

Foreword

Enemy Waters, the third book in the excellent Mine Warfare trilogy by Commanders Bruhn and Hoole will evoke many memories for those who have served at sea and experienced the challenges posed by sea mines, whether they are modern and newly laid or still highly dangerous WWII relics.

Having joined the Royal Navy to dive in an attempt to emulate my childhood hero Jacques Cousteau (that amazing military leader, scientist, film maker and inventor of the aqua lung), I eventually found myself as a newly qualified Mine Clearance Diving Officer (MCDO) and Operations Officer on board HMS *Chiddingfold*, a *Hunt*-class mine countermeasures vessel. We were preparing to deploy to the Persian Gulf in a small task group that included HMS *Berkeley*, commanded by co-author of this excellent book, Rob Hoole. A hugely experienced and capable MCDO during his active service, Rob has gone on to thrive as a successful author as well, a widely acknowledged and a highly respected naval historian, specialising in mine warfare and diving.

Working up in the middle of the English Channel before we deployed to relieve the other RN Minehunters that were keeping the Strait of Hormuz open at a time of increasing tension, we started the day off as we usually did with System Operator Checks or "SOCs." A chance to turn all the gear on and test it with the maintainers ready to finely tune it up was always welcome. We slowed down to mine hunting speed, turned on the 193M Sonar and, purely by chance, discovered a very solid sonar contact on which to run out the submersible. As soon as the Chief Petty Officer Mine Warfare saw the sonar contact, his mine hunting antenna was immediately raised. "That's a mine!" We launched the submersible, got it into position and with about ten metres to run, turned on the searchlight and video recorder. Into view came a fully intact, German WWII mine. After the usual reactions and preps, the divers went down to neutralise the threat.

As interesting a start to the morning as this was, it was not the first and certainly was not to be the last intact WWII sea mine found in the English Channel during that year and in every year since. They continue to turn up today during similar chance encounters, or in trawlers' nets,

or are uncovered on the beaches at extremely low tides; and mine warfare and diving specialists from the navies on both sides of the Channel continue to regularly deal with old WWII ordnance.

Mines, old or new, remain a potent weapon in wartime and a threat to all shipping once the shooting ashore has ended. During WWII the Channel was strewn with them and for very good reason. This relatively cheap-to-manufacture weapon always achieves a high return on investment if offered a target. Countering the mine threat must be part of every amphibious plan to open the approaches to chosen landing areas for the amphibious forces and provide access to the ports and harbours for supporting shipping and follow-on forces once the battle has moved inland. This book not only reinforces this point but also reminds those designing the navies and amphibious forces of the future that ignoring the lessons of the past would be folly.

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