



## Kip on a Ship



### HMS Belfast & London Trip

HMS Belfast is steeped in naval and social history and so any opportunity to go aboard and look around its decks is exciting in itself. To be able to spend a night afloat is straight from “Swallows and Amazons” only on a grander scale and I think we all felt truly privileged to find ourselves sleeping below decks where part of Belfast’s 950 wartime crew spent both their nights and their days when they were not at “action stations.” Just like those heroic sailors in World War 11, Brooke House children made their own entertainment – and we were all treated to a feast of reels and jigs which must have given the old girl a touch of the “Ho Ho and up she rises” even though she is firmly roped to the quay side.

There is no doubt that the Belfast occupies the most coveted site on the Thames. Its bows are almost under Tower Bridge-which is a stunning sight at night lit in purple , gold and red-and it is flanked by buildings which accentuate the rich History of our country. To the starboard side are the refurbished wharves which played such an important role in our country in the days of “Empire”the dockers long gone to be replaced by folk working equally as hard and into the night at their “hot desks.” And on the Port side, William the Conqueror’s London castle and first stone Keep, the mighty Tower of London.

It was perhaps significant that we were in London on the anniversary of the Battle of Hastings and so William would probably be pleased to know that his castles and cathedrals are still intact-and surprised that his early Motte and Bailey ones can still be seen! The Tower, like the Belfast, has seen a lot of “action” over the years- and this part of the Thames experiences permanent day as the flashes from thousands of cameras are trained on the sights. Those people who took shots of the Belfast from the passing floating restaurants will have an unexpected bonus when they return home to their countries around the world.

They will see excited children waving from every port hole- another aspect of Brooke House entertainment prior to kipping on the ship, and kip they jolly well did. We are now in the superb position whereby over 96% of our pupils have spent the night away from home on some form of trip and camp. This, of course, is an educational experience in itself-and the pupils and their parents can, quite rightly, feel very proud of themselves for having achieved a considerable milestone in their lives.

