



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 210 –October 2011

EDITORIAL

Gentlemen,

I did warn everyone that this month's issue may be a little late, due to the ever-present Treasury, damn their eyes, wanting my annual accounts. It really is the most tedious event of my year, and I always seem to leave it until my accountant is badgering me for my books with phone calls every few days. Anyway, enough of my troubles. Although my self-employed nature does have its little drawbacks, my travelling around the country can also have its unexpected perks. Early last month I had to spend a week in Norwich, always one of my favourite, though rarely visited, cities. This time I had the most fabulous accommodation. I was astonished to find that 'The Norfolk Club' advertised in the Theatre Royal's Digs List; nevertheless, they did, and I was lucky enough to get a room for the whole week for an absolute song! Now you are probably wondering where all this is leading to, but 'The Norfolk Club' is an old, well-established gentleman's club that is full of chesterfields, squeaky floorboards and, wait for it, portraits of admirals! No surprise that local hero Nelson takes pride of place above the fireplace; though you



could have knocked me down with a feather to find Augustus Kepple not far away; and on top of this, there is an old sea chest half way up the stairs! Quite the 'naval establishment', I'm sure you will agree!



While not busy working, it was my intention to spend my free time (a bonus of working away!) painting up a couple of Langton vessels, a Spanish 80 and the *Santa Anna*, but myself and the fellows discovered a marvellous pub called

The Belgian Monk, and, well as you can imagine with a gang of musicians on tour, things sort of unravelled from there...though I did undercoat both of them! (I suppose I should have taken my accounts to do, but damn it, a chap must have a little fun, shouldn't he?)

Many thanks to both Simon Stokes and Rob Morgan for supplying this month's *AGB*.

Up Spirits!

Richard Wimpenny

wimpenny@talktalk.net

Luftwaffe 'Naval Targets'1939.

By Rob Morgan

Well, the Ian Allen bookshops sometimes come up with the most astonishing bargains, and the other afternoon, in the Cardiff shop I found a copy of 'The System of Selection applied by the German Air Force in WWII' by a Luftwaffe General called Deichmann. This was originally one of the USAF's 'Air War Papers', republished by MLRS in 2006. The volume is old type print, and not the best quality.

I was attracted by the reduction from £30 to a sale price of just a pound for a substantial and unusual 220+ page paperback of A4 size- naturally! Anyway, looking through it I found a comment on Goering's order for priority naval targets from October 25th 1939.

'Targets will be considered as of primary importance in the following sequence....

1. Aircraft Carriers.
2. Battle Cruisers.
3. Battleships.
4. Cruisers.

"Particular importance attaches to the British minelaying Cruiser Adventure, which might be considered as a special type ship for mining operations in the Bight of Heligoland."

The Luftwaffe High Command in the same order designated three squadrons (sic) one of Ju-88s from 30th Bomber Wing, and two of He-111s from 26th Bomber Wing to attack *Repulse*; allegedly damaged and presumed to be at Scapa Flow until 'decisive results' were achieved. Of course this was the time of the *Panzerschiffe* sorties, and the three RN battlecruisers and the two big French ships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg* were the only units able to chase and destroy the 11-inch gunned German raiders single handed, hence the priority. As for HMS *Adventure*, she survived of course to be broken up in 1947.

COLOURS 2011

A couple of weeks ago I received a rather humorous email, with some splendid pictures attached, from stalwart member Simon Stokes regarding the 'Colours' wargames' show held at Newbury. I know that weather is a vital part of any naval wargame, but heaven's above! He wrote:

Hi Richard,

Our game was a re-run of the Tarigo Convoy parti game we took to 'Salute' earlier in the year. We did, though, have to make some adjustments due to ex-hurricane Katia, which blew our counters all over the show whenever anyone opened the nearby door onto the racecourse terraces!

Regards

Simon

See what I mean? Anyway, a slight easing of conditions allowed Simon to take some excellent photographs of the NWS game and a neighbouring, slightly naval, eighteen century game.

Many thanks for these, Simon.







RURITANIA.

By Rob Morgan

Somewhere deep within every wargamers heart and history lies his (or her!) 'Ruritania'; the country where otherwise impossible or implausible skirmishes, battles and campaigns take place between armies which would otherwise not exist or encounter each other. Ruritania's an elusive place, sometimes an island in the Mediterranean, sometimes a colony, sometimes a land-locked state somewhere in Central Europe beset by predatory enemies and internal strife.

