



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 178 – December 2008

Editorial

This issue is a little delayed for a whole variety of reasons, for which your editor would like to apologise. "Real Life" continues to take its toll of my spare time and so its time to begin the hunt for a successor. I would like to find someone who is willing to take on editing the newsletter from July 2009, which will mark the end of my third year at the helm. If anyone who has a bit of spare time and a flair with Word or another suitable software package would like to take over please let me know. I will still be happy to generate PDFs and to post copies to the website.

Contributions to AGB are always welcome. "Soft copy" input via email is the preferred method of submission as it cuts down the time taken to get your piece into the newsletter considerably!

And finally, may I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Yours aye,

DM

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NWS on board HMS BELFAST

The annual Christmas event on board HMS BELFAST will be running again this year. I am informed by Simon Stokes that the theme this time around will be Convoy JW51B, with some interesting new rules in play, and 1/600 models on the table (or should that be the deck?). If anyone has a burning desire to volunteer, or to know more, please don't hesitate to email either myself or Simon.



The NW S "crew" at the 2003 North Cape refight on board BELFAST. What excitement will this year's Christmas game bring?

Battle Report - Gunboats on the Danube

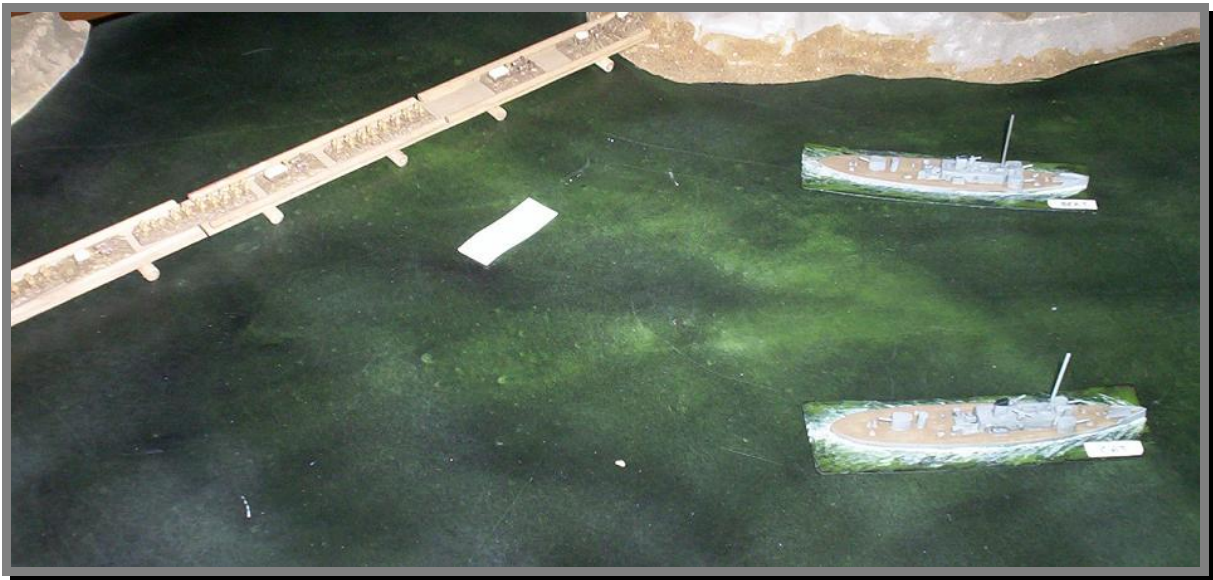
Great War Riverine Action

Introduction

For October's game at the North Hampshire regional group we staged a scenario based on an idea I'd previously put forward in an article on Great War Riverine Actions in Battlefleet volume 30 issue 1.

The background to the scenario is the attack of the Austrian monitors of the Donauflottille on the Rumanian pontoon bridge at Flamina on 2nd October 1916. The monitors *Bodrog* and *Körös*, plus the patrol boats *Wels*, *Viza* and *Barsch* had to approach a Rumanian pontoon bridge through treacherous sandbanks to try to destroy the bridge by gunfire, mines floated downstream and other such inventive schemes. The bridge was defended by Rumanian machine guns, light artillery and the Rumanian monitors *Lasca* and *Ion C Bratianu* bought up in support of the defences.

We dusted off the scenery we used for the Nahr-Al-Kalek bend display game we used at Salute last year and pressed it into service again to represent the Danube. A scratch built pontoon bridge, figures from tumbling dice and 1/600th scale monitors and gunboats from PT dockyard completed the scene. A lack of any manufacturer that produces Austrian river monitors and gunboats in this scale meant that we had to use stand-ins. The monitors you see below are actually all Rumanian monitors of the *Ion C Bratianu* class, so at least the Rumanians were accurately represented.



Pontoon bridge across the Danube with the Rumanian monitors covering the approach.

For rules we used David Manley's "Action Stations on the Danube" rule supplement. To add a bit of variety and historical flavour each side randomly picked three of the following cards:

Rumanian

Conventional Minefield	Command Detonated Mine	Above Water Cable	Submerged Cable
Sand Bank 1/7 for 5cm radius (grounding hazard)	Sand Bank 1/7 for 5cm radius (grounding hazard)	Sand Bank 1/7 for 5cm radius (grounding hazard)	Sand Bank 1/7 for 5cm radius (grounding hazard)

Austrian

Soil Filled Barge	Floating Mine	German Bomber (2x50lb bombs)	German Bomber (2x50lb bombs)
Soil Filled Barge	Floating Mine	German Bomber (2x50lb bombs)	German Bomber (2x50lb bombs)

The Game

Dave Sharp, Rob Hutton and Jeff's grandson Ric took command of the Austrian flotilla whilst Jeff and Robert Kirk commanded the two Rumanian monitors whilst I controlled the Rumanian land forces.

