



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 208 –August 2011

EDITORIAL

Gentlemen,

First off this month I have to make a small apology to Mike Dowd, and indeed the rest of the readership, as I managed in my ham-fisted way to double-up part of his article *'Roskill and The Times'*—one of the perils of 'cut and paste' and rushed proof reading! I hope it didn't lead to too much confusion. Still, trouble with unintelligible signals was ever the bane of the Service, was it not?

I have no battle report to include this month, though I was hoping to have one of my own. I have mentioned a few times recently of my renewed enthusiasm for the *Fear God & Dread Nought* rule set; so much so that I have been running a solo mini-campaign, complete with maps and all the delicious signalling rules that this particular set has to offer. It is a mid-WWI clash in the North Sea, with light cruisers scouting ahead of the battlecruisers, destroyer flotillas and a lurking 5th Battle Squadron; oh, and the whole High Sea Fleet as a potential threat! The problem is I haven't had enough time to finish it, family holidays, etc, so hopefully it will grace next month's issue.

For our members 'Up North' I have received intelligence that a new wargames shop has opened in Bolton, Lancashire. I have few details as yet, but I shall see if I can induce one our local alumni to go and scout over the horizon and send in a report.

Aside from an interesting piece by Norman Bell on the *Navy News* and some superb photos supplied by Mike Crane, a non-member friend of Rob Morgan's, the entire issue is courtesy of the same Rob Morgan! Many thanks, Rob.

Well, I'll let you 'clear the decks' or 'close up', which ever you prefer and carry on with August's issue.

Up Spirits

Richard Wimpenny

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'Cols Bleus'

Reviewed by Rob Morgan



I picked up a recent copy of this, the *'Magazin de la Marine Nationale'*- the French Navy, on holiday in Brest. The full colour A4 36-page publication cost €2.40, and was well worth it, even though my 'technical' French was put to the test on more than a few occasions. The issue I looked at, No.2972, for May 2011, was delightful! Apart from the usual activities pages, events, meetings, the odd tattoo, that sort of thing, the magazine was given over to detailed consideration of the new Stealth Frigate *'l'Aquitaine'* which has just undertaken her *'...premiere sortie a la mer'*.

'l'Aquitaine' is the lead ship in what's to be a substantial class of a dozen frigates to replace the older F67s and F70s. As an analysis of a warship, it is superb, very much written as a wargamer would want. There are a number of useful large photographs, all good for a detailed paint-job, and an analysis of the armament of the warships of her Class. A 76mm cannon (they'll never get rid of guns!) a battery of 16 cruise missiles, 16

'Aster 15' missiles, the 'surface-to-surface MM-40, MU 90 torpedoes, a Caiman Marine helicopter and a unit of commandos. I think you'll agree a pretty good suite of weapons for a 6,000 tonne, 142 m long man-o'-war.

There's also an article with good photography, on the current French Task Force in the Med, including the new-ish Frigates *Courbet* and *Forbin*. The latter of course has her armament of 76mm guns in paired turrets forward, which is unusual. The new Assault ship *Dixmude* also appears in this issue, but only in passing, there's to be a full account of her '*premiere sortie...*' in a future issue. Her sisters, *Mistral* and *Tonnere* are already in service of course.

An interesting publication '*Cols Bleus*', and worth picking up if you encounter it on your holidays. One thing you won't find in it, as you might elsewhere is lists of ships being sold off before their time by a government which doesn't recognise it is on an island. The French fleet has its head up, this magazine oozes maritime pride...

USS CONSTITUTION

A few weeks ago I received an email from regular contributor Rob Morgan saying that a friend of his, Mike Crane, had some excellent photos of the USS *Constitution* and would I be interested in publishing them in *AGB*. Naturally jumped at the idea and soon received the following:

Dear Richard,

Our mutual friend, Rob Morgan, asked me to send these photos to you. They were taken on a family vacation to Boston where the USS Constitution is berthed. The Constitution is the oldest ship on active duty in the US Navy. She and her sisters were large frigates originally built to patrol the Mediterranean Sea against the Barbary pirates. Her sides were covered with live oak, a variety of oak found in the southern states that stays green all year. Cannon balls had a tendency to bounce off the live oak wood, hence the nickname, "Old Ironsides." –Mike Crane





REVIEW OF NAVY NEWS.

