

NORTHERN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

NUPG NEWSLETTER Issue #20, Sep2006-Oct2006

NUPG Web Site: www.nupg.org.uk

Silvery Reflected images was the subject of October 2006 Image competition. Paul Webster's shot of shoaling Skye mackerel won the day!



This Issue:

- Meeting Information
 - Meeting Dates
 - Meeting Reviews
- Reports & Handouts
 - NUPG Away-Day
- Web Links

Date for your Diary:

NEXT MEETING: Monday November 06th 2006, Bull's Head, Hale Barns, at 1930.

Editor: Tony Gilbert, e-mail: Info@Nupg.Org.uk, for the Editor ☺

MEETING DATES & EVENTS for your diary

Pass on the dates to your friends & colleagues who may fancy joining the club.

The Northern Underwater Photography Group

Contact information, meetings & events.

The NUPG meets regularly throughout the year to increase experience and knowledge of underwater photography. It's fun, informal, informative and fishy!

Date	Meeting place	Time
Monday Nov 06 th 2006	See Website for Venue	19.30pm - 22.00pm
Monday Dec 04 th 2006	See Website for Venue	19.30pm - 22.00pm

To contact or find out about NUPG, meetings and for further information,
See the NUPG Website www.nupg.org.uk

Note: Meetings usually start 1930 and finish at 2200 at the latest.

MEETING REVIEWS

September 2006

The first meeting of the new NUPG Season, our 7th NUPG Year, and a surprise change of premises to across the road from Corbans to the Bull's Head in Hale Barns. This was brought about by changes with the previous venue, however the new venue for tonight proved very popular, if somewhat cosy this time around! See the web site www.nupg.org.uk for further details on the venue.

Hopefully we shall continue to grace the Bull's Head with our presence, as the food was reported to be just as good if not better. For tonight's meeting, we had a change of room, a temporary room rather than originally booked and it was a little small to fit the 25 attendees in. The saving grace on this warm evening was that we had a nice patio area overlooking the bowling green, lovely.

The trend of this meeting was quite "alfresco", perhaps with the absence of Lucy, as one was to overhear {☺}. Colin was running the meeting and the image competition of scenic weeds proved very popular, with about 16 entries. Paul Maddock performed a Fave 5+1, whilst the remainder of the meeting was taken up with two talks, a technical talk by Paul on altering images post shot, and Derek Haslam on "avin some" photos in a crisp Capernwray. Jason, who was originally billed regrettably couldn't make it owing to other commitments.

Before the image competition, a round-robin from Colin on the various aspects of NUPG, on any news from the camera world, newsletter and web site, and ...

BLUE PLANET AQUARIUM VISIT

During NUPG's meetings semester, during a mid-August weekend we had a stand at the Blue Planet Aquarium at Ellesmere Port, manned by Paul, Neil & Pauline Blackie and Lucy, amongst others. We had great reports of how well this went.

LEWIS LIVEABOARD TRIP

At the end of July and first week in Aug, Paul had organised a week's diving trip to Lewis, which proved as popular as last years trip, and this year again was made up of NUPG and BSoUP members. We saw minke whales & basking sharks, and the trip went out along the far western Atlantic coastline to remote sites. The marine life was quite prolific, with Norwegian prawns, oodles of gobies, hermit crabs, cushion stars, compass jellyfish and anglerfish, many photographic targets and opportunities.

Image Competition: Scenic Weeds

An interesting wet floral collection, no “gill-e-weed” here, only swathes of swirling weeds on rocks, or perhaps a smattering of weed, grasses or sea lettuce dangling precariously on a rock. The images numbered around 16, all but two were digital, and encompassed both sea and fresh water.

After the judging had weeded the floppy from the strong, the drab from the colourful, we had winning weeds, no dandelions here, you are not the weediest link!

A strange quirk of this meeting was the actual judging for winners and runners up, with a show of hands rather than a voting slip. This made for some interesting comments!

1st Mark Thomas

Well done to Mark!

2nd Mark Thomas

He certainly knows his greens, with another enthralling weed covered shot from Connemara.

1st Mark Thomas, Connemara, Ireland



Taken in a few metres of water a Monet of colourful swirling stuff, with small weeds, sea oak and such like in a nice pleasant setting.

Nikon D200 using 16mm fish-eye and ambient light.

The image was taken where the land is a rich green and its emblem also, Connemara, Ireland.

