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International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research (ISSN 1355-2554)

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Citation Details

Citation for the version of the work held in 'OpenAIR@RGU':

SMITH, R., 2004. Rural rogues: a case story on the 'Smokies' trade. Available from <i>OpenAIR@RGU</i>. [online]. Available from: http://openair.rgu.ac.uk

Citation for the publisher's version:

SMITH, R., 2004. Rural rogues: a case story on the 'Smokies' trade. <i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research</i>, 10 (4), pp. 277-294.

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Rural Rogues: A case story on the ‘Smokies’ trade.

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ABSTRACT.

Research into rural entrepreneurship continues to expand, albeit slowly. A common theme in the literature is the creation of value and its extraction from the environment. Rural entrepreneurship potentially covers a wide gamut of activity including the illegal. Also studies into agricultural entrepreneurship particularly traditional accounts of ‘rurality’ tend to emphasise the rural idyll. Most studies tend to concentrate on the application of entrepreneurial theory to issues of rurality and as such exist on the margins of entrepreneurship research – being primarily studies into rurality and not entrepreneurship per-se. Rarely do such studies impinge upon issues of illegal enterprise that shatter this rural idyll. As a consequence, rural and farming rogues have been neglected as subjects of research. Yet, in the present perceived climate of economic decline in agricultural income extracting value from the environment can be difficult and can give rise to illegal enterprise in the countryside as well as an increase in the prevalence of farming rogues. The case story, presented in this paper relates to one such illegal enterprise, namely the illegal slaughter of sheep for the Muslim ‘Halal’ market, known to those in the know as the smokies trade. Using the case story methodology this paper explores an issue of contemporary illegal enterprise in the countryside telling an important story that is otherwise difficult to evidence empirically.

INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this paper and case story is to “tell an interesting story” that cannot be researched in any other way by the author, and also to stimulate academic research into this interesting but neglected phenomenon. The story highlights the chasm between perceived ‘idyllic’ notions of rural enterprise and an actual economic practice performed that runs contrary to the rural idyll (Mingay, 1989). For a discussion of the rural idyll / ideal see Bunce (1994) and Sinclair (1990). It also embodies a discussion of rural rogues. The case story is also intended to educate and inform.

Although the subject of rural entrepreneurship is an expanding research paradigm with a modest stream of papers accruing annually, it has yet to develop a critical mass. This is exacerbated by the fact that entrepreneurship research has a distinctly urban bias – see for instance Keeble & Tyler (1995). A common theme relating to urban and rural entrepreneurship alike is the creation of value and its extraction from the environment. See Anderson (1995), Jack (2002) and Nicol (2003:forthcoming) for a fuller account of this argument. Viewing entrepreneurship from this perspective is central to this paper. Granted, it is a particularly moralist viewpoint, but one which is defensible because the countryside is predominantly a moral environment. This is one of its greatest attractions and selling points. One major problem with researching rural entrepreneurship is that it covers such a wide gamut of disparate activities with the common link being the setting of rurality. Thus farming, fishing, village activities, and tourism are lumped together

under one rubric. In addition, entrepreneurship is even less visible in the rural setting than it is in the urban, for particular types of research. Such studies rarely take cognizance of 'rural rogues' who are portrayed in the media as the 'likable rogue' for example Claude Greengrass in the British television series 'Heartbeat' and 'Eric Pollard' in the British soap opera / series 'Emmerdale'. Both fit the template of the entrepreneurial rascal. The hapless, but likeable rogue Claude Greengrass blunders from one bad deal to the next providing a skeleton upon which many stories are hung. Conversely, Eric Pollard is smoothness and insincerity personified as a 'gentrified spiv'. They are rural versions of their fictional cousins Arthur Daley and Del Boy. In reality, there is little to like about rural rogues.

Also the absence of hard pragmatic research into agricultural entrepreneurship, and particularly its darker side, is discernable. Yet crimes such as sheep rustling, cattle theft and EEC frauds can proliferate with alarming frequency in the countryside. Nevertheless, networks of rural rogues have escaped serious academic study because of their hidden nature and also because of the rise of more serious criminal types. An interesting American study is that of Potter (2003) into rural rogues, rascals and outlaws in, which he laments the general lack of serious research into rural affairs by journalists and scholars alike. Potter documents the influence of forty years of neglect upon the rural economy of Copperhead County, Kentucky resulting in it becoming a rural center for crime.

In Britain, there is anecdotal evidence, that isolated farmhouses are used by members of the illegal drug trade as safe houses, or as places to cultivate cannabis plants and also as factories for the production of illicit drugs. Another contemporary issue, is the exploitation of illegal immigrants by 'gang masters' to service the staffing requirements of seasonal work on farms and estates, across Europe. There is anecdotal evidence that during the 'Foot and Mouth' epidemic unscrupulous farmers charged up to £6,000 per diseased carcass to knowingly spread the disease. That there may have been takers is testament to the depressed state of farming. In many of these cases there is an underlying element of rural gangsterism at play. Often these facilitators and organizers are entrepreneurial types who are transferring their skills from one arena / sphere into another (Barth, 1963 and 1967). Nor is the practice confined to agriculture. Dishonest practices, such as the landing of black-fish in the fishing industry are rumoured to occur with alarming frequency. In many of these instances the actions of the entrepreneurs who profit from these activities can only be located in stories.

Furthermore, in keeping with the rural idyll rarely do such studies impinge upon issues of illegal enterprise that run contrary to the romanticized image of the countryside as being associated with wholesomeness? As a consequence, rural and farming rogues have been neglected as subjects of research. Yet, in the present climate of economic decline in agricultural income, extracting value from the environment can be problematic and may give rise to the practice of illegal enterprise in the countryside. The following case study is of one such illegal enterprise, namely the - illegal slaughter of sheep - for the Muslim 'Halal' market, known to those whom participate it as the smokies trade. This trade was chosen for as it is a contemporary problem in the countryside and also because the author had sufficient knowledge of it to write about it. Like most entrepreneurial crimes the dealings of the trade are hidden from public knowledge. Using a case story methodology this paper explores this contemporary illegal enterprise.

