

# NORTHERN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

## NUPG NEWSLETTER Issue #14, Mar 2005 - May 2005

NUPG Web Site: [www.nupg.org.uk](http://www.nupg.org.uk) (see new improved website).

Derek Haslam, Winning Shot of the Winter 2005 Splash-In  
Minesweeper Podsnap in Capernwray, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2005.



### This Issue:

- Meeting Information
  - Meeting Dates
  - Forthcoming Meetings
  - Meeting Reviews (including AGM)
- Future Splash-Ins, Events & Exhibitions
  - Summer 2005 Splash-In
- Reports and Articles
  - Winter Splash-In Report, Tony Gilbert
  - Xlendi Bay – By Night, Jason Gregory
- Useful Web Links
- Talk Handouts Attachments
  - Selecting an Image for the Membership Card, Colin Doeg
  - NUPG Yearbook 2004/2005, Tony Gilbert

**NOTE: NUPG MEMBERSHIP IS NOW DUE**

Date for your Diary:

**NEXT MEETING:** A Monday in Sept 2005 TBA, Corbans, Hale Barns at 1930.

**Editor:** Tony Gilbert, e-mail: [TonyGilbert@hotmail.com](mailto:TonyGilbert@hotmail.com)

## 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 - Sept 2005.

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	
Saturday June 4 <sup>th</sup> 2005	NUPG Summer Splash-In (and Print Comp.)	08:00am	Summer Splash-In
TBA September 2005 *** NEW VENUE *** *** SEE FOLLOWING *** *** PAGE FOR *** *** DETAILS ***	Corbans, Hale Barns (A538/J6 M56, towards Altrincham & Hale)	19.30pm - 22.00pm	

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)

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

Meeting Dates are to be announced by email at a future time, however, following on from the May AGM, it was agreed to change the venue (see below), and the finish times adjusted to 2200hrs. A new venue has been chosen:

**Corbans  
Old Winery & Bar  
329, Hale Rd,  
Hale Barns,  
Altrincham,  
Cheshire  
WA15 8SS  
Tel: 0161 980 4347**



### **Directions:**

#### **1. From North Wales / Chester**

Take the eastbound M56 passing the Altrincham/Knutsford junction (for the old venue), carrying on to the next, J6 signed A538 for Altrincham/Hale & Wilmslow/Macclesfield.

Turn LEFT towards Altrincham & Hale down the A538 at the traffic lights.

#### **2. From Stockport / East**

Stockport take the M60 to M56 spur at Baguley/Northenden westbound towards Manchester Airport. East, similarly, M62/67 to pick up either M60(clockwise) or westbound M56 at Northenden.

Take the next junction after the airport junction, J6 signed A538 for Altrincham/Hale & Wilmslow/Macclesfield.

Turn LEFT towards Altrincham & Hale down the A538 at the traffic lights.

### **NOTE:**

The A538 towards Hale Barns drops to 30mph and a SPEED TRAP exists (both ways) between the motorway junction and Corbans in Hale Barns.

## MEETING REVIEWS

### *4<sup>th</sup> April 2005 – Caribbean Bonaire*

The efficiently run meeting had been organised by the ugly sisters, Colin & Jason, who both have had out of body experiences in Bonaire. This meeting was centred around these separate, yet close, encounters with the southern Caribbean island. In even more of an efficient manner, each round occasional table & cloth was adorned with water glasses, and a meeting agenda!

The best laid plans of mice of men sometime go awry, and "The Case of the Missing Wires" was solved, not by Sherlock Holmes (old top hat), but by Chris Holden and his wife meeting halfway along the A55/M56 between the Swan and Chester. A sort of "High Noon at 8pm"!

While we waited for the digital side to come alive, once more it fell upon the old "steam driven" and "reliable" technology to carry on the good old slide shows! This closely followed by the "Slide" comp and the Winter Splash-In judging.

**Talk: Bonaire, the above water experience by: Colin Samuels (and Gail)**

Colin & Gail provided a double-act on describing the island of Bonaire and its delights. A very few years ago they visited the island, located in the Netherlands Antilles, however Colin had a pierced ear and therefore most of the time was spent land bound. This gave them an opportunity to sample the delights of the island & culture.

