



All Guns Blazing!

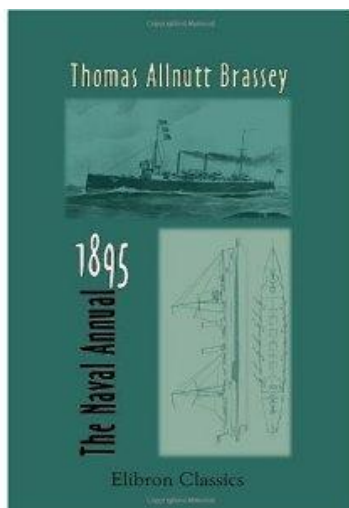
Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 199 –November 2010

Gentlemen,

First off, chaps, I want to issue an alert if next months *AGB* is late again. Firstly, the usual work problem is going to raise its ugly head, as I've taken on a show in London that starts in a couple of weeks, plus I'm still going to try and keep my teaching work load on up in Warwickshire during the days; so it's going to be morning, noon and night for the next few months! (One of the perils of being self-employed, I'm afraid, is having to take all the work you can while it's there.) But the other potential fly in the ointment is I'm going to be changing my computer, and what with trying to make sure I don't lose all my contacts, as well as transferring data, I'm going to have my work cut out. In short, ***please bear with me***; I'll be as quick as I can. On the other hand, if you never hear from me again you'll know I've really cocked things up and lost all your email addresses! (Gulp!)

The thing with computers, of course, is all the wonderful things you can find by accident on the Internet. The word serendipity could have been invented with them in mind! Take the other day, I was sure I'd seen a book somewhere on the Naval Defence Act of 1889, so I put that in a search on 'Amazon' and I turned up a whole heap of new re-prints of Brassey's Naval Annuals! They are published by *Elibron Classics* and are paperback facsimiles of the originals, ranging, if memory serves, in price from around £17 to £45. As far as I can tell, those available are 1886, 1887, 1888/1890, 1891 through to 1898, and 1900. An absolutely scrumptious horde!



I have mentioned before in this column my love of these volumes and I have collected several originals over the past couple of years, and in truth these aren't that much cheaper—but they are readily available and that's a big plus.

To end on a wargaming note, I've been doing a little experimenting with the *Fear God & Dread Nought* rules-set again over the past couple of weeks. Before I got into *Seekrieg 5*, I used them pretty much all the time, especially for my Russo-Japanese games. I have always like the way signalling is handled (flag, flashlight and W/T), as it added a very realistic delay to tactical handling; furthermore, I particularly like the way fires and flooding are handled. Now while they don't give the detailed descriptions of what is happening in the way *SK5* does (something I fell in love with at the outset), they are a well thought out and developed set. They play a little quicker than *SK5*, which I appreciate is important sometimes. They are definitely worth a look if you haven't seen them already. I shall probably have more to report on them next month...what am I saying, how will I find the time?

Yours Piping 'Up Spirits'

Richard Wimpenny (wimpenny@talktalk.net)

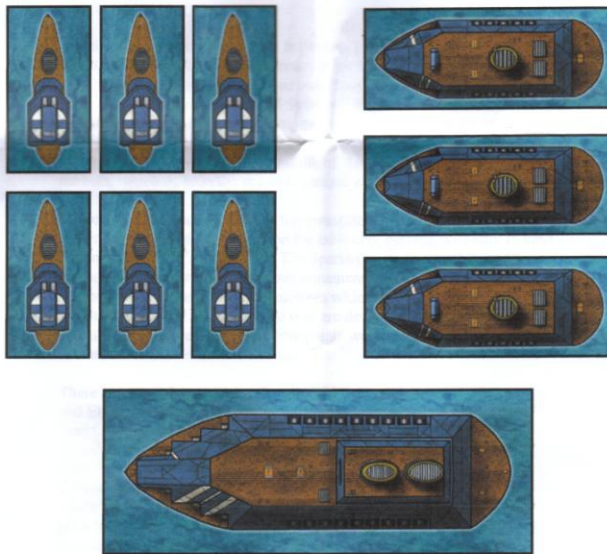
THE UNCHARTED SEAS?

