

# NORTHERN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

**NUPG NEWSLETTER Issue #22, Jan-Mar 2007**

NUPG Web Site: [www.nupg.org.uk](http://www.nupg.org.uk)

## GROUND ZERO:

Jim Garland's atmospheric shot of a downed warplane in Chuuk Lagoon.



## This Issue:

- Meeting Information
  - Meeting Dates
  - Meeting Reviews

**NEXT MEETING:  
ANNUAL  
GENERAL  
MEETING**

**NUPG Committee  
need you!!**

Please think about whether you fancy enrolling into the committee, there are several positions becoming available.

Without the committee, NUPG as a group probably would cease to function.

Support your club and join the committee!!!

**SUMMER SPLASH IN:  
Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup>  
See following page &  
website.**

Date for your Diary:

**NEXT MEETING: AGM Monday May 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, Bull's Head, Hale Barns, at 1930.**

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## 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 May 14 <sup>th</sup> 2007	Bulls Head, Hales Barns.	19.30pm - 22.00pm	Annual General
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2007	Trearddur Bay, Anglesey	08.00am	Summer Splash-In

To contact or find out about NUPG, meetings and for further information,  
See the NUPG Website [www.nupg.org.uk](http://www.nupg.org.uk)

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

# NUPG SUMMER SPLASH-IN 2007

The next NUPG Summer Splash-In is to be held on Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup>, all welcome. The Splash-In results and judging are to be made at the Trearddur Bay Hotel, Trearddur Bay, Anglesey.

Come in and join us, last year we had stunning visibility! Even if you can't make the actual splash-in, SUPPORT YOUR CLUB and come along anyway for the evening. Make a day and night of it, and like many of us, stay over in one of the local (and nearby) B&B's. Some even camp, and several made a weekend of it with the glorious weather - why stick at home when you could be diving in good conditions!

In addition to the splash-in, a Print Competition is being run. This consists of Temperate & tropical Macro and Wide-Angle subjects, printed on to A4. Usually there is a small charge for entering each print, and even if you can't make it, why not submit your images beforehand. Further competition details available on the NUPG website.



Happy Dayz!! You too could be taking home one of these trophies. Here are the lucky winners from last year's competition. All you need to do is "enter and just add water!" Of course, next year there may not be a committee (or club) to organize one ☹

## MEETING REVIEWS

### January 2007

Tonight's meeting was organised by Colin Samuel, and Steve Smithson as guest speaker, who was the former chairman, and founder member of NUPG, discussing the intricacies of getting the best out of digital compact cameras.

Also, Tony Gilbert was talking on the dive destination of the Northern Egyptian Red Sea, and the image competition was "whole diver in shot".

The meeting was quite packed this evening, with the hope of a few new faces, especially from the compact digital ranks, and the whole meeting was well timed till 10pm.

### Image Competition: Whole diver in shot

"Whole diver in shot" or a variation on this theme, with a round of usual suspect divers posing for the camera. Many interesting shots came out - 10 digital/scanned images and 4 slide images, some of which bore no relation to the subject matter whatsoever, but funny to say the least! The valid shots comprised of silhouetted divers, divers in the middle or foregrounds, or divers looking at coral heads.

1<sup>st</sup> Jim Garland, Croatia Caves

Jim's well-composed shot was of a diver in silhouette against a sunburst, on a dive in Croatia. Jim and Helen are obviously a good photographer & diver/model team, who work well together. Taken on a Canon EOS1D.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Thomas, Capernwray Quarry

Never a meeting goes by I don't think, with either a shot from Derek or Mark – the "Capernwray Clickers", and this was no exception. They enjoy the quarry so much that they've now started taking photographs of each other! Mark's shot of Derek in the shallows (no doubt on a clear wintry day) secured second place. Taken with his trusty Nikon F90 and a 16mm fish-eye lens.

3<sup>rd</sup> Jim Garland, Croatia Caves

Another fine shot from Jim, from the same dive as the first placing, and indeed also the winning shot submitted in last months Best of 2006 wide-angle.

Situated at the Blue Hole in Croatia, a diver jumping gradually descending into it.



**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Jim Garland**

**Croatian cave fantasy! Down, down... deeper on down. Well done to Jim, and Helen!**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Thomas**

**Mark & Derek, The “Caped” Crusaders making a getaway after their “holed-up” in Capes – the dynamic duo strike again!!**



## **Guest Speaker: Steve Smithson, Digital Compact Cameras**

The talk provided ALL of us with a fascinating insight into using compact digital cameras, because many of the members have never used one underwater, graduating from a wet camera system to a housed SLR.

The subject matter was obviously aimed mainly at those using compact digital cameras, of which a few were present tonight.

There has been a stigma attached to compact digital users, and Steve's talk showed exactly why that is. It was a very useful talk indeed, and invoked much discussion during the break time. I think many non-compact digital users present, including myself, gained an appreciation of the usefulness of these camera systems, and their place in the scheme of underwater photography.

