



All Guns Blazing!

Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society

No. 215 –September 2012

EDITORIAL

Filling Richard Wimpenny's shoes and producing All Guns Blazing has not been easy. Members' patience and understanding is requested for the transition period. I am trying to continue the good work of Richard and hopefully the drop in standard will be temporary. It is planned to retain the Quiz and Signal Pad in subsequent editions and changes are not expected to be drastic or revolutionary. Obviously there will be a few changes as we all do things slightly differently. Please remember that Clubs like ours rely on input from the Members. Your contributions and ideas for future AGBs will be gratefully received. Likewise send in your after action reports and rule reviews etc. All periods of history should be covered and I shall try not to lean too far towards my favourites (Trafalgar and World War II) if left to generating content myself. Also the NWS Web Site will shortly be updated and improved. What should the Web Site include? This is your chance to put forward your ideas. Remember, this is your Club.

Somewhere in the World, the Sun is over the yardarm.

Norman Bell

Plans to recover Bell of HMS HOOD postponed

04/09/2012

An historic attempt to recover the Bell of the Second World War battle-cruiser HMS HOOD has been postponed due to bad weather.



Archive image of HMS HOOD (pennant number 51) [Picture: Royal Navy]

After more than ten days working in the North Atlantic in worsening weather and difficult deep currents, the recovery team on board US philanthropist Paul Allen's yacht Octopus were reluctantly forced to discontinue the operation, but not before commemorative wreaths were laid where the ship sank. The Bell was found in more than 2,800 metres of water in the Denmark Strait, where it has lain since HOOD was sunk by the German warship Bismarck on 24 May 1941.

Yesterday, Monday 3 September, from a rain-swept flight deck, crew members of the Octopus laid wreaths in memory of the 1,415 members of the naval service who died, including personnel from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Poland.

Mr Allen said:

"I was honoured to be involved in this project, and I stand ready to help the Royal Navy try again in the future. Recovering this Bell is a way to commemorate the hundreds of brave sailors who were lost at sea and I want to see it through."

Mr Allen has offered to recover the Bell without any cost to a grateful Royal Navy and Ministry of Defence.

The Octopus, which is equipped with a remotely-operated vehicle (ROV), is being supported by Blue Water Recoveries Ltd which specialises in the search for and investigations of shipwrecks. The recovery is fully supported by the HMS HOOD Association whose members include veterans who served in the ship before her final mission in 1941 and relatives of those lost with her.



A crew member of Paul G Allen's yacht Octopus lays a wreath at the site of the sinking of HMS HOOD in 1941 [Picture: Courtesy of the Octopus]

Association President Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks, whose uncle was among those who died on board HOOD, said, "While hugely challenging conditions have precluded a successful recovery of HMS HOOD's Bell on this occasion, the HOOD Association continues to hope that another attempt will be made at some stage in the next year or so. Our objective remains the provision of a unique memorial in the National Museum of the Royal Navy for this iconic warship and her gallant crew. We are extremely grateful to Paul Allen, to David Mearns [of Blue Water Recoveries Ltd] and for the professionalism of the captain and crew of the Octopus for their outstanding assistance on this occasion."

David Mearns of Blue Water Recoveries Ltd, who first found one of the two ship's Bells in 2001, said, "Despite our limited dive-time we were able to relocate the Bell relatively quickly and confirm that the ROV's manipulator arms were able to physically reach it in order to attach recovery tools."



Members of the crew of the Octopus conduct a service in memory of the 1,415 men who lost their lives in the HMS HOOD in 1941 [Picture: Courtesy of the Octopus]

"This information will be vitally important in planning a future recovery attempt. The location of the Bell, and decoration on its rim, strongly indicates that it is HOOD's main Bell as we had expected and hoped. The high definition video showed the Bell was in excellent condition and thus another year or so on the seabed will cause it no harm." If recovered, the Bell will form a major feature of a new exhibition dedicated to the 20th and 21st century Navy. It is due to open at the National Museum of the Royal Navy at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard in 2014, which is a fitting location as HMS HOOD was based in Portsmouth.

Professor Dominic Tweddle, Director General of the National Museum, said, "I am deeply grateful to Paul Allen, Blue Water Recoveries and the HMS HOOD Association for all their hard work and support in attempting to recover the Bell. A place will be reserved in our new galleries dedicated to the 20th and 21st century Navy; a place that we hope to fill in the future when HOOD's Bell is successfully recovered."

The wreck of HMS HOOD is designated under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 and the recovery of the Bell has been licensed by the British Government

MOD sets out future of Invincible Class carriers

10/09/2012

Plans to preserve the legacy of the Royal Navy's Invincible Class aircraft carriers have been outlined. HMS Invincible, HMS Illustrious and HMS Ark Royal came into service in the early 1980s and have spent the last thirty years protecting the UK's interests across the world. The last of the ships to be decommissioned, HMS Illustrious, is due to retire from the Royal Navy in 2014 and the MOD has announced the intention to seek proposals from organisations interested in preserving her as a lasting tribute to the work of the Invincible Class, which have played key roles in conflicts in the Falkland Islands, Iraq and Bosnia. HMS Invincible was decommissioned in 2005 and later recycled. The 31-year-old HMS Ark Royal was withdrawn from service in 2011, following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review. The MOD announced that she will also be recycled as part of a £2.9m deal with Leyal, the same company responsible for recycling Invincible in 2011. Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology Philip Dunne said:

"It is important that we preserve the legacy of the Royal Navy's Invincible Class aircraft carriers. When the last of these - HMS Illustrious - retires from the Royal Navy, we would like to see her preserved as a legacy to the work she, Invincible and Ark Royal have done to protect the UK over three decades.

