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HMS *Belfast*: Iconic ship re-opens!

Iconic London landmark, HMS *Belfast* will be ready to welcome visitors back onto her historic decks on 18 May 2012. A **weekend extravaganza** of family activities and events on the 26 and 27 May will mark the re-opening of the ship that made history during her service in the Second World War and Korean War and for the past 40 years has been a much loved visitor attraction, located in the heart of the capital.

The 26-27 May will see HMS *Belfast* brought to life with a summer jamboree of free activities:

- Meet HMS *Belfast* **veterans** and hear their tales of life at sea
- Delve deep and explore the **Boiler Room** and the **Engine Room** which are re-opening after a long period of closure
- Explore **nine decks of amazing seafaring history** with HMS *Belfast's* Yeomen; where sailors once hurried up and down the ladders, and hear their battle stories from the Second World War and beyond: the convoys in icy Arctic conditions, the bombardment of German defences on D-Day and the 404 days spent on patrol during the Korean War
- Tuck into a **sumptuous barbecue** and take in the views of London from the top decks, whilst listening to some **festive music**
- Visit the **Gun Turret Experience**, which immerses you in the midst of a battle during the Second World War, or climb up to the interactive **Operations Room**, which puts you in the Captain's shoes as you control a fleet of ships off North Borneo
- You can also find out what it was like to live as part of a ship's community, eating, sleeping and socialising together in cramped messdecks. Down in the bowels of HMS *Belfast*, imagine what it was like to work among the noise and ferocity of the ship

Phil Reed, Director of HMS *Belfast*, says; "HMS *Belfast* shows firsthand what it was like to live and work on board a warship. Since her arrival on the Thames, more than 40 years ago, she has grown to be a national symbol of the efforts and endurance of sailors who took part in the Arctic Convoys, D-Day, the Cold War and Korea.

London hasn't been the same in the six months that the iconic HMS *Belfast* has been closed. Its re-opening in May has been a long time coming and is a cause for great celebration. And that is what we plan to do - celebrate, with all manner of exciting, fun and engaging activities and attractions on board."

HMS *Belfast* has been closed to the public since Tuesday 29 November 2011 when a section of the gangway providing access to HMS *Belfast* collapsed.

– Ends –

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Notes to Editors

IWM Media Statement on closure of HMS *Belfast*

HMS Belfast closed on Tuesday 29 November, 2011 when a section of the gangway providing access to *HMS Belfast* collapsed. Since the incident, we have worked with the Port of London Authority and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to develop and implement a full recovery plan, and begin work on a replacement gangway which is now underway.

We have also worked with both the HSE and with our insurers, with whom we jointly appointed an independent investigator, to establish the cause of the damage to the gangway. These investigations have allowed us to conclude that the failure resulted from a subcontractor, who while carrying out refurbishment works cut through the structure of the gangway without sufficient support. The HSE investigation is still underway. We will receive their detailed report later this year.

HMS *Belfast*

HMS Belfast is the most significant surviving Second World War Royal Navy warship, with a history that extends to the Arctic Convoys, D-Day, the Cold War, Korea and beyond. Moored on the River Thames between London Bridge and Tower Bridge, *HMS Belfast* tells the story of life on board and explores how war affects and impacts on the morale, resilience and determination of a ship's community. We take visitors on a journey through the ship's nine decks and show them what life was like for the 950 strong crew, through the real life stories of the people who served in her.

Open daily 1 November-28 February, 10am-5pm (last admission 4pm) and 1 March-31 October, 10am-6pm (last admission 5pm). Admission £14.00 adults; £11.20 seniors and students, visitors with disabilities (free carer); children under 16 free; special rates for groups of ten plus. Please note entry prices include a voluntary donation, making a valuable contribution to the care and conservation of the historic site.

HMS Belfast, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2JH

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch with six floors of exhibitions and displays; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS *Belfast***.

First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM will mark the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities

across the country, including the opening of brand new First World War galleries at IWM London in 2014. For more information visit www.1914.org