

Football Grounds Frenzy

Floodlights



Football Grounds Frenzy Floodlights

by Mike Floate



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Above: Sunset over the Pilot Field, Hastings United FC, January 1991.

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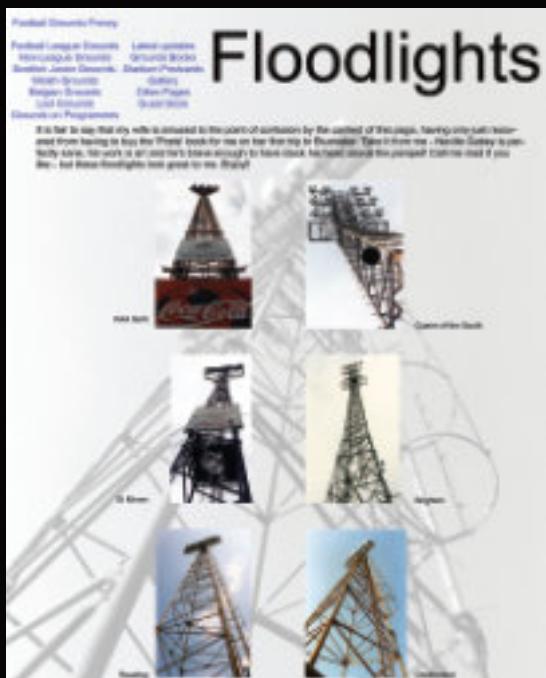
Introduction

*They took all the trees
And put them in a tree museum
And they charged all the people
A dollar and a half to see 'em*

Back in 1970 Joni Mitchell's environmentally-aware song Big Yellow Taxi spoke of a tree museum in the USA. Back then I'd have scoffed at the suggestion that we'd have something similar in the UK. What did I know? Yet the Eden Project is exactly the sort of place that the song describes.

Listening to the song I would also have said that one structure which I and everyone else took for granted would never be included in a museum: a floodlight from a Football League ground. I'd have said: 'and there won't be a song about one, nor a book – surely not?'. What did I know? There may never be a song or museum but here is the book.

I just accepted floodlights as being part of a football ground from the first game I went to on a Wednesday evening in 1964 at Selhurst Park.



This book does not aim to cover the history of floodlighting at matches as anyone looking to learn about this can do no better than search for the thoughts of Simon Inglis in his article *Lights Out*, WSC issue 196, June 2003. Peter Miles posted *Amazing Floodlights* on his blog *The Itinerant Football Watcher* in 2013. He illustrated this with some amazing photos of modern floodlights. In 2006 Desert Island Football Histories published *Blinded by the Lights: A History of Night Football in England* by Michael Peirce.

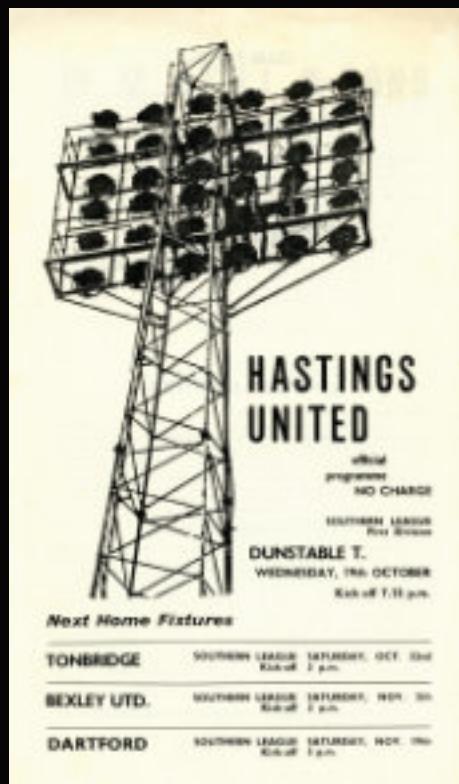
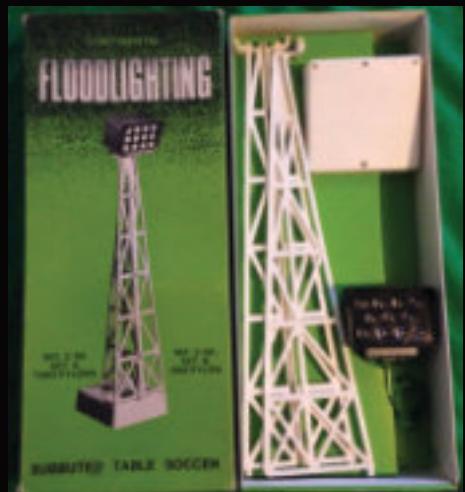
My intention is to use images to record the amazing variety of floodlights which I have come across at football grounds, which at first glance may all appear to be very similar. On closer inspection one can note that engineers have used different sections of steel, different ways of triangulating to add strength, different means of holding back corrosion, different footprints from which to build their pylons, to different heights, with different means of supplying the power and with different ways of mounting different numbers of differing lamps. They even offer different means of accessing the lamps, ensuring that service engineers are protected and that unauthorised people do not climb the pylons.