By Norman Bell

Navy News is a monthly glossy newspaper-type publication, which is widely available in Navy towns and locations, but it may be unknown to those living inland. For £2.20 you get 48 or 50 pages of current Royal Navy and RFA news. Regularly included are pull out and keep centre spreads of cut away drawings of ships, ship profiles, both current and historical, a lively letters page, and just like a daily paper, sport is at the back. You will be pleased to know that the Royal Navy beat both the French Navy and the RAF at Rugby!

Recent editions have covered HMS *Edinburgh's* sea trials following her refit, the last patrol off the Iraqi offshore oil platforms by HMS *Iron Duke* and HMS *Brocklesby* minehunting off the coast of Libya, details of the WWII Cruiser HMS *Gloucester*, an eight page article by Richard Hargreaves on the invasion of Crete, the latest information on the preservation of HMS *Caroline*, as well as book reviews, tributes to Brian 'I counted them all out' Hanrahan and Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Henry Leech.

Less serious topics are covered also. Did you know that a two-metre, radio controlled model of the Soviet Aircraft Carrier *Kiev* built by a former RAF Aircrewman Dave Wooley, using drawings sourced from Russia, has been presented to the Fleet Air Arm Museum for safe keeping? In May's edition you were also able to find out all about the Navy Dentist, the Dorper Sheep and the Island of St Helena.



Subscription gives you 12 issues for the price of ten. Details are available from:

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Tel: 023 9272 6284

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The Sun-Yat-Sen, a Chinese Aircraft Carrier?

By Rob Morgan

Remarkably few fleets have ever built true aircraft carriers; Britain, Japan, the USA, France and the USSR obviously, with smaller attempts by Nazi Germany and Italy during WWII. The 'second-hand' option is an easier and much cheaper route to naval air power and one taken by India, Australia, Brazil and Argentina in particular, since WWII. Carrier ownership not only provides not only the distant ability to defend territory and interests, but of course it confers status as a regional, if not a global naval power.

A Carrier = Sea Power—as much today as in 1945.

As far as the Pacific is concerned, the appearance by any other than an American carrier is a rarity indeed, but perhaps that is going to change and fairly soon. Sources such as the *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, *Jane's Defence Weekly* and *Intelligence Review*, along with in a mass of regional naval, security and intelligence publications are obsessed with one naval warfare topic above all; there have been a over a hundred articles on the subject in the past 3-4 years. When, and it is when rather than if China's - People's Liberation Army- Navy' PLAN, will acquire the aircraft carrier which will project the enormous economic power of China into the blue waters of the Pacific, where it will undoubtedly confront and challenge the US Navy's Carrier Group, the hitherto dominant force at sea, and have an enormous impact on East Asian and Pacific Rim stability.

PLAN bought the incomplete Soviet carrier *Varyag* from Ukraine in 1998, and conjecture as to its use has fuelled the minds of naval commentators since then. One possibility debated in the following years was that *Varyag* would be completed using Russian assistance and parts from the *Minsk* scrapped in 1998 and *Kiev* scrapped in 2000 and that accompanied by the larger units of the PLAN would form a Task Force or Carrier Group to undertake blue-water exercises in the South China Sea, and beyond, in support of claims to the Spratly Island Group; even that such an ad hoc collection of warships might undertake a goodwill tour of selected Pacific Rim and Asian ports. It hasn't happened, of course, but detractors from the idea might do well to recall the effect on European and other Admiralties of the US Navy's 'Great White Fleet' voyage of 1902. A feat which the PLAN imitated, in part, with its 2002 circumnavigation of the globe, probably the most significant Chinese event at sea since the days of Cheng Ho.

