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Our Ships Do Not Disrupt, Pollute, or Require Expensive Bunkering Facilities: Derek Ellard, Founder of Go Sail Cargo

Derek Ellard
Founder



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COVER
STORY

Go Sail Cargo, founded in 2018 by Derek Ellard, designs zero-emission cargo and passenger vessels powered entirely by renewable energy. It specialises in small ships under 2,000 tonnes, blending

traditional sailing aesthetics with advanced wind, solar, and electric technologies. The company's fleet includes versatile ketches, the Electric Clipper series, and smaller container-compatible boats, all engineered for efficiency, safety, and minimal environmental impact.

With global hubs, customisable vessels, and a focus on reliability and cost-effectiveness, Go Sail Cargo addresses modern maritime challenges while offering solutions for logistics, tourism, research, disaster relief, and sustainable shipping.

The company is based in Queensland, Australia.

SME BUSINESS REVIEW reached out to Mr. Ellard for an interview to discuss the vision, development, and future plans of [Go Sail Cargo](#) and the impact of sustainable technology on the maritime industry. Here's what he had to say.

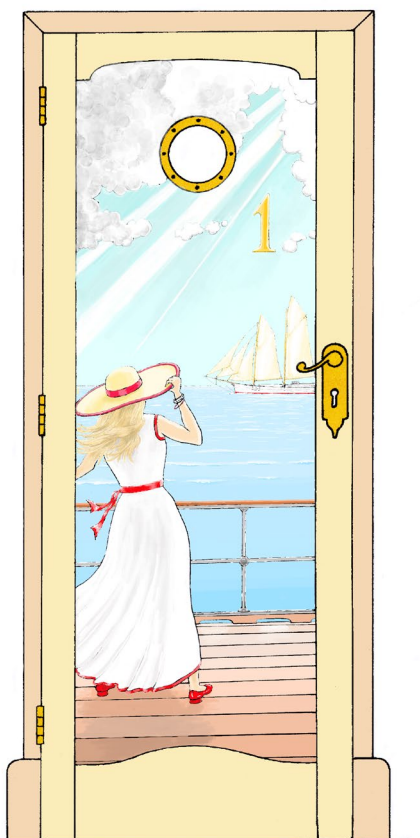
Interview Excerpts

How did Go Sail Cargo come into existence and as its founder, what challenges did you face in the early years?

Go Sail Cargo was formed in 2018 in response to the persistent lack of action and, at times, outright denial of man-made pollution and its clearly visible global impact. Sadly, little has changed, and our planet continues to suffer severe consequences. My response was to focus on practical solutions, which have since evolved into viable business propositions.

In the early years, the many challenges included limited access to serious capital, underperforming technology, and the complexity and cost of designing even small cargo ships. Yet these proved to be blessings in disguise, allowing my expertise to deepen and problem-solving innovations to mature.

The current war on Iran presents further challenges but also strengthens my resolve. Amid ongoing oil supply volatility, as well as the loss of innocent lives, the waste of resources, and severe pollution, Go Sail Cargo's war-resistant, oil-immune ships offer a logical alternative. The need for zero-emission vessels has never been more urgent.



What are your focus areas, and why did you decide to build wind powered cargo ships?

My focus was, and remains, on the "small ship" sector, vessels under 2,000 tonnes, which are best suited to the "soft sail and solar" design. The decision was straightforward as wind and solar energy are free, non-polluting, and effectively inexhaustible. What was required was the advancement of technology to effectively harness that energy.

The global addiction to oil has brought many benefits but also long-term destruction on an industrial scale. As the son of a mariner, I lived with sailing from an early age, and the incredible efficiency of commercial sail, especially Thames sailing barges, was a source of wonder to me. It was inevitable that my life's voyage would lead to designing

modern incarnations of sailing ships.

What design and operational features make Go Sail Cargo's 21st century cargo ketch an efficient workhorse?

Where do I begin? Well, the original zero-emission cargo ketch has evolved from its humble beginnings eight years ago; in essence, the simplicity and risk-averse principles remain. The traditional rig, the "engine," runs on infinite free fuel and is updated with optimised design and superior materials to be lighter, stronger, and longer lasting.

The steel hull is fine-tuned for safe, efficient, and reliable voyages. Add slippery coatings, and the result is faster, more profitable passages. There are no refuelling or diesel maintenance costs, zero risk of oil spills, reduced risk of fires, low sound levels, and absolutely no pollution.