### Users

There is a clear distinction between Compact Digital Camera users, probably more so than users with SLR systems. These tend to fall into two categories:

- a) Users who snap away without much thought to lighting, composition and techniques.
- b) Users who take their photography more seriously and start to learn the techniques, lighting composition.

Users in group "a", were not being discussed tonight, and generally will probably not progress further than snaps and blue water images.

Users in group "b", generally graduate to more complex systems, however some never do owing to budget limitations, and Steve wanted to demonstrate the limitations of Compact Digital systems.

### Steve's Compact Digital Camera System

The system he used, and currently uses is an Olympus C5050, which by today's cameras is quite old, although his camera is but 3 years old. It has a 33mm lens, 5.5megapixels, inbuilt flash. He also has add-ons, which augment the system, to provide him a wide range of image capture. The camera can adjust for white-balance, has various shutter speeds and ISO settings.

## Set ups

There are 4 set ups he showed. As Steve has a very great knowledge of cameras underwater, then he was able to understand and manipulate the camera to the way he wanted to use it.

### 1. Basic out-of-the-box setup

This is buying the compact digital and placing in to the relevant housing. He set ISO 100 film speed, and used aperture priority.

By trial and error, it was obvious that the in built flash is ideal for close up photography, with no or very little backscatter, as could be seen from some really great shots taken in St. Abbs of Bolocera anemone & lobsters.

Conclusion: This configuration was ideal for the smaller items, but not macro, and the subjects were well lit. Composition is paramount to produce a good photograph.

A common failing (mainly of users in group “a”, above), was to raw back from the subject to take scenic shots of passing animals. This would result in great disappointment and many blue shots, or partially lit images with the added “bonus” of backscatter!

(Of course, many then resort to post-camera technology to make a manipulated final image, resulting in garish colours, and out of context subjects).

### 2. External Flash Gun

By adding on an external flashgun, this changed things providing a much greater range of subjects, as the flash gun’s reach is much greater, around 2-3m depending on water quality.

For his trials, he used a Sea & Sea YS90DX, which has about 8 power output settings and can be set to “slave mode”. This latter setting is required, as the external flash is not connected (synchronised) directly with the internally housed camera. A sensor and cord is placed over the internal flash, which detonates the external flash at the correct time.

The flashgun requires careful placement and subject selection, to reduce backscatter and allows the user to photograph larger subjects, within 1-2.5m or so, like parts of gorgonian fans with feather stars, divers, larger fish, where a part subject is selected as the image. The shot can also be taken so ambient background light can be added in to the composition.

Conclusion: This configuration, provided it is used properly can produce some great results, even with the existing 33m lens, especially closer up shots of part subjects, and will provide adequate lighting. Conclusion: Delivers the capability to produce images which can and could rival older film camera systems, and almost rival the SLR systems of today, providing the techniques are followed.

### 3. Basic System plus Wide-Angle Lens

When large subjects are needed, a wide-angle lens can provide the answer, so the user can get in close, retain an adequate depth of field. This camera system allows an external screw on wide-angle lens, and he showed a series of images of the Giannis "D", taken during the Jan 2006 New Horizons Red Sea liveaboard trip.

This configuration is ideal for ambient light photography, and by careful use of previously gained techniques can deliver images very similar to SLR systems!

A first shot showed a playful dolphin, taken at 1/250<sup>th</sup> second in shallow ambient light, but this was mainly demonstrated by showing the "classic" stern shot of the Giannis "D", and a side on view lit by rays of sunlight through upper hull works.

Conclusion: Especially useful for wide-angle ambient light photography techniques.

### 4. External Flash-Gun and Wide-Angle Lens

The final clip of images showed that with these two add-ons that providing correct photographic techniques were followed, the user can produce images which rival or are much better than the old Nikonos V or Motormarine II camera systems, the mainstay of wet camera systems during the latter part of the last century.

There was a really great shot of the large well-lit wreck in the background, and at the foreground had a group of feeding lionfish above the engine room, of which the nearest to the camera were lit by the internal flash.

Conclusion: Delivers the capability to produce images which can and could rival older film camera systems, and almost rival the SLR systems of today, providing the techniques are followed.

### User of Filters

Some of the audience use filters, metering on a slate for white balance, before taking shots. Steve used externally attached filters in the green waters of Plymouth and made them blue. (Incidentally, the water in Plymouth can be blue; I've slide images to prove it so). The use of filters is not convincing and can produce a false image.

### Final Conclusion

The overall impression of the use of Compact Digital Cameras, is that providing they are used in the right way, and the limitations of the system configuration are known, then pleasing and very good shots can be produced, to suit most divers needs, like for web use, photographic printing, magazines.

The key point which came out of this, and it seemed the consensus of opinion of those present, is that the "basic techniques" used for good photography are still necessary for Compact Digital Cameras, in order to produce good quality shots. Without the basics, it doesn't matter what camera system you use... "No Basic Techniques" = "Crap Produced in the Camera".

### Limitations

During the Q&A session afterwards, there were some mention of limitations to this type of system, and as long as the user recognises these then the photography becomes easier. One example here, was the delay time between images, especially if the user is trying to shoot a series of images of a moving subject. This can be a pain.