Favourite 5: Paul Maddock

The raving pop-tastic fave 5 was duly resurrected from last year and “Pauly-M” mc’d his pot-pourri of delightful imagery, a real dolly-mixture of old and new film and digital output, crossing the whole of his underwater photography career, with wet cameras, SLR film and digital.

Coco the Clownfish

Taken with a Nikonos V, the staple diet of erstwhile photographers in bygone flared trouser days. This was a first time for Paul, and he still likes the shot today.

Flat Boy

A dab, floundering around Naa’ma Bay on Sinai Divers House Reef; taken with his trusty Nikon F50 film camera, using either a 60mm or 105mm macro lens.

Jelly-Belly

This compass jellyfish was tricked into posing around the Isle of Man.

Horses for courses

Sea horses are a great favourite and sometimes difficult to find, and properly photograph. Their miniscule and thin bodies present an almost two-dimensional object, which needs to be correctly lit, and the creature remains relatively undisturbed and not blind!

The tale went, that at 4 o’clock in the afternoon is when they come out to play, romping & cantering around the seaweeds at 0.000001 mph. This must be Egyptian time, cos this one was photographed at Naa’ma Bay, Sharm El Sheikh, using Nikon F50 and the 105mm lens to get in real close.

Sealed with a photo

Back to the UK, this time “when the boort goes oort, y-i-man”. The sharp rocks of the Farnes and one of the largest seal colonies in Europe gave Paul many seal candidates from which to choose from. The Nikon F50 came into play once more and shot the inquisitive and young playful seal.

Wellie that Jelly

A familiar and recent sight of a compass jellyfish in the ascendant, almost touching the under-surface of the water column. Paul has been practising with his latest camera system, Nikon D70S, and this was taken at the recent NUPG Summer Splash-In competition.

He went to explain how the shot was achieved in camera, by setting the aperture to F10 and shooting 1/400th second speed, resulting in the subject and reflection of same being lit by the flash, and the background darkened to almost black.

Several attendees promptly volunteered for future Fave 5’s, Bill Bradley for October and Neil Blackie for November. The gauntlet of challenge has been thrown down!

Derek Haslam, “A Winter’s Tale”

Well, if you thought Capernwray was a little jaded & boring place in a backwater near the Cumbrian Lakes, think again! Derek’s plethora of images on the north’s famous inland dive centre and quarry certainly painted a different picture, a bright shining blue sapphire. It even made you almost one to go now.

Derek presented a series of well cultivated images of just what can be taken in Capernwray, mainly during the winter months, when the air is cold, the water very clean and particle free resulting in superb visibility, and the sun creating some stunning low angles.

We experienced some of this on the NUPG winter splash-in competitions, and given a good sunlit day, it can produce some excellent and stunning images, with mirror calm water – if you’re prepared to go the extra mile and dive during these months.

Presented were mainly wide-angle shots including:

- Shot of The Trapeze as a dark image, with sunburst behind.
- Fish-eye in 2m of water, near rescue slip of the underside of trees lining the water’s edge.
- Nice image of the Podsnap minesweeper bow and diver with lantern.
- Close-up wide-angle shot looking skywards of the Lynx helicopter on its cage.
- Herbie goes bananas with Derek’s atmospheric beetle pic.

If you want to go down to the woods today, forget, go to Capernwray instead and grab some stunning images this winter, better still, get yourselves on the NUPG Winter splash-in, which is usually run around the last vestiges of winter and the young sprouts of spring.

Paul Kay – Underwater Digital Imagery Techniques

Paul described some techniques he applies to his digital images, in the post processing. This could be called manipulation, or altering of the images, but there is very good reason for it.

Digital capture is linear, so Paul explained, showing a usual blennie scene loaded with backscatter, his next image optimised it, which was the power of the computer!

An interesting shot of Dublin Bay prawns, with these creatures showing their orange bodies. A normal shot, but perhaps a touch of colour enhancement to enrich and bring their truly colours out, which the image underwater couldn't provide. The next frame showed them in bright glowing orange, the contrast boosted in the raw stage.

Lobster at Wylfra headland contained masses of biological material in the water, one click, hey presto and it was gone, not the lobbie, but the backscatter and strange material. Perhaps a mass clear up from the power station, no, 6 hours of taking the dots out! Was it really worth it, was asked of Paul, the answer was yes. This is ideal for marine identification purposes, and closer look showed just why. The lobster besides having been in a fight, was regenerating its arms, and these were quite strange, so this has now been recorded.