This paper has four sections. The first introduces the topic and explains the historical, cultural and social factors surrounding the trade and highlights the lack of academic research into the phenomenon. The second discusses the case study methodology and highlights its importance as a research tool in areas of entrepreneurial activity which are difficult to gain access to. The third begins the case study proper, narrating the story of a fictionalised rural rogue by the pseudonym of Jack Cash who being a 'bit of an entrepreneur' spotted a gap in the market and exploited it. The story parodies Mark Casson's (1980) fictional character Jack Brash. The final section discusses the reality of the Halal trade and explains why it is such a lucrative illegal enterprise, which shatters the rural idyll. The paper ends with some conclusions for interested practitioners. Prior to commencing the case study proper it is necessary to discuss issues of methodological and ethical concern.

SECTION 1: THE ILLEGAL 'HALAL' TRADE EXPLAINED.

The purpose of this section is to introduce the topic, whilst highlighting the existence of an organized illegal network of businessmen, rogue farmers, rogue haulage operators, butchers and restaurateurs in the United Kingdom whom have formed a criminal coalition that is operating as a lucrative criminal enterprise. The network can be legitimately termed an entrepreneurial criminal enterprise because it deals in a specific commodity that people are prepared to pay a premium for on the black market irrespective of such ethical issues as morality, or legality. For the purpose of this paper it is helpful to describe the operation as the *Network* (a loose affiliation of individuals, as perceived by Mitchell, 1973). It must be stressed that this network is merely one of many operating across the country. Such operations are predominantly organized by ethnic Muslim businessmen connected to the restaurant trade, or by individual farmers with the specialized knowledge necessary to exploit the demand.

As stated, scholarly investigation of this phenomenon is in its infancy. Indeed, the author is unaware of any other academic paper dealing specifically with the socio-economic or criminal aspects of this activity. There are scholarly articles pertaining to public health issues. To investigate the phenomenon necessitates one to resort to examining newspaper articles and inter-net sites and these tend to be somewhat sensationalist. In general these articles also concentrate on the public health issues with quotes being replete with such phrases as disease ridden meat, rotten meat, riddled with disease, unfit for human consumption and contamination. They emphasise such conditions as pneumonia, cysts and colonies of bacteria. The inter-net articles concentrate upon the international nature of the trade, but have not been discussed nor referenced here as the paper specifically relates to the British market.

When we discuss the term 'Halal' slaughter, we are referring to a ritualized practice specified as essential in the Muslim religion. Halal is a 'Quranic' term, which means permitted, allowed or lawful or legal. In relation to food or drink it means that the food or drink is lawful. Food that is not 'Halal' is said to be 'Haram'. It relates to the specified way of slaughtering animals (primarily sheep and goats) for human consumption. It involves the killing of the animals without first 'stunning' them, as is the accepted humane practice in the western world. When conducted legally, the ritual slaughter is accompanied by the narration of a sacred prayer.

To appreciate the cultural aspects of the trade it is necessary to describe the process that takes place in an illegal 'Halal' slaughter. This is at variance with western notions of humane slaughter. The slaughter-man first suspends the animal by its hind legs from the ceiling and then cuts its throat, often with blunt instruments. The animal is then left hanging until it bleeds freely to death. Thereafter the wool/hair is singed from the carcass using blowtorches. This is an expedient method of removing the wool and seals in the flavour, smoking the carcass hence the reason why 'Halal' carcasses are known as smokies in the trade. The heads are then sawn off the carcass, using a chain saw. The heads accompany the carcass to the point of sale. Many people in the western world find this process to be cruel, barbaric, abhorrent and unethical behaviour. However, to those of the Muslim faith properly conducted slaughter it is not unethical, it is a morally obligatory practice. Western civilization and United Kingdom legislation accommodates such practices by enshrining them in law and enacting legislation that permits lawful 'Halal' slaughter. There are a number of such licensed slaughter houses in Muslim enclaves in Britain, predominantly in Manchester, Birmingham and London. However, in adhering to the strict Health and Safety Regulations imposes cost implications thereby making it a costly affair to produce the end product and transport it to the market place. There is a gap between the total number of carcasses that can be provided by the lawfully sanctioned slaughterhouses and public demand for the product. Entrepreneurs exploit gaps in markets. This paper does not relate to such lawful activities, but to illegal and thus unregulated ventures. The *Network* exploit this obvious gap in the market and therefore can be said to be acting in an entrepreneurial manner.

Another aspect of the operation deemed to be cruel is that the process works better the thinner the sheep are. An undue cover of fat is detrimental to the finished product because the fat marbles when heated and splits the carcass. For this reason practitioners often deliberately starve the animals prior to the slaughter. This can add an element of undue cruelty – a far cry from the humane image of farming. The *Network* can compete in the market place effectively because they do not have to adhere to, nor comply with such legislation as Health and Safety. It is this aspect that causes the concern because the slaughters often take place on the farm in unsanitary and unhygienic conditions and the carcasses are transported to the market in un-refrigerated transit van type vehicles or small lorries. There is clearly ample scope for the meat to become contaminated and this has consequences for the food chain. Another ethical dilemma is the obvious suffering and cruelty caused to the animals at the point of slaughter.

