North Cornish Coast Sailing

by Martin Pumphrey, Shrimper 82 (*Salt Horse*) (Spring 1993)

Sailing at Rock isn't just about racing, or bouncing off sandbanks trying to cheat the tide. Only too often we return to the camel Estuary from Trevose or Port Isaac at 4.30 pm on a young flood tide to find a few Shrimpers making a belated start to their day's sailing. They have to fight against the stream in order to make progress towards open water.

For several years now we have tried to leave the river at about 10.30 am, on an ebb and take advantage of the downhill sail out to sea.   Once at Stepper there are usually several choices; either to return at once as it is patently too uncomfortable outside the bar, or to lunch in the shelter of Stepper, swim and inspect the squat lobsters only found at low spring tides.

An alternative choice is to use the ebb to sail west and south round the Quies to Trescore Rocks at Porthcothan. Behind the Rocks you can picnic and walk ashore, even when Treyarnon has four foot of surf. This last trip may entail some motoring (as calm conditions must prevail) and requires a departure on the ebb at 10.30 am for a 12.30 pm rounding of Trevose Head.

Another option, once out of the Estuary, is to use a southerly or sou'easterly to sail to Portquin or to Port Isaac for a very comfortable lunch. Alternatively, when a westerly or easterly permits, we occasionally sail seaward until the coastline at Pentire disappears and the only recognisable features are the higher points of Bodmin Moor. My last suggestion, for when southerlies prevail, is just to round the Rumps and anchor close inshore and swim in the gin clear water.

These are only a few of our favourite lunchtime spots. The point I am trying to make is, that in settled high pressure summer conditions, the North Cornish Coast is eminently preferable to the rather over-crowded estuary. It must be emphasized that if the weather is cyclonic you do not have to worry about seasickness since the sea state is often flat calm thus allowing beach landings.