My Ruritania came into existence in the early 1960s when as a youngster I acquired a hefty collection of two Airfix HO/OO packs, as they were then. A maternal Uncle, well-decorated and an old campaigner in the 'Dad's Army' sense concerned at the fact that I along with my cousins would not enjoy the splendid opportunities of National Service, provided me instead with the makings of a wargames army, though I didn't realise it. I had ten shillings, that's fifty pence worth of figures, four boxes of Airfix Guards Colour Party, and one of the Guards Band. There were forty-eight figures in each box, well over 200 in all. The

band was a collection of drummers, trumpeters, cymbalists and instrumentalists with a splendid Drum Major to lead them, and the 'Colour Party' was a standard bearer, an officer with drawn sword and a mass of guardsmen with sloped rifles; along with them two sentry boxes, and sentries presenting arms.

Now I'd seen some odd things written about war games, in the new 'Airfix Magazine' and in 'Meccano Magazine' too, and there were some bits in the 'Eagle' from time to time. Fifty years distance is too far to explain or recall exactly how I formed the Royal Army of Ruritania, but the name of the Kingdom came from the film 'Prisoner of Zenda' the most swash-buckling of tales, set firmly in the decades before the Great War. The packs provided me with at the outset, four Infantry Regiments, of about twenty figures each; well there were only enough officers and flags for four. Then I provided each regiment with a drummer, and a fifer, basing the soldiers four in a row making them easier to handle for battles and parades. They were my pride and joy!

Of course cavalry were immediately a problem. Although expected by many military buffs, no 'Lifeguards and Horse Guards' pack appeared, not ever. So, what was the ardent young wargamer to do? Fortunately, Airfix soon released a two shillings (10p then!) pack of 'Cowboys'; and my imagination went to work. In those days we thought about modelling, converting, adapting and generally 'scratch-building' as much as we could, there was no real alternative.

Ruritania, of course, was mountainous, but with a great river running through it, a city, small towns and villages but no real plains to speak of. So, the bulk of her army would be Infantry and garrison troops for the many castles and fortresses. Along with a nice, pretty Royal Guard Regiment. Such cavalry as could be obtained would be of the irregular Croat type, frontier lads, on rugged ponies, and with uniforms less than perfect in style. The big hats of the cowboys fitted in, and I added pin lances to most of them, to make them more military. Some of the cowboys on foot became a sort of Militia. The set up grew, and when Airfix issued the 'American Civil War Artillery I was overwhelmed! Two superb field guns, a limber and a mounted officer, who immediately became my General (that was on a temporary basis until later on I bought the Airfix 'French Foreign Legion' which had two elegant mounted officers to replace him). In retrospect I should I suppose have looked for a mounted King at the outset, this was after all the period in which Monarchs still went to war, but didn't.

The artillery was used as it came. I mixed kepis and floppy hats to make them look active and specialist, and some with model railway shovels and picks became engineers and pioneers, along with a couple of spare cowboys. Guard Artillery was just one gun with a crew of a cymbalist and a couple of 'present-arms' guardsmen.

My King, he's Rudolph II in the book, was the surrendering cowboy figure in greatcoat and wide-brimmed hat, with a piece of paper for a map in his hands, and a standing horse alongside him, held by a Guards band figure without an instrument.

There were lots of developments in Ruritania. My country needed a flag, one simple enough to paint obviously! So, with the historical Burgundian links, I chose the St. Andrew's Cross, in bright green on white. Easy. The Regiments differed with small dots in the spaces, one, two three and four. Guards had a white cross inside the green, and the Monarch's personal flag was taken from the Airfix 'Santa Maria', Ferdinand and Isabella's flag- historical reasons again; good dynastic marriage! Uniform colour, dark green coats and white trousers, all dark green for the 'Cowboys' and for the artillery too. The Guards Regiment all white, black bearskins.

I was proud of my army, used it lots of times, and even had a map of Ruritania, bits of the Danube route, from Ulm to the Iron Gates mostly, though my Ordnance Survey maps of remote corners of Scotland also came in useful. We had a colony by the way, an island which remarkably corresponded to the 1" Ordnance Survey map of Coll and Tiree in the Western Isles.