To demonstrate how lucrative the venture can be one must bear in mind the high cost of a lawfully produced carcass. The price is dependent upon market demand, supply factors and seasonal variations in availability of appropriate sheep / livestock. The *Network* can provide carcasses at a lower cost direct to butchers or the restaurant trade and still make a considerable profit, as will be demonstrated below. At one point in time an illegal carcass fetched approximately £100 on the black market. Compare this with the average price of £5-10 per sheep carcass obtained by the farmers on the legitimate market during the Foot and Mouth epidemic and one can then begin to see why it is such a lucrative enterprise. Couple this with the estimated size of the market where in Wales alone according to Dr Teinaz (an acknowledged expert on the subject) approximately 1,500 per week are slaughtered for this illegal market alone. The tragic incidence of Foot and Mouth disease in the U.K during 2001 also led to circumstances where sheep had

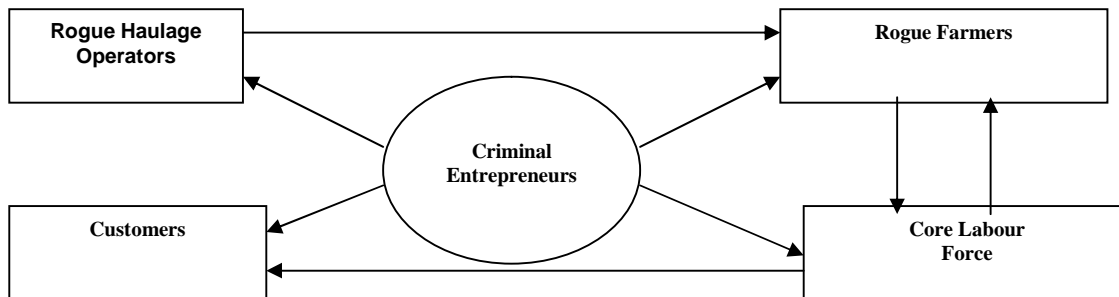
little or no value on the open market, and in some circumstances were even prohibited from being sold. Another factor that makes the venture profitable is that they also deal in stolen sheep, making all the proceeds pure profit.

The *Network* is organized on a countrywide basis, with nodes in The North of Scotland, Wales, the Midlands and the Home Counties. However, it is principally centered around the market places in Muslim enclaves in major urban conurbations such as London, Manchester, Birmingham. The network consists of

- (1) Core Customers [businessmen who operate in the restaurant or butchers trades];
- (2) Rogue Haulage Operators [who receive a fixed rate for knowingly transporting the livestock to the point of slaughter];
- (3) Criminal Entrepreneurs [Businessmen or Farmers who operate as criminal entrepreneurs facilitating the trade];
- (4) Core Labour Force [who received a regular fixed payment for their services];
- (5) Rogue Farmers [who provide the Livestock and services].

The persons in categories (1) and (2) described above ostensibly operate outwith the structure of the *Network* but the persons in categories (3), (4), and (5) form its central core. It must be stressed that their activities are conducted on a black market basis with all payments being ‘cash in hand’ and therefore all earnings are profit that is unlikely to be declared to the Inland Revenue. It is a further factor that makes it so lucrative. See diagram 1 below for a depiction of the *Network*.

Diagram 1: The Operational Structure of ‘The Network’.



As can be seen from the diagram above the criminal entrepreneurs who mastermind the operation control the entire chain of operations in such a manner as to isolate the risks involved to themselves. It is beneficial to discuss the components of the *Network* individually to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics involved. See table 1 below.

TABLE 1: THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE NETWORK		
Category	Role	Level of Risk
Core Customers	Consist of butchers/restaurateurs who can effectively launder the carcasses and financial gain within their lawful business. They possess a business persona.	Low, unless caught at point of delivery
Rogue Haulage	Are used to transport the live animals to the	Minimal,

Operators	point of slaughter. It is a minimal risk activity because they appear to be engaged in a legitimate lawful activity. They face risk in that they will not be in possession of relevant documents. They benefit by receiving regular tax-free cash payments – a particular incentive in a recession hit and highly competitive industry.	unless stopped by the authorities
Criminal Entrepreneurs	The majority of these individuals have the persona of bona fide businessmen farmers. They are independent operators who finance the operation, provide an illegal service, and act as arbitrators between the core customers, rogue hauliers, rogue farmers and core work force. They seldom place themselves at the point of greatest risk of interdiction – the slaughter, the transportation and the delivery.	Minimal. Yes they risk their capital but are able to isolate themselves from risk.
Core labour Force	Are key individuals directly employed by the criminal entrepreneurs for their individual skills and operate in a cell like structure. They are a mobile resource and are used at each slaughter location irrespective of distance. They include Slaughter-men: Will be present for several hours Labourers: Assist in the manual labour required. Drivers: Required for the high risk task of delivering the carcasses to the market place – core customers. Digger driver: Required to quickly dispose of any incriminating evidence at point of slaughter	High. However it is low risk task in reality due to the low risk of interdiction in general.
Rogue Farmers	An indispensable part of the network. They purchase (or steal) the livestock in small numbers on behalf of the entrepreneur, or use their own livestock. They assume the risk of providing the location for the slaughter on a rota basis. They are recruited on the basis of previous displays of bad repute. They are likely to belong to the community of rogue farmers and will be known to their honest peers as such. Involvement in the network is by invitation only. They often double up as core workers and have a vested interest in avoiding leakages of information to the authorities. They are likely to have previous convictions for cruelty to	Medium, particularly when engaged in a slaughter at their premises.

