



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

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EDITORIAL

Gentlemen,

Well how the last four weeks has whizzed by; I can't believe I'm writing my second Editorial already! Firstly, I would like to apologize for the slightly late 'posting' of last month's issue. I was rushed off my tiny feet work-wise and then technical hitch after technical hitch seemed to thwart my every 'e-turn'. (Thanks again to David Manley for distributing this issue, too.) That was bad enough, but at 0600 on the very morning of July 1st (my 'D-Day') a pipe connecting the hot water tank to the shower pump came apart and began to flood the upper decks of HM-House *Wimpenny*! Our damage control party (er, me!) leapt drowsily into action and set about turning off the water at the stop-cock. However, by now various bulkheads were giving way and the flooding began to spread out of control into the lower deck (through the ceiling and into the lounge!) and also into the fuse box, so that we suffered a complete loss of power—which also meant no computer! As I gazed round at the utter desolation that had been wrought upon our home, I suggested to the highest ranking officer I could find (Mrs. W) that perhaps we should try and counter flood. Fortunately for me, my attempts at humour fell on stony ground! Eventually, a young rating from 'Dynorod' secured the flooding, and it was only then that I realized—with a relief that I'm sure you will *all* appreciate—just how luckily things had turned out. For despite the fact that the light shades in the lounge resembled showerheads and that the carpet below looked for all the world like a Vietnamese paddy field, *none of my books had been damaged!*

Talking of books, I came across something of a serendipitous little gem a couple of months ago. It is an occupational hazard of mine to find myself strolling up and down The Charing Cross Road on a somewhat regular basis; and as many of you are probably aware, that is where many of the best second-hand bookshops in London ply their devilishly-tempting trade. One in particular, 'Quintos' on the corner of Great Newport Street, has over the past few months had quite a few old 'Brassey's Naval Annual' for sale, and on too many occasions I have been unable to resist! However, good though they are in their own right, I found a fantastic piece of marginalia in the 1901 copy I picked up in May. Aside from Jane's-like details of ships' armour and ordnance, Brassey's have articles on subjects such as developments in marine engineering, naval estimates, and, of particular interest to the wargamer, naval manoeuvres. Chapter V of the 1901 edition has a fascinating account of the 1900 British manoeuvres, which includes mouth-watering orders of battle and 'Rules of Engagement'; however, it is in the description of an incident between a cruiser and fishing boats that I found a rare 'nugget'. From here I shall quote directly from the text; page 115, should any of you have the volume and want to look it up.

"The *Minerva*, scouting off the west coast of Ireland, got amongst a fleet of fishing boats off the Skellings...Mistaking them for torpedo boats, and remaining among them apparently for some hours, she persuaded herself that she must have been torpedoed, and, loyally hoisting the 'Blue Peter'—the signal for being out of action—she proceeded quietly to Milford, there to await the decision of the umpires...Such an incident could not, of course, happen in war, but, even in war, cruisers which mistake fishing boats for torpedo boats are likely to meet with strange adventures, and to play the enemy's game rather than their own."

Well, would you believe it? This paragraph has been highlighted with pencil markings in the margin; and, unlikely though it may have appeared at the time, Admiral Rozhestvensky did indeed meet with 'strange adventures' on the Dogger Bank in October 1904. Obviously, he should have subscribed to Brassey's! How soon after that bizarre event in the North Sea the book's previous owner added his markings I shall never know, but it has given an already absorbing book an extra historic twist. Ah, the joys of being an 'anorak'...or should such as we qualify for the more nautical appellation of 'souwester'? Hmm...

The Russo-Japanese War continues as 'the theme' of this edition of *AGB*, with Simon Stokes' excellent battle report below. Luckily there were no fishing boats to confuse the issue: your humble editor trying to explain *Seekrieg V* in a tongue-tied and somewhat 'bumbly' fashion was sufficient on that score! Well done to those involved for bearing with me! (Should you want any more details of the rules, I wrote a review of *SK5* that was published in the 'Winter 2007' *Battlefleet*.) Well, time to let Simon take up the story from here.

