

# Wooden Walls, Iron Balls and Paper Ships

By Paul Le Long

Originally published in Lone Warrior 182

I was inspired to try age of sail games by two articles in LW – one a simple set of rules by Kevin White in LW173 (entitled All at Sea) and the other paper model ships by Mike Crane in (UK) LW144 (Mike has recently put some more of his paper ships on the blog).

I didn't much fancy making ship models as I am a very poor modeller and so Mike's paper ships seemed ideal, especially for trying out a new game. Kevin's rules were really simple (but not simplistic) and took the headache out of naval wargaming for me – I find that this branch of the hobby can often be very technical and difficult to grasp. I tinkered with the rules, added some simple additional ones for sailing and came up with the system set out below; I hope Kevin won't mind me reproducing some of his ideas here. Then I added a simple campaign system which I'll explain later together with a short synopsis of a really excellent campaign that I played out with these rules.

The battles are played out on a hex mat with 1' hexes.

## The Ships

Ship	Gun Points	Mast Points	Crew Points	Hull Points
First Rate	10-12	9	12	12
Second Rate	8-9	9	11	11
Third Rate	6-7	9	10	10
Fourth Rate	5-6	9	9	9
Fifth rate	2-4	6	8	8
Frigate	3-4	9	8	8
Sixth Rate	2	6	7	7
Frigate/Sloop	2	6	7	7
Brig/Bomb/Cutter	1-2	6	6	6
Merchant	0-1	6	6	6

## The Rules

I group ships into squadrons (usually 3 ships) and each squadron or independent ship is activated by the draw of a card. Generally there will be one card per squadron or ship in each fleet. When a squadron's card comes up it moves. When all cards have been drawn, the turn is over and you shuffle the deck and start again. Ships may fire at any time in the turn, regardless of activation, but they may only fire once per turn. Stragglers (ships that began the turn more than 6 hexes from their squadron) do not move or take any other action when the squadron's activation card is drawn, rather, at the end of the turn they move directly towards their squadron, taking no other action. They may return fire if attacked.

## Sailing

Wind is:	Warship speed (in hexes)	Frigate speed
Fore	1	2

Abroad	2	3
Aft	3	4
Quarter	4	5

Warships are 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> rates. Frigates are 5<sup>th</sup> rates and below. All ships must move their full move. A turn of 1 hex face costs 1 movement point.

There is a 10% chance per turn that wind changes one point of the compass – roll 1d6: 1,2,3: clockwise; 4,5,6: anti-clockwise.

If you want you can add rules for running aground, wreckage collisions and so on; it all adds flavour.

### **Firing**

Ranges

Point blank: 1 hex

Short: 2 hex

Medium: 3-4 hexes

Long: 5-6 hexes

Extreme: 7 hexes

Draw 1 playing card for every gun point and apply the following modifiers:

Initial Broadside +1 card

Short Range +1 card

Point Blank Range +2 cards

Bow/Stern Rake +1 card

Long Range -1 card

Extreme Range -2 cards

British crews cause damage on cards of value 5+

French crews cause damage on 7+

American crews cause damage on 7+

Spanish crews cause damage on 9+

Aces are low.

Each Club causes damage to the hull.

Each Spade causes damage to the guns.

Each Heart causes damage to the crew.

Each Diamond causes damage to the masts.



### **Damage**

For every 3 points of damage to masts reduce speed by 1.

No hull points left: ship sinks.

No gun points left: no firing.

No crew points left: ship ceases to operate and drifts with the wind.

No mast points left: ship dead in the water.

## Special Damage

Special Damage occurs if you draw a joker when firing.

Roll 1d100:

1-10: Heavy crew casualties: Take an extra crew casualty

11-20: Severe crew casualties: Take 2 extra crew casualties

21-25: Rigging damage: Ship may not sail into the wind or turn

26-30: Rigging damage: reduce speed by half

31-35: Rudder/steering hit: ship may not turn until repaired (roll 6 on 1d6 per turn)

36-45: Mast brought down – lose the most damaged mast and take 1 extra crew casualty

46-50: Gun deck hit: Take 1 extra gun casualty

51-60: Gun deck hit: Take 2 extra gun casualties

61-70: Gun deck hit: Take 2 extra gun casualties and 1 crew casualty

71-80: Fire: ship takes 2 cards of damage each turn until repaired (roll 6 on 1d6 per turn)

81-85: Hull damage: ship taking on water, reduce speed by 1 per turn until repaired (roll 6 on 1d6 per turn).

When speed reaches 0 ship will become unmanageable and will be dead in the water

86-90: Severe fire: ship takes 4 cards of damage each turn until repaired (roll 6 on 1d6 per turn). If one of those cards is a Joker, the fire has spread to the magazine and explodes, destroying the ship

91-98: Bridge hit: ship may only sail on in current heading (but may defend itself) until a new captain can be located (roll 6 on 1D6 per turn) and lose 3 morale levels

99-00: Magazine hit: ship explodes

## Boarding

Draw 1 card for every crew point – the attacking crew gets +1 card. Simply add up the cards.