	animals or other farming misdemeanors	
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This paragraph chronicles the weekly activities of the individual members of the *Network* thereby providing a better understanding of its modus operandi. The entrepreneurs finance individual trusted rogue farmers to purchase the sheep from markets at the beginning of a week in small numbers to avoid suspicion. These sheep are then transported to the individual farms by the rogue haulage operators on a semi legal footing, where they mingle with other livestock to be legally sold in legitimate markets. On a Thursday or Friday a haulier is arranged to transport a consignment of sheep to the designated point of slaughter, usually a farm owned by one of the rogue farmers in the loop, or an otherwise secluded spot. The slaughters take place at the end of a working week to allow the carcasses to be on sale at a weekend when market demand is high. At a predetermined time the core workforce arrive and the slaughter-men begin their work, assisted by the labourers. This operation is usually carried out under the cover of darkness and speed is of the essence to lessen the danger of interdiction. The preparation process continues with the heads of the sheep being severed by a chainsaw and the wool being singed off using a blowtorch. When the slaughter is complete the drivers leave immediately with the carcasses for the long drive to market, or alternatively to uplift further carcasses from other designated slaughter sites. The slaughter-men and the labourers assist in cleaning up the debris and washing down the place of slaughter with pressure washers to erase visible traces of the slaughter. The digger driver then digs a pit and buries the offal and waste in situ on the farm. On completion the core work force departs. The whole operation can be carried out in several hours, leaving little tangible trace of the illegal activity ever having occurred. The drivers drive through the night to the market place and return the next day. This routine is repeated every week, year in year out.

The *Network* offers an essential service to the core customers because otherwise they would have to bear the burden of undertaking numerous small scale slaughtering operations themselves in an urban environment where the risk of interdiction is dramatically increased. This practice has been known to occur in the past in the kitchen of individual restaurants. Given that butchers and restaurant premises are now subject to increasing levels of inspection by various Health related agencies it is a service worth paying for. It is also import to remember that the rogue farmers constitute a '*deviant network*'. Deviant networks converge - forming alliances and new networks can be created to fulfill common needs. Thus a person may be a member of many such deviant networks e.g. they may be an illegal drug user, an alcoholic, a hedonist, a poacher, a gambler etc, simultaneously. They will therefore have access to hidden resources. Even entrepreneurs and business communities have such deviant networks. Wherever there is a human need to be satiated, a deviant network will exist to service that need.

Table 2 discusses why the *Network* can be described as entrepreneurial-

TABLE 2 – THE NETWORK : JUSTIFYING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LABEL
It is organized on a business footing (albeit illegal) and provides a commodity and services on a regular continuing basis. Planning and management are therefore required.
Their activities are illegal only in so far as that no attempt has been made by them to seek the legitimacy and legality of a legal business entity and because they do not adhere to

the appropriate legislation. In every other respect it is a business venture. The product and services are provided to meet a public demand for the commodity. It is therefore not a predatory crime, but an exploitation of an illegal entrepreneurial opportunity.
The venture is entered into freely by all concerned and not via compulsion or coercion.
The facilitators are entrepreneurs, in their own right being legitimate business owners in other spheres, e.g. farmers, hauliers, restaurateurs or butchers and are therefore likely to possess an entrepreneurial flair and persona.
The criminal aspects of the venture are incidental and of secondary importance to them. It is a profitable sideline engaged in for that reason and not because it is a criminal act per se. It is therefore inevitable that their sideline ventures will also bear the hallmarks of their entrepreneurial personality.
They deserve the label entrepreneur having exploited a niche, a gap in the market that was not being met by others and created a new organization to meet the demand. They are thus ‘creative destructors’ as envisaged by Schumpeter (1934). They are entrepreneurs in the sense that they create value (provide work and money to the core workers and their families –immediate communities) but are non-productive as posited by Baumol (1990) because they do not add to the common good (pay taxes etc). They are destructive in the sense that they are destroying legitimate market opportunity.
They are entrepreneurs in the sense that they utilise their own knowledge, experience, social capital and human capital networks to create the business venture and realize their vision. They also utilise the social capital and skills of others to achieve their ends. Social Capital is increasingly being used to explain entrepreneurial action.
They ‘ <i>take between</i> ’ the source and the customers. One literal definition of the French word entrepreneur is “ <i>One who takes between</i> ”.
They are obvious calculated risk takers, in that they risk their finance and theoretically their liberty if caught. Risk taking is a propensity / trait associated with entrepreneurs per se. The calculated risk taking is evident in their ability to insure against the risks by adopting the isolating measures discussed above. They thus (like all true criminal entrepreneurs) distance themselves from the crime
They operate on the margins of the farming and business community and at the frontiers of crime. Operating at the frontiers of the permissible is also an entrepreneurial trait.
It is a niche activity where there is not much serious competition at present. This results from the specialized nature of the knowledge necessary to operate effectively.

We may not approve of their activities or methods but it is churlish to ignore the entrepreneurial component of their crimes. It is therefore important to differentiate them from genuine “*authentic entrepreneurs*”, as envisaged by Machan (1999).

SECTION 2: THE CASE STORY METHODOLOGY.

This section explains the primary research methodologies used in constructing this case study and explains why they were chosen instead of other methodologies. As a qualitative methodology, the case study is well established but its relative, the humble ‘case story’ is less well so. Case stories unashamedly utilize narrative techniques more commonly found in fiction and storytelling and as such is a literary device suited to narrating entrepreneur stories, which after all traditionally trade on humble beginnings. It

is a wonderful methodology to use by outsiders looking in or insiders looking out. Outsiders are never granted exclusive access and many insiders who are cannot accurately report the full extent of their knowledge because to do so would betray confidences and sources. The only viable route is to convey the knowledge as a story. Presenting a case story is often more ethical than presenting a case study because one can be more truthful and open with the reader being left to judge if it is a credible story. Many case studies are actually little more than artfully crafted case stories. It is therefore more ethical to stipulate 'up front' that the case in question is only a story from which inferences and conclusions can be drawn.

