

**40 per cent** – growth of Cornish food and drink sector 2003-2011

**£1.4 billion** – value of Cornwall's food and drink economy (2011)

**£100m** – Investment in agriculture, fishing, food and drink (since 2001)

**14 per cent** – of employees in Cornwall and IoS working in export industries (2010)

Eclipse started something that was cosmic

Ruth Huxley, managing director of Cornwall Food and Drink, says:



"I believe that the solar eclipse of 1999 was the start of Cornwall's renaissance. "I was living in Somerset at the time and everyone was talking about Cornwall. I don't recall that ever happening to the same extent in my lifetime before. "Cornwall was implanted in people's minds, so it was fortunate that the European Union Objective One funding came along soon after. "Then along came the Eden Project, and now we have a university, so a generation of young adults who, along with their families, are discovering (or perhaps rediscovering) Cornwall."

**Sparkling**

"And successful names like Kneehigh Theatre; a huge surf scene and the backdrop for numerous films and TV series like Poldark. "We produce a sparkling wine that graces the tables of royalty (the Queen chose Camel Valley for her jubilee trip down the Thames), the UK's top draught ale (Sharp's Doom Bar), and Cornish Blue Cheese, which was crowned best cheese in the world a few years back. "So Cornwall has become hip and trendy and the cool place to be seen – think of the prime minister's holidays and the number of celebrities who have homes here. "Restaurants all over the UK but particularly in London, want to put the word 'Cornish' on their menus, not only because it's cool but because the products are good."

# 'Brand Cornwall' growth shows no sign of slowing

What was once a quaint seaside destination, far away from foreign markets, has blossomed into a powerful brand with global clout, writes **Craig Blackburn**

SINCE the turn of the millennium, the world has looked at Cornwall in a different way. Aided by £100 million of investment at a time when perceptions about big brands were shifting, and bolstered by local celebrity chefs, confidence in the county's food and drink has reached an all-time high.

Since then the quality assurance associated with brand Cornwall has spread to other sectors – creating new markets to boot. Ruth Huxley from Cornwall Food and Drink, says the step-change happened in 1999. "Firstly, there was an increase in demand locally for local products, notably the hospitality trade of Cornwall," she says.

"Some 15 years ago, it wasn't the norm for a Cornish restaurant to use Cornish produce but these days it's undoubtedly yes. The range and quality of products has also improved no end. "We have also got much better at marketing Cornwall and Cornish produce. "Again, thinking back 15 years, there were some good Cornish food products and Cornwall was a great place, but we weren't really shouting about it – we kind of waited for people to find us."

The evidence of this growth, says Kirsty Miles, from Cornwall Development Company (CDC), lies in takers of Cornish brands. "A number of significant company buy-outs in the past five years, including Cornish Orchards by Fuller's Brewery and Cornish Country Larder by Aria Foods, have reinforced Cornwall's position nationally as a producer of exceptionally high quality food and drink products and a location that is some of the most competitive companies in Europe would like to associate themselves with."

She adds that Cornwall's other traditional industries have boomed, with the arrival of Liskeard's Ideal Foods (which exports fish to the



■ Grape picking at Camel Valley Vineyard – Brand Cornwall has blossomed into a thriving hotbed of creativity and innovation.

Far East), in 2000; the opening of Mawgan Porth's world-renowned Scarlet Hotel in 2006 and the granting of the Cornish pasty protected geographical status in 2011 – when the pasty economy was valued at £288 million.

She also cites marine and technology companies like Falmouth superyacht builder Pendennis Shipyard and Engineered Arts, which has a humanoid robot in the Nasa visitor centre in America. "But Ideal Foods processes fish from a company based in Grimsby, and a growing number of entrepreneurs in new sectors, like clothing, creative and digital, do not source from Cornwall – so what does 'brand Cornwall' actually mean?"

According to Chris Pomfret, chairman of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership, the county's brand values include "high quality and care for one's fellow man and the environment, culture and heritage".

Nicholas Rodda, managing director of Rodda's, says the Cornwall brand means "richness of provenance, spirit and a unique sense of place". He adds: "No matter what the industry, it is the values of all parties, working together, which creates a strong brand, Cornwall which will inspire generations to come."

Across traditional and emerging trades, EU-funded initiatives such as CDC's Invest In Cornwall attract finance into Cornish companies by supporting and promoting them out of county.

Among the firms it proudly supports, CDC's Cornwall Brand initiative boasts food and drink producer Lynher Dairies Cheese Company marine giant Pendennis Shipyard, and specialist drilling and marine construction contractor Frugo Seacore.

To guide them all through the process to sell outside Cornwall and to foreign shores, the investment in Cornwall paid for a sophisticated network of business support services.

Kim Conchie, Cornwall Chamber of Commerce chief executive, says the growth

has mainly come from the food and drink economy, which has expanded beyond recognition. "Rodda's cream is no longer 'quaint' – it is a globally acknowledged super-product sold in China, United Arab Emirates and the US, to name just a few."

The quality and purity of clotted cream and the brand of Cornwall is enabling us to export high value goods in associated sectors and to attract 'food tourists' here. (Celebrity chef) Rick Stein was an early adopter of the zeitgeist which we now see all around us in so many ways."

He adds that this success has been followed by expansion in the emerging creative and digital sectors, driven by Falmouth University Superfast Broadband and Cornwall's fine art heritage. Precision manufacturing, which supports the global mining community, is also still holding firm, he says, thanks to the county's strong identity, expertise and world-class reputation.