The Austrians pulled their three cards and got a soil filled barge, floating mine and German bomber, whilst the Rumanians drew a sandbank, above water cable and a submerged cable. Robert placed the Rumanian cards face down on the river in the position where he wanted the obstacle to be.

The Austrians proceeded sedately down stream and round the last bend before coming in sight of the Rumanian pontoon bridge and the Rumanian monitors proceeding up stream to meet them to try to head them off before they could come near enough to do any damage.



Austrian flotilla rounds the river bend, the gunboats detouring round the sandbank.

A furious fire fight ensued between the opposing monitors, with the Austrian gunboats initially staying out of harms way by making a detour round a sandbank which Ric had confidently sailed *Koros* straight over the top of without even touching the bottom. In the initial exchanges it was Dave's monitor *Bodrog* which came off worst, hit repeatedly and with at one time as many as 7 separate fires, she nevertheless plodded on, often without either her captain on the bridge or a helmsman at the wheel, repairing the machinery damage as she went. She nevertheless kept up a punishing fusillade of fire with her one remaining 4.7" gun upon Jeff's leading monitor *Ion C Bratianu* which itself was soon on fire and out of control as it ploughed into the river bank on the Rumanian shoreline. *Koros* also opened fire on the pontoon bridge itself with her 4.7" howitzer and was rewarded with a single hit which caused damage to the central section of the bridge, but not enough to prevent it's use.



Ion C Bratianu runs aground as the Austrian monitors close in.

Damage to the Austrian monitors continued to mount however as the Rumanian shore batteries added their weight of fire to try to stop the Austrians short before they came within effective range of the bridge. The punishment was too much in the end for *Koros* and she lost all power as heavy shells penetrated her armour and put her machinery out of action. As she drifted helplessly towards the Rumanian river bank she ran up against the submerged cable the Rumanians had stretched across the river at this point. Lucky dice rolls from Ric indicated that *Koros* in fact managed to hit the cable square on with her bows and parted the cable even though it was only the current of the river that was moving her along. With the river bank getting ever closer and her machinery still out of action, Ric decided to launch into the river's stream the soil filled barge that *Koros* had been towing. *Bodrog* temporarily regained power from her damaged machinery sufficient to allow her to press on, but eventually the heavy shell hits from both Rumanian monitors and shore batteries breached her armoured sides and she began to settle as river water filled her hull. The now silent and sinking monitor then drifted ominously with the current towards the bridge and threatened to do with her water logged hull what she had failed to do with her guns. Eventually though the current took her towards the Bulgarian river bank where she ran aground well short of the bridge. The soil filled barge released by *Koros* initially made unnerving progress from the point of view of the Rumanians, but eventually the Rumanian gunners managed to land enough hits on it to sink and it went down quickly in the end, well short of the bridge.

The Austrian gunboats staged a valiant effort to try and carry forward the attack, but they were no match for the Rumanian monitors and soon *Viza* was sinking and *Wels* was heavily damaged, but not before releasing her floating mines into the river's current. It was these floating mines that came closest to completing the mission for the Austrians as the mines, drifting this way and that in the current, avoided all obstacles in their path, didn't run into the river bank, drifted under the above water cable which was the last line of defence for the bridge and on underneath the pontoons of the central section of the Rumanian bridge. Here though the dice rolls that had been quite kind to them thus far deserted the Austrian players just when they needed them most of all and the mines failed to snag on the pontoons and drifted harmlessly downstream.



Viza, Bodrog and Koros wrecked and sinking eventually run aground well short of the bridge as the soil filled barge drifts downstream.

The surviving Austrian gunboats retired back upstream as the Austrians played their remaining card that gave them a last desperate chance to complete their mission. A single lonely German biplane bomber appeared in the sky and made a bombing run on the bridge. None of the bombs hit however and the Rumanians were declared victors at the (1st) battle for Flamina.



Remaining Austrian gunboats retire back upstream.

Conclusions

It was a fun and fairly evenly matched game that could have gone either way. The Austrian monitors were marginally inferior to their Rumanian adversaries however as even the advantage of veteran crews on the Austrian boats didn't quite make up for the material disadvantage. The Austrians did have a real chance of knocking out the Rumanian pontoon bridge though and in fact came within an ace of doing so, even though they paid a high price to do it.

Historically the Rumanian monitors were not present when the Austrians attacked, and the Rumanian general in command of the attack was roundly criticised for not bringing them up in support of the crossing. Both *Bodrog* and *Koros* were damaged by shore batteries in the attack, *Koros* having to be left aground on the Rumanian river bank overnight before her damage could be repaired and she could be floated off and towed back to the Austrian base at Beline. The Rumanian pontoon was damaged in these attacks and the use of the bridge by the Rumanian army temporarily halted, but the bridge was quickly repaired and soon back in action.

We hope to play many more great war riverine games in the future, and with a bit of luck generate some interest in this more obscure naval wargaming subject.

Thanks go to Jeff for the hospitality as usual.

Simon Stokes

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2008

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

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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.