Some clubs mount adverts on their pylons while some use them to mount devices such as loudspeakers or to route cables between stands. They are mostly in the same general position but never exactly the same distance from the corner of the ground. Only one club felt the need to add floodlights on the halfway line, while others began the current trend for mounting their lights on the roof of a stand. I will draw no further attention to these points but leave the reader to investigate for themselves. I may even have failed to note some differences myself.

Left: My original Grounds Frenzy website was the first to feature floodlights in 1999.

Right: Hastings United were so pleased to host evening games that a generic floodlight adorned their programme.

Below: Subbuteo for me was non-League as I didn't aim to buy the floodlight set.



When travelling it was always possible to spot town-centre grounds from a train or car. I can still look out for the floodlights at the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre every time I travel by train to London. On arrival at a station the direction in which to walk was often clear to see, or an idea gained by seeing the floodlights on the way in. Visiting spectators in cars could judge when to park and walk the remaining distance to an away ground.

There is always an exception. When planning a visit to Gillingham I asked my Millwall-supporting friend the best way to get to the game. His reply was priceless. 'I dunno, when we go anywhere we just stop, wind down the window and demand 'Oi, we're Millwall: where's the ground?'.

My archive of images began when I visited Queen of the South in 1996, with the most recent image being added in 2015. Although most of the floodlights featured illuminated Football League matches I have also included Scottish, non-League and Belgian floodlights. Other than Bristol Rovers, whose floodlight was seen to be lighting the delivery bay of the IKEA store built on the site of Eastville, I have made no specific journeys to gather these images.

Boston United



Today there are fewer traditional floodlight pylons with many clubs opting to replace them with modern and less photogenic tubular pylons. Only one of these is included, with the Leitch grandstand really being the focus of the image.

This book could be said to be self-indulgent, tongue in cheek, hopelessly uncommercial, ridiculously optimistic or a key visual record of amazingly varied structures. The reader will form their opinion.

Of course, Joni Mitchell was right to go on to sing:

*Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone.*

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A visual record of floodlight pylons detailing their design and structure.

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Floodlights featured within an image of the ground.

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Views of the floodlights guiding fans to the Vetch Field, Swansea City.

At a Distance 82

After a game the floodlights at the Vetch Field seen from across the bay and the top of Townhill.



