

NEWS

CEREMONY: RACE ON TO RAISE MONEY FOR HISTORIC UNION JACK TO BE INSTALLED AT CATHEDRAL

Homecoming for flag of stricken HMS Sheffield

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More than 36 years since the HMS Sheffield was hit, killing 20 people, the Union Jack it proudly flew is set to be raised once again in the ship's spiritual home.

The historic flag ended up in the US following the destroyer's sinking during the Falklands War in May 1982, but it has finally been returned to British soil.

A repatriation ceremony was held at Sheffield Cathedral, where former HMS Sheffield crew members gathered earlier this month for an annual service in memory of their fallen colleagues.

The race is now on to raise the money needed so the flag, measuring 4.5ft by 9ft, can be hung at the cathedral as a permanent reminder of the ship and those who gave their lives while serving on board.

The HMS Sheffield Association needs £5,000 to pay for its installation – including the design and creation of a custom jack and bracket – and is trying to do so in

Tanzy Lee

'It would mean a lot to the families of those who died and to survivors'



The Union Jack from the second HMS Sheffield is returned to the Royal Navy during a ceremony in Newark, US

time for next year's memorial service, where a dedication ceremony is planned.

If successful, the flag would be unfurled in St George's Chapel at the cathedral, alongside the battle ensign and Union Jack which flew from the ship's predecessor, the C24 cruiser which played a crucial role in the Allied victory during World War Two.

Tanzy Lee, from the HMS Sheffield Association, said: "The cathedral already houses the bell from the first HMS Sheffield but although there's a commemorative plaque there's nothing physical from that second ship.

"It would mean a lot to the families of those who died and to the survivors to have this flag hanging there.

"All the photos and oth-

er possessions they had on that ship were lost, and this is something physical people can look at when the memorial service takes place each year."

The flag in question had been flown from the HMS Sheffield during the 1970s, and the story of how it ended up in the States and was eventually returned to the UK is a peculiar one.

It was taken to Newark in 1974 by British police officers attending an international conference on combating car thefts, where attendees from around the globe had been asked to bring their national flags to display.

One of the British officers, Peter Byng, brought the Union Jack which had been donated by his brother who was then commander of the

HMS Sheffield.

Former Newark police chief Bill Brierley told how the flag ended up in his possession when the British officers had to jettison some of their belongings to make space in their luggage for American souvenirs, including chocolates and cake mix.

It lay in his small personal collection of military memorabilia for more than 40 years, during which he often thought of returning it to the Royal Navy.

He eventually did so after being asked to donate the flag to an Argentine military museum, a request he said would have been an insult to those killed and which rankled him so much he was spurred into action.

Mr Brierley, who had served with the US Marines during the Korean War, formally handed it over to representatives from the Royal Navy during a ceremony at the Pencader Heritage Museum in Newark, Delaware, last September.

"It's not my flag, but I've honoured it over the years. I wanted it to go back where it belongs," he told the Newark Post at the time.

"I don't want to get corny, but that flag has to mean something to the families of those who died."

The second HMS Sheffield was hit by an Argentine Exocet missile on May 4, 1982, killing 20 people on board and injuring another 26. It sank six days later, while being towed away from the Falklands in the South Atlantic.

It was the second of three different ships to date called the HMS Sheffield, or Shiny Sheff as they were nicknamed, the third of which entered service in 1988 and was decommissioned in 2002 before being sold to Chile the following year.

The Star is backing a campaign, launched by Sheffield's former lord mayor Councillor Anne Murphy, for one of a new fleet of submarine hunters being built for the Royal Navy to be named after the city.



The ceremony in Newark in America



HMS Sheffield after she was hit by an Argentinian missile off the Falklands



Repatriation ceremony for the flag