# Six members of The Old Time Sailors arrested in human trafficking probe after minibus crash



A modern investigation into potential human trafficking has thrown the spotlight on a West Country sea shanty band known as The Old Time Sailors. The group, which has gained popularity at events such as Glastonbury, finds itself embroiled in controversy following a minibus crash on the outskirts of Dartmoor. On May 19, police responded to the accident in Tavistock, during which they discovered individuals in the vehicle who may have been victims of exploitation. This has since escalated into a comprehensive investigation by Devon and Cornwall Police, leading to the arrest of six band members.

The police were alerted to the situation at approximately 7:30 AM, prompting a deeper inquiry. It soon emerged that, after the crash, officers conducted a search at a nearby caravan park linked to the band, uncovering eight potential victims of modern slavery. Authorities have confirmed that these individuals are receiving protective support through specialist services. Sergeant Tom Ottley from Devon and Cornwall Police remarked on the delicate nature of the circumstances, stating that safeguarding the identified individuals is a priority.

Compounding the issue, reports have surfaced alleging that some musicians were poorly compensated for their performances, even as the band toured substantial venues across the UK. This troubling aspect brings to light wider issues of exploitation that artists in similar sectors may face. These claims echo past investigations in the region, such as "Operation Triage," which led to the arrest of individuals involved in trafficking operations. That initiative underscored the often-hidden aspects of modern slavery, where vulnerable individuals face harsh working conditions and insufficient legal protections.

The Old Time Sailors, celebrated for their lively performances and traditional songs, have responded to the allegations with fervent denials. They describe themselves as a "family" of musicians committed to sharing collective costs and building community connections through their music. Furthermore, they assert that the accusations stem from a previous falling out with a band member who allegedly instigated a smear campaign against them. In a post published on their social media, they dismissed the claims as "scandalous" and indicative of an "elaborate web of hate."

Despite their insistence on innocence, the unfolding events have drawn significant media attention, and some upcoming shows have been cancelled. Such circumstances raise questions about the darker realities often lurking in the music industry, particularly in contexts where performers may be more vulnerable. The ongoing investigation has sparked conversations about the need for greater awareness and vigilance regarding exploitation in the arts, mirroring sentiments expressed by police officials in the area.

The overarching problem of modern slavery remains pertinent in various sectors, including artistic communities. Historically, individuals in similar positions—whether actors, musicians, or other performers—have faced significant risks, including the threat of exploitation. The call for vigilance echoes through police efforts, urging communities to remain aware and report concerning activities.

As discussions continue surrounding the plight of The Old Time Sailors and efforts to safeguard vulnerable individuals, the investigation highlights the critical need to address exploitation and ensure that those involved in the arts are protected and valued for their contributions.

## 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/uk-england-cornwall-31708880)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-29222013), [[3]](https://www.thedevondaily.co.uk/news/local-news/eight-arrested-human-trafficking-investigation), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/8273847/Sea-no-evil-the-life-of-a-modern-sailor.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[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), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-29222013), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/6e31bec8-9516-4657-a3d9-bfe7efa16d6c)
* 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), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cornwall-31708880)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cornwall-31708880)

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## 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.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-29222013> - In September 2014, Devon and Cornwall Police arrested eight individuals on suspicion of modern slavery offenses following raids in Plymouth and Bodmin. The operation, named 'Operation Triage,' led to the rescue of eight men, all suspected victims of human trafficking from the Czech Republic. The police emphasized the hidden nature of such crimes and the importance of public vigilance in reporting suspected incidents of exploitation.
3. <https://www.thedevondaily.co.uk/news/local-news/eight-arrested-human-trafficking-investigation> - In September 2014, a major human trafficking investigation in Plymouth and Cornwall resulted in the arrest of eight individuals on suspicion of trafficking people into the UK for labor exploitation and money laundering. The operation, 'Operation Triage,' also led to the rescue of eight men from the Czech Republic, suspected victims of human trafficking. Thirteen children linked to the suspects were safeguarded. The operation involved over 200 staff from various agencies, highlighting the collaborative effort to combat modern slavery.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/8273847/Sea-no-evil-the-life-of-a-modern-sailor.html> - An article discussing the harsh conditions faced by modern seafarers, with thousands working in slave-like conditions, including minimal safety, long hours for little or no pay, and abuse. It highlights the lack of legal protection for seafarers and the challenges they face in seeking justice, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and reform in the maritime industry.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cornwall-31708880> - Devon and Cornwall Police Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer called for increased vigilance in reporting suspected incidents of modern-day slavery in Cornwall. He highlighted the discomfort traffickers feel in the area due to public awareness and urged residents to watch out for each other to prevent exploitation. The article also mentions the Eden Project hosting a conference on slavery, attended by the Bishop of Truro and Cornwall Council.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/6e31bec8-9516-4657-a3d9-bfe7efa16d6c> - An article exploring the revival of sea shanties in Falmouth, Cornwall, and their role in bringing new life to the town. It discusses the Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festival, the cultural renaissance in Falmouth, and the town's efforts to reconnect with its maritime heritage through music and community events.
7. <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2024/10/patrick-tayluer-on-the-art-and-origin-of-sea-shanties/> - An interview with Patrick Tayluer discussing the art and origin of sea shanties. The conversation delves into the history, cultural significance, and evolution of sea shanties, highlighting their role in maritime culture and their enduring presence in contemporary music.