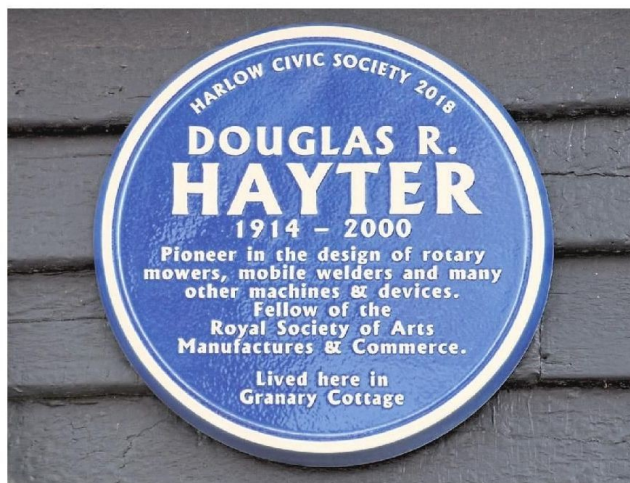


Below is a slightly edited version of an article by David James first published in April 2019 in the Bishop's Stortford Independent. Thanks go to the Indy for their permission to reprint it here. Photographs were also taken from that article.



The plaque unveiled in honour of Douglas Hayter, left, at his former home Granary Cottage in Old Harlow

Bishop's Stortford-born engineer and visionary Douglas Hayter has been honoured by Harlow Civic Society with the unveiling of a blue plaque at his former Old Harlow home. The commemorative sign was officially unveiled on the wall of Granary Cottage, Mulberry Green, by Harlow MP Robert Halfon. Stan Newens, the head of Harlow Civic Society, and Cllr Maggie Hulcoop, the chair of Harlow Council, were there to recognise the contributions Hayter made to the local area.

Susan Hayter, Douglas' widow, said: "I am thrilled that even now, 19 years after Douglas' death, the Harlow Civic Society has decided to honour Douglas' achievements with this plaque. "It is fantastic to see that his accomplishments as an inventor and pioneer are being recognised. He was a very creative man and his dyslexia fuelled his lateral thinking."

Friends and family, including Douglas' daughter Jenny Pactat, also attended the celebration. Raghu Das, Hayter managing director of Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said "We are immensely proud to be a part of the unveiling of the blue plaque in honour of Douglas Hayter's achievements. He was a great visionary and businessman who contributed a lot to the local community in and around Harlow, Bishop's Stortford, Spellbrook and Sawbridgeworth."

Douglas was born in Portland Road, Bishop's Stortford in 1914 and was the sixth of seven children. After leaving school at 14, he worked in several jobs, before settling into the building trade. Before setting up his own building business in 1937 he worked on several local building works, including the construction of the houses along Stansted Road and Foxley Drive.

That year he also built a five-roomed bungalow for himself and his wife in Spellbrook. In 1938 he started his own building business. He erected workshops and sawmills, manufactured his own plant, and invented a top-secret device for the War Office.

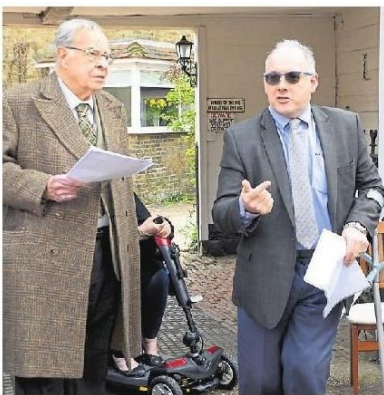
During the Second World War, he was employed helping the war effort through repairing and constructing farm buildings, as well as maintaining and servicing farm machinery. Douglas' journey into grass cutting machinery began in the 1940s when he was cutting grass around his drying timber stacks. He borrowed a cutter bar mower from a friend but found the process frustrating and slow.

“On a visit to London’s Science Museum, Douglas saw a horse-drawn rotary mower that had been invented a hundred years or so earlier,” said Susan. “On his return to Spellbrook he added a second-hand two-stroke engine to the collection of bits and pieces that he had under his workshop bench. By the next day, the first Hayter rotary lawnmower, complete with a dustbin lid over the rotor, was ready for use.”

The invention quickly gained popularity and Douglas started receiving requests for more machines. In 1946, the Motor Scythe went into full production and Hayter Ltd was officially born. Several professional and domestic mowers, such as the Hayterette and the Hayter Harrier, today synonymous with the Hayter brand, were developed at the Spellbrook factory. In 1960, Hayter’s company received the Royal Warrant for the supply of machinery to HM Queen Elizabeth II, which is an honour the company still holds.

In 1968, he was awarded Fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts for recognition of his design and innovation work. It was around this time that Douglas and Susan took up residence in Granary Cottage, whilst selling the company’s products internationally. By the end of the 1960s, Douglas had established a network of 38 international distributors selling products into 110 different countries.

During his career, he also developed machines and devices outside of grounds care, including a range of portable welders known as the Mighty Midgets, which were used in the construction of the new London Bridge and the Post Office Tower. Douglas sold the company aged 70, in 1984, due to ill health, but the business continues to use the Spellbrook site to this day to manufacture Hayter’s equipment.



Robert Halfon MP gives a speech at the plaque unveiling



Information was also taken from www.hayter.co.uk