



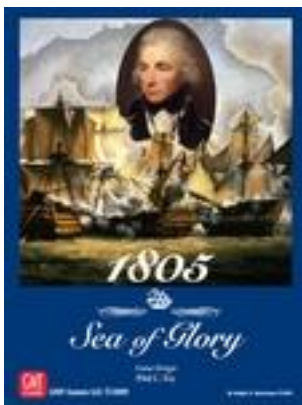
# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 196 –August 2010

#### EDITORIAL

Well, I suppose I'd better get the apologies out of the way first. Once again *AGB* is a little late. I can only plead pressure of work and the fact that I'm away from home a lot as a consequence, so please bear with me for a while; things should settle down by September...or maybe October! However, I find that I have another reason to throw myself on your collective mercy. The eagle-eyed David Manly spotted that I'd got the captions to Norman Bell's excellent Portsmouth photographs the wrong way around in last month's issue. Apologies to all for any confusion caused, especially to Norman.



Talking of David Manly, did any of you read his review of GMT's '*1805: Sea of Glory*' that appeared in *Wargames Illustrated* early in the year? I loved the sound of this strategic age of sail board game and picked up a copy while in London. Although I haven't played it yet, it looks a fantastic simulation of the whole of the 1805 campaign, but it does look like it needs a lot of 'getting into', if you know what I mean. However, if you have a copy yourself and feel a little daunted, do check out the game's website, [www.1805seaofglory.com](http://www.1805seaofglory.com), as the designer, Phil Fry, has put together some superb online tutorials. These are short videos which show how to set up and play the game, and they supplement the already excellent rule-book a treat. If you don't have the game, they also act as a very useful advert! Definitely well worth a look.

Some of you may remember a short piece I included in last November's *AGB* where I pondered the problem of British ensign colours at the battle of Cape St. Vincent; whether they were red, blue or combination of the two. Well I have turned up a little more information. I have just finished reading Michael A. Palmer's *Command at Sea*, which is a generally excellent account of naval command since the seventeenth century. While discussing Cape St. Vincent and Nelson's wearing out of line he states (p.175) that although Nelson was in Vice-Admiral Thompson's division, technically, as a commodore, he wasn't under his command. So, perhaps as Nelson had only just rejoined the fleet after completing an independent mission in the Mediterranean, he was still entitled to fly a *red* ensign and broad pennant, even though Thompson, and indeed Jervis, were both admirals of the Blue. If anyone has anything to add to this niggling mystery, please get in touch. I'm starting to think I'll never truly get to the bottom of it!

I received a flyer from 'Clash of Arms' games a couple of weeks ago for our very own Mal Wright's 'Deadly Water's', and although most of us are aware of it, I thought it wouldn't hurt to give it another plug in these pages. There are also a couple of submissions from Rob Morgan and a short piece from me on the alarming prospect of a naval wargame with no ships!

Enjoy the summer, and I'll try and be as prompt as I can with September's issue!

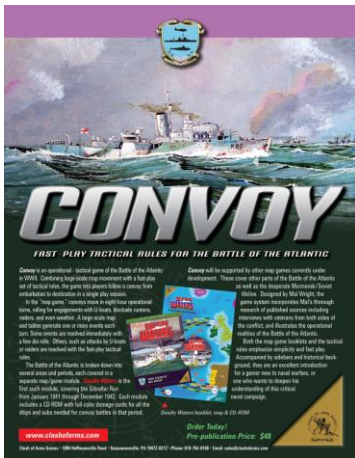
Up Spirits!

Richard Wimpenny

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## CONVOY AND DEADLY WATERS

**Convoy** is an operational-tactical game of the Battle of the Atlantic in WW2. Combining large-scale map movement with a fast-play set of tactical rules, the game lets players follow a convoy from embarkation to destination in a single play session.



In the "map game", convoys move in eight-hour operational turns, rolling for engagements with U-boats, blockade runners, raiders, and even weather. A large-scale map and tables generate one or more events each turn. Some events are resolved immediately with a few die rolls. Others, such as attacks by U-boats or raiders are resolved with the fast-play tactical rules.

