

All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 313 – NOVEMBER 2020

EDITORIAL

At the time of writing, we are on a slippery slope back into full lockdown around the world and many more months of restrictions. Is there an end in sight?

As the play by email Battle of the Denmark Strait and Battle of Felixstowe were well received and a bit of fun, I have been thinking on what could come next; taking on board the suggestions, of Members. It is tricky finding the right level of complexity for players without making the job of umpire too difficult/time consuming. If lockdown continues, I will have something in the New Year. I'm leaning towards Destroyer action at the First Battle of Narvik, ACW Ironclads or hypothetical Battle of the Gulf of Siam, Force Z vs Kongo and Haruna

In lockdown I have listened to several episodes of a podcast, "We have ways of making you talk", by historian, author and broadcaster James Holland and knowledgeable enthusiastic amateur Al Murray. (You may know him as stand-up comedian, "the Pub Landlord"). The subject is the Second World War, all aspects not just naval. The style is laid back, two guys having a chat over a beer. Sometimes they have guest contributors, recently a notable guest was Brian Johnson lead singer with AC/DC who spoke about his Dad and his own time in the "TA Paras". Most guests are experts on that week's subject. The standard is very high and for me the stand out episodes so far were the ones on Operation Market Garden and Dunkirk. Previous episodes are all available and it is free unless you chose to sign up for extras.

www.wehavewayspod.com

By now members will have received the latest 38.1 edition of "Battlefleet". 60 pages of goodness. Well done to the contributors and Simon Stokes; who will have sent out emails to those members of volume 37 who have not yet re-subscribed for volume 38. Producing "Battlefleet" is a bit like painting the Forth Bridge. The next edition is already in the early stages of being prepared. NWS Members can all make a contribution, so have a go – the Society is only as good as the Members make it.

Welcome to new Members Ken Scott and Stephen Cook.

Norman Bell

In 1918, the guns of the Western Front had fallen silent after more than four years of continuous warfare during The Great War/First World War.

Time to take a few minutes of silence and show respect for the end of a war and to remember those who have fallen. We will remember them, lest we forget!



A quick playing set of fleet action level Renaissance naval rules covering the period 1450 to 1600, allowing large scale battles such as Lepanto and Prevesa to be completed in a couple of hours or less.

<https://www.wargamevault.com/product/331292/Inferno-and-Glory?src=sub>



Historical events, Pearl Harbor for example, provides the wargamer with the chance to explore “what ifs” and/or get an insight into strategy and tactics not possible by just reading a book or sitting in a classroom.

HMS Sutherland, USS Ross and Norwegian frigate Thor Heyerdahl have taken time out from their exercise in the Barents Sea for a wreath laying service in honour of the Arctic Convoys in WW2. Over 100 ships were lost and over 3,000 sailors and merchant seamen. By tonnage more than 25% of the world’s shipping capacity passed through the convoys. U-Boats, bombers and surface ships harassed the convoys and then there was the weather.

SEA QUIZ 99.....the questions.

I was tempted to start this month with the question who played Commodore Harwood in ‘*The Battle of the River Plate*’, but ‘Octopus’ probably wouldn’t have approved at all. Now, the first question for this month was one I had no idea of the answer, but when you think of it, so obvious! Question 5 is not from ‘Octopus’s’ pen, but derives from a very scathing number of protests reported on the same page as the quiz questions (they included one from ‘Octopus’ - of this he certainly didn’t approve).

1. How and when was the ‘three mile limit’ determined?
2. Which early Battle Honour do *HMS’s Swiftsure, Ark Royal, Vanguard and Triumph* bear?
3. Which commander did John Jervis fight at the Battle of St. Vincent?

4. What did *HMS's Benbow, Sans Pareil, and Victoria* have in common?
5. What in *Bundesmarine* service have *HMS's Flamingo, Hart and Mermaid* become?

A decent set of questions this time, answers below.

Rob Morgan.

Rowland White's "Vulcan 607", about the Black Buck raids in 1982 is a cracking read and I hope that his new book "Harrier 809" is as good.

Battle of the Denmark Straits 2nd December 1941

So, it's not **the** Battle of the Denmark Straits then?

