washout ☺

The visit to Tokyo was fascinating, and I managed to achieve another naval wargaming related goal when I got down to Yokosuka to visit the battleship “Mikasa”, Tojo’s flagship at Tsushima. Much of the ship was reconstructed in the 1960s after the ravages of post-WW2 deconstruction took their toll, but the result is impressive and in many cases it is difficult to spot new from old. If you are ever in the area the ship is well worth a visit!

Contributions to AGB are always welcome. “Soft copy” input via email is the preferred method of submission as it cuts down the time taken to get your piece into the newsletter considerably!

Yours aye,

DM  
[david.manley@btinternet.com](mailto:david.manley@btinternet.com)

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## NWS at Colours 2008

The NWS will be attending the popular “Colours” wargames show at the racecourse, Newbury, on Saturday 13th September, showing the “Attack at Source” game we first took to Salute in April. We’ll be on the first floor if anyone wants to look us up. We hope to see you all there.

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## NWS at SALUTE

After the success of the “Attack at Source” game at Salute 2008, thoughts are now turning to the 2009 event. The NWS has been invited to attend again, and we have until mid October to submit the application. The question is, what to do? If you have any ideas for a subject that could be covered by an innovative and eye catching (and preferably participation) game please drop us a line. Note this is a call for ideas only – we won’t suddenly ask you to run a game just because you had a great idea for a subject!

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# After Action Report

## Bardia Convoy - somewhere in the Med 1941

### Introduction

After something of a hiatus in our collective gaming calendars, August saw the North Hampshire regional group meet up round Jeff's place again to resume hostilities. The game this month was a continuation of an occasional series of actions based around the activities of the Malta Striking Force in the Mediterranean during WW2.

This particular game was a "what if" based around the real events of 24th November 1941.

From the British perspective ULTRA decrypts have shown the desperation of Rommel's fuel situation and that the enemy are excerpting themselves to resupply Rommel. With operation CRUSADER currently underway in the western desert, Churchill has insisted that the enemy supply line is completely severed. Admiral Cunningham has agreed to supplement Force K with a second strike group, Force B. ULTRA indicates that the Italian's are simultaneously running one large convoy, supported by a cruiser squadron, and two smaller two ship convoys with only light cover. Air reconnaissance located the large convoy shortly before midnight on 21/22 November in mid ocean to the east of Malta. Force B was already at sea and in the vicinity, having sailed from Alexandria. Force K are ordered to sail from Malta and join the attack. However the possible interception points for the main convoy mean that a daylight attack during the afternoon of 24<sup>th</sup> November is the only option. The strength of the Axis air cover over the convoy is unknown.

From the Italian perspective the repeated attacks on the supply convoys running to North Africa have created a severe logistical crisis for the Axis forces fighting in the western desert. This has resulted in a desperate need to force a large quantity of supplies through to North Africa, especially petrol. A large convoy has therefore been organised, with cruiser escort, and is to be routed to the east of Malta sailing from Taranto to Bardia. The convoy has already suffered submarine and air attack by the British. The submarine attack severely damaging the *Trieste* with a torpedo, forcing her to turn back to port, the air attack damaging the *Abruzzi* with another torpedo hit, also forcing her to turn back. Of the remaining cruisers, the *Luigi Cadorna* is acting as fuel carrier, her deck crammed with cans of petrol. The Luftwaffe has provided air cover for the convoy of 6 Ju 88 bombers circling overhead.

### The Game

#### British Forces

**Force K** (Capt William G. Agnew)

*Aurora* <sup>CL</sup> *Penelope* <sup>CL</sup> *Lance* <sup>DD</sup> *Lively* <sup>DD</sup>

**Force B** (Rear Admiral B. Rawlings)

*Ajax* <sup>CL</sup> *Neptune* <sup>CL</sup> *Kimberley* <sup>DD</sup> *Kingston* <sup>DD</sup>

