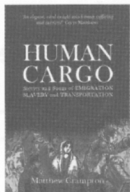


Matthew Crampton: Human Cargo

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At a time when the news is rarely free from stories of refugees stranded in the sea off Greek beaches, or crackdowns on modern day slavery in our Inner-cities, we are reminded, quite forcefully, that such



recent events are the latest chapter in a long story – a story researched and presented by Matthew Crampton in his book *Human Cargo*. Divided into two parts, the first considers the forced migration of those 'Taken with Violence' whilst the second 'Duped or Desperate' examines the plight of emigrants who chose to leave their native shore, frequently lured by false promises

only to find their passage was no better than those slaves who had gone before. Basing most of his work on broadsheet ballads, shanties and folk-song, London based singer Matthew Crampton has successfully made this challenging material accessible. Using bite sized chapters he provides just enough material to engage and inform, tacitly encouraging the reader to delve deeper and providing numerous reference sources by which to do so. The songs 'appear without melody just as those early broadsheets appeared on the street' and although I would like to have seen a simple tune suggestion, and can't agree that such can put off non-musicians, Matthew rightly points to the ease of finding such information via the internet, and includes, where possible, the appropriate Roud number while encouraging the use of on line forum 'Mudcat'. Supporting the twenty eight songs, Matthew has assembled a remarkable collection of broadside material, courtesy of John Foreman, complete with woodcut illustrations. It would have been interesting to have seen some reference included regarding the plight of children who were transported from England to Australia and elsewhere in the 1940's, '50s and '60s but maybe that song has yet to be written. Though frequently disturbing, *Human Cargo* makes for compulsive, if not compulsory reading.

Brian Cope