By Rob Morgan

The more observant among the brethren will have noticed that in recent months there has been a slight increase in the number of youngsters playing 'naval' or rather 'sea-based' wargames in the clubs across the land. This is due to the release of 'Spartan Games' 'The Uncharted Seas', along with about thirty or so 'fantasy' ship models. Take a look at the website, www.spartangames.co.uk. It's quite interesting, even if you think of fantasy wargaming as rubbish, which is, broadly, my own view.

However, when you see eight or ten youngsters, who normally don't go within a mile of seas and rivers on the tabletop, playing with ship models it's encouraging, if nothing else. The 'Spartan' range is attractive but has all the usual problems of ridiculous armament, odd sail suits, and strange combinations of weapons and structures, which put together couldn't sail, steam or fight. The models by the way are described as 1/600 and the rules look interesting with a few points worth noting, especially the submarine stuff.

There are a number of fleets: the standard 'Imperial Humans', the 'Orcs and Elves', and something called 'Shroud Mages', amongst others. One fleet I will mention, since I intend to return to it later, is the 'Ralgard', which are in fact a set of Oriental junks. I think the hulls of a couple of these vessels will provide the base for a flotilla of medieval Chinese, Korean and Japanese fighting ships, as appear in the two 'Ospreys'. I didn't mention the 'Iron Dwarf' fleet, which essentially is a bunch of grim looking broadside ironclad rams of the Confederate sort. The people at 'Spartan' provide a couple of fleets including the Dwarves in paper cut-out type. (See below.) The battery's cramped and overall appearance on the models themselves looks something like resin versions of some of the stuff I scratch-built back in the 1960s. One youngster proudly opened his box containing a Dwarf fleet, which he described as really cheap, at about £15.99 for ten models, that's six small ones, three of the middle sized, and one of the big flagship jobs. Cheap!!!



Anyway, these things reminded me of ACW warships, and I dropped the hint that I actually had a somewhat similar fleet at home; not actually crewed by Dwarves you understand, but somewhat in the same mould. They are the ACW fleets of 'Peter Pig', and 'Thoroughbred', etc. Now, I wouldn't usually trouble the younger generation much with the odder ironclads of the ACW, but from what I have unused and unmade of the 'Pig' range, making fleet was no problem. Not much of a sacrifice either, after all most of the Confederate models were one-battle wonders in reality.

I chose, no, not the CSS *Manassas* this time, but the largest ram model, No. 34, which is a delight to look at. That became the flagship, and No. 44 CSS *Arkansas* became her consort, a

little smaller, but equally attractive. For the standard fighting ship, I picked up No. 45 CSS *Palmetto State*, which is a double-ender, or at least looks like it. I added a few details, such as super-tall funnels, standard provision with 'Pig's' models, and a couple of masts and a jack staff fore and aft. I didn't forget ships' boats either (but for some reason the fantasy modellers always do forget them). Sprayed everything matt dark earth overall and then added matt black for the armoured sides and funnels, with, naturally, some gunmetal touches for anchors and gun muzzles, etc. Boats, I painted white. You may think there's nothing special about that, true enough, but it took some of the younger wargamers by surprise. I did, I have to say, sacrifice some of the smaller 1/1200 'Navwar' versions of *Jackson* and *Fredericksburg*, adding some 1/1200 'Skytrex' furlled and billowing sails from packs NS 101 and 102 for a bit of flair.

Why all this, you may ask? Well, it showed that the idea of a bizarre iron warship, driven by steam and with a ram and a couple of heavy guns really did exist, not in fantasy but in the Confederacy. They actually fitted

into the game, too, with little effort. I expanded my ideas later with two more of the odd craft made by 'Peter Pig' et al, that frankly don't fit in that well on the tabletop. No. 50 in the range is the enormous paddler USS *Blackhawk*, which spent her life as a flagship, and painted in black and white she looks wonderful and vulnerable. Her consorts were No. 25 USS *Choctaw* and I threw in No.49 USS *Indianola*; again painted black and white with wooden decks and added detail, including boats! Very colourful they looked, but my personal favourite was USS *Keokuk*, which lasted about an hour and a half in the war; probably one of the most useless Federal warships (apart from the 'Casco' class!) ever built. I ditched the funnel and cemented a metal ship's cannon barrel in its place. Then drilled through the tops of the two gun houses adding pin masts and turned this into a pirate ship by painting it bright green (well, *Keokuk's* useless anyway) and giving the vessel a group of small raiding craft, eight of them actually, from pack No. 12 the 'torpedo boats', which are very reasonably priced.