#### Italian Forces

**Scorta Diretta** (Capitano di Vascello Capponi)

*Vivaldi* <sup>DD</sup> *Da Noli* <sup>DD</sup> *Granatiere* <sup>DD</sup> *Fuciliere* <sup>DD</sup> *Corazziere* <sup>DD</sup> *Carabiniere* <sup>DD</sup> *Alpino* <sup>DD</sup> *Turbine* <sup>DD</sup> *Perseo* <sup>DD</sup>

Convoy of seven freighters

**Scorta a Distanza** (Ammiraglio di Divisione Parona)

*Gorizia* <sup>CA</sup> *Trento* <sup>CA</sup> *Giuseppe Garibaldi* <sup>CL</sup> *Luigi Cadorna* <sup>CL</sup>

Forces were divided between the players with Dave Sharp and Jeff's grandson Rick taking Forces K and B respectively and Jeff and Rob Hutton taking command of Scorta Diretta and Scorta Distanza.

The Italians deployed their convoy and the destroyer escorts in the centre of the table heading South, with the covering cruiser squadron deployed a few miles behind the convoy to the North. The Ju 88s circled overhead. The game started as the British forces moved onto the table from the South, the two commanders choosing to enter on opposite sides of the table South East and South

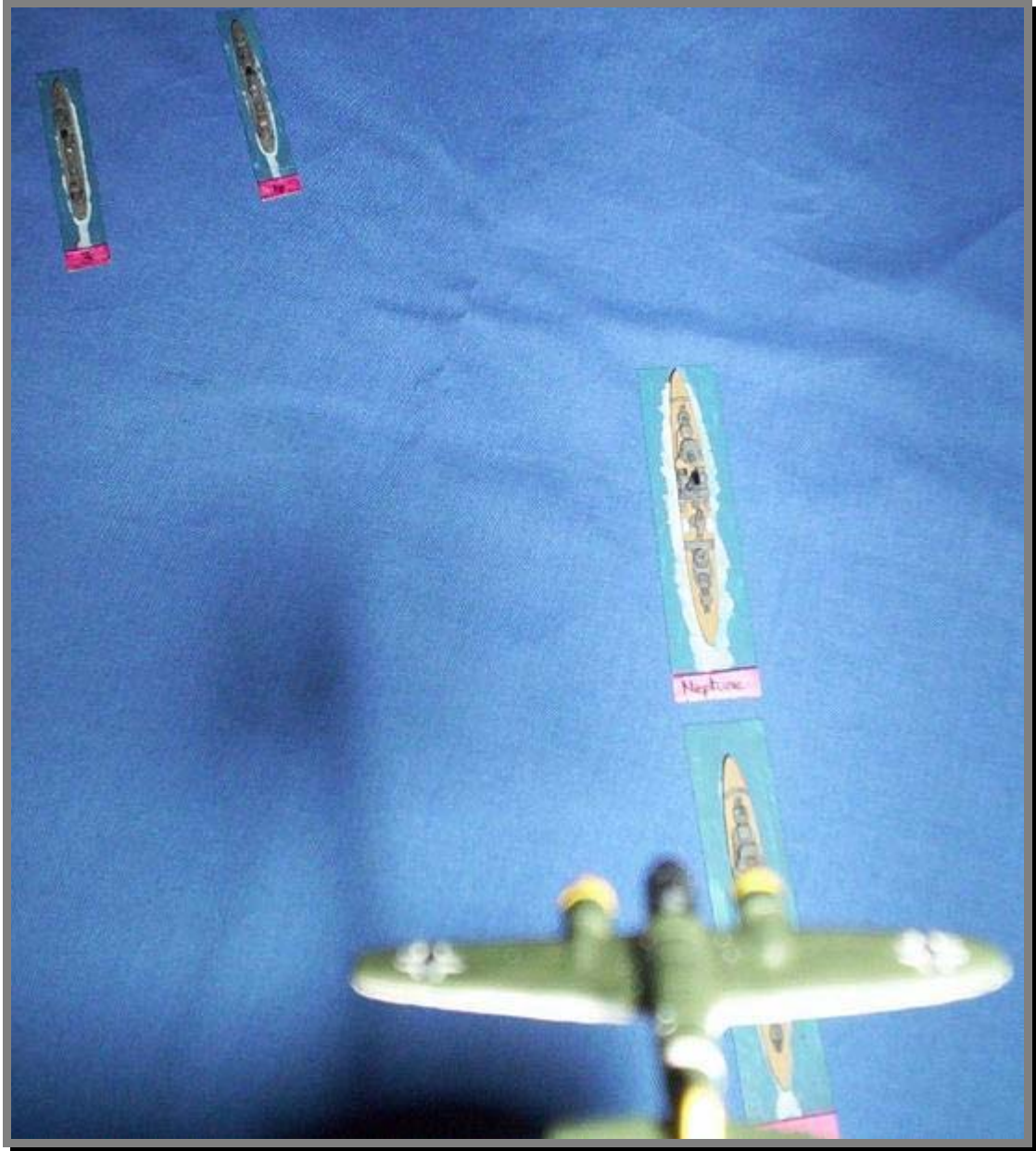
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West of the convoy.

