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Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' Black Watch celebrates new cruise season from Harwich

Ipswich-based Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines welcomed a delegation of local VIPs on a visit to its 804-guest cruise ship, *Black Watch*, on 7th May 2013, when the ship made its first-ever turnaround call at Harwich International Port, departing on a 14-night 'European Capitals and Canals' cruise.

The dignitaries visiting the ship included the Mayor of Harwich, Councillor John Thurlow, and the Mayor of Ipswich, Councillor Mary Blake, along with representatives from local authorities, travel agents and tourism bodies. Whilst on board *Black Watch*, guests were treated to a Champagne Reception in the ship's exclusive Observatory Lounge, on Marquee Deck 9, with its stunning panoramic views, and sampled the fine fare that is such an important feature of any cruise. A guided tour of *Black Watch* was also available, showcasing the ship's elegant décor and spacious public areas, along with a visit to the traditionally-styled 'Pipers' Bar' – named after the ship's close links with the world-famous Black Watch Regiment.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said:

"We are delighted to welcome such prestigious guests on board *Black Watch*, the 'Grande Dame' of our fleet, and our most traditional, intimate vessel. This new turnaround cruise season from Harwich builds upon our already-close relationship with this convenient, regional port, as both *Black Watch* and *Balmoral* have enjoyed successful calls here in the past, as part of their itineraries.

"As the 'local, global cruise line', we are pleased to be adding Harwich as a regular fixture in our cruise programmes for 2013 and 2014, and we are committed to offering cruise guests in the East of England and Midlands the chance to set sail from right on their doorsteps."

Black Watch will be offering four cruises from Harwich in Spring/Summer 2013 – to the Baltic, Norway and Lapland, and a mini-cruise, with durations ranging from three to 17 nights.

In May and June 2014, Fred. Olsen's 929-guest *Braemar* will be making its first call at Harwich with three cruises to Norway, Iberia and a special commemorative 'D-Day Anniversary' sailing, visiting Bruges (from Zeebrugge, Belgium), Portsmouth (UK), Cherbourg (France), Le Havre (France, for an overnight stay), and Dunkirk (France).

From Harwich, *Black Watch* embarked on a 14-night W1305 'European Capitals & Canals' cruise, calling at Warnemünde (Germany), Stockholm (Sweden) – with an overnight stay – Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia) – for an another stopover – Karlskrona (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Amsterdam (Netherlands), and featuring two daylight transits of the Kiel Canal.

The last of Fred. Olsen's four cruises from Harwich in 2013, W1308, is rather special; it is a three-night mini-cruise in aid of The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. This cruise departs from Harwich, which is the closest port to Sir Bobby Robson's team, Ipswich Town Football Club, on 15th June 2013, and visits vibrant Amsterdam for an overnight stay, and then returns to Newcastle – Sir Bobby's home town – on 18th June 2013.

This mini-break links the supporters and communities of Ipswich and Newcastle and the two statues of Sir Bobby Robson that stand proudly outside the football stadia of each club. By calling at Amsterdam, those from Sir Bobby's former club, PSV Eindhoven, can also join the cruise. Fred. Olsen is supporting Sir Bobby's cancer charity, The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, and will be hosting dedicated fundraising activities on board *Black Watch* throughout the cruise. Guests will get to meet football legends George Burley, John Wark, Allan Hunter and Bryan Hamilton, with more to follow, and Lady Elsie Robson has been confirmed as the 'Guest of Honour'.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

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