Darlington



05

2003



2004

Cambridge United



1997

Rotherham United

06



The Underview





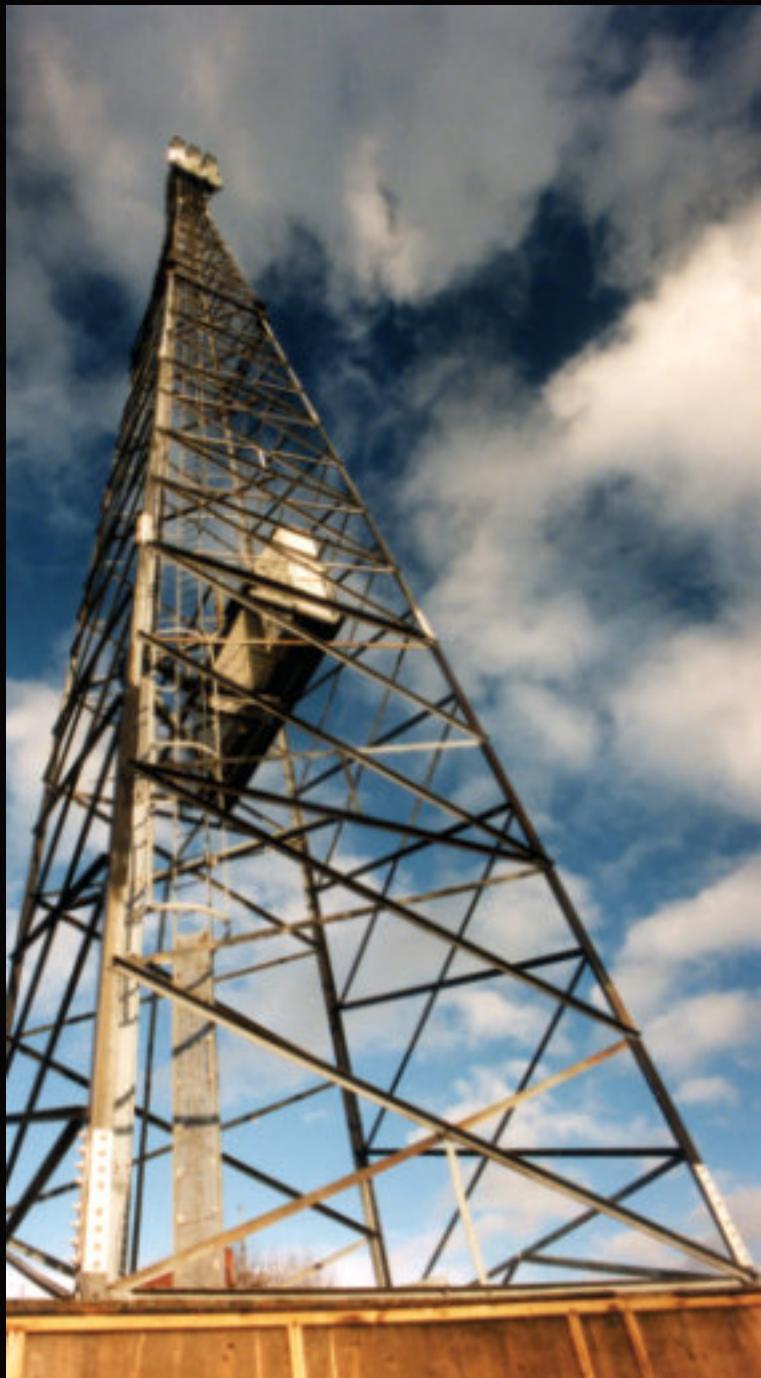


2001