As for names, well Anthony Hope the English Barrister who wrote 'The Prisoner of Zenda' the book whence Ruritania's name comes, provided several. So I had 'Rupert of Hentzau's Regiment', and ' Colonel Sapt's Artillery' as well as 'Sophie of Krevonia's' and 'Michael of Zenda's'. Along with 'Rassendyl's Light Horse' The 'Zenda' Regiment since it's original Colonel was a rebel, was dubious in terms of loyalty. The book's filled with names. Far and away the best 1800-1914 selection around anywhere! You could add some foreign monarchs' names too, obviously. From 'The Almanack de Gotha' perhaps.

Well there it was. My Ruritanian army, and there it might have remained, had I not discovered the sea.....

The Sea! The Sea!

Well, Xenophon's classic excitement was little compared to mine when I found that there were serious model ships around. My Ruritanian Admiralty acquired at a very reasonable price the Airfix HMS Shannon a Frigate of the Napoleonic Wars (this was the crack British warship which captured the USS Chesapeake in 1813), but she wasn't all that useful, since Ruritania was largely landlocked apart from one port somewhere on the Mediterranean and a big river. She was of course renamed the 'Zenda' for service as the King's entire fleet, and gallantly protected the colonial islands fishing fleets.

One damp Winter's day, having been given-it was in the mid sixties I think, Don Featherstone's 'Naval Wargames' as a birthday present, I decided that the book's American Civil War rules and the simple balsa models were for me. I couldn't carve balsa at all, and so looked around for alternatives.

Now plasticard was rare then even in specialist shops, but I drew the outlines of several decent sized ironclad rams and monitors, and on top of the monitors cemented small funnels and a turret made from the inverted road-wheel of a 1/72nd scale M4 Sherman tank. It worked. The broadside rams were harder, but plastic electrical housing strips a couple of inches long, with funnels glued on top worked nicely. The Ruritanian Admiralty had bought a job lot of about five monitors and two ex-Confederate rams from this bloke in New York. They were worried about the sabre-wielding Prussians, the conflicts in Italy and Denmark and the Austrians big unpleasant and untrustworthy neighbours- with warships.

The monitors, four single turrets and one twin were all named after great literary figures, as King Rudolph enjoyed the works of Shakespeare and was anxious to develop a treaty with Great Britain. So we had the Royal Ruritanian Ships RRS *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Rosencrantz*, RRS *Guildenstern*, RRS *Falstaff*, *Bardolph* and so on. They served well. From tiny ship's lifeboats I made some dozens of small torpedo boats, and along with fire-rafts and gunboats they provided a formidable river frontier force.

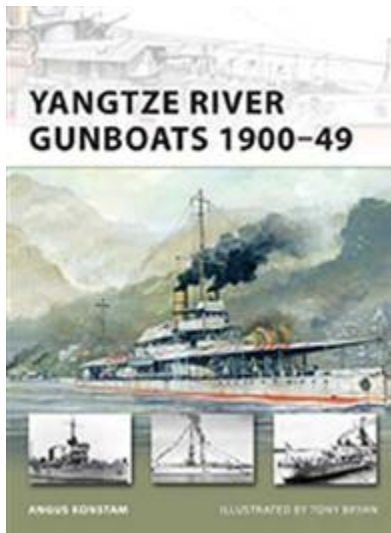
The opposition was often the intrusive Imperial Russians who of course had, as in reality, after 1868 about a dozen single turret monitors of the Ericsson type, direct copies of the USS *Passaic*, and lots of torpedo boats. The grateful US government provided all the technical details to the Russians after their significant support at sea in the war against the Confederacy. So, Ruritania had her hands full. Mind you the monitor vs. monitor fights were magnificent affairs. The rams frequently tipped the balance too. We had an early air force as well by the way, small balloons which either acted as observation posts along the great river, or were bomb carriers like the ones the Austrians used against Venice in the previous decades. Once the gallant 'Hentzau' troopers sallied forth aboard ten balloons and captured a Russian Monitor grounded on a sandbank.

