

Review for the CE Journal of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Stevenson, R. L. Robert Stevenson's account of the building of the Bell Rock Lighthouse told by his Grandson. Edited by Cordelia Stamp. Caedmon Reprint, Whitby, 2004. ISBN 0 905355 61 X. Hardback. £20.00

This book is a reprint of part of Robert Louis Stevenson's Records of a family of engineers first published posthumously in 1896 and subsequently reprinted several times. Its content here is as he selected and edited it from his grandfather Robert Stevenson's definitive *Account of the Bell Rock Light-house*, 1824, without any explanatory comment by the previous or present reprint editor, or an index.

Stevenson proudly provides a very readable account of his grandfather's Herculean achievement of one of the *Seven Wonders of the Industrial World* [BBC 2003], as Engineer to the Northern Lighthouse Board and resident engineer, but without fairly acknowledging *Chief Engineer* Rennie's lesser although fundamental contribution and foreman Watt's invention of the remarkable cranes and other innovations. This landmark achievement involved the creation by 1810 of a stone lighthouse 35 m. high, 11 miles out to sea, on a reef submerged up to 5 m. below high water level.

With its large format, 12 well-chosen illustrations, and illustrated dust wrapper this attractively presented book is intended, not least, to inspire budding engineers. A welcome original touch is the facsimile of a Bell Rock Lighthouse Signal Book of 1812 used in sending messages to and from ships or shore. Engineers will be fascinated to note that Stevenson had his own flag to fly when on board the lighthouse vessel!

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