

# SIR GEORGE DOWTY MEMORIAL STATUE

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*Unveiling Ceremony, 27th May 2026  
International Bomber Command Centre*



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International Bomber Command Centre  
Lincoln, LN4 2HQ*

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*In Memoriam of Sir George Dowty DL FRAS*

# INTRODUCTION

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The founder of the world-renowned Dowty engineering business, Sir George Dowty, eschewed the limelight and was not self-serving. His inventions saved lives on a monumental scale and he made a significant contribution to the winning of the Second World War.

Over fifty years after his passing it is most appropriate to have a statute erected in his memory at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln given that probably his most famous design was that of the undercarriage for the Lancaster bomber.

“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men”.

**Martin Robins**

Chairman of the  
Sir George Memorial Committee

# WELCOME

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It is most appropriate that the first statute to be erected at the International Bomber Command Centre should be of Sir George Dowty. He was responsible for the most outstanding and remarkable aeronautical innovation during the Second World War and beyond.

His designs incorporated both the hydraulic and pneumatic cushioning of landing gear and his business, the Dowty Group, supplied almost every aircraft that the RAF flew during the Second World War. No aircraft programme was ever delayed for lack of Dowty equipment and no single aircraft was ever unserviceable for lack of spare parts, a record that is, perhaps, unequalled.

In 1956 George Dowty received a knighthood and in 1967 the Royal Aeronautical Society made him an honorary fellow, the greatest distinction it can confer, in recognition of many years of outstanding service to aviation.

The Sir George Dowty Memorial Committee is delighted that Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE is to lead the unveiling service.

# CEREMONY

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## Unveiling Ceremony

27th May 2026

Introduction by Martin Robins, Chairman  
of the Sir George Dowty Memorial  
Committee.

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Remembrance by the Very Revd Simon  
Jones, Dean of Lincoln.

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## Reading of the Kohima Exhortation.

They shall not grow old, as  
we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them nor  
the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

*All:*

We will remember them

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## Two Minutes Silence

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Their epitaph declares:-

When you go home tell them of us and say  
“for your tomorrow we gave our today.”

**Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori**

Gentle and gracious.

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Let us say the Lord’s Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.

Amen.

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Remembering the fallen from  
WWI and WWII.

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A tribute to my father by George Dowty.

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Tribute by Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBR,  
Head of Air Staff 1992-1997.

***The Life and Times Of Sir George Dowty.  
Canon Hopkins' Address, Thanksgiving  
Service, 22nd December, 1975.***

This impressive congregation has come together so that we may pay our respects and offer our heartfelt tribute to the memory of one whose life-story has all the popular appeal of a "rags-to-riches" romance. Not that the small boy from Pershore, playing with his precious toy steam-engine, was ever destitute, nor that fifty years later he ever regarded his executive aeroplane and Phantom Rolls-Royce as playthings. But the able lad who did so well at Worcester Grammar School, and who under wise guidance went on to develop his engineering talents to the highest degree, began his creative work, as we all know, in the most modest way, on the proverbial shoe-string, and in the middle of the worst trade-slump in our history. The remarkable saga of how Sir George's infant workshop set up in 1931 in one of the back streets of Cheltenham grew into the now world-famous Dowty hydraulics concern with its many associated branches, its work-force of 13,000, and its annual turn-over of nearly £100,000,000, has been well told in print. Almost impossible though it was to separate George Dowty from his work, which his active mind was still engaged throughout his increasingly distressing illness.

Difficult though it still is to think of them apart, we are trying today to remember the man he was, behind it all, and to thank God for what he was enabled to do. It is fair to say that Providence had endowed George Dowty with nothing less than genius, inventive genius. He used to brush aside such a notion and call it just "common-sense", but it was very far from common.

When he said that "good ideas are the greatest asset a man can possess", he claimed no particular credit for being so full of such new ideas. He simply felt that it would be a crime to be able to think out useful safety and other technical devices and not go to the trouble, and take the extensive risks, of putting them into execution. Over the years more than 200 patents were taken out in his name, and this surely means genius, and of a very high order. In addition to his inventive powers, George Dowty had an almost uncanny ability to look into the future, to anticipate impending developments, and to forestall others in meeting their technical requirements, thereby bearing out the truth of Longfellow's words that...

*The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.*

This is not the place to enlarge on the variety and the value of those many processes which took shape on his drawing-board and then found their way from factory to firm over these forty-five years. They were the work of a perfectionist who was impatient with himself, or with anyone else, if 100% soundness was not achieved at every stage. This made him, as many of you will know from experience, a demanding man to work for, yet one nobody could help admiring for this very insistence. Of course he could not have accomplished all this alone. While he may not have been infallible in spotting the potential ability and worth of others, it was the choices he made, and the loyalty he gained from his colleagues, that ensured the successful growth of his enterprises. And those of you who have been with him for a long time know very well how indebted he always felt to you.

His benevolent concern for his employees and their families was widely appreciated. Those who had reached or were reaching the end of their working life knew that their needs would be met. And those at the beginning of their careers discovered that invaluable apprenticeship training schemes had been drawn up which would mean that any young man with ability and the will to work hard would be sure to get on.