The ship with the highest total wins.

The losing ship is taken and a prize crew (1 crew point minimum) left on board.

## Forts

Forts are treated as static ships. A fortress will have ‘hull points’ (its structural integrity) ‘crew points’ (garrison) and ‘gun points’ (its guns)

Treat a Vauban style fortress as a 1<sup>st</sup> rate ship.

A strong stone fort equates to a 3rd rate.

A wooden fort equates to a 5<sup>th</sup> rate.

A small or improvised fort equates to a sloop or bomb.

Every 25% of hull damage will open a breach in one wall.

Ignore any inappropriate results for Special Damage (like rigging damage).

Garrison morale works exactly like ship morale.

## Crew Morale

Fearless

Steady

Shaken

Fearful

100

90 80 70

60 50 40

30 20 10

All crews begin with steady morale. Good crews start at 90, average at 80 and poor crews at 70

When to test morale:

When a ship takes damage

When receiving boarders

When ordered to board

Modifiers:

+/- 10% per difference in level between ships. For example a 1st rate taking damage from a 3rd rate test morale at +20%

Per enemy vessel destroyed +10%

Per friendly vessel destroyed -10%

How to test:

Roll 1d100: Success: carry on

Critical success (01-05%): move up one level

Failed by 1-20: move down one level

Failed by 21-40: move down two levels

Failed by 41+: move down three levels

Fearful crews will attempt to break off the engagement if practicable

If morale is reduced off the scale the ship strikes its colours.

### **The Campaign**

The key to the campaign is Gun Points. I created two fictional navies – we'll just call the Blue and Red. Red had a navy of 100 gun points and Blue a navy of 75 gun points. I chose a number of ships accordingly to make up the navies – for example Red had a 1<sup>st</sup> Rate flagship with several smaller warships and a few frigates while Blue built his navy around three 2<sup>nd</sup> rates and a swarm of frigates. Each ship was modified slightly to add flavour (some had a reinforced hull or were faster than normal and so on) all decided randomly from a list.

The campaign is simply a set of ten scenarios, each chosen at random (see below) with 20 victory points available for winning the scenario and 1 victory point for every point of damage to enemy ships, but with 1 point lost for each point of damage to your ships. I gave each side 50 Dockyard Points with which to repair their ships; any ship in dock for repair would miss the next scenario and when all Dockyard Points were used up no more repairs could be carried out. The winner is the navy with the highest score at the end of ten scenarios.

### **Scenarios**

Roll 1D100 for scenario from the following list:

1-20 – Convoy: Defenders have 2D6 merchant ships (gun power 1 each) plus 2D6 gun points for the escorts.

Attackers have 3D6 gun points. Defenders must cross from one short edge to the other. Attackers enter at random table edge.

21-35 - Single ship action: One ship each; enter from random table edges. 1D10 gun points each.

36-45 – Blockade: Defenders must break out or in to port past the blockaders. Blockaders have 3D6 gun points, defenders 2D6 gun points plus 1D6 small ships (1 gun point each). Defenders must break through the blockade line (set at player's discretion).

45-55 - Sea Chase: Defender is 2D6 gun points; attacker is 4D6. Defender must escape by crossing the table (lengthways) 3 times.

55-65 - Bombardment: Target might be a town, port, fleet at anchor, fort etc. Attacker has 4D6 gun points; defender has 2D6 gun points. Attackers must inflict x damage on the target and then withdraw.

66-75 - Shoreforts: Attacker has 3D10 gun points; defender 2D6 plus 2D10 gun points in fort(s). Attacker must reduce the forts.

76-96 - Flotilla action: Each flotilla enters on random table edge. Each has 3D10 gun points.

96-99 - Estuary battle: As flotilla but maximum terrain is placed.

100 - Fleet action: Each fleet enters on random table edge. Entire navy deploys.

## Set-Up

Many actions will take place in coastal waters and there may therefore be underwater obstructions, islands, sandbars and so on. Divide the table into 4 quarters. Roll 1D6 per quarter. 1-2: no terrain. 3-4: one terrain piece. 5: two terrain pieces. 6: three terrain pieces.

Wind is determined randomly.



## How it Played

The first scenario was a flotilla action; the Blue flotilla was 18 gun points (I chose three 2<sup>nd</sup> rates) and the Red flotilla was 17 gun points (a 1<sup>st</sup> rate and a 2<sup>nd</sup> rate). Random deployment saw both flotillas entering the table at close quarters with Blue winning initiative and crossing the 'T' of the Reds – both flotillas were sailing line astern. In truth it wasn't a great game, just a brutal slugging match which left Red's ships turned to matchwood.

