



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 198 –October 2010

EDITORIAL

Gentlemen,

You know it is funny how the brains of a naval wargamer work. The other day I noticed an email with 'CVs' as the 'Subject'; naturally I opened it at once. However, far from being some interesting facts on aircraft carriers, it turned out to be a request from a school my wife works at for her *curriculum vitae*! I'm sure that this membership, at least, will recognize that it was an easy mistake to make! And talking of aircraft carriers...

While 'Googling' maps of the Marshall Islands a couple of weeks ago an interesting website came up, www.history.co.uk. The page entitled 'Battle 360°' has a collection of short documentaries on the USS *Enterprise* (CV 6). These blend interviews with veteran crewmen and historians, old film and computer generated action sequences and are headed: 'Life on Board an Aircraft Carrier', 'Weapons Match Up', 'Meet the Men', and 'Anatomy of a Raid'. (Though why, oh why, they thought it necessary to have heavy rock music in the background is a complete mystery to me; I would have thought that if any were needed at all some big band music would have been far more appropriate.) The picture below will give you an idea of what's in store, and it is well worth a look. I tried to find the relevant page via the Home Page, so I could tell you how navigate your way there, but failed miserably every time—I *just couldn't find it that way at all!* Then I tried in vain to give you a more, how shall I say, digestible link to follow, but unless I used this obscene amount of gobbledygook that includes my original Marshall Island search, I couldn't make it work! Still, as I said, it's definitely worth a look. Here it is, folks! Hope the representation of some of their graphics tempts you, even if this idiotic link doesn't!

http://www.history.co.uk/shows/battle-360/season-1/videos.html?utm_source=yahoo&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=battle%21442&utm_term=marshall%20islands%20about



Now, I always seem to be apologising about something in my editorials these days. Whether it's the semi-usual grovel about *AGB* being a tad late, or finding I've put the wrong caption under current RN vessels. However, I've just come across this in the monthly newsletter sent out by Julian Stockwin, the author of the popular 'Kydd' series of Nelsonic naval fiction:

The renowned marine artist Geoff Hunt RSMA is having a busy 2010! Earlier in the year he was guest speaker aboard the four-masted barque Sea Cloud on a Nelsonic cruise around the western Mediterranean. Impressed by her lovely lines, Geoff plans to paint the ship in the near future. He's also done a series of paintings inspired by C S Forester's Hornblower novels.

My problem is I am *sure* I read well over a year ago that Geoff Hunt had died! To the extent that when I was referring to his work and its relation to my on-going quest to find the distribution of British ensign colours at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent in last November's *AGB*, I lamented his sad demise! Blimey, I do hope he

never saw it. I suppose it could have tempted the sort of laconic reply of, "Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated," etc; and I'm sure I've read *that* somewhere too, but I can't remember where! I think it is obvious to us all that despite the fact that I really enjoy writing articles and editing this newsletter, I could never be a *real* journalist—I'd be in court all the time on charges of liable or misrepresentation. But hang on; I suppose I could always escape gaol by volunteering for the sea!

Yours packing his ditty-bag

Richard Wimpenny (Landsman)

wimpenny@talktalk.net

THE LANCE-BOMB OF WWI

By Rob Morgan

Paul Kemp's 1993 volume *Convoy Protection: The Defence of Seaborne Trade* was a volume I had not encountered until very recently. It was published originally by 'Arms and Armour Press' (ISBN 1-85409-037-2), and, I believe, now long out of print. It is an interesting but fairly standard book on submarine and anti-submarine warfare in the twentieth century, which, sadly, lacks a definitive bibliography. Nor were any of the photographs, some good and other unusual, attributed to any specific source. In the case of this particular illustration, this is a shame!



The caption tells us this is a 'lance-bomb', an early method of 'dealing' with a U-boat, and Kemp terms the weapon as, "Imaginative but unpractical." I have never encountered an illustration or specimen of this WWI weapon before. It is clearly in the hands of a Royal Navy matelot and seems to be a yard-long pole with a simple 'shell-shaped' warhead at one end, probably with an impact detonator. It has something of the look of a WWII German *panzerfaust* about it, and I presume that was the intended to be used in the same manner; thrown (rather than shot off) against the hull of a U-boat, to breach it with an explosive charge. Arguably, it is not unlike some of the extemporised Japanese anti-tank pole-arms of late WWII and it could even have re-emerged as an anti-tank device in Allied hands later, in 1917 or 1918. Of course, in its intended role, if the U-boat being attacked had submerged, the 'lance-bomb' could still be effective to an extent, as it would sink with its own weight and might breach the top of the casing of the vessel.

