New Books

Lighthouses of South Africa

There are few books on South African lighthouses although PORTNET produced a slim publication in 1991 and Harold Williams, a former senior Engineer there wrote *Lighthouses of Southern Africa*.

Now comes *Lighthouses of South Africa*, a profusely illustrated book by a master photographer with more than 500 splendid and frequently dramatic photographs showing the 45 operational lighthouses, other aids to navigation and the flora and fauns associated with these stations as well as their history. The text is supported by 47 maps and a rich anthology of nautical quotations and poems.

Of particular interest is the book’s reflection: *To the unselfish dedication of those who have done so much to save the lives of seafarers.* In its opening pages the book passes further well deserved credit: *Celebrating the many lives and ships saved from the treacherous currents and tempestuous seas off the coasts of South Africa – paying homage to the fortitude of its intrepid lighthouse keepers and the ingenuity of the men who designed, built and maintain these beacons of hope.*

There is no doubt that this extraordinary book, divided into the regions of Western Cape, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, is a landmark in lighthouse literature. It is profusely illustrated with dramatic photographs taken by world-renowned master photographer Gerald Hoberman from the land, the sea and the air (as well as photographs of the mechanism and optics of the lighthouses). This treasure trove tells of the romance of men who went down to the sea in ships along the perilous coastline of Africa’s Cape of Storms.

It features the important role of lighthouses since the earliest known light, the *pharos* at Alexandria, to the South African stations we see today with their marine life, breathtaking scenery, lighthouse keepers and people around the southern shores of the African continent.
Gerald Hoberman worked in collaboration with specialist consultant, James Collocott, Manager Lighthouse Service of Transnet National Ports Authority and Vice President of IALA, who commissioned the work. Additional text was by Harold Williams.

Writing in his foreword, David Gordon of Transnet National Ports Authority commented, “Many staff retiring with more than 40 years’ service is an indication of the dedication for, and love of, the business that is lighthouses…”

Hoberman reveals a multi-faceted insight into every aspect of lighthouses and in his introduction James Collocott has written of him, “Gerald Hoberman has captured the history, the different lighthouse designs, equipment, different atmospheric moods and diverse environments in such a way as to show the reader the uniqueness and essence that makes one lighthouse quite different from the next.”

The book reveals the optical, mechanical and civil engineering genius, innovation and traditions of lighthouse science, against often treacherous and logistically challenging odds, in sometimes remote, uninhabited territory and wild seas. Hoberman, who travelled 12,000km in his researches for the book, enlivens history, painting a vivid picture of legendary shipwrecks, providing graphic and dramatic accounts of the sheer terror and blending in the story of civil lobbying for the establishment of lighthouses and other threads in the rich fabric of social history. To accompany there are maps showing the locations of the lighthouses and shipwrecks. Chapter headings incorporate delightful pencil drawings of the stations by Mellany Fick and an anthology of poems from Virgil and Shakespeare to Kipling and Masefield.

Each station listed is provided with its position, nearest town, date commissioned, architect / builder, material from which constructed, cost, height of tower, height of focal plane, optics (original and current), light source, light character, intensity, range, other equipment, heritage status (some are regarded as national monuments), whether manned, and if open to the public.

There are two editions, the Flagship edition at £59.95 and the Boatswain’s edition at £29.95. Each has 384 pages and is printed in full colour.
It is believed *Lighthouses of South Africa* can be regarded as the authoritative and definitive work on the subject.

To order see the website: [www.hobermancollection.com](http://www.hobermancollection.com) click on ‘Books,’ click on ‘Commissioned,’ click on ‘Hardcover.’ Prices are given on the website which also provides shipping charges.

Further details may be obtained from and orders placed with: Combined Book Services Limited, Units Y, Paddock Wood Distribution Centre, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 6UU, England. Telephone: +44 (0)1892 837171 Fax: +44 (0)18 92 837272. E-mail: orders@combooks.co.uk