One of the most recent articles on the fate of the *Varyag* described its status as "shrouded in mystery", it is reported as having no engines, rudders or weaponry by Taiwanese sources, but will China develop a carrier? The internal arguments split in two; the 'green-water' Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) group which wants to strengthen its already immensely powerful coastal forces, and regard aircraft carriers as 'floating coffins', which is probably not a wholly defensible stance since the last carrier sunk in combat was the IJN's *Amagi* in July 1945. Though the Japanese experience at the hands of the Allied navies, losing twenty out of a total of twenty six excellent carriers, might well be a source of influence upon the RMA! Admiral Liu's Blue-water school however, strongly desires an aircraft Carrier to project naval power as soon as possible, and China is the only permanent member of the UN Security Council never to have deployed an aircraft carrier.

The whole debate may just be academic at this stage, since the PLAN may be as much as ten years from being able to deploy and maintain a carrier and its battle group. Maybe more, since the Chinese don't possess, despite Russian help, the technology to create an indigenous carrier and its support and survival systems. Chinese yards are, however, capable of building a 100,000 ton hull. Using espionage the PLAN is beginning to acquire some of the technology and from the US!

Ten years is nothing, a mere grain of sand, in the long game which China plays, and some of the US carriers are ageing fast. The Chinese long game dates back to the relationship between Admiral Liu and Admiral Gorshkov in the 1950s and it is a fair bet that the Chinese will follow Sergiy Gorshkov's route to a deep water fleet capable of challenging control of the Pacific. The road to that began in 1985, when China bought the old 'Majestic' class HMAS *Melbourne* for scrap keeping the flight deck intact for pilot training! At present the Chinese cannot confidently secure more than about 900km from the mainland, and the heart of the South China Sea is over 1,500km away, and the vital straits of Malacca even further again. China is a net importer of oil; 80% of which travels this route, and of course India, seen as a threat, bought the last of the 'Kiev' Class carriers from Russia a few years ago and have Harrier jump-jets. Not to mention the fact that with a carrier group at sea, defending Taiwan from a two directional attack would be slightly more problematic for the Taiwanese. It is the Taiwan conflict scenario, with its US 'carrier card' option which sits clear in the sights of the PLAN, as it does in Washington.

One carrier and its battle group would be enough, even in a limited deployment to alter US, Japanese, Thai and other perceptions, but not enough to alter the balance in war terms. US doctrine, well known to all naval wargamers is 'three for one'. Three carriers built, one on active deployment, one in training and the third in refit. It works. One or two sources deduce that if China began a carrier, Japan would have to respond, and respond with at least the historical perspective of carrier use to draw upon. Other Pacific nations would have to respond if a Chinese carrier was launched. Perhaps, as one commentator suggested, Taiwan or Japan, or South Korea might suddenly find itself the proud owner of a formerly 'moth-balled' US flattop? South Korea launched a 'light' carrier in 2005, the *Dokdo*, and this was seen by the Chinese as another potential threat to its northern coasts and interests. A modern carrier is an offensive military platform—*nothing* else, so the prospect of two or three Asian states with carriers would be a nightmare. India's carriers have long ensured regional dominance of the Indian Ocean. What might others do?

China, continuing to grow and prosper as it does, will as Admiral Liu's school suggests, at some stage have to have a carrier fleet, no doubt of that at all. Western naval analysts probably know as little of the Chinese intent now, as they did of the Japanese in the 1920s. This subject is becoming far more than a what-if for naval and air wargamers. I recommend an article in *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol XVII! #1, spring 2006, ISSN: 1016-3271 as a fascinating source of information, references and technical detail as you wish to find. It is entitled *Dying with Eyes Open or Closed*, by Andrew Diamond, pages 35-59. Diamond's final conclusions are not exactly oriented to naval or military policies, and he may be very wrong. It is when and not if the PLAN's *Sun-Yat-Sen* slips into the water of the Pacific. The subject of war between the USA and China, including the most interesting naval options, is apparently covered in a book *America's Coming war with China: Collision Course over Taiwan*, by Ted Galen Carpenter, 2006.

Navies of Rome

By Michael Pitassi

Reviewed by Rob Morgan

Published by Boydell Press Pb, £19.99. 384pp. Illustrated. ISBN: 978-1-84383-600-1.