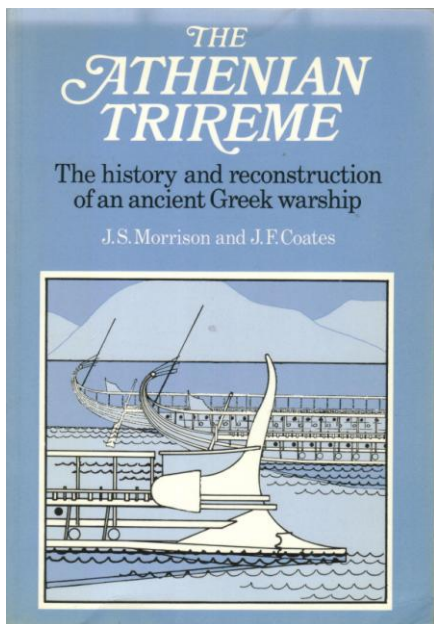
The Battle of the Atlantic is broken down into several areas and periods, each covered in a separate map/game module. **Deadly Waters** is the first such module, covering the Gibraltar Run from January 1941 through December 1942. Each module includes a CD-ROM with full-color damage cards for all the ships and subs needed for convoy battles in that period.

**Convoy** will be supported by other map games currently under development. These cover other parts of the Battle of the Atlantic as well as the desperate Murmansk/Soviet lifeline. Designed by Mal Wright, the game system incorporates Mal's thorough research of published sources including interviews with veterans from both sides of the conflict, and illustrates the operational realities of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Both the map game booklets and tactical rules emphasize simplicity and fast play. Accompanied by sidebars and historical background, they are an excellent introduction for a gamer new to naval warfare, or one who wants to deepen his understanding of this critical naval campaign.

## OBITUARY: JOHN COATES OBE.

By Rob Morgan



I met John Coates at his home in Bath on several occasions in the early 1990s, when his help to a struggling post-graduate researcher was to say the least gratefully received; my recollection of his remarkable study with the imposing model of *Olympias* remains to this day. His death was recorded in 'The Times' in mid-July and his Obit' described a remarkable man. From his work on 'County Class' cruisers through to his understanding of the Greek trireme and its capabilities in war, he was a man to whom naval wargamers and historians alike owe a substantial debt.

John Coates was one of a pair of scholars (the other being John Morrison) who transformed many of the ideas held about ancient naval warfare. To many NWS members his loss at the age of eighty-eight will be sadly borne. 'The Times' obit, incidentally, contained the following remark on the difficulty of the Coates-Morrison research, which might make an essay question in other circumstances.

*"Since triremes tended not to sink but simply broke up into floating timbers when rammed, archaeology could not greatly help."*

I wondered how the obituary writer would fit that comment in with the rare and fascinating discovery made in 1980 of a massive, half-tonne

bronze Hellenistic ram, highly decorated and with three prongs, still partly attached to its prow timbers; an archaeological find which could add weight, (literally!) to the counter argument. As long ago as the mid-1970s I recall the vivid and often vitriolic correspondence which graced the columns of 'The Times' and spilled into the pages of the 'Mariner's Mirror'; it is this which led to so much of value to us as wargamers. We shall not see the like of that writing again, nor, I fear, the likes of John Coates.

## 'PAPER AEROPLANES'

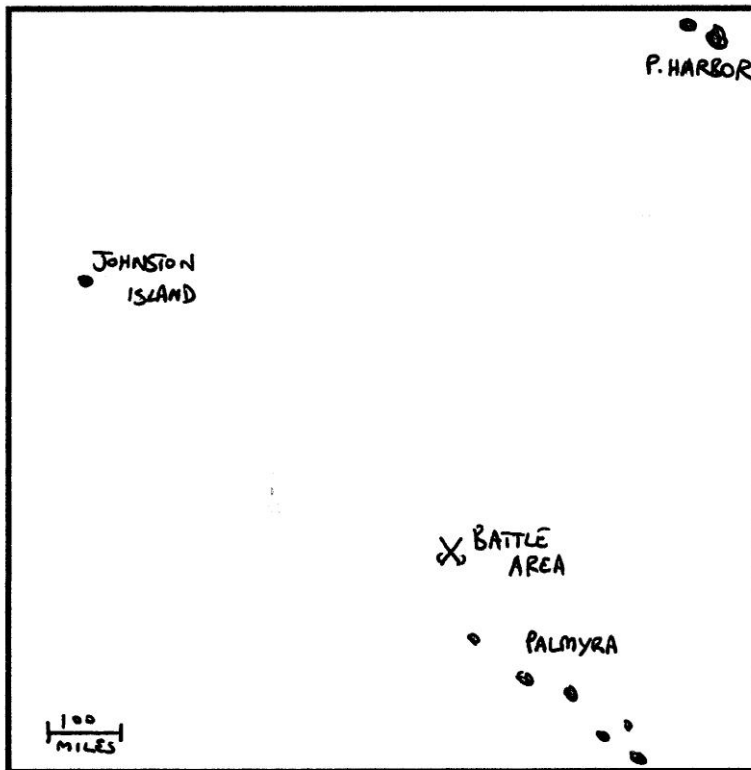
### SOME THOUGHTS ON MAP-BASED CARRIER ACTIONS.

