



17 June 2010

## **Criminal's Misplaced Confidence Nets Cucumber Cannabis Gang 66 years**

A drug trafficker and members of the two networks he controlled have been jailed for a total of 66 years and 9 months after attempting to distribute four tonnes of cannabis across England.

Paul Gurr arranged the first shipment in June 2009, and then used a second gang to distribute another shipment two weeks later even though SOCA officers had intercepted the first.

In total, 12 people have been sentenced for offences relating to the possession and supply of cannabis. The cannabis resin, which was imported from Spain concealed in shipments of cucumbers, was distributed from industrial premises in Essex to buyers with connections to Essex, Kent and Manchester.

Gurr was identified as the organiser of both shipments. He enlisted Stephen Adamson, John Chalkley, brothers Ian and Gill Scott, and father and son team Gary and Robert Holden to distribute the drugs to various buyers. Using industrial premises in Essex, the distributors would collect the buyer's vehicle from a pre-arranged meeting point, drive to the yard being used to store the drugs, and load the vehicle before returning it to the waiting buyers.

Paul Gurr, who arranged the importation of the drugs and their onward sale, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess a Class B drug with intent to supply in relation to both shipments and has been sentenced to 7.5 years for each count, sentences to run concurrently.

### **In relation to the first shipment – 27 June 2009:**

Robert and Gary Holden were found guilty to conspiracy to possess a Class B drug with intent to supply and were sentenced to 6.5 and 7 years

Stephen Ely, Lee Mortimer and Gary Burns were found guilty of possession of class B drugs with intent to supply and were sentenced to 5, 4.75 and 5.5 years respectively.

David Freeman was found guilty of attempting to possess class B drugs with intent to supply and was sentenced to 4.5 years

John Chalkley, who pleaded guilty of possession of a Class B drug with intent to supply in relation to the second shipment, was sentenced to 6.25 years

### **In relation to the second shipment – 12 July 2009:**

Stephen Adamson, Ian Scott and Gill Scott pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess a Class B drug with intent to supply and were sentenced to 6.5, 4.5 and 2.75 years respectively.

John Fearnley was found guilty of the same offence at trial on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2010 and was sentenced to 6 years

## **Notes to Editors:**

### **Date of Birth and address details**

**Paul Gurr** (DoB: 25/5/66) of Allen Road, Rainham

**Stephen Phillip Adamson** (DOB: 27/5/55), of Buckles Lane, South Ockenden.

**Ian Scott** (DoB: 20/1/46) of Buckles Lane, South Ockendon

**Gill Scott** (DoB: 20/6/61) of Alexander Square, South Ockendon.

**John Fearnley** (DoB: 1/6/70) of St James Street, Milnrow, Rochdale, Lancashire.

**John Chalkley** (DoB: 18/6/57) Nine Ashes Road, Ingatestone.

**David Freeman** (DoB: 11/6/55) Knights Way, Brentwood, Essex

**Robert Holden** (DoB: 7/1/81) Sydervelt Road, Canvey Island.

**Gary Holden** (DoB: 27/11/57) Ibscott Close, Dagenham,

**Gary Burns** (DoB: 12/3/74) Roding Hall Cottages, High Roding, Dunmow.

**Stephen Ely** (DoB: 22/12/84) Navigator Drive, Southall.

**Lee Mortimer** (DoB: 9/7/83) Green Lane, Hanwell, London.

### Background information

This operation targeted two separate cannabis importations linked by principal defendant Paul Gurr. Having had one shipment of approximately two tonnes seized on the 27 June 2009, he displayed his contempt for law enforcement by attempting to complete deals for a separate two tonne shipment a fortnight later on 12 July 2009.

12 people have been jailed at all levels of the criminal operation, including the principal organisers, the men conducting the deals and the buyers.

Activity centred around two business premises in Essex, which were used as distribution centres. Drugs were delivered to the sites by HGV. The criminal group protected the identity of the sites by collecting buyers' vehicles from a nearby pub, driving the vehicles to the site to be loaded, and then driving them back to the pub.

The cannabis would most likely have been distributed in Essex, Kent and Manchester.

### *First shipment*

On 27 June 2009 SOCA observed an HGV lorry leaving Convoy Commercials in Orsett, Essex. Gary and Robert Holden were seen driving a number of vehicles to the site, where they were loaded with boxes of cannabis resin before being reunited with the vehicle owners/drivers at a nearby pub (the Kings Arms, Orsett). The Holdens were acting as distribution agents, collecting buyers' vehicles, which they would then load with cannabis before returning them to the waiting buyers.

SOCA officers, assisted by Essex police, subsequently stopped two of these vehicles on the A13; Stephen Ely and Lee Mortimer were arrested with more than 200 Kg of cannabis resin in one vehicle; Gary Burns in a second vehicle was arrested with 1

tonne of cannabis resin. Stephen Ely attempted to evade arrest, pushing a SOCA officer over and running across the A13 central reservation, before he was apprehended.

SOCA officers then entered the yard and recovered a further 600 kilos of cannabis resin, bringing the total quantity of drugs seized to 1.85 tonnes of Cannabis Resin. The HGV lorry was recovered and found to contain approximately 3 tonnes of Spanish cucumbers which had been used to conceal the cannabis during transit.

Robert and Gary Holden had previously been observed receiving flat packed cardboard boxes from Paul Gurr outside Gurr's home address. These boxes were identical to those containing cannabis, recovered at Convoy Commercial. The Holdens were arrested after returning to the yard driving a car belonging to a third buyer, David Freeman. SOCA officers were already in control of the yard at this time, and opened the gate for the Holdens to access the yard.

John Chalkley who controlled the premises, and access to it, was arrested at the yard. David Freeman was arrested at a later date following further enquiries (29 July 2009).

Paul Gurr had previously been witnessed purchasing a heat sealing machine and plastic wrap which was identical to that found at the yard and was probably used to pack the drugs before they left Spain.

*Second shipment:*

On 12 July 2009, following a dummy run on 10 July, Stephen Adamson and Ian Scott loaded an HGV trailer at the Western International Market, Hounslow, with boxes of cucumbers. The trailer was taken to an industrial site in Dagenham just off the A13.

On 13 July 2009 Adamson and Scott were joined by Gill Scott, Ian Scott's brother, at the Dagenham yard. All three were seen to empty boxes of cucumbers onto the ground before taking foil wrapped packages out and placing them into further boxes. A Salford's Hire van was loaded and driven to the Premier Inn in Rainham, Essex where it was reunited with its driver John Fearnley – he had handed over the van to Adamson the evening before. SOCA officers moved in and arrested all four on suspicion of conspiracy to possess a class B drug with intent to supply. Adamson attempted to avoid arrest and escape by ramming a SOCA car before being apprehended.

Later in the day, Paul Gurr was arrested in a restaurant in Brentwood, Essex for the same offence. He was also arrested for his involvement in the previous seizure of 1.85 tonnes of cannabis resin on 27 June 2009.

Upon examination, Fearnley's van was found to contain just over 1 tonne of cannabis resin. At the industrial site in Dagenham just over a further 1 tonne of cannabis resin was also recovered.

3.85 tonnes of cannabis resin has a wholesale value of approximately £3.5million and a street value in excess of £11million.

It would be enough resin to produce 11 million joints and if laid end to end, they would stretch from Lands End to John o'Groats.