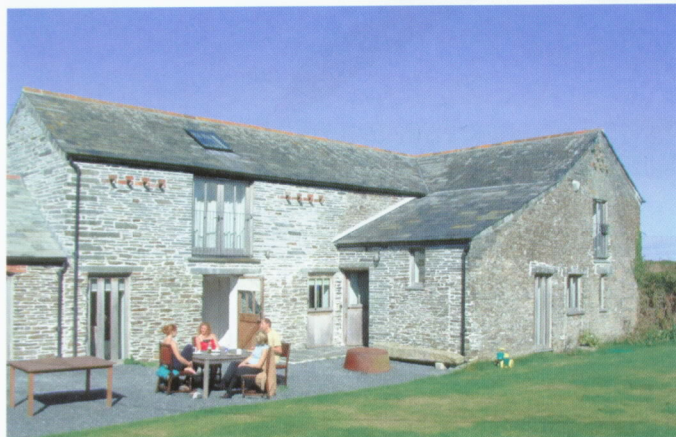


# between a rock and a tranquil place

By Phil Chapman  
and Scooby Gill

yoga holidays on the North Cornwall Coast



A typically Cornish sunset fills the sky this evening. Jaw-dropping oranges, yellows and pinks take centre-stage, whilst dark brooding clouds lurk dramatically in the wings. We drive towards it chasing the warmth and the drama. We pass wind turbines, silhouetted against the sun, standing tall in groups around the hillsides. Like students in a Yoga class, the air flows through them, pushing them into heavenly stretches before grounding their energy and completing their salutations to the sun. The roads get narrower as we near our destination. Hedges begin to hug the sides of the car and grass from the middle of the single-track slaps the underneath. Then we are there. We've nowhere else to be, nothing else to think about and nothing else to do but be here, at Caradoc. Heaven....

For us, Caradoc of Tregardock, a venue for Rock Yoga Holidays, is a winner before you even step out of the car. Located on the rugged but beautiful North Cornwall

coast, there is no shortage of clean air, peace and tranquillity here. In the unlikely event that you are lured away from such a haven, you could find yourself exploring nearby Tintagel, with its Arthurian myths and legends, walking a section of the South West Coast Path, or wandering through the diverse biomes of the world famous Eden Project.

The four star accommodation offered by Caradoc, a beautiful Grade II listed barn conversion, has an informal feel, and it is very easy to feel instantly at home. This was very well demonstrated when everyone gathered in the cosy farmhouse-style communal kitchen to cook, and get to know each other a little better, beyond the first impressions we had made during the opening Yoga class of the weekend on the Friday evening. We all came from diverse backgrounds; a lawyer, an interior designer, a hairdresser, a media technician, a support worker and of course a Yoga teacher; all brought together in search of





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relaxation, peace, and the chance to focus on and improve our Yoga practice.

Two Yoga teachers lead the Yoga sessions at Caradoc, both of whom trained with the Devon School of Yoga. They are Sally Ornellas and our teacher for the weekend, Anne-Marie Le Seve, who describes her approach as 'holistic'. Anne-Marie incorporates teachings from many Yoga traditions, taking care to match the teaching with the student's ability, experience, and level of fitness. She got a sense of our abilities and limitations not only from the introductory class, but also from our conversation on that first evening around the large farmhouse table. Finding ourselves feeling comfortable in the company of like-minded people, everybody eventually retired to bed, with full bellies, and very much looking forward to the class in the morning. The group dynamics, so important in a good Yoga class, had already begun to form.

In the soft light of morning, the dreamy sound of distant waves and birdsong replaced the sound of the early morning rush hour traffic that normally greets our day. As we pulled back the curtains to reveal the magnificent sea views, we realised that we weren't dreaming. Even the crowing of the farmyard cockerel was eminently gentler than the flashing L.E.D.s and electronic shouts of the alarm clock back home. Stillness and calmness fill our minds as we took the few steps across the courtyard to the Yoga studio for our first two-hour lesson of the day.

The purpose built 60ft studio had a light, airy feel so beneficial to Yoga practice yet blended with a warm, rustic feel quite unique to the Caradoc experience. The body was warmed and the mind quietened by the crackling wood burner at the back of the room, the faint smell of wood smoke blending wonderfully with the smell of incense, the large round paper lampshades swaying hypnotically from the ceiling in the slight breeze from one

of the open skylights. No wonder everyone had a smile on their faces as they came to their mats.

There was a varying degree of experience within our small group this weekend, and as the class progressed, Anne-Marie managed to lead a practice which was not only suitable for those of less experience but also demanding enough for those with more. Anne-Marie's teaching is precise, patient, understanding, and demanding all at the same time, the perfect match to meet the limitations and requirements of a diverse group of students. She also maintained a sense of fun and a sense of humour within the practice that added to the closeness of the group and prevented any beginners from being discouraged (a potential problem in some of the more serious natured classes we have attended in the past). We ourselves are firm believers in incorporating a bit of fun into our practice, whilst others tend to lean the other way completely. The Yoga sessions at Caradoc maintained a good balance.

