



Cornwall's North Coast

St Enodoc

All things draw toward St Enodoc. So said Sir John Betjeman, and who are we to disagree? Each year thousands of walkers visit the little church in the dunes with the intention of doffing their caps to the poet laureate who lies there in the sand. And this year there are more than most - 2006 marks the centenary of Sir John's birth.

We took the ferry from Padstow across the Camel estuary to Rock and the parish of St Minver Lowlands. From the ferry you can see the estuarine frontage which presents itself in the form of huge sand dunes. So why Rock? What an odd name for a village built upon sand.

Writer J.R.A. Hockin's in his *Walking In Cornwall* has no explanation but prefers instead to witter on about the strange fact that Cornwall's estuary harbours tend to be on the west banks of their rivers. Fowey, Falmouth and Padstow are his examples and then he goes on at some length about the Romans, long lost roads and the early tin trade. He suggests (at least he did so in 1936) that you ponder all this at the inn at Rock, describing it thus:

«Though its company is mostly of the cocktail class it is not in the least proud, and it puts up, at midday, a remarkably good pasty which you can eat on the veranda with a picture-postcard view of Padstow.»

The cocktail crowd is still there. Indeed, Rock exudes an air of wealth. And you know you are somewhere posh when you pass the gates of the golf club. For that is what you must do to begin this hike: walk 500 yards along the road to the right of the ferry landing, and turn left up the lane that leads to the links.

A small path slinks through a hedge just to the left of the golf club gates but, before you join it, peer into the car park and witness a unique instruction painted on the tarmac.

«Saloon Cars Only,» says the missive repeated in various parking bays. But why? Are sports cars, shooting brakes and coupes unwelcome in these spots? I say the path slinks through the hedge because you get the impression that this public right of way is there by historic merit and by sufferance.

Golfers and walkers do not mix well - and at Rock the two are thrown together with the potential for alarming and painful outcomes. For the walkers that is. They do not hurl missiles about the place. Golfers do. The ball that just missed us came



Basic Hike: from ferry landing at Rock across golf links to St Enedoc Church and from there to Polzeath via Shilla Mill. Back along the coast path.

Recommended map: Ordnance Survey Explorer 106 Newquay and Padstow.

Distance and going: five miles easy going - watch out for golf balls.

hissing out of the sky like a small white missile. Look at the Ordnance Survey map and you will see that the footpath passes right through the very heart of this glorious links course. Signs regularly tell you that balls are likely to be driven this way and that, but you need eyes in the back of your head to remain out of harm's way. Or a good crash helmet.

The fear of the firing range goes on all the way across to noble Brea Hill where the path swings inland. The trouble is that the golfers do too. I put my hardback copy of Hockin over my head and made a bolt for it towards St Enedoc.

And what a refuge it was. No wonder old Betjeman loved this place. His ornately carved headstone can be seen just inside the lych gate, but the best view is from the wall at the top of graveyard where you are treated to a vista of church, hill, dune, wood and sea.

Blessed be St Enodoc, blessed be the wave,

Blessed be the springy turf, we pray, pray to thee....

So wrote Betjeman in a poem called Trebetherick, which is where this walk goes next. It's a village on the slight hill to the north of the old church and to get to it you can take any number of public footpaths which are to be found in the area.

Go up any of the north leading paths and on the road just past the Post Office, a footpath branches right down into the leafy valley near Shilla Mill.

The lichened branches of a wood

In summer silver-cool and still;

And there the Shade of Evil could

Stretch out at us from Shilla Mill.

There is something creepy about the valley, but the footpath brings us to the sea at Polzeath - which is nowhere near as posh as Rock and is a surfing Mecca full of wet-suited folk splashing about in the icy waves.

Turn left and we find the South West Coast Path - which takes us south past Broadagogue Cove, around Trebetherick Point to Daymer Bay. If the tide is out you can cut across the sands and think of the bell that rings so forlornly in St Enedoc's small tower - it came from the Italian vessel the Immacolata that was wrecked here in 1875 but, strangely perhaps, is inscribed «Sahel».

On we go around the coastal slopes of Brea Hill and along the low dunes to the ferry landing.