He was by nature a reserved man; one might almost say a “loner”, for no one got very close to the real George Dowty. He did not seek the limelight, nor did he particularly enjoy it. But there were many things he really did enjoy. For one who was an essentially practical man, whose natural bent was for things mechanical, his great love of beauty and of nature comes as something of a surprise. Whether it was the gentle loveliness of the Vale of Evesham where he was brought up, or the gorgeous floral arrangements which Lady Dowty so excels in, or the majestic mountain scenery of the Bernese Oberland where they both enjoyed such happy Swiss holidays, his appreciation of God’s good gifts was unbounded. He loved the English countryside and longed that this heritage should be safeguarded for future generations. So he did not take much persuading to give his support to the preservation of this glorious Abbey and this unique town. Many societies and organisations, far too many to mention by name, are represented here because they have good reason to be grateful for the ready help and encouragement and generosity that Sir George bestowed upon them. Whenever he could see that there was a genuine need he was prepared to step in and do what he could. This was specially true of two causes which I feel I must mention.

In Her Majesty’s Prison, where men’s lives tend to go so easily to waste, he quickly responded to the suggestion that a workshop be established and equipped to train men for a more profitable way of life when their terms expired. His example has been followed since, and hundreds of men have benefited as a result. And the Cheshire Homes, where such devoted assistance is given to those suffering from permanent physical handicap, ranked high in the esteem of the one who was himself so fit all his life.

While on this very human level I hope I may be allowed a personal reminiscence. I am sure that I am not the only one present to whom, when conversation at some dinner party began to lag -- for like many of us, small talk to put it mildly was not his strong point -- George would turn and with a mysterious twinkle in his eye come out with... “Now when I played for England at Twickenham” - pause - “and won a gold medal”. He would then look with great delight at his neighbour’s puzzled reaction: How proud indeed he rightly was of his membership of the Richmond Curling Club and his successful mastery of that unusual and somewhat un-English sport. A similar light-hearted spirit affected his interests in racing and the breeding of thoroughbreds. It seemed at times almost a matter of indifference to him whether one of his horses passed the post first so long as everyone enjoyed the races. When it came to cricket, it is now a matter of history that his Presidency of the Worcestershire County Cricket Club had a magic effect on their side which sprang into new vitality and for two years carried off the County Championship. It is not surprising that in due course George Dowty was given well deserved recognition for his many achievements, he was knighted in 1956.

Yet the honour he personally valued most I am told was when he was made Deputy-Lieutenant of the County of Gloucestershire. In 1952 he had been elected President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and in 1955 was awarded their gold medal. Five years later he became President of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors. He was elected Master of his Livery Company, and awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the University of Bath. And, not surprisingly, the two towns which have so benefitted from the great industrial concern associated with his name, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, were happy to confer on him their highest honour, the Honorary Freedom of their Boroughs.

Inside the north door of St. Paul's Cathedral by the memorial plaque to its distinguished architect, Christopher Wren, there run the words "If you seek his monument, look around you." If you seek George Dowty's monument you must look up into the skies, over the oceans, deep down into our mines, to the railways, the farms, and the highways of our land. You must ask how many flying men's lives have been made safer, how many miners' bodies have been preserved from serious injury, and how many local homes have been made much happier by the security of their breadwinner's employment. You must look for his products or his trainees in Canada and the United States; in Australia, New Zealand and Japan; in Mexico and South America; in France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Spain; in Egypt and Saudi Arabia; in India and Ceylon; in Jamaica and Zambia. And especially in Malta, the island whose growing self-consciousness has been stabilised not a little by the new employment that Dowty manufacturing has brought it.

Because of all this, and because of our Christian belief in resurrection to a new and better life, free from the struggles, frustrations and anxieties of this one, we can end this memorable service quite appropriately on a note of Christmas joyfulness with the carol "God rest you merry, gentlemen" (meaning God make and keep you merry) "let nothing you dismay" - No, not even the task of carrying on his great work. We pray that the Good Lord will convey tidings of comfort and joy to his devoted wife whose gracious charm, which has endeared her to us all, relieved George's home life of so many of the strains and stresses that his busyness inevitably brought. We extend to Lady Dowty, and their son and daughter, George and Virginia, whose presence during his illness was such an enormous comfort to him, our deepest sympathy and affectionate prayers. They will have many, many happy memories to enrich the days ahead. George Dowty always believed that each day was a new gift from God to be made the very most of. Indeed, during his illness he had written out beside him one of the texts that appear on the first page of our service paper. "This is the day which the Lord hath made: I will rejoice and be glad in it." How true this was of his active life: but perhaps only a man of exceptional courage like him could, as he did, repeat this every day to himself while pain and weakness were daily increasing, and his life slowly drawing to a close. Perhaps George Dowty's chief legacy to the future, brought about through his original invention, has been to ensure that thousands of people day in and day out throughout the world should now be having "Happy Landings". We all pray God that he has himself made a Happy Landing in those realms about which he did not often speak, but where he firmly believed that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God."