No. It came from something I read in Evan Mawdsley's excellent book, *The War for the Seas; A Maritime History of World War Two*. If you've not read it, I'd really recommend you getting hold of a copy. It's excellent. £25 but well worth it. Anyway, in the section dealing with US involvement in the Battle of the Atlantic before their official declaration of war, he mentions Task Force 1.3, based in Iceland to intercept any German ships attempting to break out into the Atlantic. In early November, radio intercepts revealed that the *Admiral Scheer* was preparing to sortie into the Atlantic and the US despatched the battleships *Idaho* and *Mississippi*. Screened by the cruisers *Wichita* and *Tuscaloosa*, to cover the Denmark Straits.

Admiral Scheer's sortie was actually cancelled because of mechanical problems, but I thought, 'Hmmmmm. What if?.....' This also coincided with me resurrecting some of my older and simpler naval games. I've decided that sometimes I just want a fast, playable game, not involving loads of paperwork. It seemed an ideal match.

First I tried out the old Avalon Hill ***War at Sea II***. This is better on strategic warfare rather than tactical engagements, so I wasn't at all surprised to see *Admiral Scheer* overwhelmed and sunk by *Mississippi, Wichita* and *Tuscaloosa*, in no short order.

Then I unpacked the old SPI game ***Dreadnought*** and set that out. I used to really enjoy playing that, and remember I had some fantastic big-fleet encounters, but those were 30 - 40 years ago. How would things go now? Well, *Admiral Scheer* went to the bottom again, overwhelmed in 15 minutes by the 8" gunfire from the two American cruisers whilst *Mississippi* gallantly steamed full speed in heavy seas, in a vain attempt to catch up.

Finally I tried using some simple counters with the ***Naval Thunder: Battleship Row*** rules. This gave me something of a better game.

On sighting the two US cruisers in the intermittent fog, *Admiral Scheer* steered to the south-east, attempting to lose her shadowers. Fire was opened, but no hits were obtained by her 11" guns. Initially, only *Tuscaloosa* was in range and although she fired at the German, she also failed to register any hits. *Admiral Scheer* turned away from her pursuers, firing from her aft turret. By now, by cutting corners, *Wichita* had managed to join *Tuscaloosa* and both cruisers opened fire on the German. *Wichita* failed to make any

impression on the *Admiral Scheer* but a lucky 8" hit from *Tuscaloosa* penetrated the armour of *Admiral Scheer's* forward turret, putting it out of action. *Admiral Scheer* again put her stern towards her enemies, and opened fire with her aft 11" guns, smoke trailing from her destroyed, forward turret. Again she was unlucky, and failed to score any hits. Neither did *Wichita*, firing with her two, triple forward turrets. *Tuscaloosa* was lucky again, though, this time hitting and destroying *Admiral Scheer's* aft turret and with it, her main armament.

Her commerce raiding was over before it was begun. With only 5.9" secondaries remaining, her Captain's only concern was to escape from her adversaries and he headed for the nearby fog banks, hoping to be able to make good his return to Norwegian waters without further mishap.

I left things there, for the moment. In three different games, the results had been broadly similar. The German pocket battleship had been unable to stand up to the American Task Group. In two of the games, in an echo of the Battle of the River Plate, cruisers alone had either sank the pocket battleship, or inflicted serious damage on her, serious enough for her to abort her raiding mission.

Good fun and interesting. It has been a long time since I've done any Second World War naval wargaming and I think Mawdsley's book has inspired me to try some more. I'm going to keep things simple, though. I recently bought *Admiral's War* a sort of global update of the old Avalon Hill *War at Sea* and *Victory in the Pacific*. The simplicity of this strategic game appeals to me. As for tactical games, well, I'm going to look out my older games, *Dreadnought* and Minden Games, *Battleships in Action* definitely, *Destroyer Captain* and *The Royal Navy* and several others for specific campaigns. A longer term aim is to use Topside Miniatures self-adhesive sheets of ships to build up some fleets, but we'll see how it all goes. Whatever develops, I think I've reached the age when 'playing naval war-games' has the emphasis on simplicity, on the 'Play' and 'Games'. For the moment, at least.

Andy Field

The night of 11th – 12th November 1940 saw a naval mission of determination and bravery when 42 aviators, in 21 outdated canvas-winged, Swordfish aircraft launched from HMS *Illustrious*. Their mission was the sinking of the Italian Battle Fleet at Taranto. Was it one of the most decisive air attacks of the Second World War? I vote "yes".