Another useful technique was pitch exposure to the high side if the image, i.e. biased towards the highlight.

Paul proceeded to show a series of images of rarer species, which he'd found:

1. Pipefish, Cardigan Bay. Not your usually pipefish, but taking a closer look revealed it be a broad mouthed species, not previously seen.
2. Snake Pipefish, Ardmir/Cul a Bhogha, Ullapool
3. Transparent goby, Cardigan Bay. This was the 2nd only recorded in the whole of the UK.
4. Green background with Bayonnese wrasse, a rare visitor to the west coast of Ireland, during summer, when breeding.
5. Egg case of a thornback ray, which is stuck down with mucus., something not previously known.
6. Skate cases, photographed on Lewis on the recent trip there, Bo 'na Uinnegg
7. Menai Straits on a rich green background, with a spawning common starfish.
8. Still in Menai, scorpion spider crabs and coryphella (or facelina) nudibranch.

October 2006

Tonight's meeting started at 1930 with 4 people, then suddenly within about 5 minutes there were 25 people, and the room packed out! Luckily for us, we had the large boardroom, with its well-used and very long table, reducing the space somewhat.

Sadly, Lucy & Paul nor Jason couldn't make it however, Steve Smithson, the first NUPG chairman did!

DIVE SHOW, NEC BIRMINGHAM

The Dive Show Oct 15/16th went well, and the BsoUP stand, along with its NUPG sub-stand was very busy. Several members of NUPG were able to help out, along with Paul & Lucy Kay, Maureen and Richard Frost.

Image Competition: Silvery Reflections underwater

Well this certainly put us all to the test! There were many entrants, a total of 20 images (4 slide and 16 digitised).

The range subject matter to capture this silvery reflection was quite interesting. The obvious one would be fish, and there were plenty of them in all different shapes and sizes, including barracuda, silversides, colourful reef fish, even glassfish and sweepers. Most were shot in exotic locations however there were a number shot in UK waters.

With a packed room, the competition was intense and Gail counted them all in, and the winner and 3 joint seconds were very close indeed. Here are the results.

1st Paul Webster

From the west coast of Scotland, Isle of Skye, a fantastic shoal of mackerel, shot very close up and in clear water, enabled Paul to capture their silvery reflection as they went past. Taken with a 17-35mm lens, twin strobes. See from cover this edition.

2nd Bill Bradley

These silvery fish were congregating in a bunch around the base of a coral outcrop in Sipadan.

2nd Clive Field

A well composed image on a black background of two bannerfish, taken in Egypt, when on Tiger Lily. Their silvery bodies reflecting the strobe light, were taken with a Nikon D70s.

2nd Bill Bradley

A few air-intakes as Bill explained how he had slightly manipulated this image of Barracuda, but its original essence of silvery reflection had been retained.

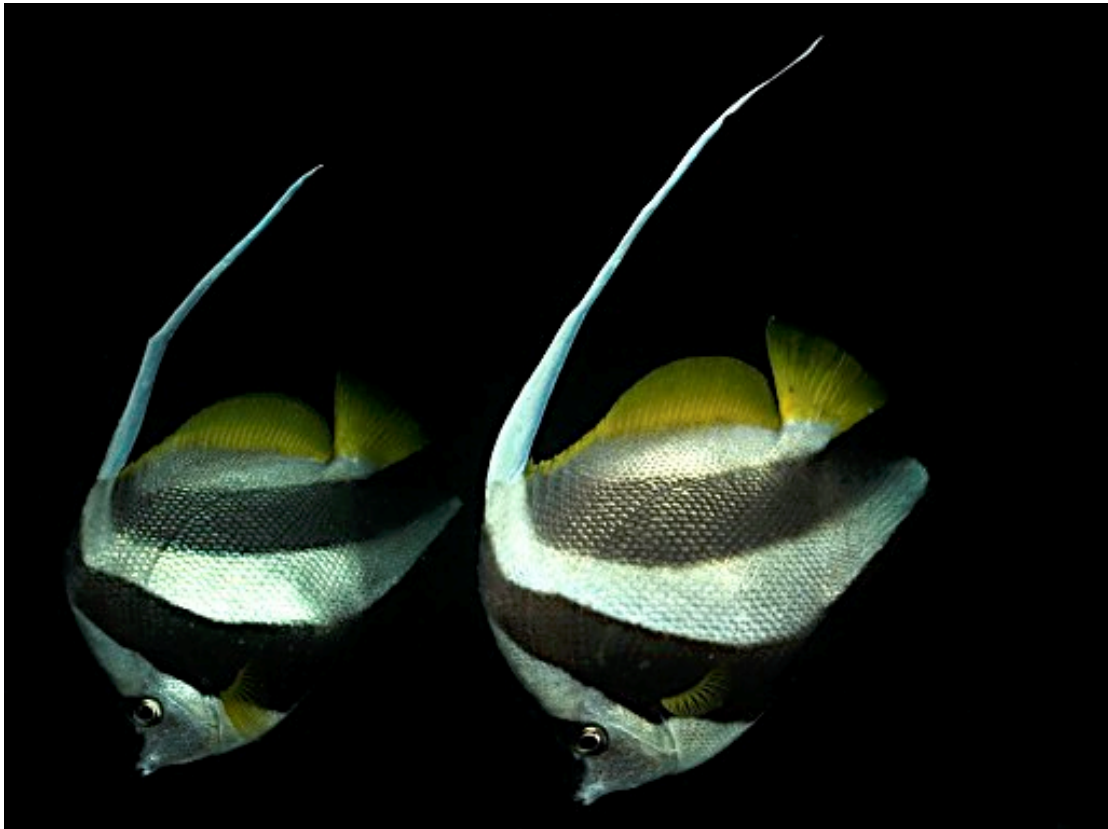
2nd Bill Bradley, Sipadan. All for One, one for All!