A superb book, amply illustrated with maps, line drawings and plates, some quite unusual. Pitassi opens with a general chronology from the founding of Rome to the acknowledged end of the Western Empire in 476AD. In nine chapters he deals with the early Republic's fleets, with the establishment of Roman naval power during the First Punic War (64-218BC), and with that war's victories and disasters for Rome; the mapping of the stages of the Battles of Ecnomus (256BC) and of Mylae (260BC) are good fodder for the naval wargamer. The author doesn't ignore 'Combined ops' in the war either.

It goes on from the first Roman victory over Carthage to the resumption of hostilities in 219 BC, to the adventure of Syracuse and covers the 'Carthage Campaign' of 204-202BC, after which Rome wasn't merely the supreme naval power in the Western Mediterranean, but the only naval power! The growth of the Empire, its wars in Macedonia, Seleucia and the Battle of Myonnesus (190 BC) all are given competent if brief examination. The Third Punic War, and the almost inevitable 'run-down' of naval forces following the victory are linked to the rise of piracy, which was the major naval activity encountered before Rome took the road to Civil war. I thought the coverage of piracy and Pompey's 'pirate wars' valuable, and Pitassi gives an account of the attacks on Gaul and Britannia, from a naval point of view which might prove useful to the ancient 'land' wargamer. Caesar against Pompey and that vigorously executed attack by Pompey on Caesar's warships at Oricus (48BC) are mapped and described in some detail. The Alexandrine war, which had but one serious naval encounter, and the end of the Republic at Caesar's hands follow on inevitably.

The remarkable to-and-fro in naval terms not least, of the years after 43BC; the War against Sextus, the eventual finality of the Actium Campaign are all well described and neatly mapped. Though Actium doesn't stand out as an encounter tactically or in terms of sheer size, in comparison with some of the other actions in this volume; perhaps it was just Shakespeare who made it famous.

The next section of the book, the 'Imperial Fleets', provide a good deal of information for those newly introduced to the navies of the ancient world, and a good deal too for those with more experience of early oared warfare. Training, recruitment, the space aboard warships, weapons (Roman Imperial Marines were all apparently trained with the sling, which intrigued me), the naval ranks, shield types (useful indeed) and command structures are all examined. Yet nothing, not even the naval campaigns in the Revolt of Civilis (69AD), in the later centuries, compares with the Punic Wars.

Yet here, in these squabbles and civil troubles, the book has great strength for the wargamer, putting forward minor campaigns, the everyday work and fighting of small flotillas; along the Rhine, northwards along the coast of Britannia, in the Black Sea; but of course the Roman navy was in decline. Great galleys were less effective in 'flank' control raids, and police work than the small craft of later decades.

The brief renewal of naval strength was eclipsed by the long decline that followed, and by the time of Constantine around 330AD, military policy had changed. The great Mediterranean fleets had virtually ceased to be, and the role of the border patrol forces was in the long term unlikely to be anything but a failure. Barbarian sea-borne raids grew in strength and frequency, and though in 357AD the Emperor Julian had a fleet of some forty new warships built, the end was in sight. He commanded a navy estimated at around six hundred vessels of all types, but these were the naval instruments of survival, not the sea-going extensions of power and might.

The final pages of this excellent, fascinating and comprehensive work cover the terminal fate of Rome, fleets in defence and rebellion are described, like that of the Count of Africa in 413AD—said to be enormous at 3,700 ships, much larger than those of the Punic Wars! Yet the last warship described was the best of them all, the 'Dromon'.

I can't recommend this book too highly. It has a superb index, is chronologically sound, well noted, and referenced. The appendices deal with ranks of naval personnel, crew levels by ship types, with a glossary of place names and one of nautical terms. The Bibliography is a selected one hundred or so

titles. I particularly liked the format where the text is occasionally broken up by information panels, dealing with ship types, the 'Lembus' for instance, or with the development of the corvus and of ship signals. There are many of these throughout.

