



# All Guns Blazing!

## Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 163 – November 2007

### Editorial

Hi Everyone,

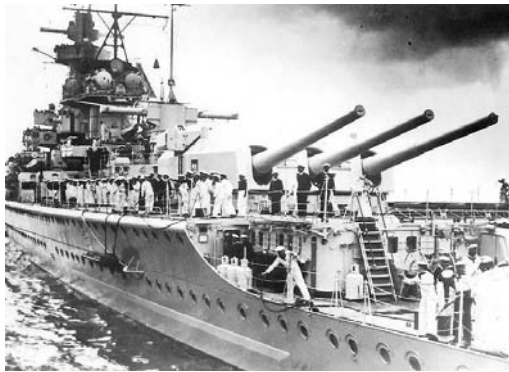
For those of you following the developments at Manley HQ, things are still in a mess. The wargames room is unlikely to be sorted out until next year and so all my books and models are in storage. However, as this month's battle report shows I've been keeping my hand in with a monster battle fought in the US. A most interesting affair that reminded me a lot of the "good old days" at Mortimer. Those were the days, eh? Twenty or more wargamers in a village hall fighting out a battle over the course of a day, then retiring to the bar for an extensive post mortem. If only we could do that now.... (continues mumbling in comfy chair with a glass of port, reminiscing about the "old days" of naval wargaming....)

Yours aye,

DM

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## The Annual "North Cape" Event On Board HMS Belfast December 28th / 29th 2007



The NWS, in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum and the Wavy Navy, will be running an event on board HMS BELFAST between Christmas and New Year. This year's "North Cape" event, which runs from the 28th – 29th December, will feature actions from the South Atlantic in two wars. The first will be based on the Battle of the River Plate, the second on events in the Falklands in 1982. Simon Stokes is running both games, which will be run as participation games for the public as well as for NWS members who are attending. As usual accommodation will be available on board for those NWS members taking part who wish to stay over. For those of you that haven't done so this is an excellent opportunity to get some "sea time" in and to see a little of the "behind the scenes" life on board the ship as she was as a warship and as she is now as a floating museum. If you are interested in taking part please contact Simon Stokes direct at;

[simonjohnstokes@aol.com](mailto:simonjohnstokes@aol.com)

**Battle of the Chesapeake, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1781**  
*(as refought October 27<sup>th</sup> 2007)*  
A report by David Manley



Many readers will be familiar with the “Close Action” age-of-sail rules written by Mark Campbell. Every year for the past 3 years Mark organises a monster CA game somewhere in the Washington DC area. These games feature upwards of 40 players, each driving one or two ships and attract players from along the East coast of the US and beyond. This year I was fortunate enough to be in the US on a business trip and I was able to make it along to the game, which was held at a village community centre in Columbia, Maryland. The scenario was based on the Battle of the Chesapeake Bay, the naval battle that effectively sealed the fate of the British Army in North America and guaranteed American independence. I was assigned the British 74 gun ship of the line “Invincible”, third from the rear of the British line. A feature of these monster games is the pre-game planning. Our commander in chief, Hal Eisen, emailed out his plan, which involved the Van and Centre charging the French line in line abreast whilst the Rear (including me) would spear through the enemy line in line astern, cutting off the French rear from the head of the line. To a greater extent our squadron was the “expendable” force that would (we hoped) guarantee victory for the rest of the fleet. With the plan exposed to his ship’s captains Hal then took comments and suggestions on the plan over several days. We congregated at the village hall at 0830 on October 27<sup>th</sup> for a last minute brief, then were ushered into the hall. I found my ship astern of the Rear Admiral, and just ahead of another couple of British liners commanded by Tatiana (a young girl from Philadelphia) and Mike (a Washington DC cop). The game started and we were off, our squadron turning in succession towards the enemy whilst the Van and Centre hared off in line abreast. All well and good, but the French line wore and (attempted to) form a double line. The reaction of the British fleet was less than stellar, and compounded by the command lag imposed by the strict signalling rules that were in force. Several times we in the rear received orders from the CinC and our rear admiral that were in conflict, or which made perfect sense during the previous turn but which, a turn later, would have us out of position. Nevertheless we played to the spirit of the rules, following our orders as we had been reminded we would have to do. As a result our progress towards the enemy line was slowed somewhat and we ended up making contact (a) heading downwind rather than upwind as we’d expected and (b) somewhat further downwind than we’d planned. No matter, since the French rear was made up of some slow sailers and they themselves were not as far upwind as we’d feared. We turned again and headed upwind towards the centre, called by the CinC to support what was happening there.

