
Bluntisham Water Towers

Bill Wade - 15 February 2020



The twin water towers at the western end of the village, have been a prominent feature of the skyline above the village for many years. Visible from every direction, they appear to move, and the distance between them is different from every view point. Nestled amongst orchards and fields they stand guard over the Wood End entrance to the village and most of us residents, past and present, travel past them on a daily or weekly basis and probably never give a thought to the story behind each tower and when they became part of the fabric of our village.

Tower One

Building of the first tower was started in 1930 and completed c.1938. This was part of a scheme to provide potable drinking water to the surrounding area by the Ramsey and St Ives Joint Water Board. The tower was designed by Howard Humphrys & Son (now part of the Atkins Group) a firm of London based consultant engineers. The tower is a reinforced concrete design and stands 26 meters above ground level (56 m above sea level). The tower is circular in plan with a diameter of 13.7 m and a capacity of roughly 638,000 litres of potable water.

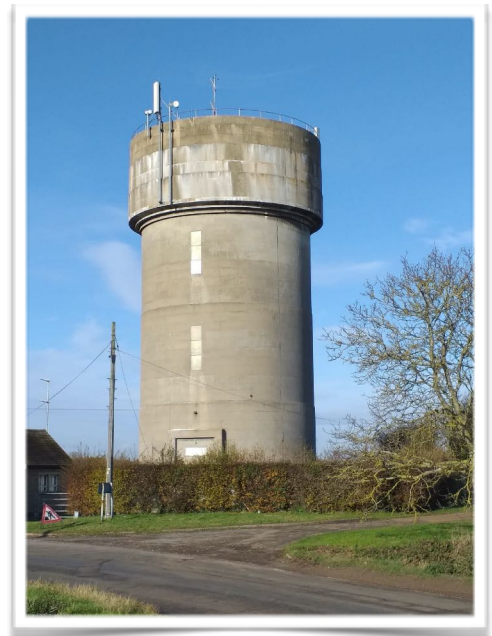
During the 1960s the operations and holdings of the Ramsey & St Ives Joint Water Board were transferred to the Cambridge Water Company (now part of South Staffordshire Water). The tower remained in service until the mid 90's when it was taken out of service due to significant leakage that was taking place from its tank.



Left - Tower One, under construction in the 1930s (Norman Gill)

Right - Tower One today (Bill Wade)

Below — a young David Godfrey on top of the newly completed Tower One, sometime around 1938



Tower Two



Tower Two - Bill Wade

The construction of the second tower was completed c.1976. Its original purpose was to provide additional storage capacity and resilience to meet the local demand for water which had outgrown the capacity of the original tower. The tower was designed by the consultant engineering firm Pick Everard and is similar in design to a number of other towers built in and around the North and East of Cambridgeshire at the same time, such as the Haddenham water tower. The tower is a reinforced concrete design that uses a series of cantilever beams and columns to support the water tank. The tower is 29.3 m above ground level (60 m above sea level). The tank is circular in plan with a diameter of 27 m.

As well as providing a secure source of water, the tower's also provide an elevated base for numerous mobile networks, ensuring a good signal in the local area. They also provide an almost unique visual reference as a waypoint for military flying training aircraft. In the past when RAF Wyton airfield was active the towers also provided a welcome visual reference on the final approach to runway 27 at the airfield.

Thanks to Alan Swann (South Staffordshire Water) for his technical help.
