

Manifesto of the Balkerne Tower Trust

The key to Jumbo's future as an asset to Colchester is public access to the building.

A successful public access scheme would bring this unique grade 2* building to life, provide a solid basis for grant applications for essential repairs and, over a number of years, enhancements to the interior and to the visitor experience.

The Balkerne Tower Trust (BTT) demonstrated before the auction of Jumbo in February 2006 how, given ownership of Jumbo and a small initial fund, it would initiate this process and put it on a sound ongoing footing. To this end we prepared a business plan.

By establishing car parking bays to the west of Jumbo (but leaving the entrance clear) a significant income would be generated.

The BTT would as an urgent priority carry out the minimum work necessary to commence safe guided tours of the existing building by Colchester Blue Badge Guides. The most expensive item of work required is repairs to the tower room including new windows, for which a grant would be necessary.

The BTT has calculated that the public access scheme would be self-financing. The benefits of such a scheme are far greater than has hitherto been recognised.

Jumbo is the largest surviving Victorian water tower in Britain and has national historic significance. Victorian water towers and pumping stations represent the late Victorian drive to bring a constant supply of clean water to towns and cities. In this they succeeded, transforming the lives of ordinary citizens by ending the scourge of cholera and other deadly water-borne diseases, as well as the daily drudgery of fetching and carrying water by the bucket from conduits, wells or water carriers. Jumbo is a historic monument to this huge improvement in people's living conditions. The cavernous tank interior and original pipes with their huge valves still in place, as expertly interpreted by Blue Badge Guides, would be part of the visitor experience to this fascinating building.

Jumbo is original and rare. Many Victorian water towers have been demolished or simply function as supports for mobile phone masts. Many others have been converted into private houses. Jumbo is an increasingly rare example of a Victorian water tower in (apart from minor changes) an original and complete state.

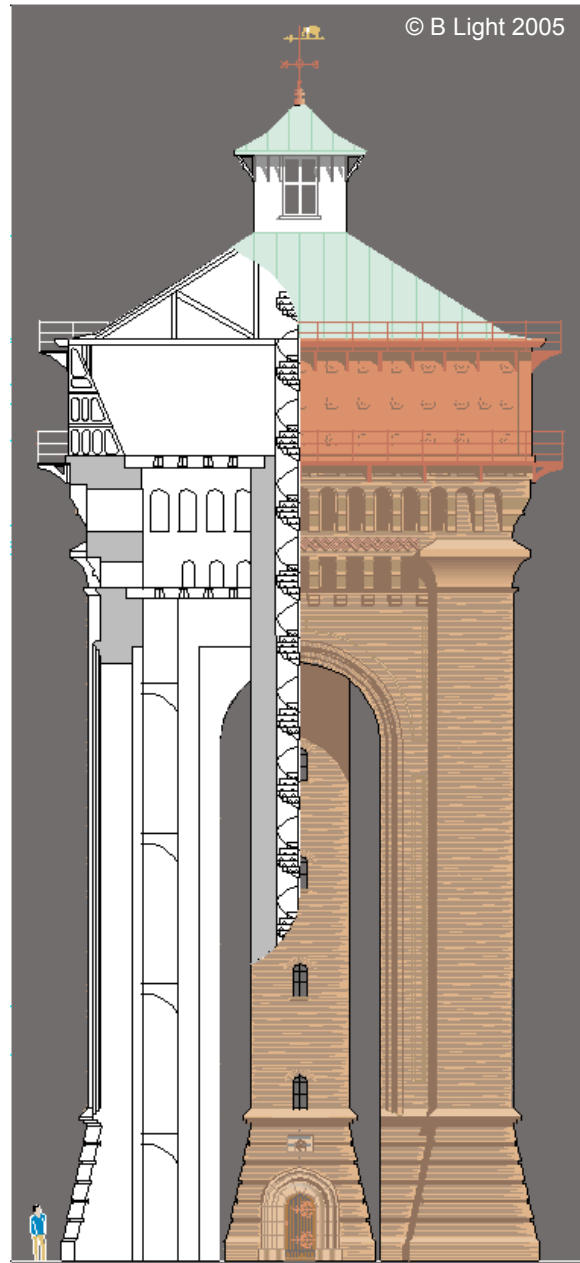
Jumbo is unusually well adapted to public access. Since the publication of *Water Towers in Britain* by Dr Barry Barton in 2003, we now know far more about the architecture of Victorian water towers than previously. Almost all are totally unsuited to public access. Only a handful were built, like Jumbo, with a spiral stairway through a central shaft leading to a tower room, and thus built-in provision for public access.

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The view from the tower room affords panoramic views of Colchester and the surrounding countryside. Jumbo is built on the highest ground level in Colchester and is second only to the Town Hall in height. The view extends as far as Brightlingsea on a clear day.

The story of Jumbo is part of Colchester's heritage. The early development of water supply and Jumbo's controversial construction is an important and fascinating part of the town's history. This can only be truly appreciated in the context of Jumbo as a public attraction.

Jumbo can make a significant contribution to Colchester's tourism. Total visitors to the town currently exceed 5 million per year, and the number of day trippers is increasing by approximately 8% per year. The resident population is increasing rapidly due to large housing development areas. Blue Badge Guides start and end many visitors' tours at Jumbo, which also features on the tour bus itinerary and on much existing tourist literature about the town. It is already familiar to most Colcestrians and its size and unique profile unmistakably define Colchester more than any other building. The potential for Jumbo as a national public attraction is therefore extremely high.



Such a future for Jumbo accords fully with the Council's aim to make Colchester a 'prestigious regional centre'. It is of greater benefit to the town, its people and visitors than other schemes so far proposed for Jumbo since it was sold by Anglian Water in 1987. The BTT will continue to strive to make such a solution possible.