By Richard Wimpenny

I have often written in my various articles and reviews that I am a 'big gun' man at heart, and although I have always loved aircraft since my school days, when it has come to naval warfare...well I tended to agree with many a veteran flag officer in the twenties and thirties that they spoiled things! However, over the past two years or so I have been lured to the 'dark side'. It's been a little like trying an illicit substance (not that I have, of course!)...I'll just a tiny bit—it can't do any harm, can it? And before you know it, you're hooked. What began to fascinate me about the carrier battles I read about was the amount the opposing admirals *didn't* know of each other's positions and readiness. Rapid decisions had to be made on flimsy, often inaccurate, reconnaissance reports, and whether to prepare a quickly organized, small-scale strike to hit first had to be weighed against the punch of a full-deck strike that stood the risk of being caught on deck before it could launch. All exciting stuff, to be sure. But how to play such a game; a game where admirals never actually saw their enemy and where no table is really quite big enough?

'A&A Games' have a system for carrier actions in 'Stations Manned and Ready III', but it requires tactical play on-table, and that wasn't going to work for what I had in mind. To concentrate as much as possible on the 'fog of war' and the consequent pressure of decisions based in part on guess work, I based my game as a campaign. Two wargaming friends of mine who both live over a hundred miles from me would play the opposing admirals, while I would run the game; giving information by telephone, text and email as and when they were entitled to receive it. Therefore, as the scenario was going to be wholly map-based, action on the tabletop wasn't important, and I knew just the rules to use! As I've mentioned on various occasions (perhaps *too many!*) I'm a big fan of *Seekrieg 5*. Now while these are a primarily a 'gunnery set', hence my initial attraction, they also have an excellent system for air attacks. Although the planning and organization of strikes are detailed and fascinating, they are calculated and resolved *purely* on paper. I know I may be losing some of you already at such a heinous suggestion, and I know also that for all of us, seeing model ships on the table is a major part of the game. To be fair, however, you could quite easily put ships and aircraft on-table while you played out a strike in *SK5*, but it's not really necessary. Believe me, the excitement and suspense are in no way reduced!

Both players received in the post the *SK5* Ship Logs for their forces, along with background information, that included other friendly units in the area and weather. The centrepiece of their information packs, however, was the main campaign map. This covered 1,000,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean! Yes, a million! Well, you need lots of space for carriers to work with. With Hawaii in the north east corner it ran a thousand miles west, to just beyond Johnston Island, and a thousand miles south to Palmyra. Operations were set in the first days of 1942, while the USN was still reeling from the attack on Pearl Harbour. It was US practice to keep a carrier task force at sea in the Hawaii-Johnston-Palmyra 'triangle' to cover Pearl Harbour, and my first foray into a carrier campaign was to have a Japanese incursion into this 'triangle'. The Japanese plan was for a carrier division to destroy the American PBY base on Johnston Island, but it was also to engage and destroy any US carriers encountered. Ok, I know, in reality had such an operation been mounted it would have been carried out by the entire Japanese First Air Fleet—but this was my first attempt!



The US player (Mike Dowd) was Vice-Admiral Wilson Brown, commanding Task Force 11. This was centred on the USS *Lexington*, CV2, supported by three cruisers and five destroyers. *Lexington's* air group comprised F2A Buffalo fighters, TBD Devastator torpedo bombers, and SBD Dauntless dive-bombers. Rear-Admiral Hara (played by Dave Blair) with the Fifth Carrier division were the opposition: the mighty *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, with two heavy cruisers, a light cruiser and five destroyers. Incidentally, if the Japanese superiority in carriers seems a trifle unfair, it wasn't. Four campaign hours into the game the Japanese player was shocked to receive the news that an explosion had occurred onboard the *Zuikaku*; initial fears of an enemy submarine were allayed when Rear-Admiral Hara was informed that a 250kg bomb had accidentally gone off on the flight deck. Damage meant the wounded carrier had to quite the area. This balanced the game, and at the same time forced Dave to rethink all his plans! (Being an umpire really can bring out the worst in a man. Something 'power corrupting, etc', I suppose.)

