



# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

### No. 197 –September 2010

#### EDITORIAL

Gentlemen,

Once again I find I have to throw myself on your collective mercy for the lateness of this *AGB*. As I mentioned last month I have been hellish busy work-wise all summer and then at the very end of August we went to Spain to visit some old and very dear friends. However, I should be able to get things back to schedule in future.

Well the summer's well and truly over now—indeed it I think it has been for about a month! September, of course means we have 'Colours' in Newbury to look forward to and Simon Stokes sent me the following information about the Society's demonstration game:

*We are confirmed for 'Colours' on Saturday 11th September. We're running the Yangtze incident Parti game that we ran on Board HMS Belfast earlier this year. There's still one or possibly two places left on the NWS team running the game if anyone's still interested in helping out on the day.*

It's only a few days away, I know, but if you would like to help, contact Simon at [simonjohnstokes@aol.com](mailto:simonjohnstokes@aol.com).

Talking of shows, Simon would also like to hear any thoughts on what the Society should do for next year's 'Salute'. Although the show isn't till next April, the organizers need to know by the end of October, so contact Simon at the above email address with any bright ideas.

Finally, regular contributor Norman Bell sent in an interesting little piece last month; he wrote:

*Depending on the Defence Review in Sep/Oct the new aircraft carriers may get the chop. So this computer generated picture may be the only way of seeing the ship leave Portsmouth!*



The days of 'a picture can't lie' are well and truly in the past! Thanks, Norman.

Up Spirits!

Richard Wimpenny      [wimpenny@talktalk.net](mailto:wimpenny@talktalk.net)

# Spanish American War After Action Report

By Simon Stokes

## Introduction

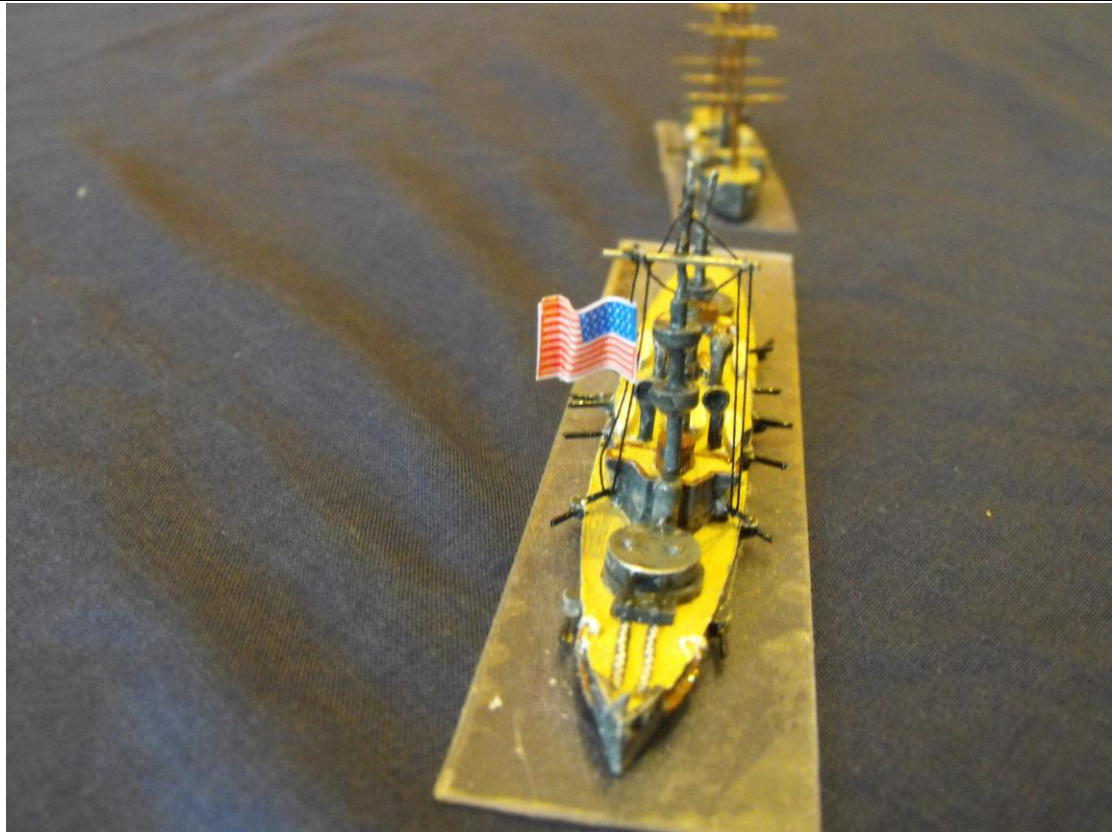
July's meeting of the Basingstoke regional group saw us plying the waves of the Philippine Sea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and trying out the *War Times Journal* set of free fast play Ironclad rules that Jeff had obtained as a download via the internet ([http://wtj.com/games/battlefleet\\_1900/](http://wtj.com/games/battlefleet_1900/)).