Apart from the final three-hour class on the Monday morning, the Yoga sessions were twice daily, morning and late afternoon and both lasted for two hours. The sessions always overran but nobody really noticed, let alone minded. That's the thing about Caradoc: there is no sense of having to be anywhere else but there. Finding time for Yoga within a busy lifestyle can be difficult but here, everything else you feel like doing is fitted around your Yoga practice instead. It really does make a refreshing change. In such a tranquil and calming setting there are none of the distractions of normal everyday life. Suddenly it is easier to centre your mind and somehow your breathing seems deeper and slower.

Beyond the set classes, private tuition is also offered for those who want to improve further during their stay. Weekend and week-long Yoga breaks are currently

For further information, you may contact: Rock Yoga Holidays, Trebetherick House, Trebetherick, Wadebridge, Cornwall. PL27 6SB, Tel: 01208 863399. E-mail: rockhols@aol.com Website: www.rockholidays.co.uk Phil Chapman & Scooby Gill are freelance writers and Yoga enthusiasts who live in the Plymouth area.



offered, and there are also plans in the near future to offer specialist Yoga holidays. Yoga for beginners, Yoga for the back, and workshops specifically for Yoga teachers, are some of the many ideas that are being discussed. As an added option, one can enjoy an alternative therapy such as a healing massage or a reflexology session with local practitioner Janine Clagett. Enquiries from Yoga teachers wishing to use the venue for their own workshops and Yoga holidays are also welcomed.

You can be as social or as reclusive as you like at Caradoc. There was no pressure to be a part of the group, but everyone was very happy to gather after the morning Yoga session to enjoy the wonderful selection of foods, ranging from fresh fruits to a huge farmhouse style English breakfast. Although dinner is self-catering, Caradoc provides breakfast and lunch and are more than happy to cater for any dietary requirements. After breakfast one can choose to relax with a book beside one of the many wood burners, or take off with fellow classmates exploring the coast path, beaches, and local area. An added advantage is that a friend or partner can join you even if they have no interest in participating in the Yoga sessions. There is plenty to do in the area.

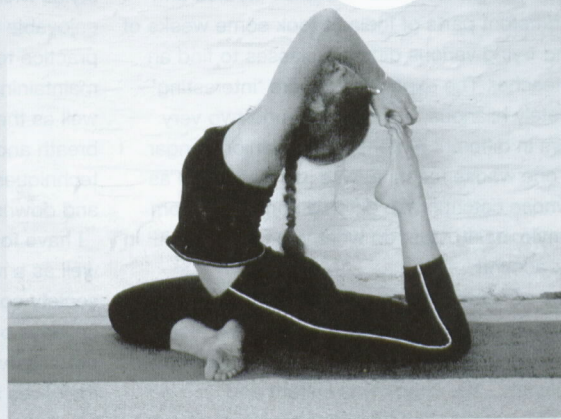
As the evening sun started to set over the sea, welcoming candles were lit in the windows of the Yoga studio. Anne-Marie had already been in the studio for some time doing her own practice and has stoked up the wood burner to get the room nice and warm for us. The evening sessions built on the work we did in the morning class, helped along with encouragement from Anne-Marie, and the flexibility a later practice brings. By the time the class was over, we were so relaxed that we could quite happily have settled down to sleep, but then we would have missed out on the great company and conversation that we had each evening. So after the class and a refreshing shower, everyone gathered in the cosy candlelit kitchen again to cook, share food and chat. The conversation always turned to Yoga.

Not many Yoga classes can offer you the time or the opportunity to sit and talk over your practice with the teacher and your fellow classmates. Anne-Marie was always happy to talk through, advise and listen to each of us as we described difficulties, asked questions and shared moments of achievement within our practice. The benefits of her observations were always felt the next day when she seemed to tailor the next session around them. We also learned a lot from each other from sharing our experiences around the kitchen table.

There is no doubt that Caradoc offers a complete package for those seeking good Yoga teaching in a relaxing, peaceful and beautiful location. Although the Yoga holidays are a reasonably new venture for Rock Holidays, it seems a great amount of thought has been put into their creation. Rosina Shepherd, owner of Rock Holidays, has a passion for Yoga herself and there is no doubt that this passion has gone a long way in helping to find the right combination of space, atmosphere and teaching at Caradoc.

# How I came to Yoga

By Anne-Marie Le Seve



My earliest memory of Yoga is watching my mother practise Sun Salutations in her bedroom. I must have only been about six or seven but remember being captivated by the fluid shapes of the postures and the essence behind them, from a perspective free from intellectual knowledge and formed ideas.