2nd Bill Bradley, Barracuda Boys!



2nd Clive Field, Dancin, cheek-to-cheek



Favourite 5: Bill Bradley

Bill's work encompasses much of the photographic work I would like to do, with plenty of colour and form. Also, his favourite 5 included divers, some in the background and some in the fore/middle ground, yet not overshadowing the subject. I think its sometime quite difficult photography unless you have a willing buddy who anticipates your intentions.

Techno!, Techno!, Techno!

Bill's interpretation of technical divers on a line, with two divers in colourful suits, interestingly enough one wet suite the other dry, both hanging there on a stop, with a hang tank for company.

Curly Top

Red is a favourite colour of photographers, as are feather stars. As John Liddiard said, it is sometime difficult to get much of the image in focus, when the depth of field is small, and I reckon all of us agree on that. With the rich red colour of the curled feather star, Bill had managed to capture a superbly composed image, focussing on these spidery tentacles in a way that didn't detract from the image.

Clowning around in the Pink

I always find it difficult to obtain a shot of clown anemone fish that I can say is really good as these fish are always out to defend their acidic friend. Colours can sometimes make or break a picture, and Bill was careful to ensure that the rich salmon pink of these anemone fish didn't overshadow the shot.

Snorkelling into the blue

This shot was an image competition winner some time ago, and would do very nicely on a magazine cover. The rich and varied broccoli coral in foreground was perfect framed, as was the far ground of Snell's window and the passing snorkellers without whom, would have lessened the impact of this image.

All Time Favourite

Imagine a baby green sea turtle just sitting there in front of you, and your buddy almost cuddling up to this wonderful animal. Enter stage right, the digital camera, add a sprinkling of colour, some good lighting, and hey presto, a superb image!

Bill saved the best to last, and well worth viewing, well done Bill and thanks!

Special Guest Speaker: John Liddiard, on Diving, the universe and everything.

John had driven up from the Dive Show, to give us all a talk tonight on his experiences in the diving industry, how he started, what he had done, and some of future, yet to be published works. This was a fascinating insight into what lengths you had to go.

Camera Systems

John's career started a long time and he took up photography using the wet camera systems available at the time. He graduated through these on to the Motormarine IIEEx (much in the same as I did, Ed.) and then got himself a Nikon F801s Film SLR. After some time with this, he went on recently to buy a digital SLR camera and housing.

Diver, and Wreck Tours

John was approached by Diver magazine to do a couple of wreck pieces, and he started with the most simple of wrecks, the ones he knew most about, like the James Eagan Layne. An illustrative artist Max Ellis put the final touches to the diagrams.

Mapping wrecks is quite a hard job, needing a large slate, several pencils. Some of the key features to getting the wreck right are taking key photographs of things such as bollards, specific pieces of machinery, selective pieces of superstructure. His small compact digital camera is mainly used for this purpose.

Once the slates and key images are there, with depths, it's a case of putting a rudimentary drawing together, after which the artist fills in the gaps, colours the wreck in etc., adds the odd diver.