Leaving the deck of HMS *Illustrious* in radio silence, without navigation lights to avoid detection, the Swordfish flew 170 miles through the night to drop their torpedoes and bombs on the battleships, cruisers and destroyers anchored in Taranto harbour. The attacks on the heavily defended harbour were swift, sudden and unexpected, crippling the Italian fleet and rendering the Italian Navy ineffective for the rest of the War. Personally, when I've gamed the raid, I have yet to achieve as good a result as they did on the night. I blame me, not the games.

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HMS *Hermes*, flagship of the Falkland Island Task Force in 1982 was sold to India in 1986 and renamed *INS Viraat*. Now she has made her last voyage to the breakers yard in the western state of Gujarat. Plans to make her into a hotel/casino with swimming pool and golf course or museum

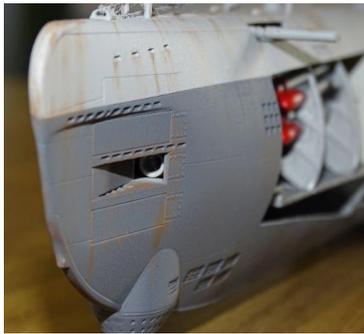
or sinking her as a diving attraction all came to nothing. BBC Reporter Brian Hanrahan was on Hermes when he famously said, "I counted them all out and I counted them all back".

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Moss Berryman born 9th November 1923 died 6th August 2020. He was the last surviving member of Operation Jaywick, the attack on Japanese ships in Singapore Harbour. From Australia to Singapore and back took 48 days in the 70ft wooden fishing boat MV Krait. Pay for the Special Forces was 5 bob a day. (That's 5 shillings or 25 pence (UK) in in this new-fangled decimal currency). The cyanide pills were free but fortunately not needed. On 18th September the Krait arrived at the Dutch East Indian Island of Pompong and from there six men in three two man canoes made their way to Singapore and attacked on 26th September. Limpet mines sunk three ships including the 5,000 ton *Kizan Maru*. Three additional ships were damaged. The canoes arrived back at Krait 1st – 3rd October. The Japanese never suspected the method of attack and tortured and killed Chinese, Malays, Europeans and prisoners of war in revenge. (The bastards). Major Lyon the CO of Op Jaywick was killed on a subsequent mission. In 1993 on the 50th anniversary of the raid, Moss Berryman met Major Lyon's son at Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore. Brian Lyon had never met his Dad. The Krait is at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. For reasons unknown to me, Moss Berryman did not receive his danger money (A\$470 (£260) until 2018 when a radio station took up his case.

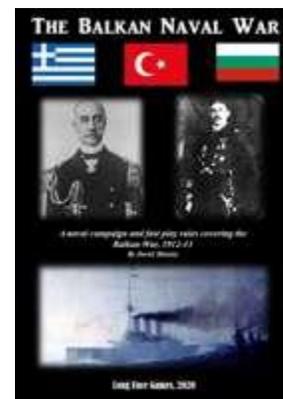


Sub model Photographs from Lindsay Bailey.



A mini campaign covering the naval side of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 in the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Mediterranean. The campaign has been written with LFG's "Broadside and Salvo" quick play rules in mind, but is adaptable to any set of pre-dreadnought or WW1 naval rules. Also included is a brief history of the naval campaign, the "Broadside and Salvo" fast play pre-dreadnought rules and a complete set of ship data in "Broadside and Salvo" format, allowing the campaign to be fought out over a weekend or a few club nights.

<https://www.wargamevault.com/product/326552/Balkan-Naval-War-191213?src=exclusively>



TOPSIDE MINIATURES FLEETS in PDF format

Ever since their introduction, I've been a fan of Topside Miniatures (topsideminis.com) self-adhesive ship plans as a less expensive option to buying fleets of miniatures. They're well drawn, attractive and there are small differences between ships of the same class. The only trouble was that they were still a bit too large for the space I've got available for gaming, and the cost of shipping for the wooden bases seemed to rule out large fleets for me. When they did their Tsushima and Jutland sets as PDF files and at a choice of scales I was happier, as I could just purchase online, print, mount them, cut them out with a craft knife and start gaming.