#### ABCs

Bonaire is one of the ABC's, the other large islands of the group being Aruba and Curacao, which are located off to the south west of the other Caribbean islands, and to the west of the Lesser Antilles. These islands are blessed with being outside the main hurricane belt and therefore can be visited pretty much at any time of the year.

The island is around 24x8 miles, with its length roughly facing NW-SE, and largely composed of ancient volcanic lava. Most of the island's human concentrations and diving occurs on its western shorelines as the eastern can be subject to fearsome waves and currents.

#### European Connection

Being of Dutch origin, much of the culture from its mother country remains, and many of the place names are also Dutch. The main centre is Kralendijk, in Dutch is pronounced "Crar-len-dyke" although I did hear Colin say it was "Crar-len-chuck", so perhaps there is a local dialect. From Europe, flights are usually via KLM from Schiphol near Amsterdam in The Netherlands, so from the UK a connecting flight is usually undertaken.

#### What to do

There is plenty to see and do, and two famous places, both above and below the water are the Salt Pier, and its associated salt mountains, and the Town Pier. In addition much wildlife can be seen in the Washington Slagbaai National Park (In Dutch, pronounce "Slag-by-ee" or thereabouts). Around the island many iguana lizards can be seen.



### Enigmatic Captain Don's

In Kralendijk, the big pier usually has much boat traffic around it, however the nearby smaller little pier is an ideal jumping off point for divers, as it's also next to Captain Don's Dive Habitat, the most famous and popular diving operation on the island. A small rope leads from the pier into the underwater world. Captain Don's is run by a man of the same name, a very enigmatic character who struts around in a variety of outrageous gear, mostly a pair of shorts or trunks and a large Stetson. He is only too pleased to regale passing divers of stories of derring-do, and by his own admission are mostly fabricated – entertaining and funny nevertheless!

Colin booked in with “The Cap”.

### Safari Diving

The type of diving on offer is safari diving, whereby divers take a couple of tanks, look on the map which sites and “drive n dive”. If a site is too busy, the next one is usually about 50 or so metres away. Guides can be provided at a cost, but in the main, these are unsupervised, and as Jason pointed out you can dive any time in the 24 hours and can do you own thing – which includes solo diving if you want to.

### Shoreline Encounters

From the shoreline, the reefs are immediately visible in the clear blue waters, and often both tarpon (type of shark) can be seen in numbers within the shallows, as well as dolphin pods.

The Salt Pier structure consists of many large tubular struts with a platform covering which transports the salt in some way. This whole structure is quite large and imposing, more so underwater. Very occasionally a boat does come along and loads salt, hence permission should be sought although many divers just dive without permission, with no problems. A guide, for US\$20 (I think it was US dollars) is well worth the money as the pillars can be very confusing, and the amount of marine life stunning, small and hard to find especially the frogfish. A dive guide usually will show you the attractions and not get you lost!

In all, an island well worth visiting both for the diving and non-diving aspects.

## **Bonaire, the below water experience by: Jason Gregory**

Jason started his experience by describing just how the diving could be conducted, and he emphasised that the diving sites, whatever time of the day or night you do them, are full of small marine creatures just waiting to be photographed.

The most famous sites using wide-angle are the Salt Pier and the wreck of the Hilma Hooker.

The list of marine creatures is almost endless, but Jason had elected to show a variety of species, which could be shot with macro lens.

- Parrotfish
- Morays
- Queen Angelfish (on orange encrusting sponge)
- Spotted Drum
- Shrimps on Anemones
- Cowrie Shells
- Bristleworms on Sponge
- Turtles
- Nudibranchs
- Crustaceans
- Boxer Shrimps
- Frogfish
- Cube Boxfish
- Squid
- Octopus
- Cowfish
- Pufferfish
- Filefish
- Sandiver
- Damsel fish
- Soldierfish
- Hermit Crabs with parasitic anemones
- Cerianthids
- Coral Grouper and cleaners
- Parazooanthids
- Arrow Crabs
- Goby
- Seahorses

# Slide Competition: Cute n' Cuddly

What would you define as cute and cuddly?

The range of subjects could be large, from cuddly gnomes to cute wolfish; it's really down to the individual's definition.

