

WOODEN COOLING TOWERS

By Barry Ryder, Feb 2015 [[email](#)]

In 1969, the last vestiges of Walthamstow's very own electrical-generation works were demolished. The plant had occupied acres of land which were enclosed by Selborne Road, Hoe Street, Priory Avenue, Shrubland Road and the Barking-to Gospel Oak railway line.

For many years the brick chimneys and wooden cooling-towers would have been the tallest structures in the town. They dominated the skyline.

For me, in the early 1960's, the cooling-towers did more than 'dominate'; they 'terrified'!

This photo (date unknown) shows the old ticket-hall of Queen's Road station viewed from Exmouth Road. Netley Road can be seen on the left and Edinburgh Road, by the pillar box, is to the right. Edinburgh Road School is just out of shot to the left. One of the monstrous, wooden cooling-towers imposes itself menacingly behind the ticket-hall.



I was a pupil at Edinburgh Road School and the gigantic edifices just beyond the railway line loomed ominously over us tiny kids. The wooden towers were at their most foreboding during the winter months when a combination of their own steam and low, clinging mists would shroud their tops and they would seem to rise up into the sky forever.



The image above captures the same tower from a vantage point on the platform of the station. The bridge in the distance carries Shrubland Road.

The frightening effect of these structures was heightened during school assemblies. The windows of the main hall looked directly out toward the monoliths and as the headmaster (Mr. Dunsheath) intoned about the majesty and might of God, these dreadful 'giant's feet' seemed to stand behind him as he addressed us. For an eight-year-old such as I, the sight – and my own vivid imagination – convinced me that Mr Dunsheath had a gargantuan, biblical bouncer backing him up.



Hoe Street Station (Selborne Road side) in 1966, showing the old electric power station in the background. This forecourt is now covered by the bus station.

This photo (borrowed from my copy of 'Waltham Forest Since 1940', by W. G. Tonkin, 1982) shows a more distant view of the chimneys and towers. The camera position used for this image would now be somewhere beneath the bus lanes at Walthamstow Central.

Does anybody else remember those sinister, wooden towers?

And...

..can anybody, please, explain why the railway station in Edinburgh Road was referred to – and is now named – Queens Road?