The game began for Mike at 0600 hours on January 1 1942 as Task Force 11 left Pearl: course 210°, speed 18 knots. Dave was informed that his carrier division could enter the map anywhere along the west and south edges, and at 0600 on January 2 he duly 'popped up' just to the SW of Palmyra. The game was run in very open sort of 'what do you want to do and when?' and 'how far and at what speed?' kind of a way. The players then marked their task force's progress on their map and the extent of any aerial reconnaissance. Once I had gathered this information and added it all to my 'master' map, I sat down and worked out the order of events and let the players know what was going on...mostly! Therefore, as soon as Dave's Japanese were 'on the map' he launched six E13A-1 'Jake' floatplanes from the *Tone* and *Chikuma* to scout over Palmyra, to make sure he wasn't going to be jumped as he sailed NW towards Johnston Island. All the floatplanes were back by 1400 after searching out to some 200 miles beyond the island chain. No evidence of the enemy was discovered, but the presence of floatplanes flying over the Palmyra was reported to CinCPac in Pearl Harbour. At around the same time Dave's floatplanes were taking off, Mike turned Task Force 11 to a course of 170° and ordered a PBY Catalina seaplane to take off from Johnston Island. The PBY was to search due east for four hundred miles, then, at 0900, it was to turn south for a further two hundred miles before returning to base. However, the report of floatplanes over Palmyra led to Mike order Task Force 11 to turn to 235° and the PBY to use all of its 'long legs' and continue its search to the south for a further two hours; to no avail, however, as the Japanese were still some three hundred miles further on. I have to say I found all this preliminary scouting and manoeuvring of extreme interest, but events were take a peculiar turn, and one that with a million square miles to cruise in never entered my head as a possibility! In the darkness of the small hours of January 3, both sides nearly collided!

*(At this point I drew a larger scale map to make all the plotting easier, and I believe that Mike and Dave did something similar for their own forces.)*