Kemp's book doesn't mention this weapon at all, beyond a slightly derogatory comment on early anti-submarine activity. Was the 'lance-bomb' in the photograph merely a prototype, or did it enter service? I suspect it could be easily and quite cheaply manufactured, and as a weapon it is no stranger than many of the odd British weapons of WWII!

THE CORAL SEA 1942

(OSPREY CAMPAIGN SERIES 214)

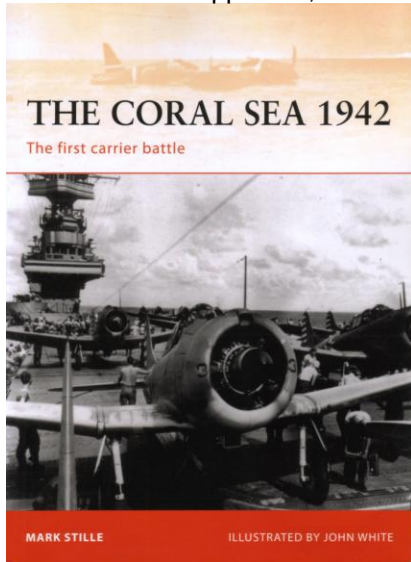
By Mark Stille

(Illustrated by John White)

£14.99

Reviewed by Richard Wimpenny

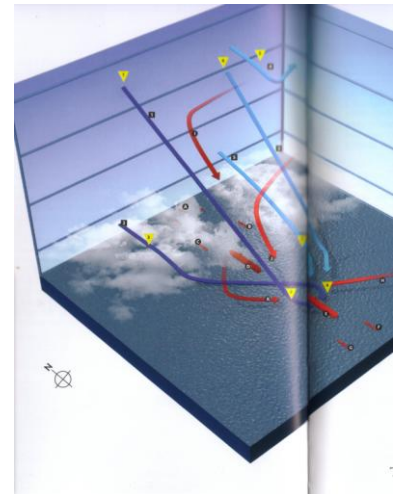
The aircraft carrier without doubt is the very icon of the Pacific War. From the world-shattering events over Pearl Harbour on December 7 1941, through the months of Japanese expansion and US raids, the carrier had demonstrated its flexibility and power across the vast Pacific Ocean. Nevertheless, the war was nearly six months old before carrier squared off against carrier; and this new form of naval combat, where neither admiral saw his opponent, was born in the Coral Sea.



In *'The Coral Sea 1942'*, a brief overview of the early months of the war and short biographies of both Japanese and American admirals, is followed by the development of the Japanese plan to protect their rapidly-gained conquests by pushing further into the South Pacific, almost to the shores of Australia itself. With a minimum of resources the Japanese had gone from success to success during the first months of 1942, but a sensational strike by aircraft from the US carriers *Lexington* and *Yorktown* on March 10 that sank numerous transports off Papua New Guinea convinced the Japanese High Command that fleet carriers would be required to guard against further hit and run raids—and that meant gaining the great Admiral Yamamoto's approval. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the Battle of The Coral Sea, as Yamamoto's main focus was on the central Pacific and his plan to draw the US carriers into a battle of annihilation off Midway. However, he eventually agreed to detach the 'junior' 5th Carrier Division, the mighty *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, for the South Pacific ('Operation MO'), before his cherished Midway campaign. Although both carriers were slated to rejoin the Combined

Fleet as soon as MO was completed, *Shokaku* was badly damaged and *Zuikaku's* air group was decimated by US air strikes in the Coral Sea battle, resulting in both these powerful carriers missing Midway a month later. How different history may have been!

This ninety-six page addition to the ever-growing 'Osprey Campaign Series' follows usual format of this type. Mark Stille, who seems to have become Osprey's Pacific specialist, has written an informative narrative, while John White's illustrations of dive-bombers 'screaming' down on enemy flattops offer highly atmospheric 'snapshots' of the battle. In common with all the Osprey ranges, the text is further enhanced by a detailed order of battle, as well as dozens of period black and white photographs and full-colour maps. As with later carrier engagements, The Coral Sea was a complex encounter that was made up of a series of complex 'strikes' and 'counter strikes'. To help follow these important stages of the action and to highlight the importance of aerial tactics in a carrier battle, there are very clear three dimensional representations of the main attacks during this two-day battle that show the altitude as well as the angle of approach of attacking aircraft and cloud cover. A very useful 'first', I believe for Osprey, as this rendition (opposite) of the US strikes on the 5th Carrier Division show. (Not my best scan, but I think you get the general idea!)