## The Game

This was a non-historical action between cruisers and gunboats. Initially each side having one of each, though as will be seen the Spanish ships were equivalent to their US counterparts in name only. Always up for a challenge Dave and I volunteered to take on command of the Spanish, whose flagship was the battery ironclad cruiser *Regina Crystina* whilst Rob and Jeff took command of the Americans, whose flagship was USS *Olympia*. Both cruisers had an attendant gunboat.



*The Spanish*

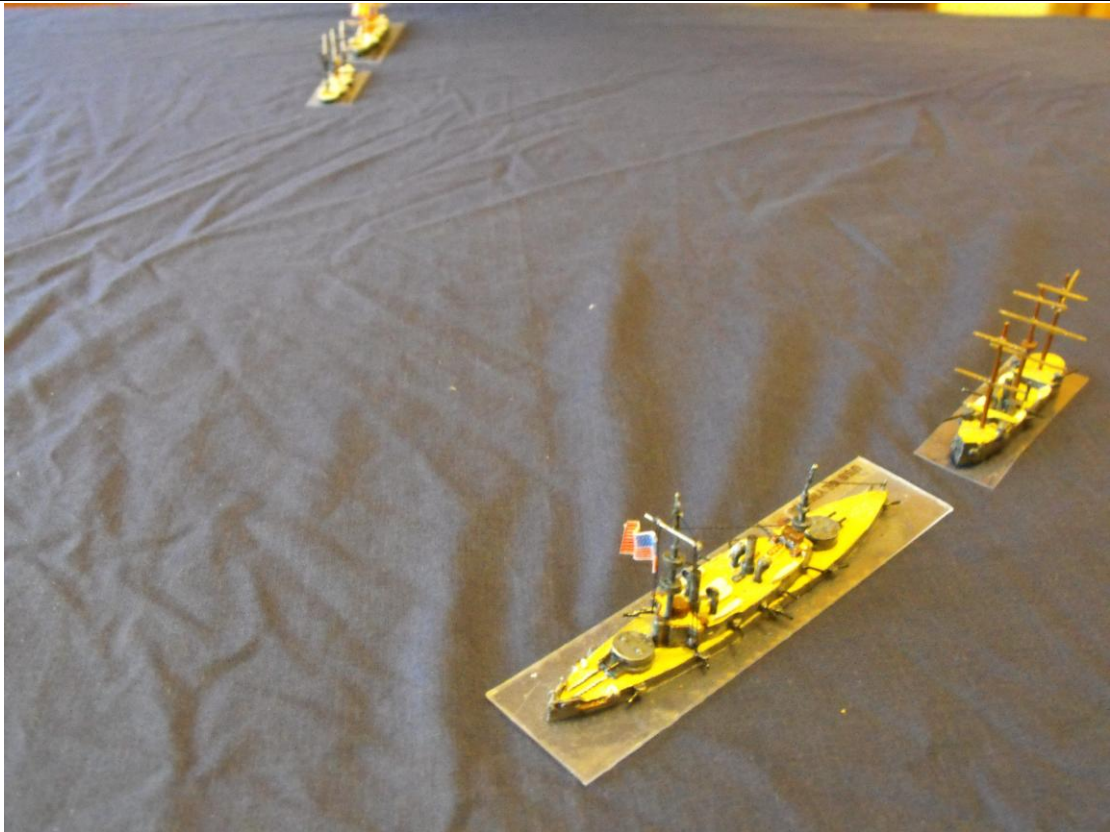


*The Americans*

From the outset it was clear that the best chance for the Spanish lay in violent manoeuvring in an attempt to throw off the American's aim, which, in a rather endearingly retro kind of way, used a banded visual estimation technique where you were allowed to be a certain amount over, but not under the actual range.

