

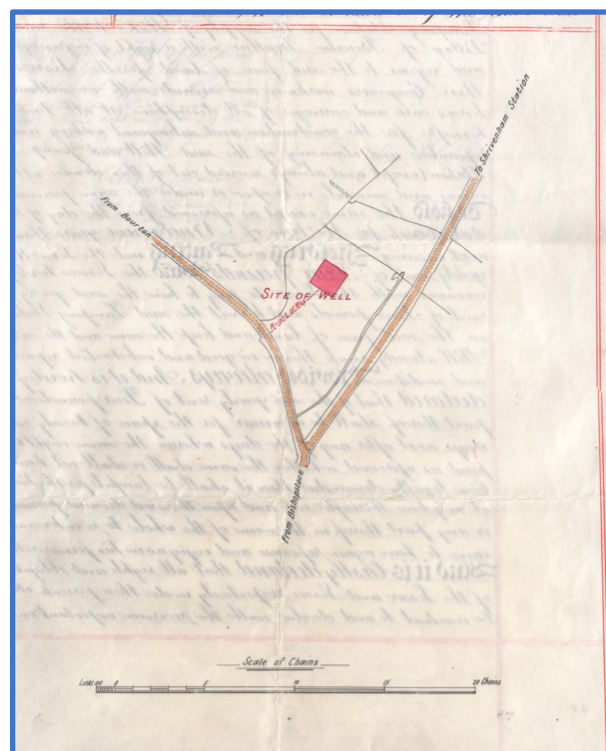
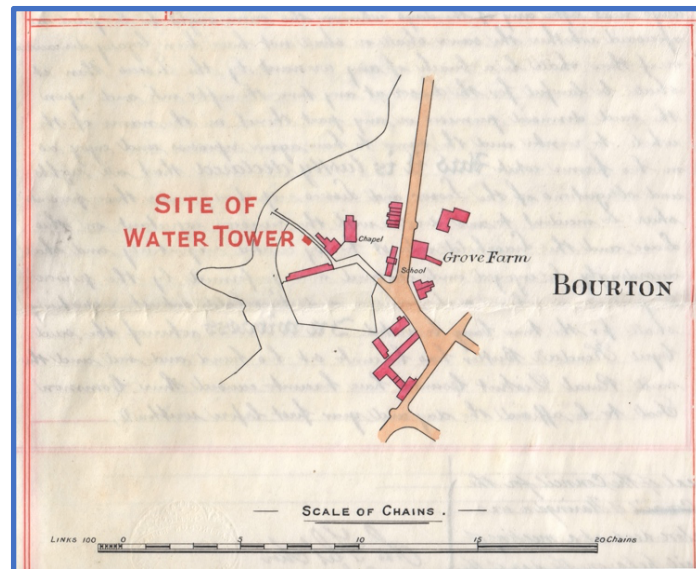
The Water Tower at Bourton

By Neil B. Maw



At the end of the 19th century, the method of supplying water to resident's homes was likely to have been using Wells. Over (Upper) Bourton would have had more of a problem because it was located on a hill. The Public Health Act of 1875 empowered local authorities to oversee water quality and wastewater. Cyril and Louisa Kendall-Butler, owners and residents of Bourton House were aware of the situation and in 1902, in collaboration with the local council authority, agreed to the building of a tower that would support a large water tank to gravity feed water to Bourton House and many other properties that they were responsible for.

An Indenture dated 22nd July 1902 between Cyril Kendall-Butler and the Rural District Council of Faringdon, (RDC) Berks & Gos, set out the rental of 56 square yards of land to build a Water Tower, on a 99-year lease at a rental of £2 per annum. (Below). Another Indenture bearing the same date was between Joseph Tucker Burton Alexander Esq of The Bury, Pavenham, Bedford and the same district council, for the rental of a piece of ground containing one rood (land measurement) for the site of a Well Pumping Station for the supply of water to the tower. (Below- south of the village at Bourton End). The agreement was also on a 99year lease for £4 per annum. Joseph was the Grandson of Joseph Tucker, one of the original Bourton-born Tucker brothers who made their fortunes in the silk industry.



However, a letter written by Cyril Butler's solicitor in connection with Bourton End in June 1930, noted that the pumping station had never been used because the water it produced was not fit for human consumption. This probably accounts for the local story of a Well located down the slope to the West of Bourton House, known today as 'Potlid.' Water from there was pumped either by a steam or diesel driven engine to the

tank on the tower. We do have an idea of what the tank looked like courtesy of visiting artist Derwent Lees who included it in one of his paintings in 1916 (SHS – N371). (Below – just to the right of the trees).



The feed from the Well was also not satisfactory in water quality and at some point soon after, the tower was connected to a Spring at Lertwell, near Ashbury, a considerable distance. By 1943 a letter dated 30th September, between the RDC and Agents for the Bourton Estate, Hobbs & Chambers, stated that, *'The system at Bourton with the tower and water supply, proved totally unfit for human consumption and has practically failed. Bourton will be connected immediately to the Council's new supply at Ashbury.'*

Another letter from the same bundle in the file dated 21st October 1943, provided further information. *'The original water supply for which a lease for the Well was granted, (Potlid ?) failed many years ago and a new supply from the neighbouring village of Ashbury was obtained. This had not sufficient pressure to get into the tower. Consequently, Sir Cyril and Lady Kendall-Butler were forced to pump this supply into the tower so as to supply Bourton House, The Manse, Church Farm House, the Vicarage and certain other properties belonging*

to them. This pumping has been going on for many years, and this is the supply which has now failed.'

At the moment we don't have the information of when the water tower stopped being used as a gravity feed of water for Bourton. The Surrender document in the file dated 25th July 1944, between the RDC and Lady Kendall-Butler, state that the Rising Main would be connected to the tower, but for how long that went on we don't have that information. We also don't know when the tower was sold by the council and transferred into private hands to become a domestic property.