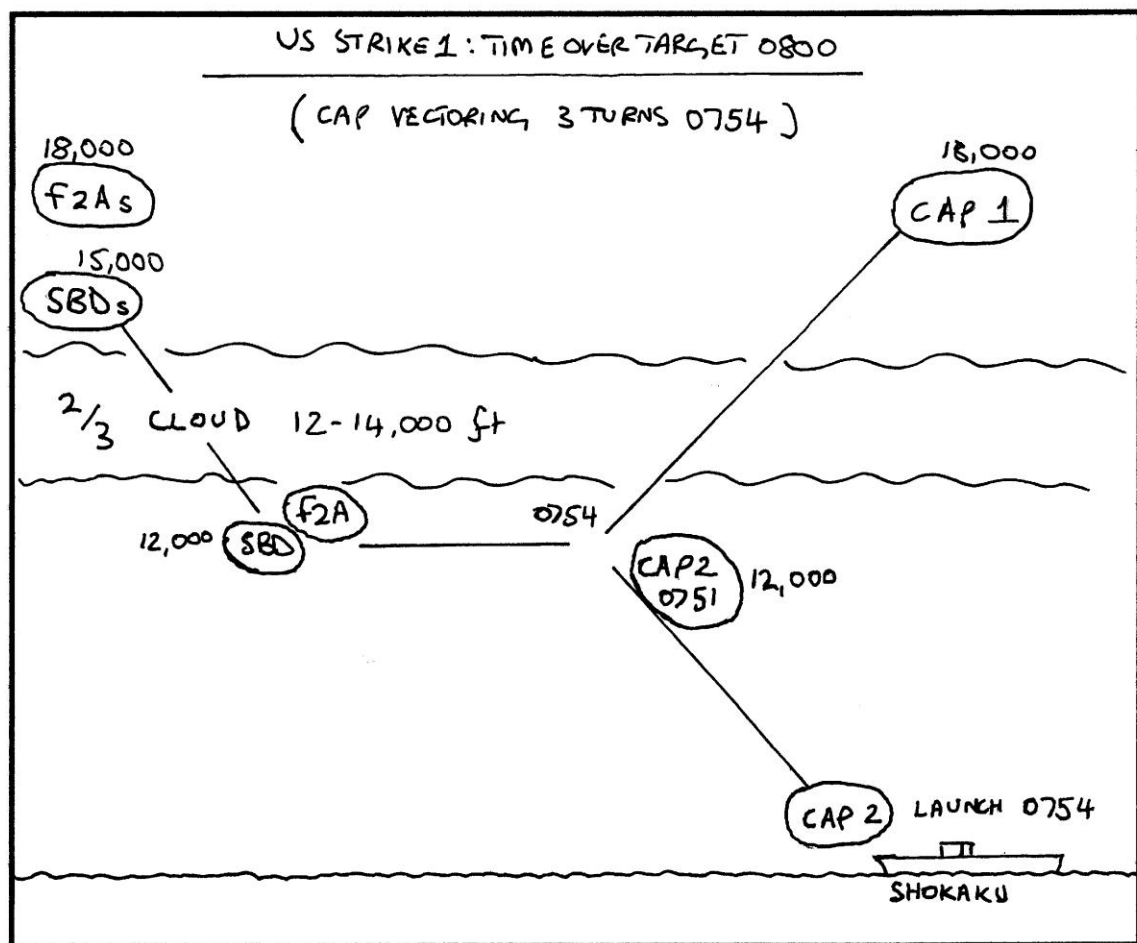
At 0200, January 3, Admiral Brown (Mike) was informed that radar had picked up a large surface contact—only 32,000 yards off his port bow! A starboard turn to 330° and an increase in speed to 32 knots were ordered that instant, and Task Force 11 managed to break away before the eagle-eyed Japanese escorts knew they were there. True the change in course meant that the Americans lost radar contact, but Admiral Brown knew that something big was close by—a luxury his counterpart did not share. *Lexington* immediately began the complex business of spotting a strike on deck during darkness. Brown's first air operation was to be an armed scout comprising nine Dauntlesses, carrying 500lb GP bombs, accompanied by six of the somewhat antiquated F2A Buffalo fighters. But the Americans weren't alone in their nocturnal pursuits.

At 0300 Admiral Hara, wanting to have 'eyes' at a good distance from his force at dawn, had ordered his heavy cruisers to launch more floatplanes; and at 0345 one of the *Tone's* 'Jakes' spotted Task Force 11, helped in part by the American's high speed. The 'Jake' took her time so as to put together an accurate report, and at 0410 Hara received, via the *Tone*, the electrifying report of 'One Lexington class carrier; speed 30 knots; course 90°' A course of 90° was all-too-important: *Lexington* was turning into the wind! The brave 'Jake' had been spotted and three F2As were scrambled to deal with her, one of which crashed on take off. The 'Jake' managed to lead the US fighter jocks quite a merry dance among the clouds (50 percent cover over the *Lexington*), but she was splashed at 0424. Task Force 11 had been found, but she still had a ninety minute start over the Japanese. However, Admiral Brown's necessary turn away from his radar contact so he had time to spot his strike had also meant he lost contact, and this had not been regained, but in contrast a succession of stubborn Japanese floatplanes held tenaciously onto the American Task Force. Furthermore, when Hara learned of the US presence he changed course to 240° and increased speed to 30 knots, with the result that when *Lexington's* first strike (Strike 1) took off at 0500 it flew in the wrong direction!

*(The action was hotting up nicely and all that day (a real life day that is) Mike and Dave were busy in work breaks texting or phoning through instructions and waiting in nail-biting suspense while I worked things out. And all this, mind, with nothing on the table!)*

Naturally, the Japanese had begun to spot a strike as soon as Task Force 11 was detected; and, in return, the Americans began to arm and fuel a second strike as soon as the first had left *Lexington's* flight deck. (Interestingly, both players had opted for multiple, smaller strikes that could be got away quickly in place or the heavy weight punch that historically both navies favoured.) This second strike was originally comprised of only five F2As and nine TBD Devastators, but when contact with the Japanese was re-established by a scout plane at 0555, nine Dauntlesses were added (one of which crashed on take off), delaying its launch time to 0630. The new contact report also led to *Lexington's* Strike 1 being re-vectored towards the *Shokaku*; and despite getting lost for half an hour, this was still the first strike of the three that were airborne at the same time (two American and one Japanese) to reach its target.

