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Now The Long Trick's Over

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A British merchant seaman's life from 1932

Captain Arthur Mathison



Synopsis

Captain Arthur Mathison was a merchant seaman from 1932 to 1977. He sailed with a number of British shipping companies, but he spent many years with Bolton Steamship Company of London and R.S. Dalgliesh Limited of Newcastle upon Tyne. He set sail from many of the main British ports - London, Glasgow, Hull, Cardiff, Newport, Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Liverpool, plus a number of lesser locations like Workington, and he has tales from most of them. He started his career as an able-bodied seaman and cabin boy on steamships, and finished it as master of ocean going motor vessels. In his own words he describes the hard times endured by pre-war merchant seaman during the Great Depression, and the subsequent challenges of the Second World War. He spent many years in the tramp steamer trade, travelling to all the continents of the world, including a great deal of time trading between Australia and New Zealand. In these pages you will find first hand stories of freak waves, convoys, on-board violence, red light districts, drunken crew members, near misses, dubious bunkering and much more. The book is a personal testament to an age of seafaring that has now vanished.

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Customer Reviews

I've been looking forward to a book like this that describes daily life aboard British merchant marine ships. The author started off as a cabin boy and through hard work and initiative worked his way up to Master. The interest comes from the everyday problems of personalities, time schedules, breakdowns, maintenance and the satisfaction of completing what the author and the crew were hired to do. The book makes you feel like you're spending an evening with the storyteller reviewing old memories. A pleasant read that is very satisfying. If tales of the sea are not your thing, you might find it a bit tedious, But I couldn't get enough of it and hated to see the book come to its end.

If you want to know the nitty-gritty realities of life in the British merchant marine in the 20th century, this memoir is what you're looking for. The author went to sea in the 1930s and retired in the 1980s. He describes the highs and lows of life at sea, including during WWII. I don't think he invented anything; it all is too authentic and true to human nature to have been made up. If you're looking for a story of high adventure, however, this book is not for you. But that's precisely why I enjoyed it so much. The author describes things I've wondered about such as how to load a hold, how to deal with shore-bound shipping line bureaucrats, what it's like to deal with corrupt practices in the docks, bad captains and good captains, how crew members settle their differences, and of course storms at sea. If you aren't looking for sensationalism, but want to know what it really was (and probably still is) like, you'll enjoy this book.

I feel that this book is a very good account of a career at sea. it was realistic and down to earth. also very believable. I would recommend it for anyone interested in the merchant marine and what a career there involves

An exceptional book, extremely well written and a great read! You follow the authors entire career starting out as a deckhand, working his way up to master. Traveling the world, his description of all ports of call is fascinating. I sail on the Great Lake freighters and can relate to everything he tells us. This is in my top five best books written about merchant marine sailors. Enjoy!

I really did like this book having spent 13 years as a Seaman from the 70's to the 80's. The book bought back a lot of memories,I also learnt a few things I didn't know about the workings of vessels in port as regards the Officers.I found the parts in the book about the 30's 40's and 50's very interesting too especially about the old coal burners.

Having spent 25 years in the merchant marine. I found this story very interesting, our career overlapped about 15 years. The beginning of mine, the end of his. Captain Matheson did a very good job of describing the conditions aboard ships as his career progressed and how people in different parts of the world treated seamen. I did enjoy this book very much.

It was great to read about how the cargo world worked in the early years. Shipping has changed so much in the last 20 years. It was nice to read about real world experience between 1930s to the 70s. I would highly recommend this book !!!

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