There is a need to take good photographs in order to illustrate the wreck, and that's where the SLR comes in. Now with digital, it's easy to review the images underwater, whereas with film it wasn't, so the compact digital at the time was used for also providing backup shots.

Good photographs don't come off the shelf, although as John admits, it's far easier to get images with the digital cameras. The secret then is make sure that images taken for publication are those which are well lit, and say something about the wreck. Items that can be identified by the readership, such as winch gear, masts, hatch covers, are so forth. It is not possible to photograph a wreck as a whole in UK waters, so key areas are photographed.

With the illustration of the James Eagan Layne, a diver near the wreck was shown, and unless you know the wreck intimately, there is every possibility that you wouldn't recognise it. So, for the JEL, a tractor spokes were shot, as were the collection of cooking cauldrons. An image of the engine crank was taken, and a good shot of the boiler looking down it; this is a Babcock rectangular boiler.

Lastly, the wreck history is added in care of Kendall McDonald, to complete the whole tour.

Other Works

John is not just about wrecks though, proceeding illustrate a range of images grouped into destinations, about 6-10 per destination. The destinations included Bali, North Carolina. Also, many shots were shown of critters from around the world.

A finally, John has a large selection of older pieces of photographic for sale, so anyone who is up for buying some of it, see his web site, www.liddiard.demon.co.uk.

REPORTS and HANDOUTS

NUPG AWAY-DAY SHORT-WEEKEND

Gail & Colin Samuel had organised an away-day weekend for NUPG members to get together informally, chat about photography, a few dives and generally chill out.

The weekend (first in Sept) started on Friday night with a night dive near Menai Bridge, at the Telephone Cable site, finding some good visibility and a plethora of marine creatures to photograph. Derek Haslam and Mark Thomas were also there, and it was Mark's first ever UK night dive – wow, where have you been Mark!

Colin had organised accommodation nearby at an RN training facility, Indefatigable, within the family rooms at a very reasonable price for the two nights. These were well equipped, as was the adjacent kitchen. Jason Gregory and his family, and friends Paul Buckley and family were also staying.

Indefatigable, which also has access to the Menai Straits directly from the facility, has a well-equipped conference room, in addition to the self-catering accommodation.

Saturday started with a dive at Caemes Bay on North Anglesey, where many marine creatures had their homes amongst the sand, shingle and mud. The vis. wasn't so good, but it was good for photographing macro bug life! A further late afternoon dive was made at Porth Eilian, where Tony Gilbert spotted a juvenile pipefish. The water was very clear here for the first 10m out then dropped to about 3-4m vis. Many marine creatures were around, such as candy striped flatworms and cnidarians.

It was decided to defer the evening's night dive, instead we sat down to an alfresco Chinese take-away along with Lucy and Paul, with much chattering and merriment! Jason presented an enthralling image show on Scotland's Strome coastlines. He and his wife Becky and their children toured the area during late summer. Some really interesting facts about the area and the marine life around it, finding plenty to photograph. Paul Kay also showed us some interesting marine id images.

Sunday morning broke to mixed sunshine and cloud, looking particularly angry over Snowdonia, thank goodness it wasn't coming our way... oh, it was!

8am saw 4 of us down under Menai Suspension Bridge slowly kitting up, which was just as well really, cos 10 minutes later another 5 vehicles full of divers came along! The water was mirror glass with a blue green tinge, Jason was so eager to get in he moseyed around in the shallows waiting patiently for the tide to slacken at 9am.

The other dive group were really nice and they know members in NUPG! The dive was superb, with a clear 6-8m visibility and a mass of marine life just waiting to be photographed. This included scorpion spider crabs, yellow amongst the same coloured sponges on the cliffs of the island Ynys-y-Moch. Many varieties of crabs inhabit, mainly velvet and edible, but also several types of shore crabs. Dahlia anemones are everywhere in dense clusters, grabbing anything that moves through the tidal race when us divers are not there. Mussel beds harbour more crabs, and the cliffs are also home to butterfish, and nudibranchs in wintertime. The hinterland between the island and the cable is not without interest, with huge numbers of goby and dragonets.

It was without doubt a very successful and enjoyable weekend, thanks go to Gail & Colin for the organisation, and for all who attended. Let's hope it can be done again, and certainly the RN facility is worthy of note and potential use for future event(s).

LINKS

If you have any photo-type web links you wish to share, let us know... (Also see previous issue(s) for many others).