I suppose Ruritania's gallant little navy would have remained there, fixed firmly in the mid-1800's if it hadn't been for the unfortunate outbreak of several small and unpleasant wars in the Balkans and the Great War kicking off when someone shot Great Uncle Franz Ferdinand, but that's another story in military and naval achievement!

Yangtze River Gunboats 1900–49

Osprey New Vanguard 181
Author: Angus Konstam, Illustrator: Tony Bryan

Reviewed by Simon Stokes



Publishers Synopsis: *From the end of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th, most Western powers maintained a naval presence in China. These gunboats protected traders and missionaries, safeguarded national interests, and patrolled Chinese rivers in search of pirates. It was a wild, lawless time in China as ruthless warlords fought numerous small wars to increase their power and influence. This book covers the gunboats of all the major nations that stationed naval forces in China, including America, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Japan, and looks at such famous incidents as the Japanese bombing of the USS Patay and the dramatic escape of the HMS Amethyst from Communist forces in 1947, which marked the end of the gunboat era.*

Review: There are relatively few books dedicated to 20th century river gunboats, so this recent addition to Osprey's *New Vanguard* series is a surprising and very welcome publication. Add to that the fact that the author is one of my favourites in the Osprey series then I knew I was in for a treat before I turned the first page.

You're not going to get a great deal of historical background in a *New Vanguard* book, and this is no exception, but Mr Konstam gives the reader enough to put the operations on the Yangtze into context. What was surprising to me was that so many foreign nations had, in many cases, very significant naval forces operating on the Yangtze for such a long period of time. Plenty of scope for some what if scenarios I'm sure!

As has come to be expected with the Osprey series the artwork by Mr Bryan is very good and this is backed up by a good sprinkling of photographs too. The most numerous single class of gunboat deployed to the Yangtze was the British 'Insect' class and this class has therefore been chosen for the 2 page cut away diagram on pages 28-29, and very good it is too.

In summary a very welcome addition to the *New Vanguard* series and one which will be a must have for anyone with an interest in early twentieth century river gunboats.

NAVY LEAGUE QUIZ PART FOURTEEN

Compiled by Rob Morgan

Once again member Rob Morgan has stepped into the breach and provided us all with another instalment of his brain-teaser based on the old 1950s 'Navy League'. As normal, however, before we carry on it is time for last month's answers:

1. Name the first two British destroyers built and the yard that built them.

HMS 'Havock' and HMS 'Hornet'; both built at Yarrow, 1893.

2. How many warships have been named (*Henri*) *Grace a Dieu*?

There were six, built by Edward III, Henry V, Henry VI, Edward IV and, of course, Henry VIII.

3. With what incident do you associate HMS *Glatton*?

HMS 'Glatton' was torpedoed in Dover Harbour in 1918 to prevent her blowing up after she caught fire.

4. Name the world's heaviest carrier, and her tonnage, and the navy in which she served. (Remember, this was 1950!)

The world's heaviest carrier (up to then!) had been the Japanese 'Shinano' at a mere 62,000 tons.

5. What class of warships were known as 'flat-irons'?

The 'Ant' class gunboats of the 1870s were known as 'flat-irons'.

And now the next batch of chin-rubbing questions!

1. What was the difference between the armament of the 'Lochs' and the 'Bays' and why?

2. With which naval tragedy do you associate HMS *Iron Duke*?

3. Name the three Royal Navy carriers which were laid down as 18-inch battlecruisers.

4. Name the four torpedo-cruisers of the 1880s

5. What was the first British armoured warship to carry her main armament in six turrets?

Good luck everyone; I'm sure Rob will keep us scratching our heads again next month!

SIGNAL PAD!

My name is Roger Burden and I am organizing a military hobbies show called SUDBURY SKIRMISH in Great Cornard Sudbury Suffolk on the 19th of November 2011. If this event is successful it is hoped to hold it on a yearly basis. There will be tables for you to play and an opportunity to promote your club at the event. If you or any of your members be interested please contact me or my wife Janet on burdenre@aol.com or by telephone 01787 311195.

Regards Roger Burden

'Lance & Longbow' Society's US rep, Bob Burke, has e-mailed me [Rob Morgan] to say that this site has a set of 'playable' Medieval Naval Rules. I've not seen them before, but they may be of interest to some members. They can be found at:

www.baronyminiatures.com

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.
