

Lighthouse wonders

LIKE buses, books about lighthouses seem to come along in convoys and two of the newest provide very different examples of how writers and publishers approach the subject.

Lighthouses: The Race to Illuminate The World is a marvellous book — an erudite account that concentrates on one character, James Chance, and his family firm in what was an often fierce rivalry to develop and introduce technology that would help open up trade routes and enable countries to dominate the seas.

Authors Toby Chance (James Chance's great-great-grandson) and Peter Williams provide a fascinating account of the politics and the engineering feats that lay behind this battle.

Key to Britain's victory was James Chance's dioptric lens, which edged ahead of the French Fresnel lens in taking light amplification to new levels — so much so that by 1951, Chance had supplied some 2,300 lighthouses to more than 70 countries. It's a genuine ripping yarn — celebrating the enthusiasm and ambition of the Victorian age, and demonstrating the importance of lighthouses in the expansion of the British Empire.

In contrast, *Lighthouses of the World*, by Marie-Haude Arzur, concentrates on the pictorial approach to the subject — with more than 150 often spectacular photographs and accompanying text showing the amazing variety of lighthouse design, which ranges from the futuristic in Japan to the castle-like in Spain and Portugal.

There are some particularly pleasing lighthouses on display here — including one in Mexico that looks more like a church, as well as some quite bizarre structures in the United States, the helter-skelter like High Rock in the Bahamas, and not to mention the Isle of Wight's 'Pepper Pot'.

The photographs are first class, but this is no mere coffee

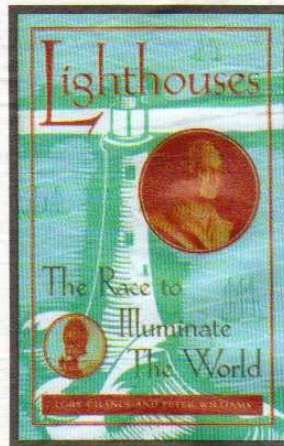


table book — the accompanying text is informative and the author is clearly passionate about her subject.

📖 *Lighthouses: The Race to Illuminate The World* by Toby Chance and Peter Williams costs £17.99 and is published by New Holland Publishers.

📖 *Lighthouses of the World*, by Marie-Haude Arzur costs £19.99 and is published by Adlard Coles Nautical.

