



Immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Slave ship comes up the Thames

On Thursday 29 March 2007 *The Zong*, a replica 18th century wooden square rigger will be accompanied up the Thames by Royal Navy Frigate HMS Northumberland from Greenwich, through Tower Bridge at around 1pm to moor at buoys next to Tower Pier. On board ship will be a group of African, Afro Caribbean and English singers and musicians. This visual reminder of the slave trade is part of the national commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade act.

The Zong was at the centre of an infamous court case in 1783, after 133 slaves were thrown overboard in an insurance scam. The public outrage it caused gave impetus to the abolition movement and created a public uproar against slavery. After 1807 a ship like *The Zong* might have been captured by the Royal Navy to face trial and possibly destruction in Sierra Leone.

At 2pm on Thursday 29th March there will be a Civic Reception held on board *The Zong*, and we are proud to announce that the Mayor of London Ken Livingstone will officially open the *Free at Last?* exhibition and ship. In attendance will be several High Commissioners, Pastor Agu Irukwu, as well as Baroness Amos, Leader of the House of Lords, and some MPs.

Following the Civic Reception there will be a Press Conference at All Hallows by the Tower, hosted by Baroness Cox and Alistair Burt MP, with a panel including Rev Dr

Clifford Hill, Deborah Hodson from the Royal Navy Museum and a representative from HMS Northumberland. Detailed timings are below:

- 1330 Press to be at Tower Pier
- 1345 Boat transfer to *The Zong* from Tower Pier for media
- 1345-1400 Media preview of onboard exhibition (filming/photography allowed)
- 1400-1430 Civic Reception and launch of exhibition by Mayor Ken Livingstone
- 1445 Boat transfer to Tower Pier for media and selected guests
- 1500-1530 Press Conference at All Hallows by the Tower (300 yards from Pier)
- 1530-1545 Questions
- 1545-1600 One on one interviews if required

A press pack containing background materials and brief speaker biographies will be available and stills and video will be accessible via MOD imagery website (<http://www.defencenewsimagery.mod.uk/fotoweb/>)

The Zong will then be open to the public for 2 weeks, with a “Free at Last?” exhibition of 18th century slavery. The on-board exhibition will depict the horrors of the transatlantic trade when Africans were sold to Europeans, then transported to the Americas and the Caribbean. The exhibition will continue at All Hallows by the Tower church where people can learn the story of the Abolitionists and their 20 year struggle – eventually resulting in the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807.

For *The Zong*, visitors need to pre-book tickets for timed escorted tours around the exhibition and on board *The Zong* in groups of 50. Tickets are available at www.free-at-last.org or tel: 0871 230 5457 at £12 each.

On Monday 9th April, Easter Monday, a public service will be held at All Hallows by the Tower as a climax to the “Free at Last?” exhibition, before the departure of *The Zong* from London. For more information visit: www.free-at-last.org.

HMS Northumberland is on another official visit to London but will also support the bicentenary events during her visit. She will berth alongside HMS Belfast where there will be access to the public on Saturday 31 March and Sunday 1 April. On board,

members of the public can learn about the Royal Navy's role in helping to enforce the 1807 British Act, and eventually helping to bring an end to the international slave trade. By talking to sailors on board they will also learn about some of the Navy's modern roles in similar humanitarian and Maritime Security Operations to combat piracy and illegal trafficking of arms, narcotics and people. Find out more about the Royal Navy's role in enforcing the 1807 Act at www.royalnavy.mod.uk.

Notes

Free at Last? is part of the Spirit of Wilberforce project, run by The Centre for Contemporary Ministry (an educational charity based at Moggerhanger Park, Bedford, home of the Thornton family, cousins of William Wilberforce and linked with the "Clapham Group" of Abolitionists). Registered Charity no. 1022698.

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