

Let there be a lighthouse - miles from the sea

A NEW lighthouse is casting its comforting glare through stormy skies - but it will not be saving any ships in the new millennium.

The light is actually set in Faringdon Folly, a tower built in 1935 on a knoll in the countryside near Swindon.

The millennium light show is courtesy of electrician Peter White, 38, of Faringdon Electrical Services, who lives in part of Faringdon House which was once the home of eccentric Lord Berners who built the folly.

Peter used £5,000 of donations from local business to transform the tower into a lighthouse for Faringdon to mark the millennium with flare.

He said: "Local businesses have been brilliant. It was just a mad idea. The light is from Sill Lighting and is 5.5 million candlepower. From the top of the folly you can see the Brunel Centre so you should be able to see it in Swindon."

Lord Berners was a close friend of artist Salvador Dalí and the tower was built after a casual remark by his lordship that somewhere with a name like Folly Hill ought to have a folly sparked off wild rumours he was going to build a 300ft tower topped by a siren - or a lighthouse.

Objections flooded in, so amusing Lord Berners that it actually encouraged him to build a tower.

Peter said: "On safety grounds I informed Brize Norton air base in Oxfordshire of the lighthouse's appearance, as well as Southampton Coastguard, which caused great amusement and speculation on shipping flows on the A420.

He said: "The enterprise gives Faringdon a millennium celebration focal point and gives the Folly Trust the welcome gift of a electricity supply that will help their future management of the folly."



■ The lighthouse, and inset, Peter White inside the building

Picture: JUSTIN McMANUS