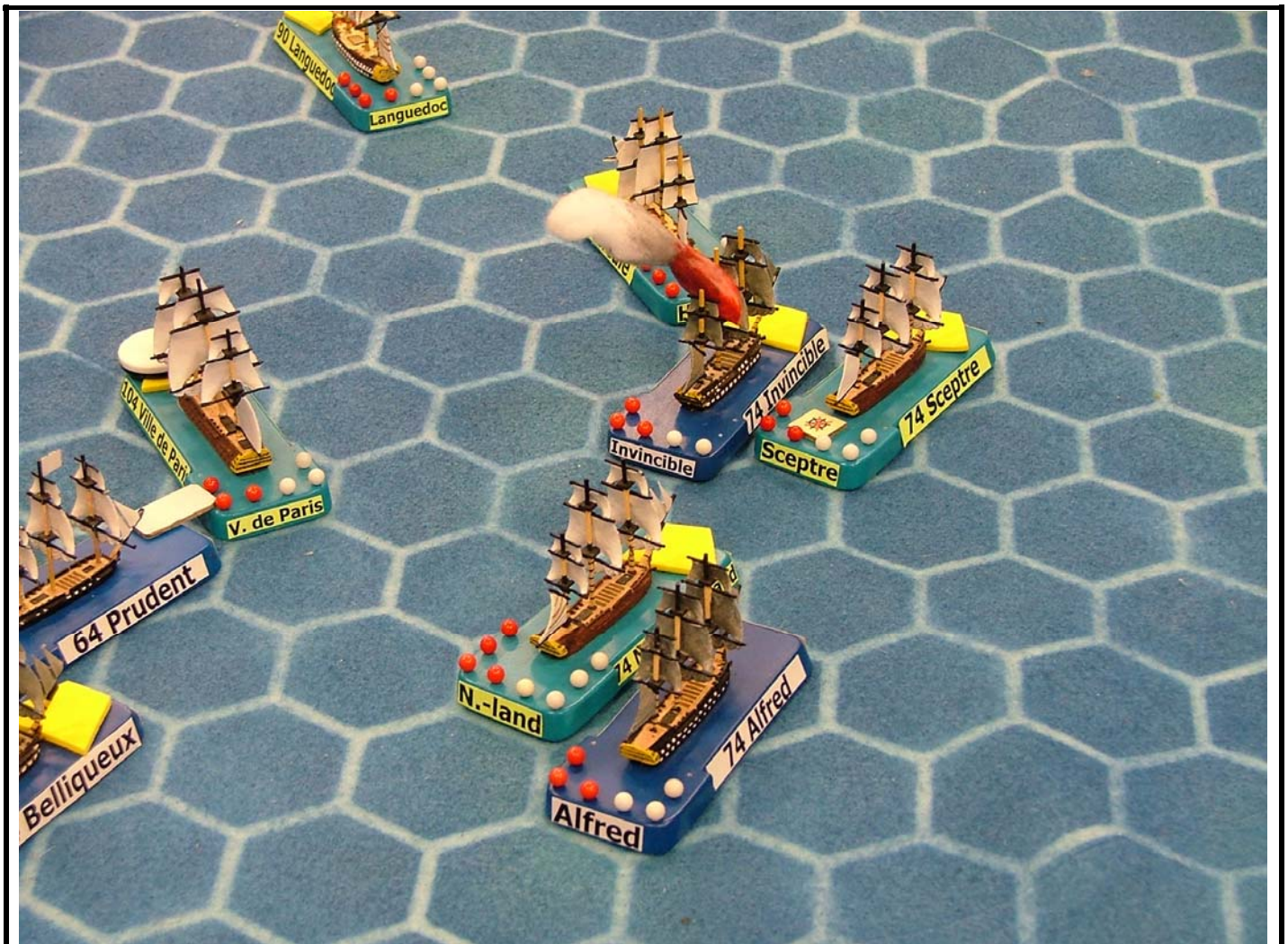




*The game in progress, with Mark Campbell moving ships of the French Rear squadron*

The Van and Centre had degenerated into a vast melee. This should have been to a significant British advantage but several ships were out of position and we could see victory slipping from our grasp. Orders were received to mix it with the French rear to slow their progress and I took Invincible into a close quarter dogfight with three enemy 74s. This had the desired effect and, with some deft ship handling I managed to cause some confusion before a dreaded "boxcars" critical landed upon poor Invincible. This caused an explosion and fire which took an age to put out, after which my once-proud 74 resembled a barbecue more than a fighting ship. I was by now engulfed by the French rear and the chance of escape to open water looked very slim. However, I still had one or two tricks up my sleeve and, as the French 74 Northumberland closed to engage I hauled across her bow. A broadside from another ship brought down my last mast, leaving my ship wallowing in the path of Northumberland, which crashed into Invincible and became stuck fast. As the game ended I was pouring still fairly substantial broadsides into the bow of the French ship, which was unable to respond. Elsewhere in the battle substantial damage had been caused to both sides but the battle was a clear French victory.





*Invincible, in flames, slugs it out with Sceptre*

The game was a testament to Mark's organisational abilities, with over 40 players marshalled with great effectiveness (standfast the escape of several players for lunch). The game was fought in a most amiable manner and everyone enjoyed themselves. The post mortem began at the close of the game and, in keeping with the manner in which the briefings had been carried out, continued with an almost endless flow of email traffic between the combatants. All still done with utmost civility.

Mark plans to organise similar monster games every year around the date of Trafalgar, so if you happen to find yourself in North America in late October and fancy taking part in something rather out of the ordinary I'd strongly recommend contacting him to see whether there are any places going for the next game. One word of warning though – previous experience of age-of-sail wargaming is a necessity!

For more information on the battle, go to:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Chesapeake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Chesapeake)

## **NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2007**

### **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/>

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)

### **NWS North Hants [Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday]**

Jeff Crane 31 Park Gardens, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hants, 01256 427906  
*e-mail:* [gj.crane@ntlworld.com](mailto:gj.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.