There was some initial success with this ploy as the early hits were scored by the Spanish ships, but the poultry damage done by the small number of Spanish broadside guns was ominous from the outset, as was the examination of the ship data sheets that revealed only half a point of armour on the Spanish cruiser. Inevitably all the jinking and turning in the world could not prevent the American ships from closing the range and with the shorter ranges came larger margins for error in range estimation that meant even the Americans could not fail to get the range, and were soon landing hits with both *Olympia's* main and secondary armament (which I might note was the same calibre as the Spanish cruisers main armament, and she had more of them too!). It was during these exchanges that a very strange effect was noted in the *WTJ* rules, namely that armour piercing shells were significantly more effective against unarmoured targets than high explosive. This to us seemed rather strange, as the received wisdom was that the opposite was true. We re-read the rules several times to check that we were playing them correctly but could see nothing amiss in our interpretation, so just flagged it up as a point of detail for subsequent house tinkering.





*The end for the Spanish, as they succumb to the American gunfire whilst making a run for it*

The Spanish ships reversed course yet again, but this time it was just to be able to get some guns to bear as the flagship was slowed to the point that there was no hope of escape for her. She was also on fire and her port side batteries were all out of action. First to succumb was the Spanish flagship which in a final attempt to sail free from her tormentors was making her best remaining speed for the table edge when a number of hull hits disabled her rudder and caused so much flooding that she foundered. Her attendant gunboat was not far behind however. Up to that point the Spanish and American gunboats had been much more evenly matched, but with the unwelcome attention of *Olympia's* guns following the demise of the Spanish flagship, she was soon overwhelmed by gunfire and she too sank.

## **Conclusions**

The *WTJ* rules had some very positive points we thought, but were in need of a certain amount of tinkering as mentioned above.

The rules did play out quickly and I liked the way that it was the thing you hit that determined the damage effect not just a knocking off the hull points approach, which I personally have never been a big fan of. The range estimation aspect is not to everyone's taste and has many drawbacks, but it was fun.

The AP vs. HE damage on un-armoured targets was the biggest eyesore. What was not an eyesore however were the lovely 1/1000<sup>th</sup> scale models that Jeff had painted and rigged. [*I've seen them too: they're great! Ed*] The question we had though was whether there was any realistic Spanish American scenario that was not a one sided action, the disparity between the fighting qualities of the two sides ships being so markedly different, whatever rules are used.

Simon Stokes  
28<sup>th</sup> August 2010

## KING'S SEMINAR LECTURES.

By Rob Morgan

'The British Commission for Maritime History', which you can find at [www.maritimehistory.org.uk](http://www.maritimehistory.org.uk) is once again running the 'King's Seminar' series in the winter of 2010/11.

Thursday October 28: *The Royal Navy's 1906 Grand Manoeuvres.*

Thursday December 9: *The Naval Arms Race and Armageddon 1750-1815.*

Thursday January 13: *British Sea-Power in the Baltic, 1715-1815.*

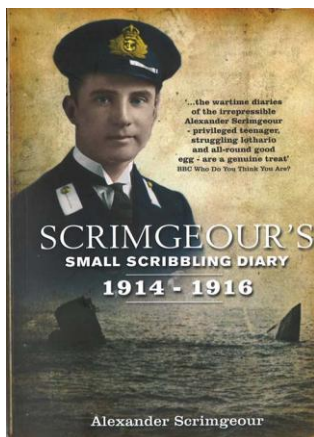
They are to be held at the Meeting Room of the War Studies Department at King's College. Further information can be gained from Professor John Armstrong at [john@johnarmstrong.eu](mailto:john@johnarmstrong.eu). The December 9 lecture is by Michael Duffy and is ticket only; it will be held in the Lloyd's Register Building in Fenchurch Street.

## SCRIMGEOUR'S SMALL SCRIBBLING DIARY 1914 – 1916

by  
Alexander Scrimgeour

Compiled by Richard Hallam & Mark Beynon  
First published 2008, paperback- 2009 Conway (304pp)

Reviewed by Mike Dowd



Whilst undertaking my weekly lunchtime 'panning for gems' in the various independent discount bookshops, I noticed in the place with the most productive of seams (the 'Book Clearance Centre') amongst all the piles of shiny celebrity ghost written bios, and copies of '100 Classic Tractors', the usual small enclave of military history volumes had been restocked—was I in luck? My eye soon landed on a new set of small paperbacks bearing an image of a young Midshipman appearing over the famous photograph of *HMS Invincible* lying in two halves after the devastating explosion that sealed her fate at Jutland, and (perhaps more importantly) a big price sticker of just £2.99! I was intrigued by the book's title, *Scrimgeour's Small Scribbling Diary*; and so turned it over and began to read the synopsis on the back. Above the main liner notes was the following quote: "*Rape Ravage and Rant are the German watchwords in this war. Right Revenge & Retrenchment shall be ours,*"

*Alexander Scrimgeour, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1914.* Sounding as if this line could have come straight out of an episode of 'Ripping Yarns' or Radio 4's classic spoof 'The Harpoon' I was, of course, instantly gripped!

