

## MERCURY NEWS

### ARCTIC STAR MEDAL

# Convoy heroes honoured at last

**THOUSANDS** of men served on the Second World War Arctic convoys – escorting merchant shipping to Russia while running the gauntlet of Nazi U-boats and Luftwaffe fighter planes.

They braved bitterly cold temperatures of up to minus 40C, savage winds and mountainous seas to get crucial supplies through. No special medal was issued after the war but the survivors eventually received one from the Russian

government in 2007.

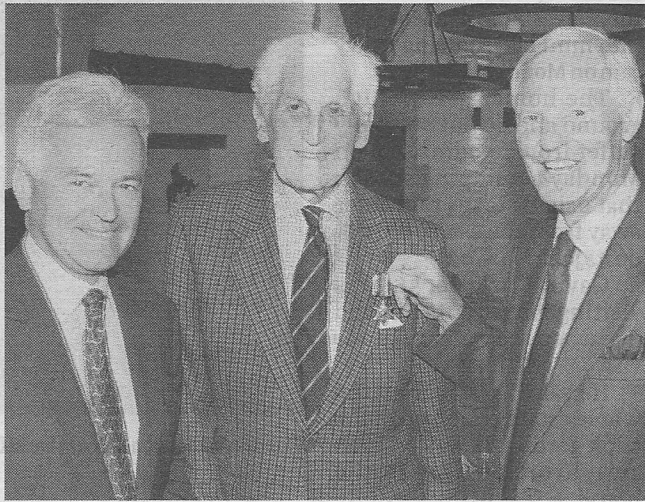
Now, after a campaign here, a new medal called the Arctic Star has been issued to a dwindling number of veterans.

An Arctic Star medal was presented to **Sir David Davenport-Handley** by the Lord Lieutenant of Rutland Dr Laurence Howard.

Sir David, now 94, was on the first Arctic convoy, known as Operation Dervish, in 1941. He served on HMS Active which took 10 days to reach Archangel in Russia.

On the return journey they were spotted by Luftwaffe aircraft as they rounded the North Cape and were told by the ship's captain to say their prayers. David obliged and when they went on watch the next morning the fog was so thick that nothing could be seen. The Admiral in charge of the convoy gave the order to scatter. Fortunately, every vessel survived.

Sir David said: "We were incredibly lucky and I feel enormously honoured to have received the Russian medal as well as the Arctic Star, even if it has been a long time coming."



**Sir David Davenport-Handley receives his Arctic Star from the Lord Lieutenant of Rutland Dr Laurence Howard watched by MP Alan Duncan**

Photo: MSMP230713-228js

The Arctic convoys were known as 'the suicide missions' by many of the men who sailed on them.

The presentation was part of a Stone Day held by Clipsham Quarry which involved a tour of the site and lunch at The Olive Branch

in Clipsham - served on Clipsham Stone platters. Rutland MP Alan Duncan was also in attendance.

Sir David, who lives at Clipsham Hall, is a director of Clipsham Quarry Company. The quarry has been in the Handley family since 1865.