Efficient new-generation solar charges the compact fire-proof DBL battery banks, which are installed below the cargo holds to enhance stability and free up valuable extra cargo space. Add in propeller regeneration under sail, the waterwheel effect, and an ever-ready auxiliary power supply is always available.

The boats are versatile and container-compatible, yet ready for all kinds of mixed cargo. No reinventions of the sail, rotors, or kites are employed, and the rig is familiar to seamen the world over. Powered systems enable smaller crew manning levels to be as low as practical, but manual override is always there.

The boats update the efficient ketch rig and incorporate

numerous small but important innovations, too numerous to list here. But incrementally, they add up to a practical and profitable working ship, ready and able to offer significantly lower operational costs without sacrificing reliability or safety.

The goal was simple. Design a superior workhorse. Step one complete.

Why did Go Sail Cargo base its cargo ships on wind power, and what benefits does it offer?

On all our boats, the wind, free and abundant, is harnessed by simple, tried and tested sail systems, and when it's calm, the solar-powered motors keep the ship moving. But at higher wind speeds, the boats will fly. And when the wind is blowing from the wrong direction, our ships can quickly adapt, and with GPS-driven route planning, the worst headwinds and storms are avoided. It was an entirely logical decision, driven by advanced technology.

The list of benefits is long, the list of downsides short, but one big advantage tops the list. Nature provides the fuel, and she does not charge, redirect, or withdraw supplies. The sun shines, the wind blows, and together, as on land, they offer the perfect renewable energy source.

All we need is to respectfully harness that infinite power supply and ensure reliable back-up options. We work with nature, not against Her, and reap the benefits of reduced fire risks, no oil spills, independence from oil volatility, zero pollution, reduced insurance rates, low, whale-friendly noise levels, and much more.

One big benefit stands out. Remote island nations in regions such as the South Pacific rely on sea transport for the necessities of life. Right now, in times of war, they are vulnerable to excessive oil prices, uncertain fuel availability, and completely at the mercy of geopolitical affairs far beyond their control. A Go Sail Cargo ship, immune to such conditions, would deliver their food, farm equipment, medicines, services, returning family, specialists, whatever they need. And then on to the next island. Will there be a market for more?

How did you transform the traditional 19th century cargo ketches into modern zero-emission vessels?

The late 19th century was a time when sailing cargo ships evolved at a faster rate than ever before, and such was their efficiency that many were still trading up until the Second World War. Small cargo boats, efficiently rigged as ketches, Thames barges, and Arabian dhows, continued working under sail, and indeed some still do. Inevitably, steam, powered by coal and later diesel, replaced them.

In order to transform that 19th century sail template, serious updates were clearly needed, but for a number of valid reasons, we retained the aesthetics of the golden age of sail. We applied effective and appropriate technological advances in hull design, rig efficiency, build systems, navigation aids, and safety measures. We enhanced stability, specified container compatibility, and full integration into modern logistics. Thus, the simple trading ketch evolved.

Our passengers and crew will now enjoy all modern facilities,

and our beautiful ships will be welcome in any port, as we do not burn fossil fuel just to keep the systems running. We provide reliability and cost-efficiency; our ships neither disrupt nor pollute and require no expensive bunkering facilities. We have achieved this via long-term research using critical analysis to determine the most effective adaptive design pathways, coupled with lateral thinking and innovative action, and driven by applied metaphysics.

What can you tell us about the electric Clipper series and how do these vessels fit into your broader vision for sustainable shipping?

The [Electric Clipper](#) series, effectively the next size up from the ketches, is our key solution to the accelerating problems with diesel-powered ships in a sector which accounts for 50% of global maritime commerce. They address numerous existing and future issues while completely eliminating all of the ever-increasing fuel costs, the ROI icing on the cake. The new Electric Clipper 200 is a case in point. Designed in response to an agribusiness owner needing to ship 1,000 tonnes of corn and combine bulk freight shipping with true zero-emission tourist operations, the new Clipper was the only vessel able to fulfil that extremely demanding brief.

Such versatility is unique, and with it comes extra advantages. The zero-carbon operation commands premium freight prices, as environmental cleanliness is a valuable commodity. There is also a growing demand for authentic tourism experiences, carbon offset services, green charter potential, disaster relief without having

to find fuel, zero-emission cruise ships, and more. By sticking with tried and tested but updated rigs, the risks and high costs inherent in experimental rigs and carbon wing sails are eliminated. GSC sails can be replaced or repaired at sea anywhere. None of the above is possible with lesser ships, not even other sailing ships if they retain the diesel auxiliaries. Technology is applied carefully on our ships, no headline-grabbing breakthroughs are chased; instead, everything that enhances efficiency and longevity is gratefully adopted.