If I had one concern as a wargamer, it would be that the book is best read with another alongside, preferably an illustrated volume dealing specifically with ship types; Conway's *Age of the Galley* being one example, as Pitassi doesn't provide line drawings or plans of all of the types of warships in the Roman Fleet, especially during the Punic Wars.

(Incidentally, almost everything floating in this book can be found in the new 'Tumbling Dice' 1/2400th Classical and Ancient Range.)

An excellent book and well worth twenty pounds!

NAVY LEAGUE QUIZ PART TWELVE

Well, chaps, as is customary now here is another instalment of Rob Morgan's Navy League Quiz; and as is just a customary, last month's answers first.

1. Name five Royal Navy warships named after titles (not individuals) in British Royalty.

The original quiz compiler (it's been suggested 'he' was a committee, by the way!) gave the following: 'Prince of Wales', 'Duke of York', 'Queen', 'Princess Royal', 'Prince Consort', 'Prince' and 'allowed' (their term not mine!) 'Emperor of India', and 'Empress of India'.

2. Name the first Royal Navy warship to carry her armament in two turrets.

HMS 'Monarch' in 1869.

3. Which warship involved at Ylo in 1877 was described by the original Sea Quiz compiler as a 'pirate turret ship'?

The 'Pirate turret ship' was of course the 'Huascar', then a Peruvian rebel. Readers might like to note that just about every vessel needed for that little sea war is available in 1/2400 from 'Tumbling Dice'.

4. Which British aircraft carrier was laid down as a Chilean battleship? The original quiz required both names and the year of her sinking.

HMS 'Eagle' (1920) began life as the 'Admiral Cochrane', she was sunk in 1942.

5. HMS *Whitely*, a W-Class destroyer, sunk in 1940 owed her name to what?

*HMS 'Whitely' was a W-Class destroyer; well she was to be HMS *Whitby*, but there was a typist's error! She was sunk in 1940.*

Well, on with Part Twelve!

1. What happened to HM Submarine C.3?

2. An American warship was once credited with making a roll of forty-seven degrees and surviving. What was her name?

3. What unusual feature (in RN terms, perhaps) was carried by HMS *Triumph*, *Swiftsure* and *Vulcan*?

4. In 1952 at Norfolk, Virginia, which Royal Navy carrier demonstrated the new British aircraft catapult?

5. During the twentieth century, which warship served in the Royal Navy for many years, but never left the United Kingdom, nor came here?

Good luck, everyone. More the same next month I suppose, Rob?

SIGNAL PAD!

Rob Needs Assistance

I'm 'desperately seeking' a copy of an article, four, possibly five pages long, by John Pritchard in the February 1984 issue of 'Model Boats', it's on the subject of WWII 68' A/SR launches. Someone of grey bearded visage and years might have a copy! (**Rob Morgan** amorgan257@tiscali.co.uk)

DM Reminds...

Some of you will have received the "warning order" several times already, but here it is once again:

The Naval Wargames Society and the Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower are holding a weekend of naval wargaming at the museum in Gosport over the weekend of the August Bank Holiday, 27th – 28th 2011. Plenty of space and tables are available and there should be room for upwards of ten tables available of varying sizes. There is also a large outdoor area where it is hoped a WW2 surface action will be played out using 1/600 models and a 1/600 "ground scale" for some of the weekend. Space is available in the museum grounds for camping over the weekend. Admission to the museum for the weekend will be free for those running games.

The aim of the event is to provide a forum where naval (and other) gamers can come together to run and/or play in each others' games. Games can be as long or as short as you like, and the intention is to include a few participation games so that members of the public can join in too. The emphasis is on gaming and there is no formal trade element (not this year at least). However, if there are any traders who would like to attend they would be more than welcome – please contact Nick Hewitt for details of arrangements.

For more details, or to book a table for a game for all or part of the weekend please contact Nick Hewitt nh "at" pnbpt "dot" co "dot" uk or me, David Manley. Contact details for the Explosion Museum are as follows:

Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower
Heritage Way
Priddy's Hard
Gosport
Hampshire PO12 4LE
United Kingdom

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.