In the past decade, academic interest in the case study methodology has been constant e.g. Spradley (1979); Spradley (1980); Miles & Huberman (1984); Lincoln & Guba, (1985); Merriam (1988); Stenhouse (1988); Greenwood & Parkay (1989); Strauss (1987), Strauss & Corbin (1990); Abramson (1992); Yin (1994); Stake (1995); Bassey (1999); Davis & Bachor (1999); Bachor (2000); and Bachor & Baer (2000). These studies proffer sound advice on conducting case studies. However, not all researchers adhere to the advice of other academics in constructing their cases. Case studies often develop according to the available time, verifiable data and methodological experience of the researcher. In many instances case studies are presented as success stories, eulogising an individual or a company and any material not consistent with hagiograph is suppressed. For this reason, they make excellent vehicles for channelling entrepreneurial propaganda. In conducting case studies one must bear various points in mind e.g. one must.

- Consider the purpose of the research.
- Indicate how the research was done.
- Indicate how the evidence was collected.
- Indicate what sources of evidence were employed.
- Stipulate what rules of evidence were applied.
- Express how the evidence was verified and confirmed.
- Articulate how the evidence has been interpreted, conclusions reached and/or judgments made?

In this particular case the purpose of the research was articulated in the introduction. The actual research for this paper was conducted over a one-year period and the knowledge was gathered in real time in conversation with other practitioners involved in attempting to interdict the problem. In addition, research on the inter-net and background material was gathered from newspaper clippings. None of these sources have been cited because of ethical problems in that some of the subjects discussed may recognize themselves from the articles. The rules applied in constructing the case story were those of fairness in reporting. Facts, which could lead to the identity of the subjects under study, were excluded even where they proved a particular point. Integrity of reporting must often be judged by the reader, as it is often not possible to lay down a proper audit trail. Another option available was not to report the story. The evidence was verified by sending it to an acknowledged expert, Dr Yusuf Teinaz who confirmed that it was a credible case story. Also, the paper was peer reviewed by experienced entrepreneurship scholars.

The scenario to which this case story relates is loosely based on a real network of rural rogues known to the author who is not at liberty to divulge the sources of knowledge discussed herein. Outside law and animal health enforcement circles little is

known about the activities of those involved in this trade. Also, there are a number of genuine ethical, legal and moral reasons why researchers may not be at liberty to divulge the source of their knowledge. For instance, medical doctors and lawyers have their ethical codes of practice-oaths, and crown employees, are forbidden by the Official Secrets Acts to divulge anything learned in their official capacity. Chapman (1968) tells an interesting story in relation to his research into the stereotype of the criminal. Chapman wanted to show a bankruptcy document and even when he changed it by adding fictitious names and company details was advised by the publishers solicitors that he was leaving himself open to being sued by any individual who believed that they recognized themselves from the scenario. Indeed, on several occasions Chapman indicates that legal constraints prevented him from stating what he felt to be facts learned in his research.

The case story methodology is an ideal method to use in this particular case as there is little academically conducted, empirical research carried out into the subject. What little research there has been is of a technical nature in the domain of the Animal Health and Food Standards Agencies. It is therefore not possible to cite previous research – negating the possibility of constructing an academic paper in the standard format. There has been much sensationalistic reporting in the press, which has raised public awareness and explained the nature of the problem.

The purpose of a presented case study is to move beyond description to explanation. Case studies can be problematic in relation to issues of subjectivity and objectivity despite being an ideal tool for telling stories. Yet, case studies require a framework for telling stories. In case stories the narrative format provides the ideal answer. Case stories are more openly subjective than case studies and have different connotations. In addition, one must gain the trust of the reader that what they are being told can be verified. The story must have a ring of authenticity to it. One is released from the obligation of trust that normally plagues case study methodology and the ethical dilemmas that can be thrown up. A researcher may feel constrained in reporting ‘the dirt’ due to the politics of the research agenda. Case stories can concentrate on the negative aspects of a story. However, even in case stories one has an obligation to adhere to the academic spirit of critical analysis – thus case stories must inevitably retain some of the elements of a case study. Conducting qualitative case studies can be an exhaustive and complicated process, particularly if sponsored or commissioned to write one. If granted proper access, one can interview all the members of a company / organisation using in-depth interviews, one can research company literature, one can read newspaper / media material, one can interview customers and competitors to build up a realistic portrait of an organisation or phenomenon. In this perfect scenario writing up the evidence into a credible story is a daunting task.

Major issues of concern to researchers using case studies are those of credibility, believability and integrity (Bachor, 2000) but must be used sparingly and executed with honesty and integrity. Case studies provide a portrait and describe phenomenon and individuals captured in time and space and possess face-value credibility by providing evidence or illustrations with which some readers can readily identify. For Bachor (2000) authors of case studies have an obligation to reveal how the investigation was conducted and how collected evidence was handled and interpreted. The narration of a case story partially absolves one from some of these onerous burdens. The case story methodology

weds one to the use of prose and is a methodological strength and a weakness but is an honest research technique presented within a storytelling framework. This alone should warn prospective readers that they may be required to use their skills of judgment and have an option to disbelieve a story.

It is also common literary device for storytellers to enunciate their credentials as a credible narrator. The author was raised in rural Scotland and as a youth worked on farms in Aberdeenshire, Angus, Perthshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. He holds an OND in Agriculture from Craibstone College, Aberdeen, but like many before him, deserted the profession to seek pastures new. Having metaphorically toiled in the wilderness for 20 years, he now returns to the fold - as a PhD student studying entrepreneurship. This qualifies him to tell the following tale of the fictional farmer-entrepreneur 'Jack Cash' who is perhaps a character, which many experts in rural entrepreneurship or farming would readily identify. It is a blatant parody of Casson's (1980) fictional Jack Brash. Case studies can also be used to vilify or tell alternative versions of accepted realities. The case story methodology has already been used to good effect in entrepreneurship studies by Casson (1980) who posited the wonderfully believable character of 'Jack Brash' whom was recognisable as a common character type shared by many dodgy businessmen. In the fictionalised story Jack Brash rises from humble beginnings and gains his first business experience in the black market. Jack Brash rises from being sole owner of a second hand furniture store to becoming a household name achieving legitimacy. However, en-route there was an unexplained suspicious fire to his old factory premises – the insurance payment from which paved the path to his success. At no time does Casson stipulate that Jack Brash committed the crime of arson – the reader is left to judge the circumstances embedded in the story and come to their own conclusion. It is granted legitimacy as a case story because it is eminently believable. Jack Cash is a fictionalized, composite creation and as is common with this literary genre it is only fair to warn the reader that 'our Jack' bears no resemblance to any living character. In this case, narrative and story telling provide a vehicle for plausible explanation via telling a qualitative story.