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**£12.7 billion** – value of South West exports in 2012-2013 (6 per cent of England's total)

**1,050** – VAT-registered businesses in Cornwall and IoS which export

## Duchy can be as central as any UK place

Phil Gendall a marketing consultant and director at Wolf Rock marketing who led branding for Cornish Sea Salt, the Isles of Scilly, the Eden Project, talks branding



"PLACE branding is a bit more complex than branding a product. But it all comes down to the ingredients of the actual product in the end."

"And here's the thing, all places have a brand – they all have a reputation; things the places are known for. These reputations stick and take time to change."

"Cornwall has been building its reputation as a holiday destination for 100 years, and a very strong reputation it is – it's a huge asset for Cornwall."

"But some of the messages that are positive for tourism, food and drink can be less helpful in promoting engineering and creative industries – for example, 'Cornwall is quiet and natural'."

"That can be a real speed bump for Cornish firms trying to do business nationally or globally."

"So, the challenge for Cornwall is to adjust the way Cornwall's 'customers' think about it, by adding new brand messages into the mix, and by re-framing existing ones."

"I know of many companies which are based here but don't source ingredients from Cornwall, nor manufacture here, yet they are having great success internationally."

"Cornwall is breathtaking – creatives and innovators flock here – and, with the internet, here' can be as central as anywhere else."

"So the challenge is to get businesses, and those in a position to influence national

'thinking' to tell a revised version of the brand story whenever they get the chance – but in a co-ordinated way – so the message gets through."

"This collective bandwagon is a bit unsteady as we have 1,000 voices."

"Our choice is either to let the 1,000 voices chatter on – sometimes resonating, sometimes contradicting – or to work to bring some structure and harmony."

"It will never be one story; one message, but the different messages need to be able to sit happily together without getting in each other's way."

"A great example is California, which we know for Hollywood, Silicone Valley and Big Sur (a sparsely populated region where the Santa Lucia Mountains rise from the Pacific Ocean in its Central Coast region)."

"Natural environment, creative industries and technology all thrive happily together, feeding off each other."

"We do that too – our brand can tell that story too."



■ Welding at marine contractor Frugo Seacore.

ulation of 500,000 is not large enough to build a growth business on so companies are looking farther afield and raising their sights to the wider national and international market opportunities.

"The growth in knowledge-based businesses has facilitated this shift although there are still examples of more traditional businesses emerging as exporters, like Ferritche, Clayworks and Science Play."

Business support provider Unlocking Potential's programme director Alyson Glover says the growth of 'brand Cornwall' started in early 2000 and coincided with a global shift in lifestyle choices.

"When we returned to Cornwall post 9/11," she says, "our conveyance solicitor said they

were dealing with an unprecedented number of professional people and families leaving the cities looking for a better quality of life and not driven so much by consumerism."

"This brought a whole new skill set into places like Cornwall and a much more discerning consumer looking for a different way of life, who look for goods and services that are unique and distinct rather than mass market."

"Combined with the growth in higher education at the same time we've seen an influx in a diverse population of students coming, falling in love with the area, and wanting to stay."

Since the turn of the millennium, says Mrs Glover, Cornwall has developed a contemporary troop of business men and women, and their staff, who have been propelled forward by the success of their predecessors.

"Whereas, traditionally food, drink and artistic products became highly sought-after with the Cornwall branding, now there are new sectors that are attracting global attention, thanks to investment in business, skills, higher education and business support in Cornwall, because of companies basing themselves in the county," she says.

The growth in broadband, which is better than parts of London, has enabled clothing companies like Seasalt, Finisterre and Frugi, stove company Anevey, digital marketing agency 3WhiteHats and many others to flourish.

"These entrepreneurs may have made a lifestyle choice to set up here, and their employees may have been attracted to Cornwall for the same reasons, but they have been a success in part because they are proud to say 'We are from Cornwall.'"

## St Piran goes to the heart of it all

Bert Biscoe's bardic name is Vyajor gans Geryow (travels with words). He lives in, and thinks about, Truro and Cornwall – and here St Piran



They say that old Piran turned up from Ireland on a millstone – a mean feat of seamanship made doubly brilliant by the fact that the millstone had a hole in the middle – navigation by faith – that's what makes a saint.

When he arrived Piran showed the Cornish how to smelt tin which set in motion a chain of events that developed Stannary law, fuelled the industrial revolution, kicked off the global economy, caused the invention of the internet and has probably resulted in climate change.

Most importantly, the exiled Irish Prince could converse with animals and birds – apparently, a talent not uncommon among early saints but pretty impressive nonetheless. It probably isn't exactly true.

It's probably a symbolic way of describing that Piran encouraged people to see themselves as part of nature, living within the natural cycle, getting hot and lively in the spring, melancholic in the autumn, hunting purely for need in the winter, going to Glas-tonbury in the summer, and

thinking of gods as the cycles, as the sun and moon, of the solstices as turning points.

Piran was, of course, a Christian and only had one God, but he saw the Christian God as being as much all of the gods of the past as the new God of the future.

This is when we really need to be talking turkey with the animals and birds, re-uniting with nature and working together to manage our way through the really serious habitat degradation we have brought on ourselves.

Hey Piran. We've dug up your oratory finally persuaded the Government that we exist, we've persuaded the court to restore the spirit of Arthur, we've got superfast broadband to stay in touch with all the relations round the world – any chance of a tutorial on conversation techniques with the badger or the buzzard?

Have a great Pirantide and remember – it ain't just a bash or rite of spring – it's also about who we are, what we do, how we do it and... talking nicely to the tortoise! Kernow by Vykklen!

what we do with our land is going to matter more than ever before.

We can spend millions bickering about how many supermarkets are needed in Greensplatt or Tregavethan, and how many houses must be built to generate a crowd to fill a mythical stadium, but we need land to produce food, and we need food for more than just ourselves because climate change is reducing the area of fertile land on the planet – the Sahara is expanding across the Mediterranean.

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