Now, even better, the two Johns (John Czarzasky & John Giacchino) have started to produce their WW2 sets as PDFs, starting with the US Navy, the Imperial Japanese Navy and the RN. You can purchase the ships in 1:1800, 1:2400 or 1:3000 scale. The aircraft come in these scales as well, or there is the option to buy them at 1:600 and you can even get all of the carriers that fought at Midway in 1:600, if you so desire. Each fleet costs between \$25 - 35 depending on the scale, whilst the aircraft sets cost between \$15 - 30, depending on the scale you want. Here's what they say about them:

"...We have decided to offer our ship and aircraft sets in pdf format for a few reasons. First we knew there were a lot of people outside the US that were interested in our product but shipping was prohibitive especially for the larger sets, secondly the reduction in time it takes for us to print, assemble the bases, and ship the product was taking too much time away from us being able to develop new products. There are several other sets we would like to make but we just never had the time. Finally there is the cost issue. Although our product which was printed and had bases provided were still far cheaper than buying 3D minis, the pdfs are even less expensive. People are resourceful in this hobby, there is vinyl sticker paper to print on and bases can be made from any sturdy stock. Art board is an excellent option. You can attach the paper to the board and then cut the images. All this will hopefully get more people to give naval wargaming a try..."

Seems reasonable, and its greatly simplified buying big fleets at usable scales. When you order online you use a drop-down to decide on the scale you want to buy, and what size paper you want (A4 or US Letter). When the purchase is completed (through Paypal) you get a download link, and there you go!

I print mine off onto self-adhesive, label paper and mount them up on artist's mount board. You can just use grey, as I have in the past, or use a different colour for each navy, as I might do with

these. Attached below are examples of the ships at differing scales, to give you an idea as to what's on offer. I've gone for the 1:3000 myself, as it fits my gaming space best, and ended up with the 2 fleets and aircraft, which gave me about 7 sheets each of ships and aircraft for each navy, all for what I considered a reasonable price.

I'd urge members to check out their website and see what's on offer. You can get sets for Tsushima, Coronel and the Falklands, Jutland and the above-mentioned, as well as 3 "Targets" sets. Even if you don't want the ship sets, the aircraft and Target sets may be useful for your gaming. As soon as mine are mounted up I'm going to try them with either the *Naval Thunder* rules or Dave Manley's *Find, Fix & Strike*.

Andy Field



Editor's note: I'm a bit of a Topside Mini fan also. But I must say that I do not find their website as user friendly as the version it replaced.

SEA QUIZ 99...Answers.

'Octopus' awarded only 5 points for question number 4, and 10 for number 2, which I put down to pure nostalgia. When you think about it the first answer's so obvious....

1. In 1702, and 3 miles was the range of a shore gun.
2. The Battle Honour was 1588 'Armada'.

3. Admiral Jervis fought the Spanish under Don Jose de Cordova.
4. I thought this was a hard one. They carried the largest-16.25in – gun aboard battleships in RN service.
5. *HMS Flamingo, HMS Hart and HMS Mermaid*, the three Black Swan Class Frigates sold became, accompanied by protest.. *Graf Spee; Scheer and Scharnhorst*.

In a charming paragraph the journal's Editor takes time to remind readers of the origin of the new names in German service, and the fates of their predecessors, which briefly for new readers was (1) Scuttled, (2) Bombed, and (3) Sunk by Gunfire.

Rob Morgan.

SIGNAL PAD!

The foreign Ministers of Australia, India, Japan and the United States have met to discuss Covid-19, counterterrorism, cybersecurity and how best to act in the face of China's increasing belligerence in the region. The USA is rethinking its strategic composition of the Navy to meet the Chinese threat, increasing the number of vessels overall to 500+ but possibly reducing the number of aircraft carriers.

The recent Special Boat Squadron's (the RNs equivalent of the SAS) action in the English Channel, fast roping aboard the Oil/Chemical tanker Nave Andromeda and rounding up the stowaways (possible terrorists/hijackers) without bloodshed leads me to wonder if anyone games similar situations.

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.

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.

NWS Scapa Flow – Orkney

Lindsay Bailey (Chair, Orkney Wargames Club) E-mail: OrkneyTGC@gmx.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/248206695192960/>

Also see www.orkneywargames.com

Orkney Wargames Club meets each Thursday evening from 6pm and caters for all kinds of wargames. Naval games are popular, with at least one game run each month. We also host an annual wargaming event, **Northern Invasion**, involving other clubs from the North of Scotland.

- Popular periods: The Age of Fighting Sail, Pre-Dreadnought, WW1, WW2 and WW2 Coastal.