SECTION THREE: THE STORY OF JACK CASH.

"On first appearances, Jack Cash is an archetypal farmer, but behind the rural façade there lies a canny business brain. In appearance Jack is a typical farmer from the Range Rover to the faded and well-worn Barbour jacket and Wellington boots. His manners are impeccable and he has adopted the dual identity of the businessman. Jack's family, have been farmers for several generations and he now runs the multi million pound business. Jack has brothers and cousins in various parts of Britain and owns farms himself in England, Wales and Scotland. Jack had a sheltered middle class rural upbringing and was educated in a private school. Jack's friends and social circle can be described as being a rural elite or rural aristocracy. To all extents and purposes Jack is a pillar of the community and is a pragmatic individual and would be described by many as a moralist. Jack's first love is farming and in the golden days of farming in the 1960's and 1970's when sustainable incomes were assured the farming business he inherited was a thriving concern. The pace of life was dictated by the seasons and Jack worked the land

and learned his trade gaining a reputation as a shrewd businessman by engaging in deals on the side with any materials or commodities he happened to chance upon. The bottom line was always cost price and profit. Jack had an eye for a bargain and during this idyllic halcyon period he purchased several farms across the country expanding his operations. Jack married and raised a family and worked towards their future. Jack's farming portfolio included arable farms and hill farms upon which only sheep thrived.

During the 1980's with the onset of the enterprise culture Jack's enterprising nature paid off and he was able to rapidly expand his farming and business interests by borrowing money from an increasingly lenient and willing bank manager. It was an era of EEC quotas and grants, which Jack, like many others exploited to the full in the true spirit of enterprise. Jack branched into farm shops, the butchery trade and also opened a restaurant. His circle of contacts kept increasing and his social life expanded. However, as interest rates increased Jack began to feel the pressure and had to downsize his business interests. By the 1990's the financial climate in farming was such that it was best described metaphorically as a 'chill wind'. Farming became increasingly difficult as income in real terms decreased – but no one had any sympathy because farmers were perceived by the public to have 'cried wolf' once to often. Crippling interest rates continued to mount up.

To the outside world Jack was an epitome of respectability and wealth. However, there was another side to Jack that few but his closest friends knew of. Jack liked to party and his privileged life style and his ability to earn a respectable income had enabled him to do so in style. Jack liked to drink at his local pub where he knew all the 'local worthies'. Jack enjoyed his pint and could often be found as the center of attention enthralled friends and acquaintances with his legendary stock of stories. Jack enjoyed his status as a 'bit of an entrepreneur' and a 'raconteur'. Jack was equally at home at the frequent dinner parties he and his wife threw for business friends. Jack was fond of his flashy Mercedes and his foreign holidays – the outward symbols of his success. Jack also liked an occasional gamble and was prone to acts of benevolence and philanthropy. These combined to cause Jack cash flow problems. As the pressures built it is rumoured that Jack took to enjoying the occasional smoke of cannabis as an alternative to his cigar. Apparently, Jack only indulged in private or in front of trusted friends. Innuendo has it that Jack was occasionally partake of cocaine. Through these activities, Jack fraternized with local criminals and drug dealers and consequentially his circle of contacts within the country gradually increased. Jack revelled in the notoriety of being 'in the know' and being 'connected'. Such hedonistic indulgence caused no problem to Jack because he only dabbled occasionally. In any case his frenetic pace of life and his enterprising nature ensured that he was kept too busy to become addicted to anything but hard work. As financial pressures mounted Jack became a lender of money to others in 'no questions asked' deals, which paid excellent returns. This allowed stability to his life style in an era of ever decreasing returns. Jack's frequent visits away from home allowed him to maintain a discreet number of mistresses. Again, it was a closely guarded secret. None of this caused Jack any real concerns or his friends for that matter – Jack revelled in his 'bad boy' image and his 'Jack the Lad' persona.

The sensible course of action would have been for Jack to sell his farms and concentrate on his other business interests, but Jack was first and foremost a farmer. It was in his blood. It was how he defined himself. Ever the canny businessman with 'a

finger in every pie' Jack soon spotted a 'gap in the market ' in the sheep trade. Through a network of farmers whom he had known for years Jack began to organize and finance what he fondly referred to as 'The Network'. If Jack had a conscience, he would probably have assuaged it by rationalizing it as merely making use of his social capital because he had the money and the necessary contacts in the farming, restaurant, the haulage industry and the slaughtering trade. The haulage industry was also on its knees and consequentially there was no shortage of drivers willing to take the calculated risk. At first profit was moderate but as the price of sheep plummeted opportunities burgeoned. Sheep that could be got for next to nothing could be sold for a handsome profit. Jack saw himself as a rural savior providing jobs and income to several rural communities.

