

A Few Memories about the Fletcher Pratt Naval Wargame by Phil Dunn

The Fletcher Pratt mass participation games have always fascinated me since first reading about them in Don's book back in 1965. It inspired me to get the Naval Wargames Society going in the following year. We did not adopt them though because we wanted each player to command a half squadron (division of ships) or a half flotilla, where as the norm for the Pratt system was one or two ships only as your book states.

However, a few members were keen on them, so we organised a trial event. It was not widely attended, but the game went well enough as I recall. We did adopt his torpedo firing system though to replace dice, as those that did attend liked them a great deal.

I found your book to be rivetingly interesting and the 1938 photos a great bonus.

It seems that yourself, Donald Featherstone and Fletcher Pratt are or were, human dynamos in getting things accomplished. Your project is a massive one that must involve great energy, time, research, enthusiasm... I doubt if anyone else could have taken it on.

Have you ever tried a pre-dreadnought action using Pratt's rules? I imagine they would work OK. I have hundreds in 1:9000 scale not in use at the moment. The large scale is OK as the maximum range for the period is only 4,000-6,000 yards.

When I got the Battleship Club underway in 1994 (Dave Manley was the leading light) we seemed to get stuck with the General Quarter System, although I used my own rules when I ran an event. Although popular, I found them time consuming, tedious and uninspiring myself. Cross off 4 little boxes and the ship is sunk. Not for me. I can imagine the Pratt method to be much more exciting than those rules, with its trying to hit a target by skill and the time constraints.