**Figure 1** Blue Flotilla crosses the 'T' of red and opens fire at close range, disabling the Red flagship. The 'scatter' die in the background shows wind direction. Note how good Mike's paper ships look.

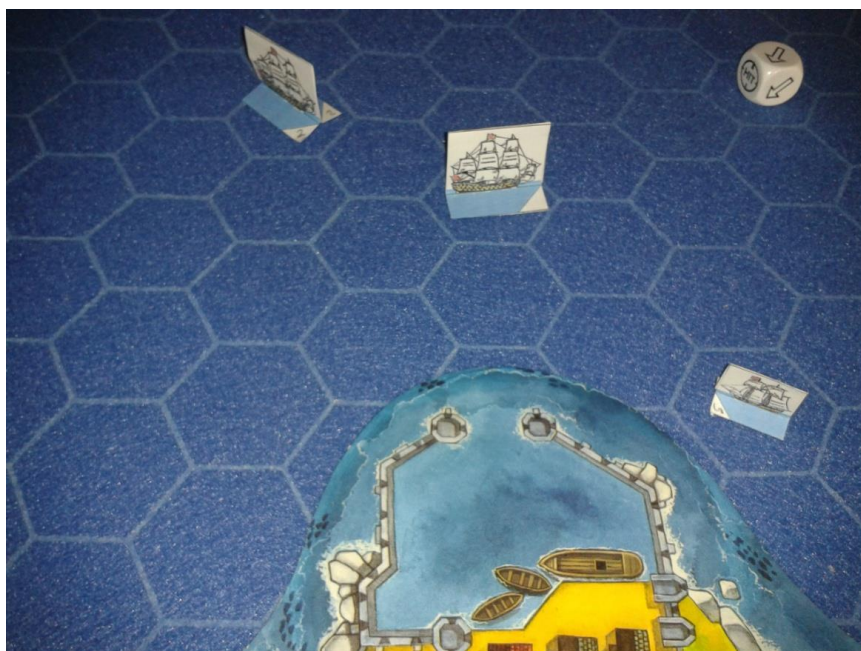
Game two was better, with Red (1 frigate) escorting 2 merchantmen past a Blue blockade of several ships totaling 14 gun points. Red used their greater speed and manoeuvrability and headed for a group of islands and sandbars to shake off the blockading force and then successfully made a run for the open sea.

**Figure 2** Game 2: The Red convoy slips past the Blue blockade by hiding in the islands. The islands are from an old Games Workshop naval game that I found in a charity shop; I think they look great with the hex mat - simple but effective.

Game three was another flotilla battle which saw both fleets blazing away at each other at longish range without decisive result. Game four saw 2 Red ships (12 gun points total) ordered to bombard a Blue fort situated on an island; the fort had 12 gun points.

One of the Red ships happened to have long range guns (a random modification) and used them to its advantage by keeping out of range of the fort's guns while bombarding it. A fire started in the fort which the garrison failed to put out and the fort eventually burned to the ground for another Red victory.

Game five was another bombardment – a Red flotilla of 13 gun points was ordered to bombard a Blue harbour and to cause 16 points of damage (randomly decided). Blue had only one small (3 gun points) ship with which to defend the harbour and Red gained another easy victory. At the halfway point Red's score was 197 victory points while Blue trailed with 179, the latter mostly gained in the first battle.



**Figure 3** Game 5: Red approaches a Blue harbour with the intention of bombarding it. Blue's defending ship is outgunned and outnumbered and so is skulking before making a run for it.

Game six was a simple single-ship action (Blue victory but not decisive) while game seven was another blockade run, this time with Blue successfully running a fleet of 9 gun points past a Red blockade of 12 guns. Game eight was fought in an estuary between a Blue fleet of 4 3<sup>rd</sup> rates and a frigate and a Red fleet of 2 2<sup>nd</sup> rates and a frigate. The abundance of sandbars on the table made sailing very difficult and a confused, indecisive battle was the result.

By game nine Blue had run out of Dockyard Points and so could only field an already damaged 2<sup>nd</sup> rate to defend a harbour against a Red force intent on bombarding it. Blue withdrew quickly, leaving the harbour to the mercy of Red. By game 10 (a Blue convoy attacked by Red) Blue was behind in victory points and needed a spectacular victory to even have a chance of winning the campaign. This led to an overly-aggressive approach which backfired and saw the Blue flagship shot to pieces and dead in the water.

The final tally was Red 411 victory points; Blue 298. This was a really entertaining campaign. Making Gun Points the focus worked well, I could field (?) any ships I wanted so long as they totaled the randomly decided totals dictated by the scenario and it simplified fleet organisation, repair and refit and scenario design. Mike Crane's lovely paper ship models also worked a treat and I honestly can't see the point of buying metal ones to replace them. With terrain being just a blue hex mat and a few islands and sandbars it was also very quick and easy to set up. In all I played the whole campaign in just two days, some of the battles lasted less than an hour and the vast majority were interesting and fun.