*(To work out a strike in SK5 you need to know where everything is vertically and also when it is. Therefore, I use a piece of paper to mark the various units' positions in these terms. Sea level (with a sketch of the target ship!) is along the bottom of page, with any cloud cover placed appropriately. CAPs and attacking aircraft are added at their altitude; I then mark who had spotted what and resolve combat in a logical order. All this would make much more sense if you have SK5, but I'm sure you get the idea. There is an example below.)*



Here is a simplified version of my 'Strike Sheet' for the first US strike on Shokaku. The 'Time Over Target' was 0800, but Japanese CAP vectoring meant there would be three two-minute turns of aerial combat before any attacks on Shokaku could take place. **Please note that CAP 2's launch time should read 0745, not 54!**

To the amazement of all, *Lexington's* F2A Buffaloes made short work of the *Shokaku's* two CAPs (three Zeros shot down—excellent dicing on my part!), but then failed to register any hits with the six Dauntlesses that got through (lousy dicing on my part!), and by 0800 the survivors were limping their way back to the *Lexington*. Eighteen minutes later, however, the second American strike was spotted and *Shokaku's* busy Zero pilots were vectored towards it. They succeed in shooting down two Dauntlesses and damaging another, while the Buffaloes, supported by those that had stayed around from the first strike, managed to shoot down a Zero and damage another. As the Dauntlesses screamed down on the *Shokaku*, AA fire accounted for three more of their number; and of the three survivors all their potentially lethal 1,000lb GP and AP bombs missed! Yet we must not forget the old Devastators. They had been creeping along towards the Japanese carrier at 1,000 feet and were missed by the Zeros. AA fire from the Japanese destroyers managed to knock one down, but the remaining Devastators dropped their torpedoes...and you guessed it, they all missed! (It would appear my dice should bear the legend 'Made in Japan!')

At the same time that the second American strike was going in, nine D3A 'Val' dive-bombers, nine BN5-2 'Kate' torpedo-bombers, covered by seven Zeros, pounced on the 'Lady Lex'. American radar helped the *Lexington's* CAP to engage the incoming strike some eight minutes before they were over their target, but they were ripped apart by the Japanese pilots; one was even shot down by a Kate's rear gunner! The first attack was made by the Kates at 0820. Two were shot down by AA fire, but they were rewarded by two torpedo hits on the *Lexington*! The first hit caused damaged the elevators and reduced the *Lexington's* re-arm and re-fuel operations by fifty percent, and knocked out her auxiliary power plant, which meant *no radio communication with ships or aircraft!* (For those of you with SK5 this was all caused by Damage Effect 185, leading to DE 151 as an additional DE.) The second torpedo caused severe flooding that also added to communication problems and stopped the launching or recovering of aircraft (Oooch!) (A mixture of DEs

172 and 182, coupled with chart M6 for flooding, and then DEs 611 and 609) And now it was the turn of the dive-bombers!

All nine 'Vals' made it through the CAP and AA fire and they hit the *Lexington* with two 250kg bombs, one SAP and one AP, both of which smashed into her flight deck. The hits caused damage to the carrier's fuel supply that could easily result in a loss of power. (DEs 122 and 119) A list to starboard also followed (DE 604), which added to the *Lexington's* air operation problems! But her sturdy battlecruiser hull had paid off: she was still very much afloat, despite her pummelling.

Nevertheless, Admiral Brown, aware of the danger the *Lexington* was now in, ordered a return to Pearl, while sending his cruiser squadron at full speed to search for the enemy. (A very brave move!) Then at 0900 disaster struck! The effects of DE 122 caused The 'Lady Lex' to drop to a speed of only 12 knots, and it took a full half-hour before the damage was repaired and the wound carrier could accelerate up to a safer 23 knots. Mike, the US player, was starting to get a trifle jumpy—and with good reason. As soon as *Shokaku's* first strike had taken off at 0640, a second, comprising 9 Vals and 9 Kates covered by 3 Zeros, had begun to be armed and fuelled, and they began to launch at 0850.

