

Wine by wind: sailing ships offer eco-friendly deliveries

David Sanderson

The power of the wind is bringing beer to Brittany and wine to Penzance in what traders hope will be a new dawn in eco-friendly transportation.

Sailing vessels are again being used to transport goods after the advent of steam engines ended their reign as queens of the sea. A small number of ship owners has formed an alliance to offer customers goods that arrive with a lower CO₂ footprint as well as an easily traceable passage.

Marcus Pomeroy-Rowden and his wife, Freya, sail from Cornwall to Brittany eight times a year aboard the *Grayhound*, a lugger, with 5 tonnes of cargo.

"We are not a bunch of hippies but we do care about the planet," he said. "We are a drop in the ocean compared with the container ships but we are moving affordable goods in a different way. There is an extra cost but it is completely offset by the marketability of the product itself."

For about 40p extra per bottle of wine, compared with transporting it from a chateau via lorry, buyers get a bottle with a number with which they can trace the route their wine took and the name of the ship's captain. The *Grayhound*

The ship usually takes ales to France and returns loaded with wine

usually takes ale to France and returns with wine, which may taste even better.

"Wine producers talk about how wine can be tainted when it is in wooden barrels because of the diesel fumes," Mr Pomeroy-Rowden said.

The *Grayhound* and a few other British sailing vessels co-ordinate their cargo with Towt (TransOceanic Wind Transport), which is based in the French port of Brest and matches producers, buyers and ships.

Guillaume Le Grand, who founded the company five years ago, said that there was an "environmental and philosophical" attraction to sending cargo by sail. "Ninety per cent of what people buy comes from container cargo ships but you would not be able to find out how those products were transported, which route they took, what boat they were on," he said.

"There is no transparency. Whereas we work with traditional sailing ships.

You buy the product and you can see where it came from and how. There is a unique relationship

between buyer and seller. We are not activists saying how bad cargo shipping is, but we are trying to re-humanise trade."

There is a small number of boats operating out of Britain, including *Tres Hommes*, which is used by New Dawn Traders, based

in Bristol, to transport rum and chocolate.

Martyn Heighton, of National Historic Ships, said that there was growing trade for "symbolic cargos".

Mr Le Grand said that the trade had benefits for Anglo-French relations. "There is an ale from the UK, Avocet from Exeter, that is sailed over and is very popular in Brittany," he said. "Then some Breton cider comes back."



It costs 40p more to transport a bottle of wine to Cornwall on the Grayhound



Ex-IRA chief's €5m bill over proceeds of crime

Sean O'Driscoll

Irish police are demanding more than €5 million from Thomas "Slab" Murphy, a former IRA commander, as the proceeds of his criminal empire were revealed in an Irish court.

Police from both sides of the border found more than €1 million in cash and cheques kept inside bin liners in a shed on his farm.

Dublin's special criminal court will sentence Murphy, 66, later this month for failing to declare tax on a separate €190,000 earned from cattle sales. Disclosures of the €5.3 million he owes the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) comes amid a political row caused by his links to Sinn Fein's leadership.

Gerry Adams, the party's leader, has defended Murphy as a "good republican" and his party has promised to abolish the special criminal court, which has no jury, if it wins power.

Murphy, who once led the IRA in South Armagh, is alleged to have run an extensive smuggling empire involving cigarettes and oil, a claim he denies. He was convicted last month of nine counts of tax evasion totalling €189,964 from cattle sales.

The Murphy farm straddles the Irish border. The investigation into his finances began with a raid on the farm at Ballybinaby in Co Louth in 2006. Police from Northern Ireland and the south moved in as Murphy had previously avoided arrest by running across the

border. The court was told that the CAB investigators seized documents, ledgers, cash worth €256,235 and £111,185, as well as uncashed cheques of €579,000, and £80,000 and smaller amounts in old Irish pounds.

In December Murphy was found guilty of nine charges of failing to furnish a tax return from 1996 to 2004. John Kearney, defending, said his client was not collecting a state pension and was employed doing manual labour for a company in South Armagh, earning €1,055 a month. Mr Kearney said there



Murphy's case has become an issue in the Irish election

was "a clear distinction" between the CAB assessment, which "runs into the millions", and the money owed from Murphy's farming business.

Murphy was bailed until February 26, the date of Ireland's general election. His conviction has become an issue in the campaign with parties criticising Sinn Fein for continuing to defend him. Mr Adams has said Murphy was of assistance in the peace process.

Murphy sued *The Sunday Times* for alleging that he was a commander of the IRA. In 1998, a High Court jury found that the article was true.



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