



IMPRESSIVE: The memorial stained glass window honouring the 17th Viscount Mountgarret at the church of St Paul and St Margaret at Nidd, near Knaresborough. Picture: Gary Longbottom.

'Balloon window' recalls shotgun antics of peer

Mark Branagan

A STAINED glass window unveiled in a Yorkshire church looks back on the life of a peer whose exploits included turning his shotgun on a hot air balloon for disturbing the birds on his grouse moor.

The 17th Viscount Mountgarret died four years ago and the 1982 incident is one of a number of events incorporated into his memorial window in the church which was once the family chapel of his estate.

Although not everyone might see the funny side, church officials have stressed the balloon is only a tiny detail in the diamond-shaped pane overlooking the altar at St Paul and St Margaret, the parish church of Nidd, near Harrogate.

A well known eccentric, the Viscount, who claimed descent from Henry VII, peppered a hot air balloon with shot as it drifted over the heads of his shooting party, for which he was fined £1,000 with £600 costs.

The window, designed by



NOTORIOUS: The late Viscount Mountgarret and the scene in the glass window that commemorates the infamous balloon incident.

Helen Whittaker, of Barley Studios of York, shows St Michael wielding his sword in one hand and holding the scales of justice in the other.

She said: "The idea for the balloon came from Lady Mountgarret. She wanted to incorporate aspects of his life, and, unfortunately or not, it was something he was probably most known for."

"I chose St Michael as he was a warrior saint and that reflected

what I saw of Mountgarret's character, fighting hard for what he believed in."

The window also commemorates one of Mountgarret's more praiseworthy achievements - settling the faction-fighting that split Yorkshire County Cricket Club over Geoffrey Boycott's role in its management.

St Paul and St Margaret's church stands beside the former family home of Nidd Hall, sold off to settle family debts.