The questions which most of us are asked on a regular basis when we place new warship models on the table are of course, 'What is it?' and 'Where did you buy it?' followed by, 'How much?' The following week I turned up with my box of 1/600 ACWs and the next week, after an impromptu talk on the magnificent but sadly futile warship building programme of the Confederate States of America and the mass production of the 'Damned Yankees', we actually wargamed a version of Mobile Bay.

I'm not suggesting this immediately created a new cohort of naval wargamers, but maybe it's a step in the right direction, and one I think we should all take, in a period when a sea-based wargame is in vogue with younger gamers. Mind you, I still can't get over the sight of a group of four bright crimson USS *Bentons*, the slab-sided one-off ironclad, with four funnels and guns added to the two domed deck houses to make gun turrets and a pair of torpedo shafts over the bows. The lad who 'created' that one also bought *Monitor* and the *Virginia* by the way, and I'm playing him again next week, but this time the damned Yankee cheese-box will go to the bottom!

A LITTLE NORTH-'SEEKRIEG 5'!

By Richard Wimpenny

Back in August (you know, that time when the kids have just broken-up for the summer holiday and autumn begins), I was able to find a spare day to shape a course for Jeff Crane's place to enjoy an afternoon's 'Seekrieg 5'. Now I know that these rules have never been popular with most society members (something that never ceases to amaze me), but I trust you will humour Jeff and I our indulgence, and who knows: you may just find that one day you too get bitten by the bug!

When I arrived the door was opened by Jeff's teenage grandson, a pleasant young man who thoroughly enjoyed the *Seekrieg* experience; and after admiring Jeff's 1/1000 Spanish-American models (featured in September's *AGB*), we set up a small 1915 North Sea encounter. Jeff was Vice-Admiral Beatty and commanded *Lion*, *Princes Royal* and the light cruiser *Birmingham*, while Jeff's grandson and I handled Hipper's Scouting Group; to wit, *Seydlitz*, *Moltke* and the light cruiser *Graudenz*.

Dicing for weather conditions gave us a rather misty North Sea. All quite normal really, and in *SK5*-speak it was Visibility Code 7, which meant our respective forces would only spot each other when the were at around 10,000 yards. Devastatingly close for big guns.

As no one could detect the enemy, both sides kept to a slightly converging course 'oblivious' to the other's whereabouts. We adopted four-minute game turns to move through this stage of the game as quickly as possible, and on Turn 7 the leading light cruisers spotted each other. Both sides now began to go the 'Battle Stations', and on Turn 9 the firing began.

Initial salvos from the respective light cruisers yielded no hits, but the following turn *Princess Royal* hit the *Moltke* with two 13.5-inch APC rounds that knocked-out two starboard side 4-inch guns, the main W/T, some searchlights and half of her fire control equipment! Pretty good shooting, I think you'll agree! British gunnery continued its run of good fortune in spectacular style when Beatty's flagship, HMS *Lion*, slammed a couple of APC into my flagship, *Seydlitz*. Well, would you believe that one of these hit *Seydlitz's* port wing turret and caused a serious fire therein (Damage Effect 109). This led in turn to an additional DE which

ended up being the catastrophic DE 100—a flash down the barrette to the magazine! Boom! Up went *Seydlitz*, Hipper and all. (This was all classic *Seekrieg* stuff, with the way the damage was incurred giving a real *feel* for what was going on.)



Seydlitz seconds before her destruction!

In effect the Germans (er, me and Jeff's grandson) had lost already, and next turn I began to manoeuvre the *Graudenz* to safety, as she couldn't really even stand against *Birmingham's* powerful 6-inch battery. However, Jeff's grandson was made of sterner Prussian stuff and he 'turned towards' with the *Moltke*, determined to even the score!