The British were up against it in this action, since despite concentrating their forces, attacking in daylight lost them the vital element of surprise and left them open to attack from the air. In fact air attack was the very first thing they had to endure as the Ju 88s peeled off and stacked up to mount dive bombing attacks on the cruisers of Force B. Here though the Luftwaffe made something of a hash of it on two counts firstly by arming their planes with two 1000lb bombs each rather than four 550lb bombs and secondly in attacking with only one bomb at a time. Consequently they lost one of their number to AA fire without scoring a single hit in either of their two bombing runs.



*Ju 88 dive bombing Force B*

In the meantime the British ships continued to close the Italian convoy as it's escorts gathered to repel the British attack whilst the merchantmen slowly hauled themselves round to starboard to try to head away from the threat and give their destroyers some sea room. The British though had the better of the early exchanges with *Kimberly* and *Kingston* quickly finding the range of the Italian destroyers, hitting the *Carabiniere* and knocking out one of her boilers and reducing her top speed to 19 knots. *Neptune's* secondary 4" guns also scored 3 below the waterline hits in quick succession on the lead Italian destroyer *Vivaldi*, two of which opened up a large hole in her bows. Travelling at 36 knots when the shells hit her, the sudden in-rush of sea water was too much for her internal bulkheads to cope with and one by one they collapsed, *Vivaldi* becoming the first casualty

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of the game as she capsized to port. *Neptune* also found the range of the more distant *Gorizia* with her main armament, though her 6" shells had markedly less effect on the Italian heavy cruiser which shrugged off the majority of the hits. One hit forward did start a persistent fire though which took quite a few turns to bring under control. The British could have made even more of these early moves however if *Ajax* hadn't been continually masked by *Neptune*.