Jack oversaw the operation, but was careful not to become involved in a 'hands on' capacity. In true gangster style he isolated himself from the most serious consequences. Instead, Jack recruited a network of employees from his network of trusted friends / associates. The network operated at the peripheries, in remote parts of Scotland and Wales. This ensured that they were located far enough away from the market place to avoid detection by the authorities. Only trusted members of the network knew who was involved. Despite several setbacks the operation continued to provide a steady stream of income for Jack. For the remainder of those involved it provided non-declarable subsistence wages. These employees were volunteers drawn from their local networks of rogues. The remoteness of the areas and the nature of the farming communities ensured that no one grassed to the authorities about what was going on under their noses. Farmers, like many sub cultural sets of communities have their own unwritten rules / codes of behaviour. The notion of 'Omerta' is not confined to the Mafia alone. It thrives in rural communities. There is no doubt that the income generated by the illegal operation does provide a welcome income to its practitioners. The local abattoir was recently closed down and the slaughter-man involved is glad of the extra work. The haulier and digger driver involved are glad of the chance to earn beer money.

Two of Jacks trusted employees suffered consequences from the activities. One - Aiden was reported for cruelty having been caught in possession of a considerable number of emaciated sheep. In the subsequent court case – ensuing publicity he alleged that he was a hapless entrepreneur trying to cash in on the falling price of sheep. He was portrayed as a fool and quickly disappeared from public view. Another Dominic, was caught in possession of a number of carcasses but incredibly managed to evade capture. Jack is extremely cautious and innovative in his modus operandi, working as a cell and using the same pool of members. Jack regularly switched venues for each kill from one part of the country to the other. Jack is at a crossroads in his life because he is operating on two fronts one legal and legitimate the other illegal. If he is lucky he will perhaps retire on his earnings but what will he do in the meantime with the rapidly increasing illegal income at his disposal. Illegal income must be put to use in another sphere. Is Jack a canny farmer with entrepreneurial propensity or has he become a criminal entrepreneur - gangster figure in his own right? Jack still considers himself to be basically honest. It is up to you to decide”.

Having described the background to the problem and having presented Jack's story it is now time to discuss the socio-economic factors, which have combined to create the circumstances that have led to the rural idyll being so cruelly shattered.

SECTION 4: FLOUTING THE RURAL IDYLL.

This section discusses and considers the socio economic factors, which have combined to enable the real life counterparts to the *Network* and also the fictional Jack Cash to flout the rural idyll. The following factors have a cumulative effect upon the profitability of venture; and also on the level of risk-return faced by the *Network*. Many of the factors are interrelated.

The first factor in their favour is that members do not as a rule have a criminal profile. The criminal entrepreneurs and the core customers are ostensibly respectable members of the business community and as such operate in relative privacy. They do not have previous convictions of a serious criminal nature, although they may have come to the notice of the authorities for minor business violations / misdemeanors. The core workforce may also have minor previous convictions but will not attract a high profile in criminal circles. The same can be said of the rogue farmers, many of whom have the persona and reputation of likeable rogues. As a consequence they will not appear in police criminal intelligence files. They may well be known to other agencies such as Trading Standards, Animal health, H.M Customs.

Nor do they possess a criminal *modus operandi*. This second factor is crucial in ensuring that the risk of police surveillance is kept to a minimum. The facilitating entrepreneurs and core customers will not act, nor behave in the criminal manner that their orthodox criminal counterparts will. Unless they are disqualified drivers or violate other road traffic violations they will rarely come to the direct attention of the police.

The third and related factor revolves around the fact that although the core work force are undoubtedly rogues by repute they are generally not members of the criminal fraternity and therefore are unlikely to be betrayed by them to the police. Many of the rogue farmers also commit various other minor scams such as the use agricultural red diesel in their vehicles, and as a consequence may come to the notice of the police and H.M Customs.

The fourth factor relates to the cell structure in operation by the core work force of the *Network*. They are a mobile resource used throughout the country and live in caravans and other accommodation. Being mobile and itinerant they will not come to the attention of the authorities providing they behave. This cell structure further reduces the risk of betrayal. The core workers receive a weekly wage and are therefore unlikely to inform on each other.

Factor five 'the mobility-invisibility continuum' is another structural factor, which protects their activities. They operate a policy / strategy of rotating the point of slaughter on a regular basis. Therefore it will take place at a different farm every week (or few weeks) and will even change counties. Thus they operate across individual police and council boundaries and even countries, thereby reducing the likelihood of effective surveillance (or even cooperation between police forces and interested agencies). They are reputed to utilise a mobile slaughterhouse in a converted lorry to service smaller scale slaughters. By varying the place of slaughter they are minimizing the risks of concentrating the illegal activity in one place where neighbours may become suspicious. This mobility cloaks the operation in invisibility. Related to this is their strategy of

conducting their operations primarily in rural environments which afford them the privacy granted by the private ownership of land. In rural environments surveillance is more difficult. In many occupations, and farming is no exception, there exists a cultural dislike of informing to the authorities. Although many neighbouring farmers may suspect that something is amiss they would not automatically inform on one of their own. Orthodox criminality is primarily associated with the urban environment and public places. This further reduces the risk of interdiction.

Factor six relates to the absence of a unified interdiction strategy by the authorities. There are three main Government Agencies involved in / responsible for interdicting this illegal practice. These are The Food Standards Agency (FSA); Individual Animal Health and Welfare Inspectorates of each local Council area; SEERAD – Government vets. These agencies have various powers of entry in relation to interdicting the practice dependent upon the point in the food chain that the information is received. Other Government agencies such as The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF); H.M Customs and organisations such as the RSPCA may also from time to time receive information concerning the activities of the rogues engaged in such activities. An associated problem is that there is no one designated lead agency and no central bureau for collating intelligence on their activities. Cooperation between individual agencies is on an ad-hoc basis even at a local level.

Factor seven relates to the absence of specific police powers, although the police do assist the other agencies in their investigations, at the request of the individual agency they have no specific powers in relation to the illegal activity should they encounter such rogues. Notwithstanding this, common sense and inter agency cooperation usually prevail and the matter dealt with expediently and sensibly, although embarrassments can and do occur. The usual course of action is to notify the appropriate agency who then attend and deal with the matter. There is the danger of gang members providing false names and addresses and absconding before the details are verified as being correct. The specifics and technicalities of the offences are outwith the remit and knowledge base of the police.