I started attending regular Yoga classes in Bath in my early twenties and the practice struck an immediate resonance within me. I quickly began to feel the benefits, both physically, increasing flexibility and strength, and mentally, developing more of a sense of calm. Being naturally a fairly highly strung person, I found great value in learning to let go of my outer world and tap into the stillness within. For years during my twenties, I went through a lot of uncertainty and confusion about a choice of career. I just couldn't seem to find anything that really felt right. I drifted from one thing to another, experiencing many different and interesting ways of life, always aware of a certain lack of fulfilment within.

“... our reality is dependent on our perception.”

A few years later, I set off on far-flung travels with an open return ticket and an open mind as to when I would return (although I would never have guessed that I'd be away for over 2 years!) I explored Thailand, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Laos, Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. During these travels I experienced so much - adventure, excitement, confusion, danger, wilderness, solitude, company - wonderful moments that I shall keep in my heart forever. In times of continuous transience, my Yoga practice was my rock - the one thing that kept me centred when there was often no certainty where I'd be the next day or week. I think it was during these times that I really began to realise that the real journey is within, and that everything in front of the eyes is affected by what is behind the eyes, that our reality is dependent on our perception. There were times spent in what could be



the most beautiful places on earth in confusion and anxiety; times of great clarity and vitality in uninspiring lands or cities. As Marcel Proust wrote 'The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes', a statement that is very yogic in its philosophy.

As my geographical travels went on, my inner journey began to unfold, and my interest in Yoga deepened and matured. I decided to venture off alone and return to India, the birthplace of Yoga, to pursue my interest and be closer to its source. Over four months I studied and practised in different parts of India. It took some weeks of searching and trying various different classes to find an appropriate teacher. The experiences were 'interesting' - some completely hilarious, but I finally found two very good teachers in different regions, one a senior Iyengar teacher and one whose teaching was just described as Hatha and whose catchphrase differed somewhat from the Iyengar style, being 'Just do what you can make it!' in strong Indian accent!

It was a time of immense personal growth and empowerment. Arriving in Delhi for the first time, alone and totally culture-shocked, it felt as though I had arrived on another planet ... the chaos was instant and everywhere. My morning Yoga practice enabled me to step outside and feel calm and centred. Over the weeks I became more familiar and appreciative of many aspects of Indian life, taking local transport, staying with locals, even learning basic Hindi which made it far easier to get off the beaten track. One of the main things that struck me about India was the co-existence of such extremes: the beautiful and the abhorrent, life and death, joy and pain, the holy and the defiled, all there together in a powerful and often harsh blend of sharp reality.

It was during these journeys of discovery in India that for the first time in my life I really knew what it was that I wanted to do - underneath the whispers of self-doubt I knew in my heart that I wanted to teach Yoga. Returning to England with a sense of purpose and a newly gained inner confidence, I researched the many teacher-training courses on offer. With so many different styles to choose from the decision wasn't an easy one - I have practised Iyengar Yoga and some Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga and enjoy aspects of both. Feeling reluctant to limit myself to one particular style, and wanting to maintain flexibility, I decided to train with the Devon School of Yoga. I wanted to study Yoga with authenticity and discipline, on physical, mental, energetic and spiritual levels in a way that integrated the beneficial aspects of different styles.

My time during teacher-training took me on another just as far-flung journey, although not so geographical this time! I believe now that as you start to practice Yoga intensely, and really bring it into your life at a deep level, it can advance your spiritual evolution and precipitate the learning process by bringing to your awareness the issues you need to address or deal with in some way. Though the process can be painful the result is purifying - like Alchemy - bringing to the surface any blockages or impurities in order for them to be released. My teacher training was wonderful, but also a tumultuous time that eventually made me stronger, with new depths of self-awareness and empathy.

I have now put some roots down in the far reaches of western Cornwall and am fulfilling my dream of teaching

Yoga fulltime. It brings me great pleasure to be self-employed, doing what I love and also sharing what I have learned with others, introducing more people to the profound benefits of Yoga. I currently teach six regular weekly classes, two classes in local schools for children and teenagers, and private one-to-one sessions. I also teach for The Devon School of Yoga occasionally and also on Yoga holidays in north Cornwall. My method of teaching is holistic in that it strongly integrates body, mind and spirit and brings together aspects of different styles whilst maintaining authenticity. I find it effective and enjoyable to work with dynamic and flowing asana practice together with slower, deeper practice, maintaining the focus on mental and energetic levels as well as the physical. I also maintain a strong focus on the breath and share the pranayama and meditation techniques that I believe are so valuable through life's ups and downs.

I have found the need for stress relief and relaxation, as well as a re-connection to the body, so necessary as our society continues to speed up and get busier. On Yoga holidays or weekends it is wonderful to see people progress when they are away from the usual pressures of their lives and can practise Yoga twice a day without having to go back into the stress of the working environment. In the future I dream of having my own Yoga studio where I can run classes, workshops and holidays and provide a beautiful peaceful space from which to share the wonderful benefits of Yoga.



Anne-Mare Le Seve teaches classes in Penzance, Sennen and St Just (West Cornwall). For further information on classes, one to one Yoga and holidays, Tel: 01736 786 424.