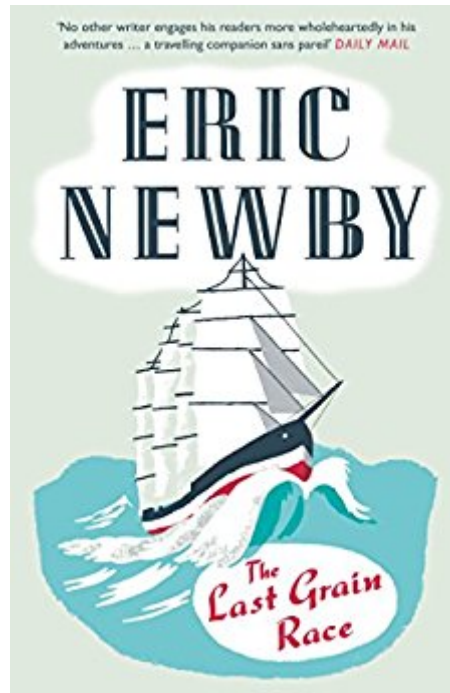




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The Last Grain Race



Synopsis

An engaging and informative first-hand account of the last grain race of maritime history, from respected travel writer Eric Newby. In 1939, a young Eric Newby set sail aboard Moshulu, the largest sailing ship still employed in the transportation of grain from Australia to Europe. Every year from 1921 to 1939, the vessels involved in the grain trade would strive to find the shortest, fastest passage home to the grain race in the face of turbulent seas, atrocious weather conditions and hard graft. First published in 1956, *The Last Grain Race*, featuring many photographs from the author's personal collection, celebrates both the spirit of adventure and the thrill of sailing on the high seas. Newby's first-hand account is engaging and informative, with frequent bursts of humour and witty observations from both above and below deck. He chronicles this classic sailing voyage of the Twenties and Thirties, and records the last grain race of maritime history.

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Customer Reviews

As one who has steamed around the world on modern (20th century) ships, and sailed large sailing

yachts in long distance ocean races, Newby's account of his experiences aboard one of the last commercial square riggers brings chills to my spine and palpitations to my cardio system. Nothing we mariners experience today comes close to what he describes in dramatic detailed scenes amongst a cast of piratical characters. Regardless of the minutiae of sails, rigging and foreign language, Newby's book kept me spellbound through the final page.

Another one of this author's books that did not last nearly long enough - why oh why was Eric not as wordy as say Norman Sherry, or Simon Schama! Having gone to sea just before my sixteenth birthday, and arrived for the first time in America nine weeks later, I can attest the truth of this account, not the sailing though as by then those beauties of the seas were rarely seen at all. Eric is a strapping eighteen and ... perhaps fearing that his first ship, on a world circumnavigation, in a four masted barque would not be challenging enough ... he joins a Finnish ship with no knowledge of any of the languages the orders were issued in by his Swedish, Finnish and other polyglot officers. He joins with a wildly inappropriate and insecure Louis Vuitton "folio" sea-chest, is sent immediately up the main-mast to the very truck and trades nicknames as he acquires skills and acceptance, from "Kossuri" an aristocratic derision to match his trunk, to a respectful Strongbody" after the usual first-trip fight, that he won. The trip turns out to be (1938) the last of the 'grain races' from Australia back to Europe and Moshulu sails magnificently enough to actually win - through storms of force 8 and 9 to near hurricanes. He is thrown onto the deck when "she ships them green" and nearly, more fatally, falls from the top mast when furling. On his first working day he drops a hammer over the side and his pay is docked. I was once washed off the flying bridge and onto the well-deck in a gale, surfacing from the tons of green, cold water to find myself in the scuppers hanging on with everything - teeth included. My pay was subsequently docked too - I had let go the coffee pot I was carrying, and it joined Eric's hammer. Yet the author is wistful in his goodbyes to seamanship, "I look back to my time in her with great pleasure", perhaps feeling, like me and Conrad, who wrote in Youth - "Wasn't that the best time when we were young at sea?"

This is one of the best travel/adventure books I have ever read. I must have read it 10 times as a young boy. My copy is long lost somewhere, in some dusty carton in some corner of the world. I am just about to order one from . Am delighted I found it. Last year I was in Gothenburg, Sweden, and saw a four masted barque in the harbour - apparently a tourist attraction. I was sure it was one of the barques that took part in this Last Grain Race. Subsequently I found she had indeed taken part in the grain runs (though I have to re-read the book to figure out if she was in that particular Last

Grain Race. Her name is "Viking" and you can look her up on Google). Inspired, I hunted around on Google and found Moshulu; she is moored in Philadelphia and has been converted into a seemingly upmarket restaurant! I cannot recommend this hugely entertaining book too highly for anyone interested in adventure. Newby tells the tale of a lifestyle long lost to modernity, and a ship full of utter characters, with great humour.

Eric Newby's first book is excellent reading from a world that no longer exists. Details about sailing and the ship may seem slightly too much for some readers, who (the same readers) might have hoped for more details about the crew members. What happened to the man with the syringe and how did the primitive sami man conduct himself?

Very well written to the extent it could, I think, interest those not already interested in the rise and fall of sail. Credible, detailed account of life on board such vessels, the ethnic and language mix, the roles of the crew, the overarching power of nature and our infinite smallness in its extremes.

A very interesting tale with lots of human drama, but also a lot of technical and historical information showing how the last of the sailing ships operated, just prior to WW2.

I read it many years ago and it was very enjoyable to read it again.

Very interesting but very technical and quite a difficult read - but worth it.

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