

Foreword

Kissing Cousins, the title of David Bruhn's latest book, refers to the familial relationship between the US Navy's PCSs (Patrol Craft Sweepers) together with a few AGSs (Hydrographic Survey Ships), and the YMSs (Yard Mine Sweepers) from which they were derived. The US-built BYMSs (British Yard Mine Sweepers), which served Britain so splendidly during the Second World War and many other nations thereafter, were based on the same design. However, the term 'Kissing Cousins' could equally apply to the historical relationship between Britain and her fellow Anglosphere and Commonwealth nations, especially in wartime.

Much has been made of the 'Brotherhood of the Sea' that unites all who live, work and serve in this often harsh environment. In the Royal Navy, fellow members of a ship's company are known as 'shipmates' rather than friends or colleagues. Furthermore, it is incumbent on all mariners to come to the aid of "those in peril on the sea," in both peace and war, irrespective of nationality or any other defining circumstance. This protocol is enshrined in Article 98 of UNCLOS (the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea) and has often seen warships, aircraft and in many cases individuals risking their own safety to rescue the survivors of enemy ships or submarines they have only just sunk in fierce battle.

By the same token, a special relationship has long existed between Britain and her fellow Anglosphere nations of the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand plus the Commonwealth nations of India, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. One has only to watch the many representatives of such nations laying their colourful wreaths at the Cenotaph in London during the annual Remembrance Sunday ceremony to appreciate the strength and longevity of these bonds. Apart from NATO (and for a relatively brief period SEATO), this relationship is epitomised by the Second World War legacy of the FVEY (Five Eyes) intelligence-sharing alliance of the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, and the FPDA (Five Powers Defence Agreement) signed in 1971 by the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. Many other 'ABCANZ' defence and economic treaties and research agreements bind these nations together, and subsets of

them. Most recently, the AUKUS (Australia, UK and USA) trilateral security pact for the Indo-Pacific region was announced on 15 September 2021.

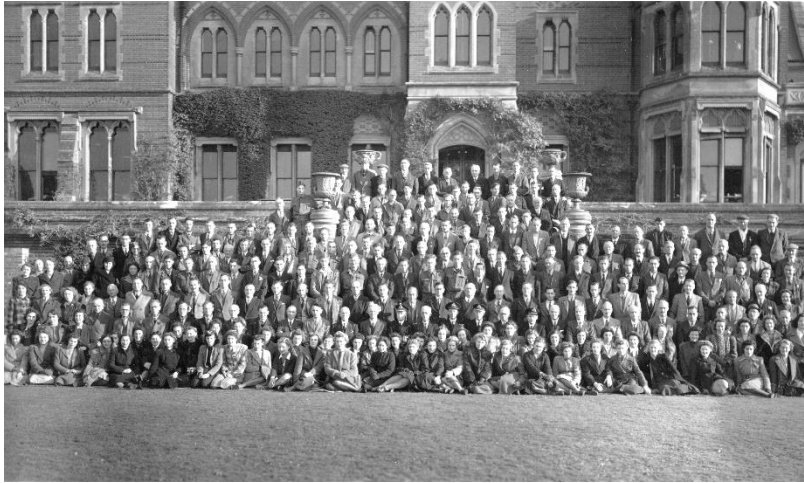
In his inimitable style, David Bruhn quite rightly focuses on the largely unpublicised deeds of the PCSs in the Pacific as maids-of-all-work during the island-hopping recapture of territories from Japanese occupying forces. Following his usual meticulous research, David describes the heroic actions of units and individuals as they worked close inshore, mainly as minesweepers or amphibious operation control ships. This left them subject to the constant risk of being mined, bombarded by coastal artillery, struck by small arms fire or exposed to suicide attack by Kamikaze aircraft. As David relates so eloquently, the ferocity of the fighting in the Pacific theatre is evidenced by the heavy 'butcher's bill' of casualties on both sides after each battle or skirmish.