10









1999

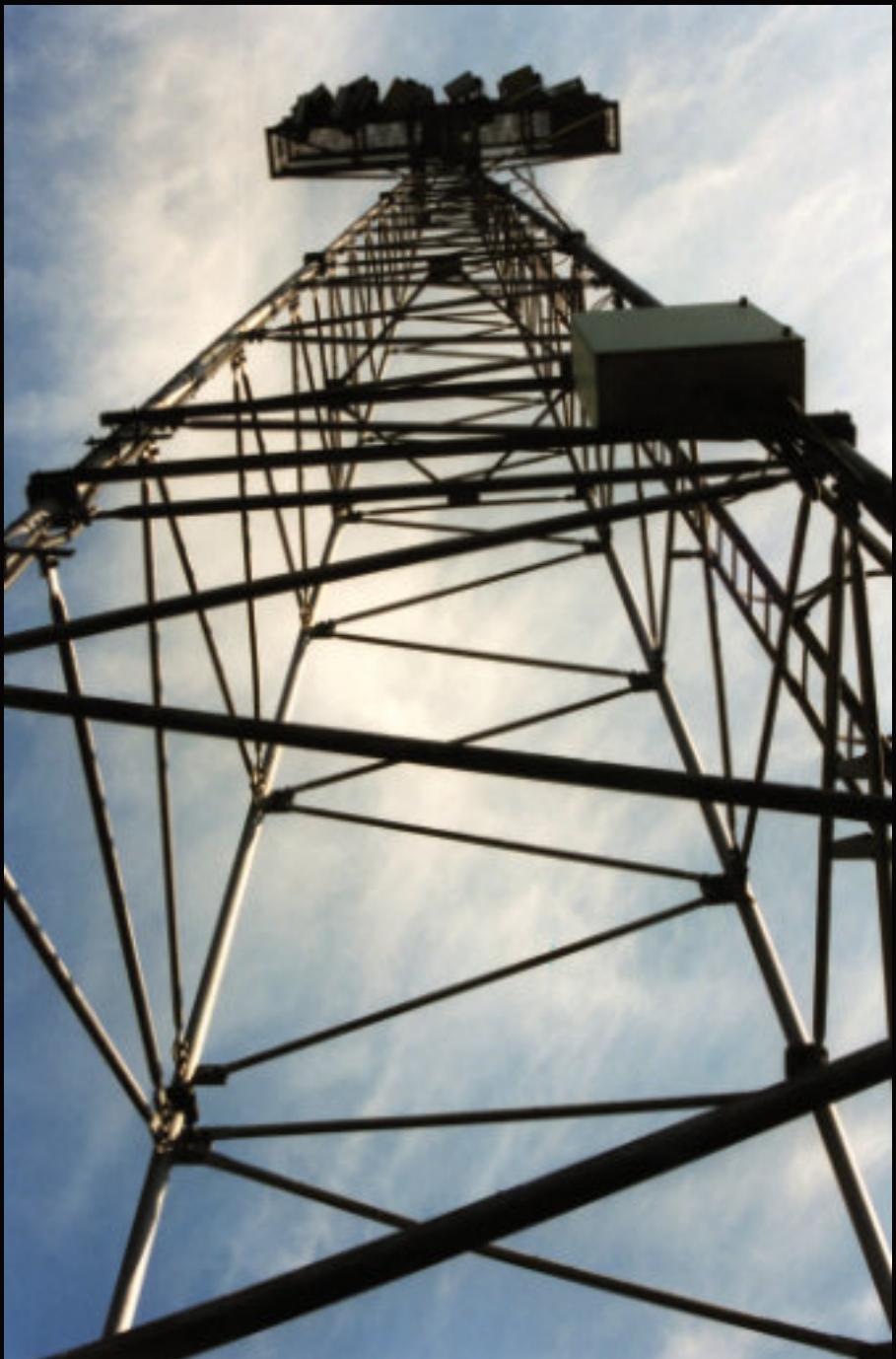
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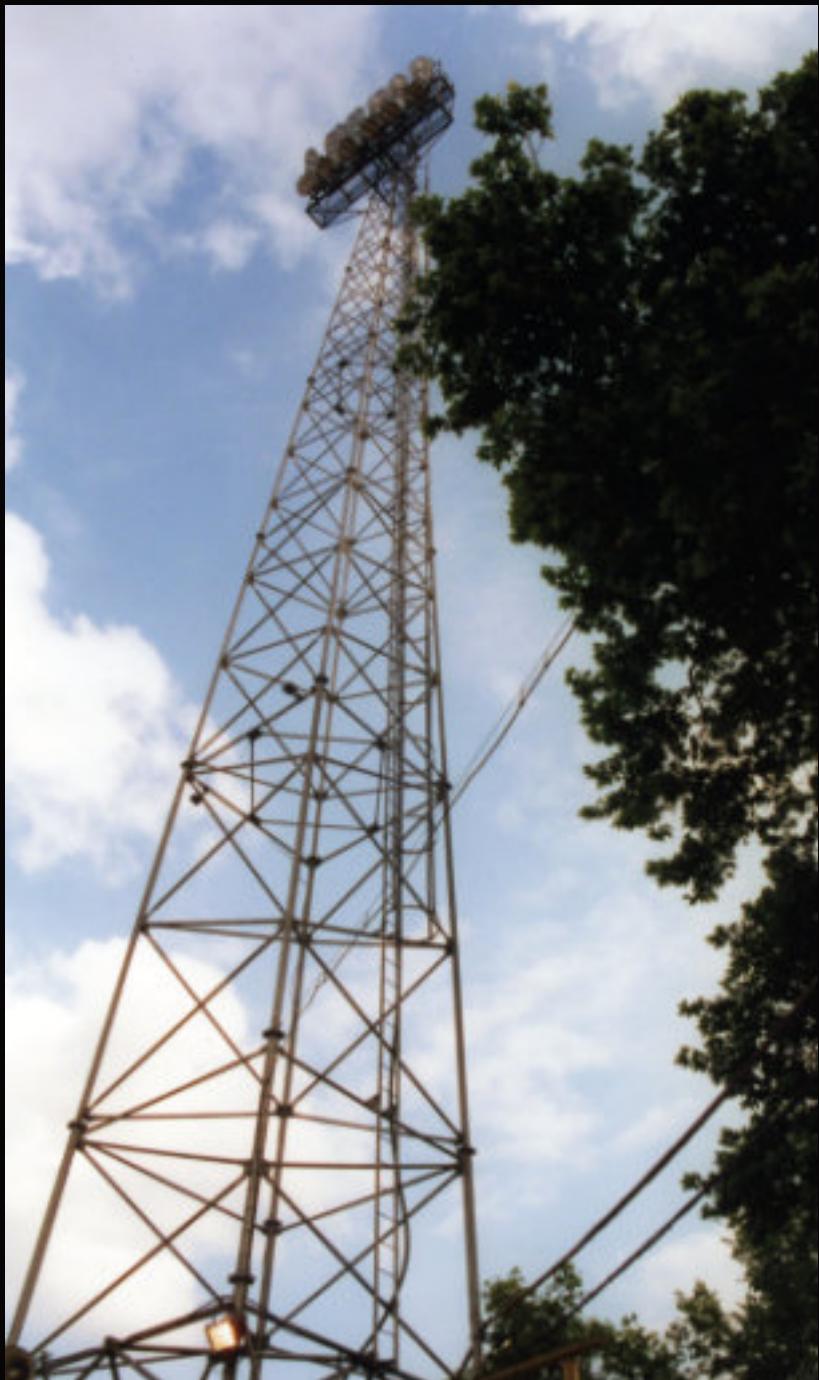






