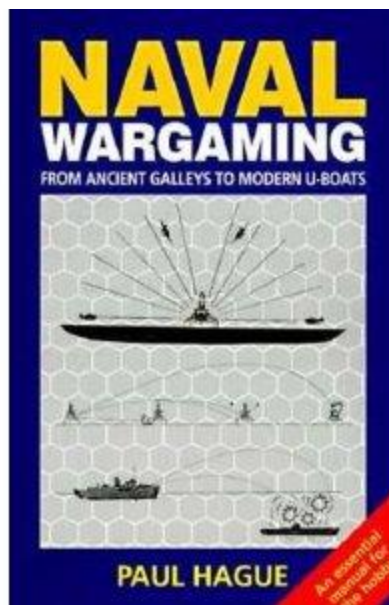


# ‘Naval Wargaming: From Ancient Galleys to Modern U-Boats’

by Paul Hague

Review by Paul Le Long

In the introduction to this book, the author states that it is his intention to write a comprehensive guide to naval wargaming - which he refers to as the Cinderella branch of the hobby. And, within the limits of just 123 pages, I think he is largely successful.

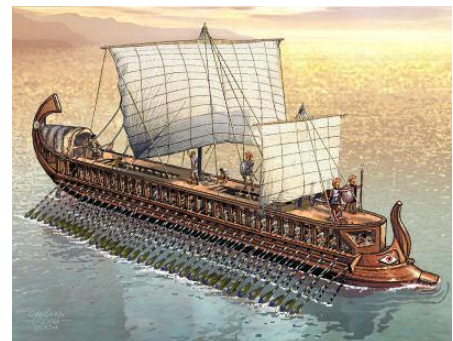


We start with a short but interesting chapter, “Notes for the Beginner,” in which Hague examines things like scale, size of playing area, general questions about naval wargaming, single-ship actions, fleet actions and campaigns. There are a few interesting asides here like when the author says that he has tried to recreate the skill of naval gunnery by using a dartboard or an airgun! (Phil Dunn also used darts back in the 1970s to simulate gunnery.) The notes on campaigns are just that – notes, not full rules. They also present a problem for the soloist based as they are on the matchbox

model pioneered by Donald Featherstone – most definitely a two-player concept.

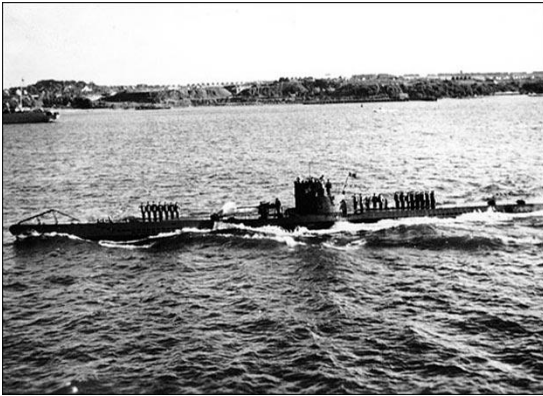
The next chapter is another short one on model ships and a discussion of the various scales. Then we get to the heart of the book – five sets of rules: Triremes, Ships of the Line, Dreadnoughts, Aircraft Carriers, and U-Boats. These are fully formed sets of rules, all of which are comprehensive but simple. I haven’t played every set simply because they are not designed with the soloist in mind – the rules for Aircraft Carriers and U-Boats for example rely heavily on hidden movement and two-player mechanisms are presented.

The Trireme rules have everything you expect in this period – boarding, oar-raking, ramming, fleet formations, rowing and sailing; it’s played on a hex grid and it concentrates on formations and tactics. The Age of Sail chapter starts with some nice background notes on the various sub-periods within



the age of sail – Armada, 17<sup>th</sup> century, 18<sup>th</sup> century and Napoleonic. The rules themselves have a good section on sailing, as you'd expect – nine pages in all, compared to just three pages dealing with gunnery and damage, so you can immediately see where the emphasis is in these rules.

The Dreadnought rules, by contrast, are all about gunnery and damage. The Aircraft Carrier rules obviously concentrate on aircraft and anti-aircraft fire but also on hidden movement – which is the essence of this type of encounter, which, of course, makes it difficult for the soloist to recreate. Also difficult for the soloist are U-Boats because of the hidden movement element and this is once again the main thrust of these rules – it's all about U-Boats stalking their prey and convoy escorts stalking the U-Boats in return. The shooting and damage bits of the rules, while not actually an after-thought, are certainly a lower priority.



One of the things I like about this book is that each set of rules contains a brief discussion of that particular period or aspect of naval war, and talks about the ships and the tactics before going on to the rules themselves. All of this is short and simple due to the short length of the book but it's well written and nicely explained so you do get a (basic) overview of naval history from Salamis to World War Two which is a nice touch.

This is a good book and probably my favourite of the naval wargaming stable. I particularly like the emphasis on describing the tactics and ships of each period – although brief, these discussions are nevertheless enlightening and the whole book is presented in an accessible style – you don't need to be a salty sea-dog to understand what the author is saying – this book makes naval wargaming (of any period) understandable and accessible for all. The problem of reproducing hidden movement at sea is a difficult one for the soloist and is not addressed here, this is a book that assumes a two-player or more approach so the soloist is not well-served with all of the rules in the book; nevertheless it is still a good book and a worthwhile purchase.

#### Details:

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