Factor eight relates to the imbalance of appropriate investigative skills within the agencies. The police do not have the technical expertise nor the necessary powers to deal with the issue. Paradoxically, whilst the individual agencies involved have the technical knowledge and the powers they do not possess the investigative skills of the police. More importantly they do not command the necessary investigative resources. This is becoming increasingly more important with the current trend towards the professionalisation of policing methods. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2001 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2001 (RIPSA) impose restrictions on directed surveillance and informant handling. It is a very detailed and comprehensive piece of legislation. To successfully interdict rural rogues merely on the basis of information intelligence received is extremely difficult without resorting to directed surveillance and/or source handling. These detailed investigative competencies are out with the knowledge of the other government agencies at present. This deficiency could lead to cases being lost in court where the correct procedures have not been followed. Given that the majority of the police forces in the U.K can only field 2-3 surveillance teams at any given time, and that these usually require booking in advance for use in high profile crime cases then it is apparent that the police do not pose a very real problem

to rural rogues. HM Customs also have the necessary expertise but the practice is also out with their normal investigative remit.

Factor nine relates to the inadequate provision of appropriate levels of punishment. The legally available level of punishment is not commensurate with the crime. The operation will remain a low risk activity for those involved until such time as more appropriate legislation is enacted. At present the perpetrators only face prosecution for specific offences under the minor legislation relating to meat and hygiene laws. Whilst it is outwith the remit of this paper to discuss the offences and the punishments available, suffice it to say that the level of punishment available is paltry. The offenders usually receive small fines. An article in the Environmental Health News, dated 11 April 2002 stresses that, *“a consensus is emerging that changes to the legal and enforcement systems are needed. Firstly, the fines and custodial sentences available under food law are insufficient to deter multi-million pound rackets. Secondly, local authorities do not have the resources or surveillance skills to undertake large cross-boundary operations. Unless they can involve the police and achieve secondments from the Food Standards Agency, food crimes will go unpunished”*.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.

The continuing successes of the *Network* pose a legitimate danger to society in general at two levels. Firstly, because of the illegal cash flow it generates; and secondly as a public health issue. Their activities are worthy of more serious study, both by academics and the law enforcement community. If allowed to develop and mature, the skills they possess, are directly transferable to other criminal arenas. The *Network* is a prime example of the emerging phenomenon of entrepreneurial crime. Their activities are an emerging crime that is generating considerable profits and to demonstrate the perils of ignoring the problem one need only pose a simple question - Where do the profits generated re enter the system? To answer the question it is necessary to speculate. A small part of the profits can be reinvested in the legitimate businesses of the individual entrepreneurs and farmers without attracting too much attention. Creative accounting can accommodate this. However, over a certain level it will attract unwanted attention from the authorities. Alternatively, it is used to finance a hedonistic lifestyle – viz Jack Cash. This can be done without leaving indelible traces. The problem with this scenario is that it often places one in contact with other criminally minded individuals, and leads to further temptations. The problem with illegal revenue is that it must be put to work in other arenas of illegality. It ultimately finances other nefarious enterprises. There is anecdotal evidence that those involved in the illegal smokies trade’ are reinvesting the proceeds in drug trafficking and prostitution networks. In doing so, they will increase their stock of social capital with the orthodox criminal fraternity and will increase their level of sophistication.

This paper is of significance because it fits in with the theory of Baumol (1990) who posited the notion of the entrepreneur as being capable of being *“productive, unproductive and destructive”* and that in the absence of legal state sponsored opportunities society produces the type of entrepreneurs it requires. This is particularly true of rural entrepreneurship and highlights the necessity to research alternative

legitimate methods of generating sustainable revenue more in keeping with perpetuating the cherished image of the rural idyll. Baumol (1990) considers criminal entrepreneurship to be unproductive and destructive to society because they do not produce anything of value and may even be destructive to society.

It is too easy to ignore crimes such as the ones discussed in this paper, because they are unusual. Jack's story rationalizes it as being an entrepreneurial opportunity to be exploited but in reality it is a shocking crime with serious health consequences. Nor can one afford to look at it in isolation because it encourages other crimes. The fictional Jack Cash may not be truly representative of the genre behind the trade because in real life the Dr Teinaz mentioned in this paper who has been directly responsible for interdicting such rogues has been subjected to death threats. There is currently a £10,000 contract out on him allegedly at the behest of criminal businessmen whom have suffered financially as a result of his dedication and tireless activity.

The moral behind this story is inescapable namely that entrepreneurship flourishes wherever opportunity presents itself. The rural idyll may help sell the countryside but in depressed economies hard cash, in the form of pounds and euros have a greater impact than idyllic sentiment. The research is of importance because it firstly highlights an ignored aspect of illegal rural / agricultural entrepreneurship and secondly demonstrates that the case story methodology has serious potential as a method of instigating exploratory research, where more robust empirical, qualitative methodologies cannot be used. The case story methodology is a valid research technique, which requires less work than case studies, but if used with integrity can be equally effective. Narrative and case stories are important, powerful devices of illumination, because the real persons engaged in this illegal trade and those who organise the ventures rely on their stories remaining untold. Also, what constitutes entrepreneurship research is often dictated by peripheral issues such as ease of access to respondents, availability of data sources and the ability of the researcher to take between the theories of entrepreneurship and the other disciplines in which the practice may be embedded. Finally, it highlights the necessity for conducting serious academic research into this fascinating and neglected area of entrepreneurship. Unlike the fictional rural rogues Claude Greengrass and Eric Pollard, there is nothing romantic, nor charming about the rogues discussed in this paper.

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