Yours Splicing the Mainbrace

Richard Wimpenny

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Battle Report – An Incident Off Port Arthur

Introduction

May's game at Jeff's place was something of a treat. Richard Wimpenny (your new *AGB* ed) came along armed with his *Seekrieg V* rules and War Times Journal RJW ships to use them with. Rob Hutton, Jeff Crane, Dave Sharp and myself were all newcomers to the rules and were keen to see how they worked, so Richard prepared a nice gentle introduction for us based on a mine laying expedition by the Imperial Russian Navy off Port Arthur.

The Game

The scenario began with the Russian minelayer *Amur* and its escort the protected cruiser *Novik* in the centre of the table conducting minelaying operations when they were set upon by two Japanese armoured cruisers, the *Chitose* and *Takasago*, approaching from the south east. Dave and I took command of the Russian forces, Rob and Jeff the Japanese.

Resistance initially came just from the *Novik* as *Amur* had very little in the way of armament. *Chitose* opened fire with both her 8" and 4.7" guns on *Novik* at 5,600 yards using common shell, and *Takasago* opened 8" and 4.7" fire on the *Amur* at 4,900 yards again using common shell. *Novik* returned fire against the *Takasago* with common shell at a range of 5,000 yards. All these initial shots went wide of the mark.

The Russian ships, which had been in a line of bearing, turned hard a starboard upon coming under fire since they knew that their support group of the cruisers *Bayan* and *Askold* were not far away and steaming in their wake. *Novik* kept up her fire on the *Takasago*, the range having dropped to 4,300 yards and was soon scoring hits, eventually landing 5 in all. One of the early hits knocked out *Takasago's* bridge.

Amur was the focus of attention from the *Takasago* in the opening rounds, but lead a somewhat charmed life as not a single shell landed on target. Meanwhile *Novik* was not quite so lucky as a single well aimed common shell fired by *Chitose* found it's mark and caused a fire on deck.

The hard pressed *Novik* was soon given some relief with the arrival of the Russian cruisers *Bayan* and *Askold*. As the newly arrived Russian ships swung round to starboard to open up their main gunnery arcs they engaged *Takasago* and *Chitose*.

