

A window on the world of Josephine

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A NEW stained glass window at a north Northumberland church to commemorate the life of social reformer Josephine Butler is to be celebrated at the weekend.

The Bishop of Newcastle will formally dedicate the window and sculpture at St Gregory the Great Church at Kirknewton at a service on Sunday at 9.30am.

The church's congregation commissioned artist Helen Whittaker to do the work as part of this year's celebrations to mark the centenary of Mrs Butler's death.

She was baptised in the church and is buried in the churchyard. Mrs Butler died on December 30, 1906.

Rev Brian Hurst, of the church, said: "The congregation has been delighted with the finished result, which has an elegance and economy of modern design which complements our ancient place of worship.

"All in all it is a most fitting tribute to a quite remarkable lady, and the dedication - so close to the anniversary of Mrs Butler's death - is an

Left, the church window. Inset, Josephine Butler.

appropriate end to a full year of commemoration in Glendale."

Artist Helen Whittaker, who made the window, worked with Milfield and Chilton First Schools, a number of community groups, and the Parochial Church Council to come up with the design.

The feature comprises a symbolic sculpture composition of bars, bind weed and lilies and the stained glass window has the words she loved, she prayed, she endured".

They represent both suffering and pain along with resurrection and freedom - while making reference to St Catherine of Siena, about whom Josephine Butler wrote an important biography.

It was funded by grants from local trusts, the Heritage Lottery Fund and private donations.

Mr Hurst said the win-

dow transforms the entrance to the church.

Mrs Butler was born in 1829 at Milfield Hill. Her father was John Grey whose cousin was Earl Grey, Prime Minister from 1830 to 1834.

She fought for social reform for women as well as education and equality and through her fight against child prostitution she was instrumental in raising the age of consent to sex from 13 to 16.

She spent her last years living in Wooler and died at a house in Queen's Road.

A week-long celebration - The Life And Legacy of Josephine Butler - was held in Wooler in the summer to mark 100 years since her death.

This included exhibitions, a trail of sites connected to her, a flower festival, a concert, a lecture and a play Truth Before Everything, written and performed by Wooler U3A.



Rev Brian Hurst at Josephine Butler's grave in Kirknewton churchyard. Ref: 250571.