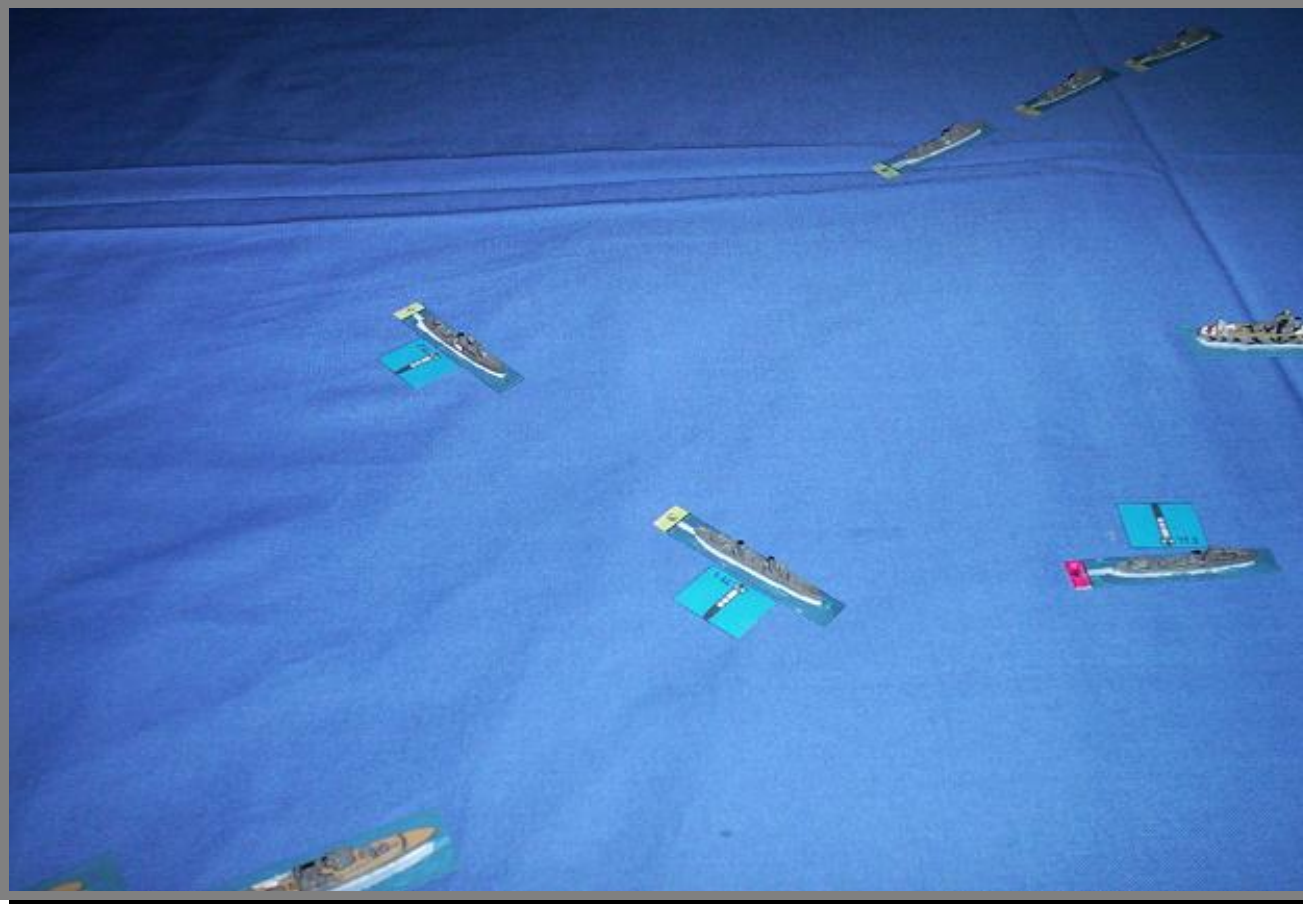
Meanwhile Force K's approach on the convoy was more measured than Force B's, Dave taking care to ensure that all his ships were able to bring their full armament to bear on the approaching Italian destroyers. Inexplicably though *Aurora* and *Penelope* seemed to take longer to find the range of their opponents, though these smallest of British light cruisers mounted only six 6" guns apiece which probably had something to do with it. *Lance* and *Lively* were the first to score hits though as they first straddled and then started landing hits on *DaNoli*, now the nearest Italian destroyer after *Vivaldi*'s demise. Again it was the Italian destroyer's high speed which was her undoing as she was hit by several groups of 4" shells, three of which hit below the waterline amidships knocking out the destroyers boilers. The Italian destroyer's internal bulkheads could not cope with the weight of water pressing in on them and two gave way in quick succession. Once more an Italian destroyer capsized after a comparatively innocuous series of shell hits.

This was the high water mark of British success however as the Italian destroyers and cruisers finally started to find the range to the British ships. First to suffer was the destroyer *Kimberly* who's T was crossed by the Italian destroyers *Corazziere* and *Carabiniere*. She was hit by five 4.7" shells, four below the waterline knocking out her boilers. Like the Italian destroyers it was *Kimberly*'s 34 knot speed which ultimately caused her demise as her bulkheads failed and she capsized to port. *Gorizia* also managed to find the range to *Neptune* and a plunging 8" shell pierced *Neptune*'s deck armour and exploded in her machinery spaces wrecking an engine room. *Neptune* slowed to 23 knots but continued in the fight, though momentarily seemed to think about retiring as both she and *Ajax* swung round sharply to port and onto a southerly heading, but then swung back round to starboard and onto their previous northerly course.