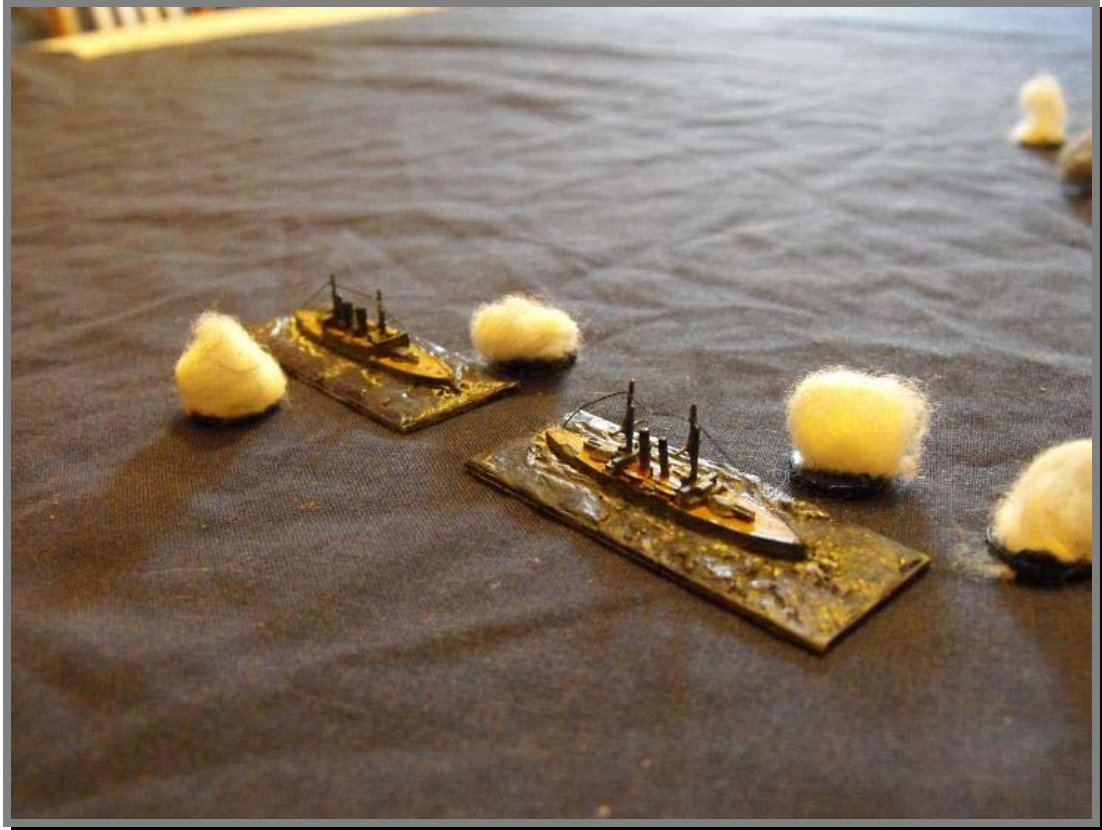
Initially *Bayan* engaged *Takasago* and *Askold* the *Chitose*, and as both ships had opened their broadside arcs they were able to use their 6" batteries as well as their main gun turrets (2x8" in the case of *Bayan* and 2x6" in the case of *Askold*). Initially the effect of the Russian armoured cruisers support was a moral rather than a physical one as shot after shot went wide. Only after *Askold* had also switched fire to *Takasago* on turn 6 did their fortunes change and *Bayan* scored 2 6" hits and *Askold* 4. These additional hits frustrated all of *Takasago*'s attempts to re-establish control disrupting both bridge and engine room communications as well as hitting the bridge for a second time *Takasago* was by now circling slowly, stuck as she was in a starboard turn. Most of the hits seem to have been concentrated on *Takasago*'s upper works but at least one shot struck below the water line and she started to list to port.



Russian ships, with cruisers Askold and Bayan in foreground, turn to starboard to open their firing arcs

The cruisers were not left to fight out the game on their own however since the firing had drawn both sides battleship covering forces to the sound of the guns, and both arrived on the scene at about the same time. For the Russians they had the battleships *Petropavlovsk* and *Pobieda*. The Japanese had the battleships *Mikasa* and *Yashima*. As both sides battleships arrived at the same time, they concentrated on their opposite numbers rather than on the other side's cruisers. *Mikasa* concentrated fire on *Petropavlovsk* and although the range gradually decreased from 12,600 yards down to 8,700 yards she failed to score any hits. *Yashima* likewise concentrated on

Pobieda at similar ranges and with equal lack of success. For the Russians *Petropavlovsk* engaged *Mikasa*, but spared some secondary 6" rounds for *Chitose*, but without success against either target. *Pobieda* was the most successful of all the battleships scoring a single 10" shell hit on *Yashima*, causing a temporary problem with her steering gear, and a single 6" shell hit on *Takasago*, which added to the damage done to her.



Mikasa and Yashima

Conclusions

We didn't get to fight the game through to a conclusion, but really that wasn't the point. What we did get was a good appreciation of how the rule mechanics work. They gave a very good period feel to the action and neatly captured the fighting abilities of the ships we used in our game. I liked the way that damage was attributed through what was hit rather than the more linear hull box approach of many rules. I can see that games would play a damn site quicker than ours did as the ever patient Richard needed to explain rules to us and field questions as to how particular aspects of the period were reflected within them. However I wouldn't say that they were the ideal set to use when there are more than a dozen or so ships on either side.

Thanks to Richard for putting together a great scenario for us and for putting up with our incessant questions. Thanks as always to Jeff for the venue and the beverages.

Simon Stokes
July 2009

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2009

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

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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)
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NWS North Hants [Every 3rd Sunday]

Jeff Crane 31 Park Gardens, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hants, 01256 427906
e-mail: 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.