My particular professional interest as a former Royal Navy MCDO (Minewarfare & Clearance Diving Officer) lies in naval minewarfare, diving and bomb & mine disposal and I was delighted to read David's treatment of US Navy minesweeping operations and the work of the MEIUs (Mine Explosives Investigation Units) and UDTs (Underwater Demolition Teams) in the Pacific, often supported by Royal Australian Navy personnel. David quite rightly gives credit to HMS *VERNON*, the Royal Navy's base at Portsmouth for all matters minewarfare including mine development, mining, mine countermeasures and mine disposal. Until the site's closure in 1996 and development into a marina, residential, recreational and retail complex called Gunwharf Quays, this was the 'alma mater' of thousands of British, US, Commonwealth and other personnel trained in such disciplines.

The list of foreign and Commonwealth officers trained in mine disposal techniques at HMS *VERNON* during the Second World War is a true pantheon of illustrious characters. The list includes Lt Draper Kauffman RNVR who eventually became Rear Admiral Draper Kauffman USN. Draper Kauffman organised the first US Navy Bomb Disposal School and then set up the first NCDUs (Naval Combat Demolition Units) that were later incorporated in the UDTs, the forerunners of the SEALs. The list also includes, but is not limited to, RANVR officers such as Gosse, Syme, Mould, Goldsworthy and Cliff who were among the most highly decorated individuals of the war. Several *VERNON*-trained officers subsequently served in the Pacific

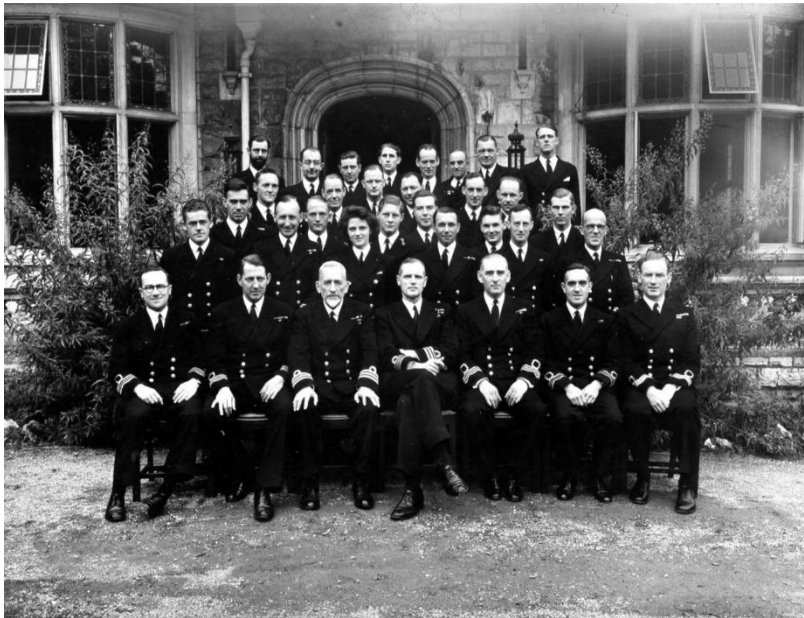
theatre after Germany's fate was sealed in Europe. Appendix B provides a more comprehensive list.

Photo Foreword-4



HMS *Vernon* Mining Department personnel outside Leigh Park House during WWII.
Rob Hoole collection

Photo Foreword-5



'P' Party officers at HMS *Vernon*(D) in 1945.
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During the Second World War, sections of HMS *VERNON* had to be dispersed to other parts of the country owing to the German bombing campaign known as the 'Blitz' and David has expanded on how the 'P' (Port Clearance) Parties were trained at HMS *VERNON*(D) at Brixham. A post-war legacy programme involved the exchange of RN MCD officers and USN officers between HMS *VERNON* and the US EOD School at Indian Head, respectively, into the 1980s. Similar post-war schemes involved the exchange of RN Clearance Diving officers and USN officers between HMS *VERNON* and the US Navy's diving facility at Panama City and a programme involving the exchange of RN MCD officers and COMINEWARCOM (Commander, Mine Warfare Command) at Charleston, followed by Corpus Christie then San Diego.

Many books have been written about the major sea battles of the war in the Pacific but *Kissing Cousins* delves into aspects of the conflict in smaller vessels which were much more close-up and personal. It contains priceless nuggets of action, valour and the sheer slog of recapturing heavily defended island after island over vast distances. I heartily commend it to any reader interested in naval history in general and the detail of opposed amphibious landings in particular.

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