

Foreword

As a mine warfare sub-specialist with over 40 years combined experience in two Commonwealth navies, 30 of those years in the Royal Australian Navy after initially serving in the South African Navy as a young officer, it gives me great pleasure to provide a foreword for David Bruhn's new book, *Kissing Cousins*.

David's book tells the story of the little-known contribution of the US Navy's Patrol Craft Sweepers (PCS) during the latter part of the Pacific war. It also provides most valuable insight into the interaction between the US Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in bomb and mine disposal tasking and hydrographic survey activities in direct support of combined operations in the Pacific, which is comprehensively covered by Commodore Hector Donohue in his fascinating foreword.

Although the wartime South African Naval Forces (SANF) did not play a direct role in the Pacific Theatre, other than fully manning the Royal Navy diving and salvage vessel HMS *Salvestor*—its efforts being focussed on anti-submarine and minesweeping operations in Cape waters, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean—of the 2,737 SANF personnel seconded to the Royal Navy during the Second World War, some 2,000 of those were serving in the Far East by mid-1945, including in several RAN ships.

As a result, South African 'cousins' took part in many operations in the Pacific and performed all manner of duties including Render Mines Safe (RMS) duties and hydrographic survey activities. They no doubt also benefited from the unsung contribution of the US Navy's Patrol Craft Sweepers to operations in the Pacific and US Navy and RAN render safe and hydrographic survey activities.

Even the explosion of one of the atomic bombs in Japan was witnessed by a South African prisoner of war, a young seaman who had served in HMS *Exeter*, sunk after the Battle of the Java Sea. Moreover, many other South Africans who had made the Royal Navy their career, or who were peacetime merchant mariners and members of the Royal Navy Reserve (RNR), also served with the RN in the Pacific Theatre. As a result, South African naval personnel, who served in virtually every major naval

engagement of the war, helped write some important chapters in the history of the Royal Navy and acquired wide experience that would prove of the utmost value to the post-war South African Navy.

Although South Africa had no navy of its own at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, the establishment and development of an efficient seagoing force during the conflict to contribute to both local and wider Allied naval defence had been significant. As a result, even before the war ended, the South African Government decided to retain a permanent navy for the defence of South Africa and to contribute towards the protection of the sea routes round the Cape after hostilities ended.

Based on the experience of the two world wars, and in the light of the increasing Soviet threat to the Cape Sea route at the start of the Cold War, the rapid expansion of the South African Navy as part of the 1955 Anglo-South African Simon's Town Agreement was almost exclusively focussed on the acquisition of modern anti-submarine and mine countermeasures capabilities to replace its legacy war-built ships. This resulted in the development of a small but highly professional, efficient, and well-equipped Commonwealth navy which was well able to train and effectively take its place alongside the RN and its other Commonwealth and Allied 'cousins' during the Cold War.

As part of this development, the Admiralty recognised that if the SAN was to play its full part in any future war, its development and training in peace should be the same as that of the Royal Navy. As a result, many South African officers and ratings attended specialist courses at Royal Navy training establishments and were either seconded to or served in RN ships and shore establishments on exchange.

Because of the heavy emphasis on anti-submarine and mine warfare, this naturally meant that the links originally established with HMS *Vernon* during the Second World War, when South Africa assumed responsibility for local mine and bomb disposal duties, were maintained and strengthened, with many future senior South African officers, including three future chiefs of the South African Navy, calling *Vernon* their alma mater. This close association with the Royal Navy and with *Vernon* continued until the Simon's Town Agreement was finally terminated in 1975 following Britain's withdrawal from East of Suez, and because of the then South African governments apartheid policies,

a situation which continued until the demise of apartheid and South Africa's readmission to the Commonwealth in 1994.

Rear Admiral Allan du Toit AM RAN (Rtd)

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Future Chief of the South African Navy, Vice Admiral Lambert Jackson Woodburne, more commonly known by his nickname 'Woody', centre with arms folded as a lieutenant, pictured with fellow course members on the Overseas Long Minewarfare and Clearance Diving Officers Course at HMS *Vernon* in the United Kingdom in 1966. He was one of only two people to have been awarded the South African Van Riebeeck Decoration (DVR) for bravery, which he subsequently received for a special forces mission while in command of the submarine SAS *Emily Hobhouse* in 1972.
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