### Editors Note:

Personally, I've found that the adage "slowly slowly catche monkey" often works, for those higher more inquisitive creatures, and also frequent diving of the same site, where known subjects are. I usually do both, and many times, just swim away from the subject and return a little later on when it has settled down again. Also fish behaviour tends to be regular, so a fish will almost certainly repeat the same thing if its performing territorial duties, so waiting or ignoring the fish gains its confidence, in its space.

**For a more practical look at Steve's work, see "Tips & Techniques" on the NUPG Website, which accompanied this talk.**

## Speaker: Tony Gilbert, Red Sea Liveaboard 2006

Tony's second attempt at making this talk, and thankfully it was completed, and the images shown had been changed/extended out, so really a different talk altogether!

The subject was last years (2006) January Red Sea Liveaboard with New Horizons, on boat Emperor Majesty. He'd borrowed Steve (Smithson's) 16mm fish-eye lens, and had put it to good use, although more work was needed in perfecting it – so much so, he's now bought one for himself!

The talk was broken down into four areas:

- a) Wreck photography
- b) Reef Photography
- c) Night Diving
- d) Marine Creatures

### Wreck Photography

As the liveaboard itinerary focussed on the “classic northern wrecks n reefs” cruise, this meant there were many wrecks in which to photograph, and here is a list of some of them:

- Gianni “D”
- Dunraven
- Kingston
- Tile Wreck
- Lentil Wreck

The Carnatic wreck was also dived, but sadly with the lens cap on! The final set of images was on the Thistlegorm wreck, using a fish-eye lens and ambient light photography.

On these wrecks, it provided many photo opps, with rounded hulls, upper deckworks, fish, divers, shapes, and so forth. Wreck and ambient light photography are techniques hard to master. Also, many shots of balanced light, as many of these wrecks contain soft coral colonies.

### Reef Photography

Mainly wide-angle scenic shots of reefs, coral heads and so forth, usually balanced lighting.

### Night Diving

As 5 night dives were made, it meant many macro subjects were photographed, and he was lucky on the trip as there were many ace spotters of marine creatures!

The first clip of images, were from around 4 of the night dive sites, including turban shells, toxic urchins (white beaded urchins), interesting and rare lilac coloured frilled urchins (name escapes me at the moment), various puffer fish, gobies, and sunset corals.

The second clip was more distinct, on the Gubal Barge, which some of the audience recognised the first shot of “George” the enormous resident moray eel. A whole plethora of images flowed from this, boxer shrimps, dorid nudibranchs, scorpionfish.

### Marine Creatures

During the daytime many marine creatures are out and about, and this was a collection of those. One such site provided the bulk of these shots, a day boat site called Fanadir North. Here, some unusual and plentiful subjects were found, including yellow mouthed morays, pink morays, scorpionfish and the rarer devil scorpionfish. Also, Umm Qamar's coral towers were visited, where a cave entrance at 27m contains some beautiful yellow and red gorgonian corals.

## **March 2007**

Tonight's meeting, (like Mar'06) had a small turnout, but quite cozy nevertheless.

Winter Splash-In judging took place, and the evening's image competition was "Man's Rubbish and Marine Wildlife". Jim Garland presented his Favourite Five.

The NUPG Summer Splash-In date & venue has been announced, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July. In addition, a Tropical & Temperate Print Competition is also run.

### **Image Competition: "Marine Wildlife and Man`s Rubbish"**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Paul Kay – Made the Sting with a "Goby in a Bottle"
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Jim Garland – Vase Sponge and Diver
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Jim Garland again – Downed aircraft (Chuuk/Truk Lagoon), see front cover.

### **Favourite 5**

Tonight, Jim Garland showed his favourite 5 that included a few more images from a recent visit to Truk (or Chuuk) Lagoon.

### **Winter Splash-In Judging Results**

5 entrants took part this year (6 divers) and tonight 15 images were submitted for judging. A good range of images were produced, considering the conditions, well done to all those who participated. The trout came out on top once more, and all placings were using digital camera systems. With the overcast day, it seems Snell's window was used to good effect!

- 1<sup>st</sup> Mark Thomas  
Large silver trout looking into the lens.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Some bloke called Dirk  
Golden coloured scrappy trout in Snell's window.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Ken Byrne  
Diver and Cessna.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Clive Field  
Underside of a trout with Snell's window in background.

For the images of the Winter Splash-In Competition see the NUPG Website. They'll also be in the next edition of the Newsletter, the last for the NUPG year.

**1<sup>st</sup> Paul Kay**

**Nice shot of a colourful goby, or is it a clingfish? Anyway, there was booze in the bottle at some stage, and I think the goby had it – just take a look at those bulging eyes!**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Jim Garland**

**Jim was on a lucky-Truky roll, with another shot from this lagoon. This time of organic marine life amongst the mass of metal down there.**

**Nice one Jim!**

## **REPORTS and HANDOUTS**

See forthcoming newsletter for trip report on Winter Splash In.

## **LINKS**

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