



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 305 – MARCH 2020

EDITORIAL

It was nice to receive more comments on February's AGB than usual. I will try and keep AGB interesting, (controversial even?), now if only Members can add to AGB (and Battlefleet) content, it can only improve the newsletter.

I had the pleasure of being at the 100th Birthday lunch/party for Bill Jenkins on the Isle of Wight. A keen sportsman, he was possibly on the brink of making the Aston Villa football team when the War scuppered his and many other lives. He was on a troopship which was torpedoed but managed to make Alexandria. So his first action was soon after El Alamein and then the following North Africa campaign as part of a Vickers machine gun team. It was here that he received news that his brother was missing believed killed on a bombing trip to Germany. Brother, crew and aeroplane have never been found. Tunisia, Sicily and Italy – Monte Casino and finally Austria followed. Back in the UK, Bill played cricket for Havant for many years scoring in excess of 10,000 runs. When he was 89, his grandson John accompanied him on a British Legion tour of the North African battlefields and Commonwealth War Grave Commission cemeteries. For many years now, Bill has lived on the Isle of Wight and for as long as possible was a keen cricketer. He is President of his cricket club in Shanklin.



Bill, grandson John and Bill's card from Her Majesty.
(You used to get a telegram from the Queen, now it is a card.
Presumably before much longer you will get an email.)

(The oldest person in the world is 111.)

Norman Bell

February's AGB drew interesting responses from a couple of Members: on the subjects of Captain Gilbert Roberts and the Wrens of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit and whether or not Australia was a Dominion or a Commonwealth.

Further to Rob Morgan's words on the Western Approaches Tactical Unit in Feb's AGB, Andy Field suggested that the link be included in AGB. Happy to oblige. An interesting article.

<https://time.com/5772665/uboaat-wargames/>

Spurred to action, I have purchased "A Game of Birds and Wolves" by Simon Parkin. I have not read it yet, so cannot supply a review. Rob Morgan tells me that Steven Spielberg has snapped up the film rights.

ISBN 9781529353037 hardback
ISBN 9781529353044 paperback
ISBN 9781529353051 ebook

The following is from Glenn Simpson:

In answer to Q2 of the Sea Quiz in February's AGB: one might also answer 'Breastwork Monitor', citing HMVS Cerberus. The two Cerberus-class ships were the first breastwork monitors to be built. Cerberus was ordered in 1866 by the Colony of Victoria, which was therefore arguably not a 'Dominion'. On the other hand, Australia was (and is) by virtue of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (an Act of the British Parliament) a 'Commonwealth'. By contrast, the British North America Act describes Canada as a 'Dominion'. Likewise New Zealand is legally a 'Dominion'. So, arguably, Australia doesn't qualify as a 'Dominion' either!

Getting back to the ships and leaving lawyers astern, George Reed designed the world's first breastwork monitor (HMVS Cerberus) at the request of the self-governing Colony of Victoria; the India Office then ordered another of the same design (HMS Magdala) as well as a less expensive version (HMS Abyssinia). The four Cyclops-class ships, enlarged versions of Cerberus, were ordered in 1870 for local defence of English ports. Sadly, I don't have a model of any of them. Cerberus ended up as a breakwater (wrought iron rusts very slowly), but her name carries on as the RAN's main training base in Victoria.

Thanks also for the catalogue from Anchorage – I presume from the prices that they are all 1/1200 scale. I will probably order some in due course – I need the 'Isaac Sweers', for example, and haven't seen one elsewhere.

The following is from Ric Pelvin:

In respect of the quiz question on which type of warship the RAN was the first to operate, the answer of submarines is quite incomplete. The RAN was the first dominion/commonwealth to operate the battle cruiser, destroyer, heavy cruiser, seaplane tender, submarine depot ship and guided missile destroyer.

The RCN was the first with light (ex protected) cruisers and aircraft carriers.

The Navy Quiz included in AGB, originates from the 1950s. I am sure no insult was intended then; or now by repeating a Quiz which includes words that now maybe considered non PC.



Sails of Glory have recently added models to the list available.