1997

20





2001





2002

24



Nottingham Forest



2009

26





2001

28

Crystal Palace Stadium

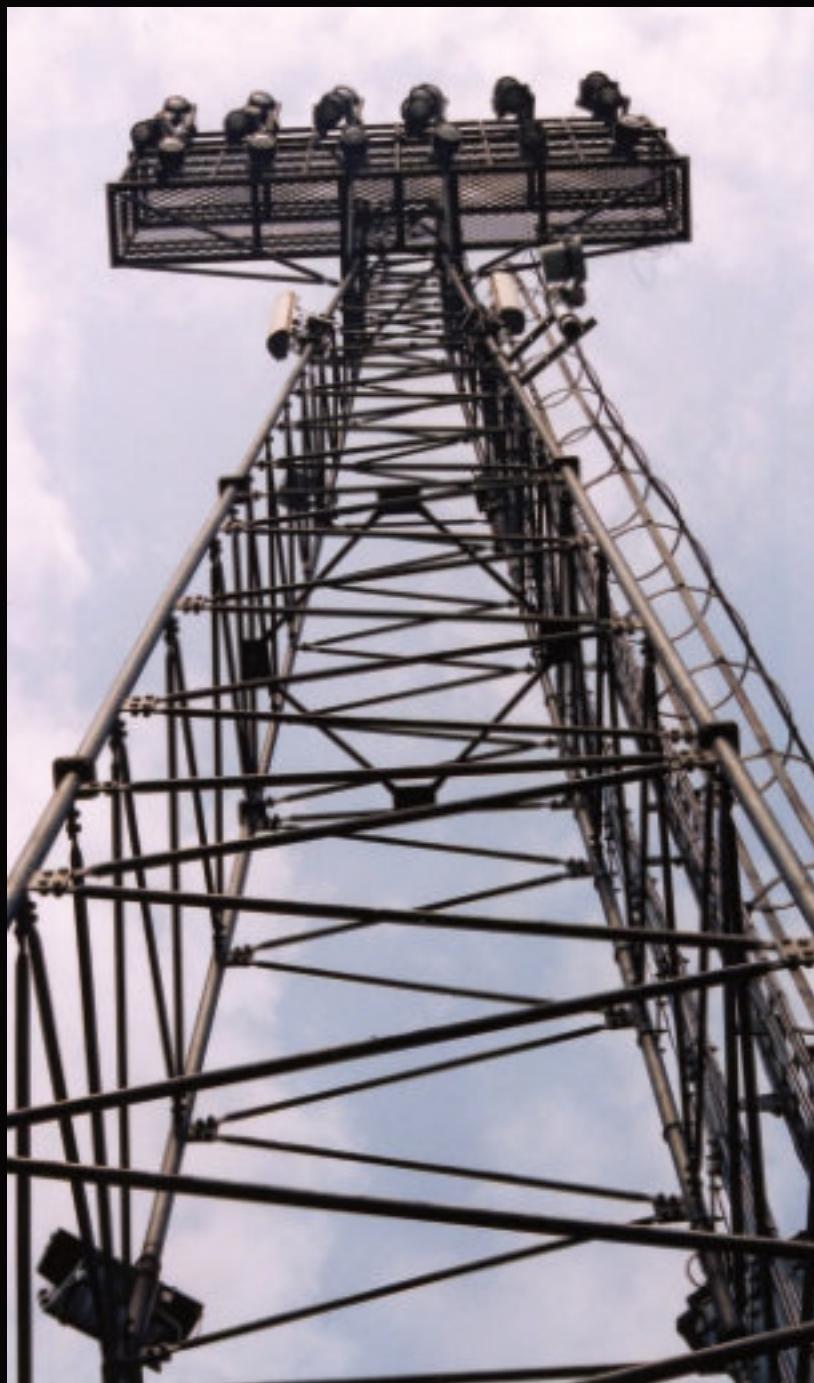




