

Revival over the reefs

In recent years the quiet joy of fishing the reefs has been re-discovered by an increasing number of anglers who want to be fishing within an hour or so of leaving the dockside.

They want to fish with light 10lb line, 2oz sinkers and lightweight rods for species that will fight every inch of the way up and are clean of red raw sores and score marks of gill net entanglement.

In the past few years there are clear indications that many experienced anglers are choosing the joy of a quality fishing experience over the moronic meat merchant philosophy.

If the skipper of a charter boat is under pressure to fill the fish box to the brim every trip, he will not tell his anglers about the quality fishing that might be a little more hit or miss. Talk to your skipper, you might be surprised at the knowledge he has squirreled away, but never tells because he is never asked!

So where do you go to enjoy this quality reef fishing experience? Scotland has some magnificent reef fishing, Wales has some excellent rocky outcrops. Ireland is brilliant, particularly the Atlantic coast... but I am a Westcountryman and I believe the best reef fishing in Europe is off the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. Places like Hatt Rock, Hands Deeps, the Phillips, the Brendons, the East and West Rutts - not forgetting the daddy of them all, the Eddystone, with its constellation of scattered rock. These places can produce magnificent fishing.

Sunrise on the Stone is something you will remember forever, or fish into a flame red dusk on an oily flat sea over Hand Deeps - these are things that you do for the memories of a quality fishing experience.

Tackle choice is critical

Setting sail from Looe, Falmouth, Fowey or Plymouth to fish these reefs, what should you have with you?

First of all, remember it's always one jumper cooler at sea, so make sure you have your waterproofs and something warm to wear even if it's shorts and teeshirt weather.

If you are going to enjoy this fishing the right tackle, properly prepared, is essential. A light uptide rod, capable of casting up to a maximum of 3oz, is a good choice, or you could try a sporting 8ft or 9ft salmon spinning rod with a baby multiplier,

loaded with mono or superbraid between 10lb and 18lb, which is what many of us use.

End tackle is no more complicated than a flowing trace. Try a skinny wire boom or a cheap straw boom to minimise water resistance.

Trace length is usually chosen on the day, but if you are using artificial eels or jellies anything between 8ft and 15ft is fine because you will be working it quite quickly anyway.

If you are using bait, sandeel, mackerel strip or king ragworm, expecting the fish to find the bait either by scent or vibration, then a longer trace from 15ft to

30ft length can be beneficial. This is a rig which will catch reef pollack, coalfish, cod, bream and bass yet allow the fish to give a good account of itself.

When slack water comes along this is often the time when the skipper will put the anchor down and suggest that you have a go with a side of mackerel or squid for conger, ling and maybe a big old cod.

The biggest cod I have ever seen, a 42-pounder, was caught like this over a reef, so a 30lb-class outfit or two on board is useful. Besides, the outfits are always useful to keep rigged with a set of feathers to ensure a constant source of fresh mackerel strip baits.

Dust down those spinning rods and fish with 10lb line for some truly exciting angling. I'll bet you will be surprised at the variety of species that you can catch, the sheer fun and sport you will enjoy ■

