

Boekbesprekings/Book reviews



J. BURMAN. *Hermanus: a guide to the 'Riviera of the South'*. Human & Rousseau: Cape Town, 1989. 144 pp. Illus. R34,99 (exclusive). ISBN 0 7981 2596 9.

This book covers the area bounded by Cape Hangklip in the west, Cape Infanta in the east and Cape Agulhas in the south — territory generally known as the 'strandveld' of the Overberg. It is indeed a welcome contribution to the sparse literature of this isolated triangle of the southern Cape, an area which the author appropriately terms the 'riviera'. Like the French and Italian rivieras, it has a string of holiday resorts, is situated in latitudes with a Mediter-

anean climate and although botanically the vegetation of both areas is classified as 'macchia', the fynbos variety of this area is a botanist's paradise.

In the first part of the book the author examines the ambivalent *raison d'être* for a settlement at Hermanus. From the earliest records it emerges that Hermanus provided a living for professional fishermen as well as a retreat for wealthy landowners who escaped to their 'lustplaats' beside the sea. The diverging interests of the two groups have existed to the present. This section contains much of interest on the early loan farms, the genealogy of the first white settlers and the development of the area as a holiday resort. It also examines the emergence of the modern fishing industry. There is a reliable account of the wreck of the *Birkenhead* as well as information on modern Hermanus, including a somewhat selective 'who's who'. The chapters in this section tend to form entities on their own with no obvious consecutive arrangement, while some of the chapter-headings are rather misleading. For example, under 'Anglers' Paradise' one finds information on the natural flora, the golf course and village management board affairs. Part One is enriched with sixteen black and white plates of historical interest.

The six-day guide in Part Two is accompanied by diagrammatic route maps, providing valuable information for the tourist. Each chapter is an absorbing chronicle of the area to be covered on the various excursions and gives much information on the numerous shipwrecks that have made the coastline infamous. This section has sixteen attractive colour plates of the area.

Burman writes for a wide audience and impresses with his broad general interests and knowledge. It is to be regretted, however, that with his obviously thorough research into certain aspects, he does not provide specific references for the serious historian. As a *guide*, the book may also have benefited by the addition of an appendix containing telephone numbers and addresses of local authorities and accommodation facilities for the tourist.

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