At 0920 *Lexington* began to recover the survivors from her two strikes, but they had to contend with a listing deck. After a little consultation on the *SK5* discussion group, I decided to roll for each aircraft as though it was damaged; to wit, there was a 10% chance it would crash on landing. All six SBDs made it down safely, but two of the eleven F2As crashed; then at 0952, just as the lumbering Devastators began their approach, *Lexington's* radar picked up the second Japanese strike! Speed, not one of the Devastator's strong points, was of the essence; and although one torpedo plane was lost, the remaining seven were just down when 9 Vals dived out of the heavens at 1018. There was no CAP to offer protection, but the 'Lady Lex's' AA gunners knocked down two; though only after they had all completed their bombing runs and they plopped a 250kg AP through her flight deck. Two minutes later the 9 Kates came skimming in at wave-top height. The American AA crews continued their spell of good luck by shooting down two *before* they were able to release their torpedoes. Only one of the Japanese torpedoes hit—but what a hit! (In *SK5* terms, it inflicted 1,005 Damage Points, just under a third of what the *Lexington* can take, and it propelled her to Damage Tier 8.)

The result of this fresh wave of damage caused the *Lexington's* crew to fail their moral test. However, as the old carrier was still very much afloat, in no danger from fires and making 23 knots, I decided to interpret this as Captain Sherman ordering all air crew and non-essential personnel to be taken off, while he attempted to get his ship back to Pearl. Realizing that the battle was well and truly lost, Admiral Brown also reversed his valiant order for his cruisers to attempt a surface action and at 1115 they began to fall back on the *Lexington*; a move that was observed by the returning aircraft of *Shokaku's* second strike. Brown also requested B-17 support as soon as he could get in range and further PBV reconnaissance from Johnston Island. The *Lexington's* travails were not over yet, however.

At 1000 that morning, Admiral Hara had ordered a third strike of a further 9 Vals and 9 Kates to begin arming and fuelling; and at 1200, after the second strike had been recovered, it began to launch. The strike headed off towards the *Lexington's* position at 1213, and they found their prey at 1313, after a slight navigational error added ten minutes to their flight time. Once again there were no US fighters to interrupt their attack runs; and although one Val was lost to AA fire, the *Lexington* took another 250kg bomb hit (this time a GP) and a fourth torpedo. Stout battlecruiser hull perhaps, but this was all too much and the American carrier sank at 1502.

Well, it had all been immensely enjoyable, and I would like to thank both Mike and Dave for throwing themselves headlong into the concept of the game. I also feel I should apologise unreservedly to Mike for my lousy dicing during his two strikes! It could all have been so different—but then that's the nature of the hobby! I can't say it was an easy game to run, as plotting multiple strikes along with numerous scouting aircraft was time consuming and complex, but I loved every minute and it was very rewarding! I am planning another carrier campaign, which will feature a far larger playing area; from Truk to the Marshals, and from Midway to the northern Solomons. Both of my previous admirals will be involved (this time on the same side, so they can discuss the game while in the pub!), but also American naval wargamer Bill Madison. This transatlantic aspect to a very 'transpacific' game may mean it takes a little longer, but it promises to be a lot of fun—and enlightening to boot!

**TECHNICAL NAVAL AND ORDNANCE PUBLICATIONS**  
**FROM DP&G**

**By Rob Morgan**

The loss of Simon Gareth's superb 'Pallas Armata' range (hopefully not permanently) has to some extent been made up for by this Doncaster-based publisher's hefty output. I've acquired and reviewed a number of their pamphlets and booklets for specialist ordnance and period-specific publications, but there are a number in their 'new' list which will have some value for the NWS member.

At ten pounds (and these are well-produced for the price) there are: No. 28 *The Protection of our Heavy Guns for Coast Defence*, 1886; No. 29 *Mounting and Working Heavy Guns at Sea*, 1872; No. 36 *Construction of our Ironclad Fleet*; No. 39 *Submarine Miners*, 1886; *Coast Fortification and the Naval attack of Fortresses*, 1879; and No. 67 *Power of Guns and Armoured Defences and Ships v Forts*.

These titles are just a few of the list; others deal with naval and military signals, specific ordnance such as the Hotchkiss revolvers, and the Gatling and Nordenfeldt. The company lists a number of future issues (most are priced at either £10 or £15) which will also please the naval wargamer in the era of ironclad fighting ships. The strategic importance of military harbours, historical sketches of the defences of Dover and of Malta, as well as a number of coast-defence and 'ship against shore' titles are among them.

**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.navalwargamesociety.org](http://www.navalwargamesociety.org).

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**NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2009**

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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

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please contact myself or any of the other NWS officials.

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