During the next two turns the valiant *Moltke* hit *Princes Royal* three times, suppressing her damage control parties, forcing her primary battery to cease fire and pushing the battlecruiser over two Damage Tiers (a method whereby *SK5* deals with accumulated damage as opposed to specific hits). However, this was nothing compared for what befell *Moltke* herself. Close range meant that in turn 12 *Lion* scored five times and the *Princes Royal* twice, which crippled our remaining battlecruiser! She duly received DE 121, a 15% chance every turn she would lose power until the damage was repaired; DE170, flooding causing *Moltke's* belt armour to become submerged; DE130, loss of power to some of the primary guns; DE 104, lose of a secondary gun; DE 115, heavy crew casualties temporarily knocking out an 11-inch gun turret; and finally DE 605, a power failure that made it extremely difficult for her damage control parties to fight fires! Quite a clattering for one turn, I think you'll agree!



Birmingham's torpedo strikes the doomed battlecruiser.

Sensing victory, *Birmingham* ordered her 'Gunner T' to make ready the torpedo flat (Bridge Command TR), and the light cruiser raced in to finish the leviathan off. In the meantime *Lion* hit again, damaging *Moltke's* ammunition hoists to the port secondary guns amidships. As though this wasn't bad enough *Birmingham's*

torpedo struck causing a, "loss of systems due to flooding," DE 180. The force of the explosion also caused bulkheads to collapse (DE 610), compartment flooding from splinter damage (DE 608), and a flooding of engineering spaces (DE 617). Phew, as may be expected, *Moltke* foundered a few turns later. *Graudenz*, however, made good her escape, but it wasn't much of a consolation!

My thanks to Jeff and his grandson for a splendid afternoon's gaming. We had all enjoyed ourselves immensely, even though personally I didn't hit a sausage!

THE NAVY LEAGUE QUIZ PART THREE

My thanks once again to Rob Morgan for providing another round of his *AGB* teaser, but before Part Three, here are last months questions, with the answers in italics:

1. Which Royal Navy warship fired the first round off the Belgian coast in WWI, and what calibre was the gun?
The gunboat HMS 'Bustard'—4.7-inch.
2. What were the names of the first two British warships (sisters) to have steel armour?
HMS 'Colossus' and HMS 'Edinburgh' (1882).
3. Which two Royal Navy warships had the most forebears of their respective names? (Remember this was a question posed in 1952.)
'Eagle' and 'Pelican'. Twenty-one each!!
4. The name of the first Royal Navy warship with barbettes?
HMS 'Temeraire'.
5. Commanders and ships: Carpenter and '*Vindictive*'; Vian and '*Cossack*'; Naismith and '*E.11*'.

And now, on with the next round!

1. Which was the first British Warship to have 5.2-inch guns?
2. If you got question 1 correct in part two you may get this. What was the name of the warship that fired the **last** round off the Belgian coast in WW1? What was the gun's calibre?
3. Name the first two warships in the Royal Navy with a sloping protective deck?
4. Which naval 'activity' was outlawed by a treaty signed in Paris in 1856? (No vulgar answers, please!)
5. What was the name of the first British warship to have a ram bow? And what was her nickname?

I look forward to receiving any answers you may come up with.

INTERESTING PHOTOGRAPH FROM NORMAN BELL



HMS Daring. Big as she is, is still dwarfed by the USS Enterprise.

'THE BASILISCOE MERCURY'

By Rob Morgan

My colleague Peter Fuller, who edits the Ordnance Society newsletter mentioned an internet newsletter of the remarkable name above (currently published fortnightly and now on issue # 119), which is published by Ruth Rhynas Brown and Robert Smith, two very well known and respected names in the 'arms and armour community' across the world. This is especially true if you like large muzzle-loading bombards as I do; they produce the definitive monograph on the subject for the Royal Armouries in the 1990s. The *Mercury* contains a mass of information on up-to-date websites and recently published material and section of it is on the subject of warships.

Take the recent issue, which provides information on 'Pirates in Copenhagen', 'Pacific Wrecks of WWII', on three shipwrecks at Rhodes, the search for the *Bonhomme Richard*, the fates of HMS *Cavalier* and HMS *Investigator*, as well as sections on ordnance and new publications. As well as this material, there is much more on events, conferences, e-books and on arms and militaria sales across Europe and the Americas. Not 100% naval and maritime, but plenty there to interest an *NWS* member without any doubt.

You can add your name to the mailing list by contacting the editors at...

brown@basiliscoe.fsnet.co.uk

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.

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2009

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)
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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.
