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# War-time courage is commemorated

**Vallant:** Window designer Helen Whittaker at St Thomas's Church.



Picture: Simon Hobson

A STAINED glass window which commemorates the Maltese war effort has been unveiled at a Newcastle church.

Dozens of Second World War veterans attended the dedication service yesterday at The Church of St Thomas the Martyr at the Haymarket, along with the Maltese High Commissioner, George Bonello Du Puis.

The 9ft by 3ft window was commissioned by the George Cross Island Association and designed and made by Helen Whittaker, of the Barley Studio in York, at a cost of £6,000.

A plaque says it commemorates the fortitude of the Maltese people and the

vital role of British forces during the siege of the Mediterranean island from 1940 to 1943.

During April 1942 alone, more bombs fell on Malta than on the UK, and later that year the island was awarded the George Cross in recognition of the bravery of islanders.

The window includes the then ill-equipped naval base's three Gloster Gladiator fighter biplanes, nicknamed Faith, Hope and Charity.

Fred Jewett, chairman of the association's North-East England and Scotland branch, said: "Until now there has been no memorial in the North-East to the many thousands who lost their lives and who took part in

this long and hard-fought siege. We would like to think our memorial stained glass window will become a lasting landmark to the history of our nation, of Malta, and of those from these parts who were involved in the siege."

The Rev Kit Widdows, Master and Rural Dean at St Thomas's, said: "I think it's absolutely brilliant."

Carlisle Cathedral's 10 Millennium Ring of Ten was complete yesterday after the final two new bells were baptised and dedicated. The cathedral joins an elite band of churches which can boast 12 bells. The ring of 10 will sound for the first time on Saturday.

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## Malta Memorial

A Dobson-designed church in the heart of the city now has a new stained glass window - its first since the First World War.

The window, in the church of St Thomas the Martyr at the Haymarket, commemorates the heroic siege of the Island of Malta during the Second World War. It has been made possible by funding from the North East Branch of the George Cross Island Association together with a donation from the late Dame Catherine Cookson.

Designed by leading artist Helen Whittaker from the Barley Studio in York, the window is a colourful memorial to the people of Malta and the armed forces who took part in the siege between 1940 - 1943.

This is the latest in a long line of commissions undertaken by Helen, who is a member of the British Society of Master Glass Painters. She has also done work for the Prince of Wales and for Ely Cathedral.

Chair of the George Cross Island Association for the North East, Fred Jewett, is delighted with the window. He said: "We set the artist the challenge to design a window that showed as many aspects of the siege as possible. She has achieved this in remarkable fashion and the window is a fitting tribute to all those people - from the armed forces and Malta - who were involved in this vital chapter from the Second World War."

The window was recently consecrated in the presence of the High Commissioner for Malta, the Lord Mayor, the Lord Lieutenants of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, together with service and ex-service organisations from across the region.



Helen Whittaker puts the final touches to the window at her studio in York.