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The Russians were in Rayleigh recently to honour 92 year old **Bill Harvey** for the role he played in the Royal Navy during the Arctic Convoys of World War 2.



A delegation from the Russian Federation visited Bill and his wife, Doreen, at their home and presented Bill with the Ushakov Medal in thanks for his service on the convoys, which transported vital supplies to the Soviet Union during the war. The convoys endured horrendous losses as they battled against freezing seas, torpedoes from German U Boats and attacks from the Luftwaffe to get cargoes of tanks, fighter planes, ammunition and food through to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel.



The Russian medal came just a few weeks after Bill had been presented with the Arctic Star awarded by the British Government. The Medal is given to members of the British Armed Forces and the Merchant Navy who served with the convoys. Coming seventy years after the Arctic campaign, it reflects the growing appreciation of the part the convoys played in winning the war.

Bill, a joining member of Trinity Lodge No 1734 since October 1986, was initiated into Shrewsbury Park Lodge No 6882 in February 1960 and eventually became Worshipful Master of that Lodge in 1974. The Lodge amalgamated with Three Columns Lodge No 8410 in 2002, and became Three Columns of Shrewsbury Park. The Lodge is based in Bromley, Kent..

Bill joined the Royal Navy at the age of 16 and after training at HMS Ganges at Shotley in Suffolk he joined the heavy Cruiser, HMS Suffolk. As soon as he put to sea, he found himself involved in one of the fiercest naval engagements of the Second World War - the battle of the Denmark Strait. HMS Suffolk, alongside HMS Norfolk, was part of the home fleet sent out to track down the German battleship, Bismarck. Bill recalls that their job was to find the Bismarck and then break radio silence and let the Admiralty and the home fleet know where she was. HMS Suffolk was one of the first ships to be fitted with Radio Direction Finding, RDF, which was an early form of radar. It was with this that the ship traced the Bismarck and her escort cruiser, Prinz Eugen. Bill was a wireless operator on HMS Suffolk. He also saw action in the Atlantic and was sent on HMS Suffolk to Mombasa in Kenya to join the Eastern Fleet helping to supply the 14th Army on the Arakan Coast before going on escort convoys between Durban in South Africa and Freemantle in Western Australia. Finally the Suffolk joined the British Pacific Fleet before the Americans dropped the Atom bomb in Japan and ended the war. Bill was then posted to Malta to join HMS Triumph a light aircraft carrier. He left the Royal Navy in 1955 and on return to civilian life worked at Standard Telephones and Cables for thirty years.

He regards his time in the Royal Navy as 'a few years in your life, and a little chunk in your life and you were there with thousands, hundreds of thousands of others '.

The above article was compiled by W Bro Norman Turner and approved by Bill Harvey