As a recent convert to the thrills of carrier actions, I personally find the early operations of the Pacific War far more interesting than the later 'Turkey Shoots', and *The Coral Sea 1942* is a good starting point for research for any naval wargamer considering gaining his 'wings'.

DISPOSING OF A BATTLESHIP—1952 STYLE!

By Rob Morgan

That interesting publication of the Navy League, 'The Navy', carried an article in the summer of 1952 by Nowell Hall, a writer who put the opinion that, "...any one of our newer destroyers would be able to dispose of such a ship as the battleship HMS *Implacable*, the fleet's flagship of fifty years ago with impunity." Hmm? Like so many hypothetical suggestions, and I recall a few on subjects such as the possibility of an old French battleship being sunk by the Graf Spee in 1939, cropping up over the years, it has some interest to the naval wargamer. It certainly created a vigorous correspondence between the 'modernists' and the old 'line of battleship' supporters!



Captain Hall selected the then very new 'Darings' as his destroyer of choice for the purpose of the exercise, as they were armed with 4.5s, had the benefit of accurate radar-controlled gunner and a tremendous rate of fire. The 'Daring' class were probably the best choice available, though he concentrated upon gunnery and didn't mention the battery of torpedoes available.

HMS *Implacable* was launched in 1899 and was broken up in 1921, and the old experts who argued with Hall stated categorically that the old ship's four 12-inch and twelve 6-inch guns would see off the destroyer with rapidity! She also had a twelve inch belt and barbettes, and lightly armoured decks (1-3 inches), and was capable of eighteen knots in her prime.



Speed and range are the keys to the problem said Nowell Hall. Probably true, and goes on to suggest that it would be the 'Daring' which did all the damage from outside the *Implacable*'s range, despite the ironclad's Krupp armour? With the pre-dreadnought long gone, it was an academic question back then, but one I think worth at least a tabletop venture. A pity that neither Nowell Hall nor his many detractors, some very senior men among them, chose the option of wargaming the encounter. Worth a try even now, I think!

(I have been intrigued by this question, though my money would very much on the 'Daring', and I thought that Seekrieg 5 would be the perfect rule-set for such a wargame, as all the subtleties of differing fire-control issues would be at your fingertips. Sadly, SK5's timeframe is 1880-1945 and there are no stats for the 'Daring' class. However, I suppose a ship log could be worked out, or a slightly older destroyer substituted. RW)

THE NAVY LEAGUE QUIZ PART TWO

Questions to Part One with the answers in italics:

1. Can you name 10 British warships beginning with MO?
(*Mohawk, Montrose, Monarch, Moon Morning Star, Modest, Moresby, Monmouth, Moorhen, Mosquito, Mounsey and Montcalm.*)
2. Which British warship was the first to have four funnels?
(*The paddle frigate 'Terrible'.*)
3. Which British ironclad was the first to have BL turret?
(*HMS 'Colossus', in 1882.*)
4. Which ships do you associate with these commanders with: a. Broke (*HMS 'Shannon'*) b. Cochrane (1801) (*HM Brig 'Speedy'*) c. C Codrington (1827) (*HMS 'Asia', at Navarino.*)
5. What was the motto of the *Navy League*?
(*'Keep Watch'.*)

A couple of members, Jeff Crane and Mike Dowd, tried their hand at the Navy League's puzzling 1952 quiz, and both did rather well. However, an interesting conundrum arose. As can be seen above the answers, as provided by 'The Navy League' and as forwarded by Rob Morgan, give the solution to question 3 as HMS *Colossus*. Mike's answer was *Colossus's* sister ship HMS *Edinburgh*; based on the fact that, according to 'Conways she was launched on March 21 1882, three days before *Colossus*. In fairness to 'The Navy League', however, *Colossus* was completed on October 31 1886, while *Edinburgh* took till July 8 the following year. Nevertheless, it's a mute point, and 1882 was given as part of the answer. (Information taken from page 27 of 'Conway's' *All The World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905.*) If any future discrepancies occur, your flexible editor will accept both dates. Anyway, enough wrangling, on with round two!

QUIZ PART TWO

1. Which Royal Navy warship fired the first round off the Belgian coast in WWI, and what calibre was the gun?
2. What were the names of the first two British warships (sisters) to have steel armour?
3. Which two Royal Navy warships had the most forebears of their respective names? (Remember this was a question posed in 1952.)
4. The name of the first Royal Navy warship with barbets?
5. Commanders and ships: Carpenter and...? Vian and...? Naismith and...?

Good luck, gentlemen, and many thanks to Rob Morgan for supplying the second instalment of this intriguing series!

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)
-
-

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.