Reading on, it transpired I was holding in my hand the compiled personal war diaries of young Midshipman, Alexander Scrimgeour, who began service in the RN in 1910 as a cadet of 13, and then as he progressed to Midshipman began keeping an astonishing series of diaries of both his experience afloat as well as that of his family life in Edwardian high society.

Opening the volume I chanced upon an illustration that was a reproduction of one of Scrimgeour's lovely little sketch maps he created for his own information and record keeping. This particular map as chance would have it was of one of the patrol lines of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron in 1915—and there in patrol squadron 'B' was (HMS) Armed Merchant Cruiser '*Patia*'; my grandfather's old ship that he served most of the great war upon (until it was torpedoed out from under him in the Bristol Channel in April 1918 by *UC-49*, which was in turn later sunk with all hands by the old turtledeck destroyer *HMS Opossum*). Never mind

what the rest of the book held—a contemporary midshipman's map showing *Patia's* patrol lines for £2.99 (!) I was sold.

Once properly in to the book itself, I discovered a small delight, not just in the young Scrimgeour's prose style, but in the observational detail that he records. He is first posted just before the outbreak of hostilities to HMS *Crescent* the old 1892 'Edgar' class protected cruiser (that incidentally on the very same day my great uncle had just left this ship as part of this wider re-organisation to allow him to go to crew the new HMS *Agincourt*). *Crescent* and several of the other 'Edgar' class would go on to form the main part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron patrolling the uppermost reaches of the North Sea between Scapa and the Norwegian coast; intercepting potential contraband destined for the German war effort as part of the distant blockade. Not the most glamorous of postings, but these unsung heroes' contribution to winning the war and their sheer endurance in some of the worst sea conditions was always widely recognised within the service. Scrimgeour takes this initial disappointment of his posting in good grace, despite longing for a post in a battleship, or better still in his hero David Beatty's dashing Battlecruiser Squadron. As a gunnery midshipman we learn of his use of the Dumaresq, of adjusting night sights for the 6-inch guns, of his use of the 1-inch aiming tube and .303 for independent target practice, and about the advantages of rangefinder control, etc. However, what I found most fascinating of all is the swiftness he learns of the great events taking place in the war, whilst he is still at sea. It gives an insight into how much signal traffic was being reported and relayed to all vessels, and how quickly this became filtered down—although not always accurately, and with the young Scrimgeour's positive patriotic interpretation of what really *must* have happened. The attacks on *Hogue*, *Aboukir* and *Cressy*, the events on the Marne and at Tannenberg, the sinkings of HMS *Pathfinder*, and *Audacious*, the battles of Coronel and the Falklands, to name but a few all feature in his great adventure. What is also interesting is the voice in which he lays these events down; almost as if writing a letter to another person for them to read and understand rather than being just a record for himself. This of course makes the book all the more unique and readable. One interesting point was his reference to 'pre-dreadnought' ships—a term one could be forgiven for believing is something historians have applied retrospectively perhaps several years after the Great War to help categorise their understanding, rather than a term that appears to have been in almost immediate usage.

Although a great slice of the diaries are from his time with, or corresponding to, his family and friends, or relating the more mundane aspects of harbour duties or shore leave, there is still offered, as Prof. Lambert states, 'a priceless insight into the mental world of the Edwardian Navy'.

It is often a wonder where Scrimgeour found both the time and energy to write his record; in the introduction Mark Beynon does state that there are some gaps in the journal entries, and where the editors have inserted maps and letters home, etc, but it does seem that Scrimgeour kept an almost daily account which helps in communicating his thoughts and feelings almost in the 'heat of the moment', or not long after they happened; rather than collecting a weeks worth or so of thoughts to set down with the slightly more considered reflective distance from events. However, this later transcription must have occurred in his recalling of the great storm of 10 – 12th November 1914 aboard *Crescent*; a fifty-hour epic of 45-foot high waves and a ship almost submerged and destroyed with each crashing trough. His impassioned description of which almost ranks alongside some of Alistair MacLean's in his 1955 classic HMS *Ulysses* for sheer drama. In time our hero goes to HMS *Alsatian*, a former liner, still with the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron patrol, before realising his dream posting to *Invincible*, of which, dear reader, you already know the tragic ending. All is recounted with plenty more worthwhile insight to the personal life aboard these respective vessels for a young Midshipman in time of war. In 1915 he chooses to leave his diary at home for a period before joining *Invincible*, perhaps feeling that the risk of keeping such a document was getting too risky. We will of course never read his final Diary of 1916 as this presumably went with him in 'A' turret of *Invincible*, but we have plenty of letters home from aboard the ship during this period, including his poignant last line on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1916 signing off, "no more now."