As a result, every year the ship “clips” hundreds of thousands of dollars off the fuel and maintenance bills, efficiently, reliably, and in some style.

Our planned global series production is a key element of the Sustainable Electric Clipper project. The planet urgently needs thousands of renewable-powered ships. With series production, build, repair, and maintenance costs are reduced, delivery and downtime are minimalised, while reliability and performance are enhanced. Several regional GSC hubs are planned, sharing resources, leads, suppliers, and expansion opportunities. The vision takes shape.

Beyond the Electric clipper series, what other vessel series has Go Sail Cargo developed, and what are their specific roles?

The GSC range is supplemented by the smaller ketches, the Secret Traders. They are single-container cargo boats with extra roles as ferries or as private liveaboards. They are joined by the Sienna 65, a unique world-cruising schooner with space for cargo, office, or studio. All are self-sufficient solar/

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sail/electric vessels with no need for diesel engines unless their owner specifies otherwise. These boats can be had as steel hull kits for smaller yards and skilled amateurs to complete.

A selection of small boats completes the model range. These boats, from 3.6 to 9.2 metres in length, will all fit inside standard containers and elegantly fulfil multiple roles in several different sectors. Combining the best of modern technology with aesthetic tradition, they are inherently safe, stable, and seaworthy, tough and efficient, but with a good turn of speed. They are built in new-generation GRP or roto-moulded, but also shipped as prefabricated fibreglass or timber/marine ply kit versions for remote assembly.

All models are available in sail/electric and electric-only versions, both with solar for self-sufficiency and readily customised to customer preference. Passenger capacity is from 4 to 14. Their roles include all use in the leisure boating industry, micro cargo boats, ship's boats, fishing boats, hire boats, eco-tourism services, and water taxi/ferry duties.

What new vessels or developments are on the horizon for Go Sail Cargo?

Beyond the existing range of sustainable ships and boats are a number of new models and exciting projects. The key is again simple, let the future govern your thinking. The future will not depend on noisy, inefficient, polluting internal combustion engines, that's 19th century thinking. We study global trends, renewable energy statistics, new discoveries, and we think of the grandchildren.

With that in mind, new sail/solar/electric vessels of all kinds are planned, including RoRo passenger and vehicle catamarans, cruise ships, fishing boats, dive boats, inter-island cargo cats, and new generation leisure boats. Many of the proposed vessels are at an advanced stage of development, while some remain as concept sketches. Readily customised for specific sectors and quickly modified to take containers or mixed freight and containerised research, medical, or film equipment, all on renewable energy.

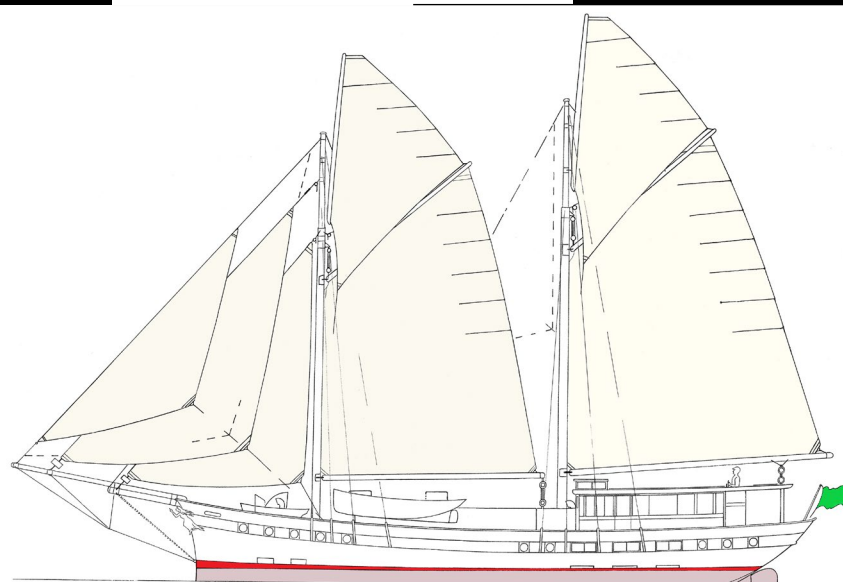
New related initiatives are being developed to enhance the business model, including training services, transporting electric vehicles, shipping renewable energy components, shipping containerised battery power packs and medical units, in-house insurance provisions, community ownership and environmental restoration projects, carbon offset services, film and research facilities, art and culture projects, and much more. The vision expands.