Tucson, Arizona hosted the world's largest Navy Week Feb 17-23, coinciding with Fiesta de los Vaqueros, the Tucson Rodeo. Sailors from USS Tucson (SSN 770), also visited the city to volunteer with several youth and community programs including local schools and Boys and Girls Clubs. Tucson Navy Week is one of 11 Navy Weeks in 2020 focusing a variety of assets, equipment and personnel on a single city for a weeklong series of engagements designed to bring America's Navy closer to the people it protects. Each year, the program reaches more than 140 million people - about half the U.S. population.

Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday hosted Chief of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) Rear Adm. David Proctor, at the Pentagon for a meeting, Jan. 23. The leaders discussed opportunities for greater mutual support in advancing the two nations' shared values, goals, and security interests. The U.S. Navy and the RNZN operate together routinely around the world. The U.S. Navy and Royal New Zealand Air Force have recently been participating in [Operation Sea Dragon](#) alongside the Royal Australian Air Force, the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, and the Republic of Korea Navy.

SEA QUIZ. 91....

Well into the 1950's with this set of questions. The Gibraltar Cup, of which I'd never heard (I was a Scout of the land-based variety!) seems to have been held at one time or another by just about every Sea Cadet Unit in the country, and a large number of readers appear to have been cadets. Australia, incidentally was a Dominion in WW1, and there were no responses or comments published on this question in the 1950s.

Here we go...

1. Which RN ship (this in 1959) has been longest in commission?
2. Which WWI British warship bore the nickname 'Gin Palace'?
3. The WWI Seaplane Carriers *Empress*, *Riviera*, and *Engadine* were all built as what type of vessel?
4. Which European Navy possessed a class of 4 River Monitors named after Prime Ministers, and which served in both World Wars?
5. What first appeared on US Battleships in 1916?

Best of luck. Question 4 incidentally, set (again) by 'Octopus' was worthy of 10 points.

Rob Morgan.

NWS is confirmed and on the published list of participation games at Salute, this year taking place on 18th April at the Excel Centre in London. The game will be the SAGA at SEA game as seen at the NWS wargames weekend last year. Anyone interested in coming along to help run the game please send an email to Simon. It'll be first come first served as we only get a handful of free entry passes to the show.

simonjohnstokes@aol.com



“Sink the Carrier“, started as a free print and play game which become well known enough to be reviewed by Marco wargamer on Youtube. Victory Point Games were going to produce it as “Dixon to Carrier - Scratch One Flattop” – they reached a stage where they had box art but nothing was produced. Looping Games a Spanish Company have produced it as “Yorktown 1942”. 1 to 4 players play co-operatively and against the clock to find and sink the Japanese carrier before the reverse happens. At 30 minutes per game, lots of fun can be had in one evening.

<https://www.loopinggames.com/1942-uss-yorktown/?lang=en>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7ImUdL4v-4>

From Boardgame Geek:

Sink the Carrier is a co-op game, where each player take control of one Douglas SBD Dauntless, a dive bomber, on board the USS Yorktown carrier during the early days of May 1942 in the Coral Sea. The objective is to find and sink the Japanese Carrier. The Japanese win if players lose a certain number of planes or if the USS Yorktown is sunk.

They are grander things than all the art of towns,
Their tests are tempests and the sea that drowns.
They are my country's line, her great art done
By strong brains labouring on the thought unwon,
They mark our passage as a race of men,
Earth will not see such ships as those again.

The closing lines of John Masefield's “Ships”.

Salnave's War: Wargaming the Haitian Civil War 1867-69
By David Manley

A supplement for "Dahlgren and Columbiad" and A&AGE's "Iron and Fire" covering the naval side of the Haitian Civil War, 1867-69. The supplement contains ship data for both sets of rules for all of the warships involved in the war, and a short campaign system based on "War of the Pacific" that focusses on the essential aspects of the war.

Available from Wargame Vault. https://www.wargamevault.com/product/302138/Salnaves-War?fbclid=IwAR287Z5xpz0TYkSkV3Ei2nwOnJz6h2kx0bJ5C5txZ75dOUQBZZ_lm6QxGh4

USS Detroit (LCS 7). The ship honours Michigan's largest city and is the sixth U.S. Navy vessel to bear the name. The previous Detroit was a fast combat support ship, commissioned in 1969, which served a 35-year career as a support ship in the Vietnam War as well as the Persian Gulf during operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. The first Detroit was launched in August 1813 and was engaged in the Battle of Lake Erie. USS Detroit operates according to her motto of swift vigilance.