The book has been compiled by a descendant of Alexander Scrimgeour, Mark Beynon, with the assistance of professional screenwriter Richard Hallam, and includes an explanatory chapter by Prof. Andrew Lambert (who should need no introduction to readers of *AGB*) entitled 'Rule Britannia—The Royal Navy in 1914'. This gives a fine synopsis of the events contained within the book and sets the context for the more casual reader. Prof. Lambert also adds an introduction to the five appendices, which range from notes on officers, editorials in 'The Times' of the naval blockade, to the account of the first gunnery officer of the *Derfflinger*.

All in all, this was a serendipity moment of purchase and proved a volume well in excess of my initial self interest and expectations. It is highly recommended – wherever you might find it.



## MODEL WARSHIP WEEKEND

**By Norman Bell**

'Explosion' the Museum of Naval Firepower in Gosport was the location of a free Model Warship Weekend in August, organised by the Waterline Ship Enthusiasts. The skill and patience of the scratch builders was obvious by the number and standard of models on display. Jack Snary's "Royal Spithead Review" filled an



ante room by itself. Five hundred 1/1200 models, arranged to show the Fleet Review to end all Reviews. 3,000 years represented from oar powered galleys to the USS *Nimitz*. Luxury Liners also were there. The *Queen Elizabeth II* dwarfed by the *Queen Mary II*. The *Titanic* and her sister *Britannic* gave a hint of the opulence available, to some at least, 100 hundred years ago. The outdoor pool gave a chance for the radio controlled models to be displayed in their element. Second-hand books were available to buy as were *Skytrex* and *Triang* waterline models.



The handout for the show included details of the Naval Wargames Society, Membership Secretary, so I think the compliment should be returned.

There are approx 8 or 9 Shows per year, details from Dave Wilcocks, 26 Gilkicker Road, Alverstoke, Gosport, PO12 2UN. Tel: 023 9235 2383. email [dave.wilcocks@ntlworld.com](mailto:dave.wilcocks@ntlworld.com) Hopefully the photograph give a flavour of the weekend.

## NEW BOOK FROM BOYDELL & BREWER

**By Rob Morgan**

In November 2010 *Boydell & Brewer* will be publishing *Navies of Rome*, by Michael Pitassi in paperback at £19.99; 384 pages and with 34 plates and illustrations. It is described as a 'groundbreaking' new study, chronologically written of the role of the fleets of Rome; examining the role of naval warfare in the conquests of Rome as Republic and Empire, and detailing the battles and campaigns of this powerful and long-lived naval force. I hope to have a full review for November's *AGB*.

## 'THE NAVY LEAGUE' SEA QUIZ

**By Rob Morgan**

Our faculty library has been given a mass of unbound, quite tattered copies of *The Navy*. A bequest of an old graduate, I suspect and I've started to look through them. The bulk of the journals, and they were a decent sized and well-printed publication, come from the immediate post-war period up to the late fifties (so far anyway); and for the most part are of interest to those who like long lines of grey battleships, smothered in grey smoke steaming across grey seas firing at another long grey battleships hidden in a grey mist. Barely a sail in sight!

However, during 1952, the year the King died, *The Navy* published a series called 'Sea Quiz', consisting of ten, sometimes more, questions designed to test the capability of the maritime mind. Some of the questions are, to say the least, complex! The creator of the quiz, and both questions and answers are in the same issue, in not identified. Here are five of the questions from December 1952, though it wasn't in any way a 'Christmas Competition' and no-one won the trip on HMS *Vanguard*!

1. Can you name 10 British warships beginning with MO?
2. Which British warship was the first to have four funnels?
3. Which British ironclad was the first to have BL turret?
4. Which ships do you associate with these commanders with: a. Broke b. Cochrane (1801) c. C Codrington (1827)?
5. What was the motto of the *Navy League*?

If you wish to have a crack at the quiz, send your answers to the editor. The answers will be in October's *AGB*, as well as more questions to follow!

## 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.navalwargamessociety.org](http://www.navalwargamessociety.org).

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## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2009**

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### **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: <http://falkirkwargamesclub.org.uk/>

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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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