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Local & National

RAF window of peace

Wednesday, May 16, 2007

By Eddie McIlwaine

A stained glass window of peace is to be installed at a church in the heart of RAF Aldergrove - dedicated to the men and women of the services and their families and the civilians based there during the Troubles.

It will be unveiled at a ceremony in St Catherine's Parish Church, around which the base was built in the 1920s, on Thursday, May 24.

"It will be a permanent thank-you and a reminder of the debt owed to all the people who served at Aldergrove, contributing towards peace and stability in Northern Ireland," said Station Commander, Group Captain David Stubbs.

The window, made at C.W.S. Design Studios at Hilden, near Lisburn, and designed by Anne Smyth, has been allocated a special space in St Catherine's, where Church of Ireland civilian worshippers will join service people in the unveiling and dedication service.

Taking a personal interest in the window is St Catherine's sole male choir member, Lord Molyneaux of Killead.

The former Ulster Unionist Party leader, a wartime RAF veteran, was baptised in the church where he has worshipped all his life.

"The window is a symbol to a new beginning in Northern Ireland," said Father Christopher Webb, the Catholic priest in the base who is organising the unveiling.






And people's churchwarden, Victor Sefton, added: "The window and the ceremony will cement further the bond between the Services, particularly the RAF, and St Catherine's, which was here long before the base was set up in the 1920s."

The window, bearing the station crest and motto Ours to Hold, will feature a radio operator and a dog handler disembarking from a Wessex helicopter under a rising sun.

"Arms of any kind will deliberately not figure in the window," pointed out Father Webb who is organising the ceremony with Wing Commander Stuart Cairns, an RAF administrator at the base.

Stormont will figure with a Lynx helicopter of the Army Air Corps hovering overhead.

The Antrim Hills and Lough Neagh, over which helicopters from Aldergrove fly regularly, are also featured on the window which will have a dark blue, red and light blue (RAF) surround. The design will also include the Tri-Service Crest of the Royal Navy, the Army and the RAF.


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