

## THE 'HOW THINGS WORK' GROUP VISIT TO HMS BELFAST, 23RD MARCH 2016.

This visit was very enjoyable. HMS Belfast proved to be a most interesting & complex vessel. Not only did we learn a great deal by following the marked route using our audio guides, but our group contact Andy, professionally involved in ship building & design for many years, was able to add a great deal more to our knowledge of the intricacies of its propulsion & equipment.

Launched at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast on St Patrick's Day, March 17<sup>th</sup> 1938, this warship was commissioned for naval service on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1939. Less than 3 months later, on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1939, she was almost destroyed whilst on exercises in the Firth Of Forth when she was very badly damaged by a magnetic mine, at that time a new German secret weapon. She was not back in action until December 1942, having been repaired & extensively

The visit began in the quarterdeck gun turret, below which hangs the Silver Ship's Bell presented in 1948.



redesigned to become what many now regard as one of the Royal Navy's most powerful light cruisers.

We gradually moved down & around the vessel, taking in amongst other things the various Workshops, Laundry, Sound Reproduction Room, Chapel, Post Room, Galley, Crew Mess Areas, Sick Bay & Operating Theatre, most of which are illustrated in the pictures below.



Of particular interest was one of the 21" MkIX Torpedoes used by the Belfast.

Some of the various Workshops . . . (L-R) General, Engineering, & Electrical:



Laundry:



Sound Reproduction Room:



Chapel:



The Post Room:

Sick Bay:



Operating Theatre:

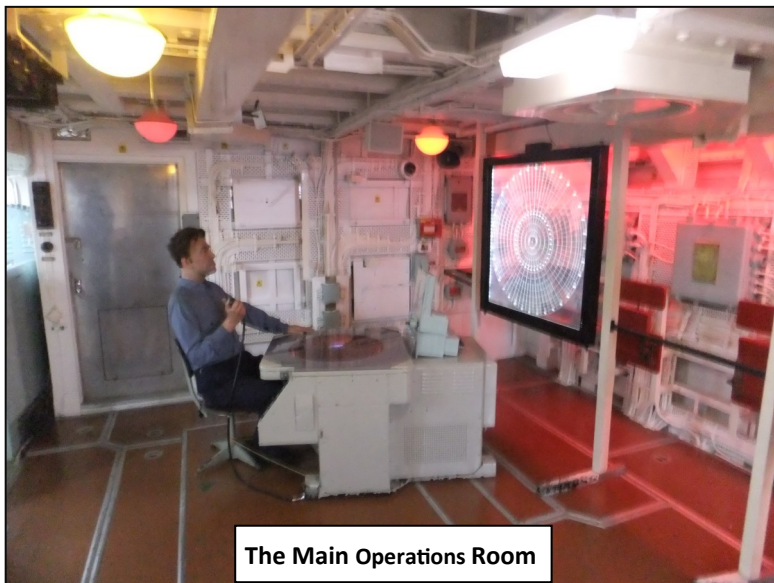




When we descended to the vast Engine Room, Boiler Room & Propulsion Units, Andy was able to give us a fascinating & detailed insight into the workings of the engines & equipment:



We went around the fighting decks, posed for a group shot at the anchor on the bow, & viewed the Operations Room, Bridge, & various armaments on board.



**The Main Operations Room**



**The guys inspecting the anchor!**

There were very informative displays on Belfast's various roles: Arctic Convoy escort in February 1943; the Battle of the North Cape in December 1943, (resulting in the sinking of the fearsome German battle cruiser Scharnhorst), & finally in the bombardment preceding the D-Day Landings in June 1944. These were followed by her post war activities in the Far East including the Korean War. Placed into reserve in the early 1950's until her future role was decided, she was refitted for aircraft carrier support between 1956 & 1959, but spent her final years on foreign commissions at sea culminating with an impressive circumnavigation of the globe before she was finally retired in 1962.

There were also many detailed & moving accounts of various individual crew members' experiences, both of life on board, & of the bravery of crew members & the hardships endured whilst fighting a war at sea. There was so much to take in that we took a well-come break for lunch in the onshore café & completed our tour during the afternoon, before returning home highly impressed & much more knowledgeable about the workings & history of this truly great vessel.