# Modern slavery allegations engulf West Country sea shanty band after minibus crash



A West Country sea shanty band, The Old Time Sailors, known for their lively performances and participation at major festivals, finds itself ensnared in a serious modern slavery investigation. The band gained popularity for encouraging fans to don pirate attire and join in raucous singalongs. However, the arrest of six members following a minibus crash in Tavistock has unleashed allegations of exploitation and abuse within the group.

Early reports indicate the band was returning from a gig in Liverpool when their vehicle veered off the road, raising concerns among police. As officers responded to the incident, they identified several occupants of the van as potential victims of exploitation. Following this, a raid at a caravan park associated with the band uncovered eight individuals believed to be victims of modern slavery. Devon and Cornwall Police confirmed that the six arrested men have been released on bail as investigations continue.

Allegations have emerged that some band members, particularly those performing less prominent roles, faced inadequate compensation. According to sources, this includes reports of musicians being housed in substandard conditions while earning little to no wages, a troubling echo of the exploitation seen in various industries across the UK. In stark contrast to the band's statement, which claims adherence to a familial structure where costs are shared and mutual support is provided, these reports cast a shadow over their operations.

The issue of modern slavery in performing arts and entertainment sectors has historically been under-explored compared to industries like fishing or agriculture. Recent investigations in these sectors have revealed systemic abuses that often go unnoticed. For example, a report by the Environmental Justice Foundation detailed atrocious conditions faced by workers on fishing vessels in West Africa, highlighting long hours and poor living conditions. Similarly, several instances in the UK fishing industry have exposed the harsh realities faced by migrant workers, reinforcing the notion that exploitation can occur in any field where workers are vulnerable.

As police continue to work alongside local authorities and support agencies to safeguard the identified victims, the band has firmly rebutted the allegations levelled against them. They have characterised the reports as fabrications, claiming they stem from a recent fallout with a former member, who allegedly threatened to tarnish their reputation. On social media, they described the ongoing narrative as a “web of hate” and insisted that the true essence of The Old Time Sailors is rooted in a shared love of music and camaraderie.

While the band is scheduled to perform at Camp Bestival and several other locations this summer, their recent troubles have already led to cancellations, reflecting the immediate impact of the unfolding situation on their reputation and livelihood. The ongoing investigation serves as a stark reminder of the issue of modern slavery, reinforcing the need for vigilance in protecting vulnerable individuals across all sectors, including those in the arts.

As this story develops, the contrast between The Old Time Sailors’ self-identification as a community and the troubling allegations poses critical questions about exploitation, oversight, and the multifaceted nature of modern slavery in contemporary Britain. The band’s future now hangs in the balance as they navigate public perceptions and the serious legal ramifications of the accusations against them.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14742813/Sea-shanty-band-caught-slavery-probe-six-members-arrested.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14742813/Sea-shanty-band-caught-slavery-probe-six-members-arrested.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqj0ln81yyjo)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/law/2010/sep/30/modern-day-slavery-fishing-europe), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/12/uk-police-rescue-nine-suspected-victims-of-slavery-from-british-trawlers), [[4]](https://www.theoutlawocean.com/reporting/slavery-is-not-gone-it-has-just-moved-out-to-sea/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/22/indian-sailors-stranded-norfolk-seven-months), [[7]](https://www.nautilusfederation.org/en/news/global-problem-of-modern-slavery-highlighted-in-fishing-industry/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14742813/Sea-shanty-band-caught-slavery-probe-six-members-arrested.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14742813/Sea-shanty-band-caught-slavery-probe-six-members-arrested.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14742813/Sea-shanty-band-caught-slavery-probe-six-members-arrested.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2010/sep/30/modern-day-slavery-fishing-europe> - An investigation by the Environmental Justice Foundation uncovered severe human rights abuses on fishing vessels off the coast of West Africa. Crews were found living in squalid conditions, working 18-hour shifts, and being paid in fish rather than money. The report highlights the exploitation of untrained, illiterate workers who are often marooned at sea for extended periods, enduring unsafe and unhygienic living conditions. This modern-day slavery is linked to the illegal fishing industry supplying Europe with seafood.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/12/uk-police-rescue-nine-suspected-victims-of-slavery-from-british-trawlers> - In December 2017, UK police rescued nine suspected victims of modern slavery from two British scallop trawlers. The men, from Ghana, India, and Sri Lanka, were allegedly working unlimited hours at sea with little rest and low pay. Two British men were arrested in connection with the case. This incident sheds light on the exploitation of migrant workers in the UK fishing industry, where labor abuses have been reported, including severe underpayment and poor working conditions.
4. <https://www.theoutlawocean.com/reporting/slavery-is-not-gone-it-has-just-moved-out-to-sea/> - An investigation by The Outlaw Ocean Project revealed the prevalence of modern-day slavery in the fishing industry. The report details the brutal working conditions aboard fishing boats, where crew members are often subjected to long hours, inadequate food, and poor living conditions. The crew members, many from Cambodia, are often in debt bondage, working to pay off money borrowed to migrate illegally. The investigation highlights the need for modernization in understanding and addressing modern-day slavery.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqj0ln81yyjo> - A group of migrant fishermen recognized as victims of modern slavery have been awarded £20,000 each in compensation by the UK Government. The Ghanaian crew were rescued in 2020 from the scallop-trawler Olivia Jean, owned by a Scottish fishing firm TN Trawlers. The fishermen argued that the government breached their human rights not to be held in slavery or servitude or to perform forced or compulsory labour. They are now living in safe accommodation in West Yorkshire.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/22/indian-sailors-stranded-norfolk-seven-months> - In January 2017, seven Indian sailors were stranded in a Norfolk port for over 200 days due to alleged modern-day slavery. The crew was confined to the ship, unable to leave the port, and faced severe financial hardship as they had not been paid for months. The case highlights the exploitation of foreign seafarers in the UK, where they are often subjected to poor working conditions and denied basic rights, including the ability to leave the vessel and enter the UK lawfully.
7. <https://www.nautilusfederation.org/en/news/global-problem-of-modern-slavery-highlighted-in-fishing-industry/> - The global issue of modern slavery in the fishing industry was highlighted by the maritime charity Stella Maris. The charity detailed a case where officers were recruited from abroad to work on a fishing vessel based in Scotland. The crew reported being forced to work 20 hours a day, not receiving wages into their bank accounts, and being subjected to mental, emotional, racial, and physical abuse. The case underscores the challenges of enforcing international legislation to protect the rights of fishing crew.