By this time the convoy had managed to turn itself about so Rob ordered Parona's cruisers to pass between the convoy's centre and starboard columns to close the British. The two groups of Italian destroyers crossed at this point and switched targets as a result. The two sides were closing fast now and soon both Italians and British decided that they were within torpedo launch range. *Granatiere* and *Fuciliere* launched 8 torpedoes apiece in *Neptune*'s and *Ajax*'s direction whilst *Kingston* put all ten of her fish in the water headed towards *Gorizia* at 46 knots.

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*Torpedoes away!*

With their fish already in the water, all the destroyers had to do now was make good their escape, but this was easier said than done and both *Fuciliere* and *Kingston* were hit hard by their opponents. *Fuciliere* was smothered in 4" and 6" shells from *Neptune*, three of which hit below the waterline. The now familiar sound of collapsing bulkheads accompanied the capsizing of the *Fuciliere*. *Kingston* was no more fortunate and she too capsized to port under a hail of 4" shells from *Gorizia* and *Trento* and 6" shells from *Giuseppe Garibaldi* several of which hit below the waterline aft and completely flooded the aft section of the destroyer.

Agnew's Force K cruisers finally found their range much to the distress of the Italian destroyer *Turbine* as she staggered under four 6" shell hits on and below her waterline which started fires and allowed water into the machinery spaces. The now familiar story of collapsing bulkheads ensued and sent another Italian destroyer to the bottom.

It was now that the torpedoes hit home. First to find the target was a single torpedo from *Kingston's* 10 torpedo spread. It hit *Gorizia* forward on the port side, but did relatively little damage to the Italian heavy cruiser, only slowing her to 22 knots, shipping 2900 tons of water and giving her a 2 degree list to port but leaving her machinery intact and weapon systems fully operational.

*Neptune* was not so lucky. Hit by a single torpedo amidships on the starboard side the torpedo wrecked her machinery and boiler rooms and caused extensive flooding, leaving her dead in the water having shipped 6600 tons of water and listing 4 degrees to starboard.

*Ajax* should have easily been able to avoid the torpedoes launched at her, but instead managed to steer a course directly across the oncoming torpedo tracks. One torpedo hit on the port side causing serious damage to her machinery and extensive flooding, leaving her with a top speed of 11 knots, a 16 degree list to port and having shipped 3400 tons of water.

With Force B all but annihilated and Force K now coming under fire from the Parona's cruisers themselves, Dave decided that nothing more could be gained by pressing on and so broke off the attack, leaving Admiral Rawlings and the survivors of Force B to their fate.

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## Conclusions

Historically this action never took place as the Italians ordered the convoy back to port following the submarine and air attacks. Whilst our game suggests that the British would have had their work cut out in getting at and sinking the Bardia convoy, I was kicking myself after the game at not insisting, as I had planned to do, that both of the British commands were taken by experienced players. If they had been the game would have been much closer than it eventually turned out. Much fun was had nonetheless, and it was probably the first game we've ever had when both Rob and Jeff were on the winning side ;o)

Thanks as always to Jeff for providing both the venue and the beverages.

Simon Stokes

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2008

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## John Curry Events

The following message was received from John Curry:

The latest article I have added is by Richard Brooks (the military historian) who kindly agreed to let me reproduce his article about Fred Jane (see <http://www.johncurryevents.co.uk/navalrules/fredjane/articles.htm>).

The Fletcher Pratt game has attracted some comment and there are now 7 articles about it on my website (see <http://www.johncurryevents.co.uk/navalrules/fletcherpratt/articles.htm>).

I have obtained another rare naval wargame that I will produce in due course.

The next Innovation in Wargames Conference (February 2009) is on HMS Belfast, a glorious place to play wargames on! (see <http://www.johncurryevents.co.uk/conference/homepage.htm>).

The conference will include a wargaming show for the public on Saturday the 28th February 2009. I will take the opportunity to try out a few classic naval games.

[www.johncurryevents.co.uk](http://www.johncurryevents.co.uk)

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## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2008**

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

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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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### **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)

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### **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.

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