"We would be keen to seek innovative proposals from a range of organisations, including private sector companies, charities and trusts.

"HMS Ark Royal, like her sister ships, served this country with great distinction. Retiring her five years earlier than planned was a difficult decision but it was the right one that, combined with her sale, has saved over a hundred million pounds. That has helped the MOD achieve a sustainable and balanced budget for the first time in decades. "The Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Class carriers and the Lightning II aircraft that will fly off them are among the biggest projects of the now fully funded equipment programme that will see around £160bn spent on equipment and support for our Armed Forces of the future."

Preparatory work will be carried out on HMS Ark Royal over the winter to enable her to travel from Portsmouth to Turkey, where she will be recycled, at the same location where HMS Invincible was also recycled. Bids received for further use for HMS Ark Royal were considered but were judged either not feasible or appropriate, or carried too much risk. As the out of service date for HMS Illustrious approaches, the MOD will look to industry to provide viable proposals to keep her available for future private use in a different capacity while still offering taxpayers good value for money.

SIGNAL PAD!

RUSSO-JAPANESE 1904 WEEKEND Scale: 1/1250

Battle of Port Arthur & Tsushima refought. Venue: Lee village hall, nr Ilfracombe North Devon

Date: November Saturday 3rd-4th Price: £49

The Idea

For many years there has been a wargames holiday centre, but none that catered for big naval games. The problem being that the popular 1/3000 scale doesn't have the same visual appeal as a table full of 25mm Napoleonic's. Having heard a friend and ex NWS member boast about how he could do Jutland in 1/1200, but wouldn't as the models would get damaged and so decrease in value dramatically, I resolved to collect my own fleets and offer for usage of NWS members. To be worth the effort there needs to be more than just a classic wargame with strangers. Lee Bay in North Devon is one of those little known gems of the British coastline, and genuine smugglers' haunt. The Grampus Inn is over 300 years old and owned by a friend and superb fiddler who encourages and promotes folk music on a Friday night. B&B's are plentiful, very good, and close by. In practice one B&B owner actually drives his clients down and watches the action (he's ex merchant navy). The hall itself is old on the outside, new on the inside. There are ample tables and I have several large terrain mats. At either end of the hall are raised areas for seating with balconies that lend perfectly as opposing ships bridges!

I am fully aware that some will be put off by socialising with people they don't know, the distance, rules etc. If that's the case, but you'd love to play your own scenario/rules with your own friends but don't have the models.....contact me. It would give me great pleasure to welcome you to a hidden treasure of Devon, hear your tales over a pint of real ale in the Grampus, dig out the relevant ships in 1/1250...and if allowed, join in! Periods covered include Sino-Jap, Span-Am, Russo-Jap, Balkan wars, Von Spee's raiders, WW1 Adriatic, WW1 Baltic, Spanish Civil War, Norwegian campaign, Far East early, Indonesian crisis 60's. Aircraft models in 1/600 where necessary.

Whilst breakfast is included, evening meal is not. I'll drive into Ilfracombe and collect your desired meal, Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Fish & chips...or eat at pub. As for accommodation, you can slum it or glam it depending on your budget. Tenting is also an option.

The Game

It is hoped to refight both battles each day in glorious 1/1250 scale. This allows for late arrivals, early departures, to get to play both battles at least once. Naval Thunder rules (easy!).

The Venue:

Ideal for large naval games, with ample parking (voluntary donation), 2 minutes from the Grampus Inn on Saturday night (great real ale and good food at sensible prices), 5 minutes from the sea and a genuinely notorious smugglers cove. Accommodation is via your own mattress/sleeping bag on the hall floor or local B&B (extra), and can be from Friday evening if desired, the Grampus having an open mike night, great folk music on Friday (I'll be setting up the night before and then staying over).

The Price:

Includes breakfast on both mornings, tea & coffee, hall, ship models, rules, dice

For more info please contact stuart_barnes_watson@hotmail.com or 01271 866637

Club Members in the Derby area may get along to the Derby Wargames Exhibition at the Castle Donnington International Exhibition Centre Sat 6th and Sun 7th Oct. What about writing a few lines review for inclusion in a future AGB?

The Wessex Group Game is on 30th September in the Grace Room of the Lincombe Barn at Downend, Bristol. It has space for up to nine players – a few spare places still - and is a fictitious pre-Dreadnought scenario with over 30 battleships plying the seas. We start at 11am and run until finish or 6pm, whichever is earlier. To help cover the room hire there is a charge - NWS members £3 and non-members £4. We'll be using Dave Manley's excellent 'Fire When Ready' rules. Additional details are available from Peter Colbeck.

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, 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)
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NWS North Hants [Every 3rd Sunday]

Jeff Crane 31 Park Gardens, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hants, 01256 427906

e-mail: jf.crane@ntlworld.com