What sets Go Sail Cargo apart from others in the market?

Only Go Sail Cargo can offer an entire range of oil-proof, war-resistant, zero-carbon vessels powered solely by renewable energy. Every single detail of design and engineering, build systems, and operational procedures is carefully evaluated to reduce risk, enhance longevity, increase operational efficiency, and accelerate ROI.

Planned global mass production is achieved via "shared autonomy" regional build and operational hubs, demonstrating the multiplier effect in action. Multiple cargo and passenger custom options are available on all models, alongside container-compatible full logistic integration. The fleet offers versatility writ large, supporting ocean research, disaster relief, genuine eco-tours, film opportunities, and all tall ship experiences.

Efficient steel hulls and innovative rigs incorporate proven advanced technology, yet remain graced with traditional aesthetics. Smaller vessels are available in kit format for assembly in regional shipyards, while a fully zero-emission ship's boat range serves multiple



EC138-12 SCHOONER © 2014/2015
EC-147-12 schooner © Derek Ellard

markets, built in advanced GRP, roto-moulded, or as prefabricated kits.

These ships provide complete immunity from oil availability issues, skyrocketing prices, and future ESG mandates. When others run out of fuel or face compliance challenges, Go Sail Cargo ships sail on regardless. The vessels also offer excellent promotional potential, including Selfie Central on a new tall ship.

The company is founded and directed by one practical visionary, Derek Ellard, not by committee, now joined by international partners who share the vision of a better world.

What are the business plans and outlook for the next five years?

The plans for the next five years can be summarised in one

sentence: build a pan-dimensional, all-inclusive, billion-dollar international shipping co-operative based on the combination of traditional aesthetics and values, plus the application of proven technology.

In order to implement that unlimited vision, the business model is based on abundance, not greed, the entirely logical driver being that modest profits derived from thousands of ships are demonstrably far greater than excessive profits on a few. Go Sail Cargo's success is not measured in profits alone, but by real and lasting benefits to all life. Pan-dimensional success will sustain a healthy business, healthy returns on investment, share dividends, support communities, and repair environmental destruction.

From a proposed headquarters in the Philippines, we intend to establish regional hubs under the GSC umbrella. Investment,

development, and products are customised to suit local conditions, and the greater proportion of profits generated locally remain in the regions. Manufacture, delivery, maintenance, and operational expenses are all minimised, while profitability is enhanced. The principal business hubs are Central and East Asia, the Americas, the EU, Africa, and Asia Pacific. I am based in Australia, the principal partner in Mindanao, Philippines, another in Singapore, one main supplier in the US, and another in the UK.

The key team now includes me as founder/director and an established agribusinessman, along with a master mariner, a traditional sail expert, a marine architect, and an innovative battery manufacturer. Design studies are complete, feasibility studies are ongoing, the chosen shipyard has been contacted, and preliminary concept documents prepared.

ABOUT | Derek Ellard

The founder of Go Sail Cargo, [Derek Ellard](#), was born in England in 1946, the son of an Atlantic navy veteran who returned a committed pacifist. From childhood, sailing was part of his life, and the history of the sea and ships was, and remains, an abiding passion.

He lived and worked in several European countries before settling in Australia in the early 1980s. He worked in advertising and commercial design, and subsequently became a regular magazine columnist. Fine art and design studies, extensive practical design and building experience, carpentry, and wooden boatbuilding added qualifications and paved the way for the formation of his first marine business, Scruffie Marine, in 1990.

Based on the combination of tried and tested maritime traditions and emerging technology, Ellard was one of the early pioneers of a now universally employed kit system for ply and timber boats. The business built a series of much-admired boats and sold over 350 worldwide. They were used privately, in schools, for sail training, and a high proportion of sales were to professional mariners.

The acknowledged sector-leading magazine, *Classic Boat*—byline “The world’s most beautiful boats”—featured his boats on three separate occasions. This all helped build a strong foundation for Go Sail Cargo. Founded in 2018 and powered by the rapid acceleration of sustainable technology, the future-focused project is attracting significant global interest, and the realisation of the vision is closer than ever.