

Window tribute to the brave war pilots

FIFTY YEARS after Southampton-built Hurricane and Spitfire planes tackled Hitler's fighters in the Battle of Britain, a stained-glass tribute to the brave RAF pilots is to be installed at a city church.

It took craftsman Maurice Bennett and his wife Molly 14 months to design and build a three-panelled window for St Mark's Church in Woolston — but their creation could still be reminding people of the historic tussle in the skies in 300 years' time.

Members of the Royal Air Force Association collected thousands of pounds (the exact amount is a secret) to pay for the beautiful design, which incorporates a Spitfire, a Hurricane and the emblem of the RAFA. Famous supporters, in-

Anna Jenkins reports

cluding singer Harry Secombe and Southampton comedian Benny Hill, had also contributed, said 58-year-old Maurice — himself an ex-RAF man — at the couple's shop in Portswood Road.

He hoped the window will remind Southampton many pilots have their own terrible mementos of the war: "We owe them so much, and for some of them who were injured physically or mentally the battle is still going on."

The window will be

dedicated at a ceremony on Sunday September 16, one day after the anniversary — and in the middle of the Wings Appeal month, which aims to raise cash for Britain's former air heroes.

Molly, 52, took on the job of making sure every detail in the window was correct. Even the exact shape of the crowns surmounting laurel leaves had to be double-checked, to avoid a mistake that could otherwise be around for centuries to come.