The last of the midget submariners who took part in the attack on Tirpitz has died. Lt John Lorimer was second in command of X-6 in September 1943. Two X-Craft made it underneath the battleship and dropped their explosive charges. The ship took on 1,400 tons of water, a fuel tank was ruptured and a 15in gun turret was thrown off its bearings. The X-Craft commanders were awarded VCs; John Lorimer received the DSO. The attack on the Tirpitz was dramatized in the film, "Above Us The Waves".

Sea Quiz 91...answers.

A couple of unusual questions here, and one or two extended responses made.

1. It was the Coastal Minelayer *HMS Plover*, which surely had the longest active career of any RN Warship (at least that I can find). She was commissioned in 1937. The question was set in 1958 and the answer was '21 years'; but....*HMS Plover* remained in service for another decade. She didn't end her career until 1969! Is there a model of her in a decent scale, I wonder?
2. It was *HMS Agincourt*. Allegedly because she had seven turrets. I won't comment on the other nicknames offered. They may make for a quiz one day.
3. They were all built as cross-channel steamers for the SE & Chatham Railway Company.
4. It was Romania. The lead ship of the group was *Ion Bratianu*. Built for service on the Danube. To describe the careers of these warships as remarkable would be an understatement.
5. Anti-aircraft guns. There were several letters from readers recalling when a/a guns first appeared on ships in which they had served.

Well, spring is on the way, (in the northern hemisphere) hopefully, and more next month. If anyone can expand on the answer to question 4, I'd love to hear it.

Rob Morgan.

The US Navy christened its newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship (LCS), USS Cooperstown (LCS 23), during a ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 29, in Marinette, Wisconsin.

Romanian River Monitors.

With the answer to Question 4 in Sea Quiz 91- the four Trieste built 3x120mm armed 1907 monitors, I asked if anyone knew more of them. One of my historian colleagues referred me back to Roger Branfill-Cook's "*River Gunboats*", an excellent volume which I reviewed some time ago. Yes. Sadly though, the book provides only five paragraphs on the *Ion C. Bratianu* Class, and two rather poor photos, on pages 236-7. There is an intriguing 'exploded' line drawing (shades of the old '*Eagle*' comic!), but it shows the Class in 1907.

The craft also appear in Jurg Meister's '*Soviet Warships of the Second World War*', described as part of the 1944-45 Soviet Danube River Flotilla, two of them were incorporated, two others were sunk, pages 323-325. This book provides a cleaner, clearer photo of the lead ship, renamed *Mariupol*. These, along with the note and 1907 period photo -page 421-2, in Conway's 1906-1921 volume are the only references I've come upon, but the unusual ships did serve until 1959, and there may be other more detailed accounts with photos and drawings which I'm unaware of.

Rob Morgan.

February 2020.

PS.....mentioning Branfill-Cook's magnificent book, I dipped into it and for no apparent reason found myself reading page 165. It deals with China Station Gunboats of the Royal and Company navies, and a model of the East India Company's gunboat '*Nemesis*' is shown; said to be in the Hong Kong Coast Defence Museum. I'm very unlikely to get there, but anyone know anything about the place. Does it still exist?

The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Texas (SSN 775) returned home to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Feb. 24. Her seven-month deployment, Texas completed a full spectrum of operations. During the deployment, which included a visit to Perth, Australia, 40 crewmembers earned their submarine warfare qualifications and 24 Sailors advanced to the next rank. Commissioned Sept. 9, 2006, Texas is the fourth ship of the U.S. Navy to bear that name.

In 'Mariner's Mirror'...

The February 2020 issue of the journal of the SNR contains one or two articles of significant interest to the naval wargamer. In the first instance, Brian Vale provides *'Pitch, Paint, Varnish and the Changing Colour Schemes of Royal Navy Warships 1775-1815'* (pages 30-42). This will be of, I suspect, immense value to those of you who are active in the Bonapartist Wars. I found it a complex matter which seemed to take up a great deal of time, given the need to keep warships at sea and at the throats of the French.