2001

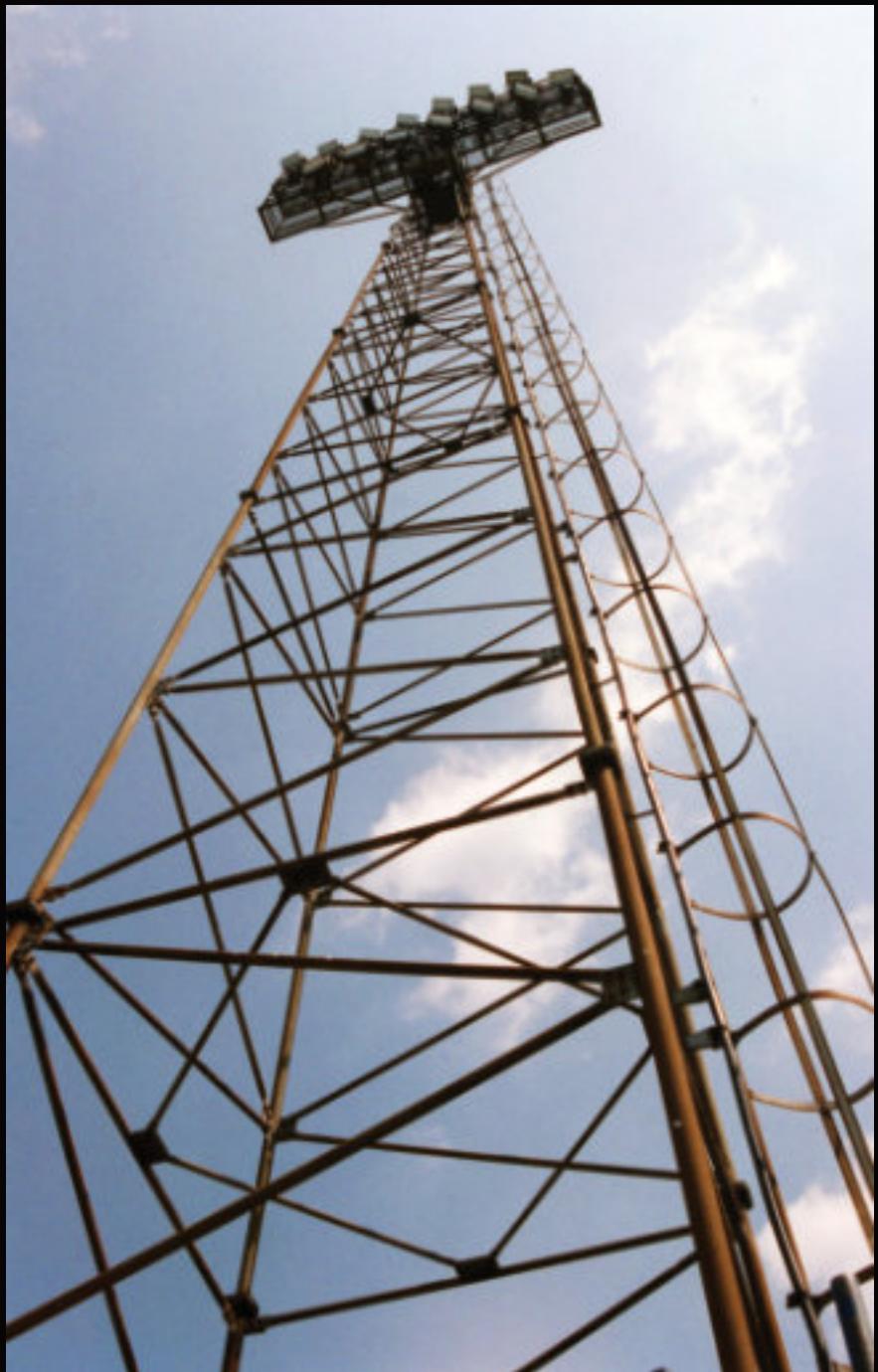
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2001

