

The Blockhouse

It is not known when Fakenham pump was installed, probably in the mid 17th century. At first it was clad in wood with the distances to nearby towns painted on it. This lasted until the enclosure riots of the 1870s when it was burned down. Its replacement, now in cast iron lasted until January 1939 when it stopped working.

In August 1941 the pump was relocated to the yard of Walsingham Rural District Council. It was never used again and probably ended up as salvage for the war effort. The pump was moved under the orders of Lord Hastings who was attached to the intelligence corps of the British Army and was also in charge of the Norfolk Home Guard. The Parish Council were advised to claim compensation for the loss of the pump and there were plans to fix a rotary pump onto the blockhouse but this was not done. With the time fast approaching when the town would not need a pump in the Market Place, a claim was never lodged even though a lot of correspondence passed between the two parties.

This new defence in the town needed to be disguised and so, stage designer Oliver Messel was contacted at his camouflage school in Norwich to come up with some ideas. His was to put a statue on the top resembling Justitia.

The location of this blockhouse was not welcomed by the residents of the town, it was the cause of two accidents, one of them fatal! It was also difficult for any military traffic to get through the town.

The only photo ever taken,
the demolition in 1944
(Fakenham Post photo)



On one occasion a wagon with three horses was unloading at the railway station when the horses were spooked by a low flying German raider and they set off at high speed towards Norwich Street. Their exit was blocked by the blockhouse and it was disaster for the valuable horses from the Raynham estate.

In February 1944 the order was given to demolish the blockhouse which began in September when the only known photograph was taken by the Fakenham Post newspaper. The market place was returned to normal except the town pump was no longer there, since there was a plan to introduce piped water to the area.



The town pump before the blockhouse was built circa 1920s