A second article by Innes McCartney, considers *'The Archaeology of WWII U-Boat losses in the English Channel.'*, which follows on from his article in last year's *'Mirror'* on U-Boat losses in WWI in the same area. Well written and valuable. A third article by Susan Rose deals with medieval fleets of Richard I and John.

Rob Morgan.

TOPMASTS.

The New Year edition of the SNR's 'Topmasts' Newsletter yet again brings news of a number of important events which must surely be of significance to us as individuals involved in naval history and research, and to us as a Society which has yet to take the place in naval affairs which is open to it.

The Russian Arctic Convoy Project, which has been mentioned in the past, is holding a Memorial for the 75th Anniversary at Loch Ewe in Scotland on 16th August this year. Further details from

www.racmp.co.uk

The World Ship Society's 42nd naval meeting takes place in Bristol on 6th June, I know that a number of NWS members are also members of the WSS, so there's undoubtedly be feedback from others who are likely to attend a day rammed with historical activity.

One particularly interesting event flagged up in some detail is the Royal Navy's International Air Day on the 11th July at RNAS Yeovilton.....a tremendous amount going on.....this to me seems an event crying out for a table-top Carrier Wargame!

There's a lengthy, competent, note in 'Topmasts' on the first rigid airship 'R1' built in 1911, and another which, I must say fascinated me. An account of two incidents involving alleged 'Ghost Ships' during WWII. One involving *U-445* in December 1942, and another involving *U-188* in March 1943. Both took place off the coast of Europe. In the first, the Submarine Commander reported sinking a four-stack destroyer with two torpedoes, and in the second, three torpedoes hit a large tanker in the middle of a convoy. Although the two sinkings were observed and described in detail, no losses of this kind were reported. The writer records a fascinating mystery, I wondered if any member knew more?

Rob Morgan.

SIGNAL PAD!

The NWS wargames weekend at the RNAS Museum, Yeovilton is planned to take place on the 3rd/4th of October. Dave Sharp is taking the lead in organising the event, so well done to him and anyone giving Dave a hand. Watch this space for info as it becomes available.

Dave Sharp asks:

Please can you let me know if you would like to put on a game for the show.

If possible could you let me have some idea of the theme/period and how many tables you will require.

dave_sharp@talktalk.net (dave(underscore)sharp)

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.

Membership secretary: simonjohnstokes@aol.com

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2020

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

Kenny Thomson, 12 Craigs Way, Rumford Grange, Rumford, Stirlingshire, FK2 0EU

Tel: 01324 714248

e-mail: kenny.thomson@hotmail.com - 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)

Devon and the West Country

Naval Wargames afternoon/evening/all day on a regular basis.

Contact Stuart Barnes Watson to arrange the details.

stuart_barnes_watson@hotmail.com

3 Clovelly Apartments, Oxford Park, Ilfracombe, DEVON, EX34 9JS

Tel: 01271 866637

Uruguay, SCOW: Southern Cone Orientales Wargamers • Games erupt, inquire to set one off: Bill Owen US telephone is [217-619-0202](tel:217-619-0202),

Uruguay 099 834 544 WmOwen@aol.com • If Spanish speaking, email & I will get someone who speaks it better. • Soca, Canelones or in Montevideo we can arrange a "Graf Spee 3 Gun Salvo": see her 5.9" gun, anchor & rangefinder salvaged from the ship resting in the harbor, a Real English Tour conducted by British expat staff who were associated with the British Ambassador who won the post-battle diplomacy and subterfuge plus, of course, a GQ3 refight of the battle (fees for features like museum & tour). • Most of the Salvo can even be done during a cruise ship stop in MVD from a Round Cape Horn itinerary between Santiago->Buenos Aires. • wargamecampaign.wordpress.com

THE NAVAL WARGAMES SOCIETY <http://www.navalwargamessociety.org> (Victorian Division "Cerberus")

Email: nws.victoria.au@gmail.com Membership by e-Subscription to NWS BATTLEFLEET magazine.