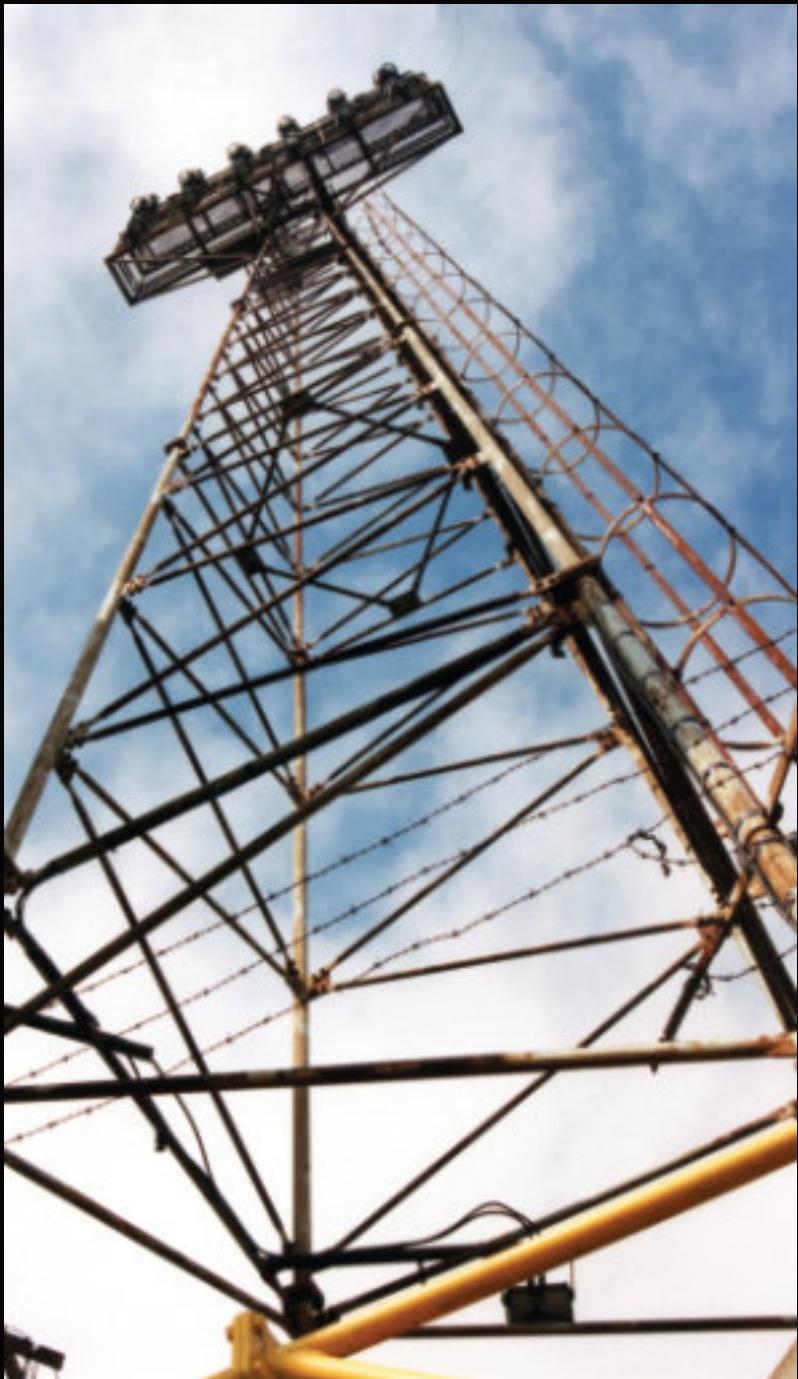
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1999

34













2004

40









1999

44





1998

46





2006

Barnsley

48



The Groundview





Peterborough United



1999

52







Queen of the South



1996

56





2001

58



Portsmouth



2001

60





2006

62





2001





1998

66





2002

68



Shrewsbury Town



2007

70





2003

Swansea City —

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Getting to the Vetch Field



2005



2005

74



2005

75



2005

76



2003



2005

77



2005

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2005

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The Dell



2006

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