



© IWM (HU 43755), Launching HMS Belfast by Mrs Neville Chamberlain, 17 March 1938 © IWM, HMS Belfast today as a museum ship, one of IWM's five museums © IWM (HU 8799), ice on HMS Belfast, November 1943. A group of Royal Marines and seamen on the quarterdeck.

HMS Belfast turns 80 in 2018

March 2018 marks 80 years since the launch of the historic warship in 1938

IWM welcomes visitors to come on board HMS Belfast for its anniversary weekend (17 March -18 March 2018) to discover stories from the ship's fascinating 80 year history that extends to the Arctic convoys, D-Day, the Cold War, the Korean War and beyond.

Visitors to HMS Belfast for the anniversary weekend will be able to journey through the ship's nine decks and uncover its fascinating history from the launch in 1938 through to its arrival in London in 1971, when HMS Belfast became a museum ship and an iconic part of the London skyline. There will also be a programme of activities on board to mark this anniversary.

Leading up to this momentous milestone, visitors will be able to get involved in preparing the ship for the commemorations. During February half term 2018, IWM will be running its *Ship Shape* programme of activities on board, where visitors will be able to participate in hands on conservation and find out how HMS Belfast's expert conservation team preserve this historic ship and prepare for this important anniversary.

In addition to public activities on board, a private ceremonial event will take place on board HMS Belfast on Friday 16 March where a number of the ship's surviving veterans will be reunited to mark this important anniversary.

Ian Kikuchi, Senior Curator, Second World War at IWM says

"HMS Belfast is a rare survivor, a veteran warship and a unique witness to twentieth century conflict. During this anniversary weekend visitors can come on board and experience the ship's life and adventures by walking the same decks, ducking through the same hatches and climbing up and down the same ladders as the crew who served on board. With 80 years of stories to discover and nine decks to explore, there really is no museum quite like HMS Belfast."

Visitors to HMS Belfast for the anniversary will not only learn about the history of the ship's 80 years, but will themselves be making history as they partake in this commemorative weekend. IWM will also mark this anniversary by sharing 80 years of stories about HMS Belfast through its rich collections which visitors will be able to experience onsite and via IWM's digital channels.

Further detail about plans for HMS Belfast's 80th anniversary will be revealed in 2018.

For further information, interviews and image requests, please contact

Poppy Andrews, Press Officer, poandrews@iwm.org.uk 0207 091 3069

Ends

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 company, through the real life stories of the people who served on her.

Open Daily: Last entry an hour before closing. (Closed 24 – 26 December)

Winter Hours: 10am – 5pm (1 November 2017 – 28 February 2018).

Summer Hours: 10am – 6pm (1 March – 31 October 2018).

Admission: £15.45 Adults; £12.35 Concessions (Senior, Student, Disabled); £7.70 Child (5-16); Free Child (under 5); Family tickets available; Special rates for groups of ten plus. Free for members.

From January 2018, a 10% discount will be offered for advanced tickets booked online.

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

T: +44 (0)20 7940 6300

E: hmsbelfast@iwm.org.uk

iwm.org.uk / @I_W_M / www.facebook.com/hmsbelfast

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 which attract over 2 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; **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 is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the world. For more information visit www.1914.org