Tonight's competition focussed on all things cute and cuddly, the "beauty and the beast" affect. The range of subjects was quite diverse from sharpnose pufferfish, Wolfish, seals, gobies, cuttlefish, octopus, manatee's and frogfish. Oh, I almost forgot, 5 shots of tompots!

The "tompot syndrome" didn't wash with tonight's audience, as the results show.

**Joint 1<sup>st</sup>: Jason Gregory, Red Sea**

**Midas Blenny - Ecseniusmidas**



Jason certainly had the "Midas Touch" tonight.

Taken in the Red Sea, this very smaller critter, a midas blenny, photographed only a few weeks ago, on F16 using Velvia Film.

## **Joint 1<sup>st</sup> : Derek Haslam, Farne Islands, UK.**

Taken some years ago, Derek has never lost the touch and eye for the cute and cuddly. This shot was taken with his Nikonos V in the Farne Islands, where a seal just flopped out onto the sea grass just in front of the camera!



## **2<sup>nd</sup> : Paul Webster, Crystal River, Florida**

The visibility was appalling in Crystal River and Paul was only allowed to snorkel and not even duck dive. Taken with a 14mm lens in a housed camera.



## **Winter Splash-In, Judging and Competition Results**

**The Winter Splash-In is as popular as tooth filling without anaesthetic!**

**Come on guys and girls, you know you want to. It's not that bad, the cold isn't what it used to be.**

**On the day, "and then there were three", 2 digitals and one wet camera. The judging therefore had to be amongst 3 intrepid divers, 3 images apiece. The selection was crucial and ranged from "Freshwater Tompots" a.k.a. Trout (no surprises there), to a variety of the interesting attractions on offer at Capernwray's underwater discount store.**

**Without further ado, it was Ken's task to present the 9, the audience to select the top 3, and there they were, and here they are:**

- 3<sup>rd</sup>     Derek, Trout Snell's Window**
- 2<sup>nd</sup>     Ken, picture of Derek amongst trout**
- 1<sup>st</sup>     Derek, Podsnap, 14mm lens, flash as slave.**

**Let's hope next year's Winter Splash-In is better supported, I for one, WILL be coming along, as I've done every year so far, come rain, shine, wind, frost, warm Caribbean waters, incredible visibility, the company & camaraderie of other NUPG members, and down right good fun, not to mention the trout or the challenge of it all!**

**And here are the winners!!!**

## **NUPG 2005 Winter Splash-in Results**

**1<sup>st</sup>: Derek Haslam**

**Podsnap and Diver – See Front Cover of This Edition!**

**2<sup>nd</sup> : Ken Byrne**



**3<sup>rd</sup> : Derek Haslam**



## ***9<sup>th</sup> May 2005, AGM***

The NUPG AGM has come around fast and so here we are again, with the 6<sup>th</sup> AGM meeting (including the inaugural). A lot was covered tonight, and sadly Paul Webster was not able to do a talk as we ran out of time.

### **AGM**

#### **Year Book Review: Tony Gilbert**

The previous "NUPG" year was reviewed by Tony Gilbert (see attachment for details), mentioning the jam-packed meetings and the activities involving NUPG Members.

#### **Membership: Gail Samuels**

Gail Samuels followed with a membership roundup. There are around 35 active members at present. The numbers fluctuated slightly during the year, owing to leavers and new starters. There are also a number of members who randomly attend meetings.

**Membership fees are due and Gail emphasised the importance of paying now.**

#### **Finances: Lucy Kay**

In summary, the finances are still in the black after a good year.

##### **Key factors:**

- Main expenditure was the cost of the room hire.
- Summer Splash-In Print Competition contributed to the profits.
- Winter Splash-In Competition contributed to the profits.
- Membership dues were paid sporadically through the year.

#### **Committee**

The current committee was voted in for another term, with no additional committee members or existing committee members standing down.

##### **Committee for 2005/2006 is:**

- Ken Byrne – Web Site Manager
- Tony Gilbert – Newsletter
- Jason Gregory – Promotions
- Lucy Kay – Finances / General Secretary
- Paul Kay – Exhibitions / Splash-Ins
- Colin Samuels – Advertising / Publicity
- Gail Samuels – Membership
- Mark Wakerly – Committee

## Ideas for the forthcoming NUPG year – Open Discussion

- **Summer Splash-In Reminder**  
Lucy reminded the audience of the forthcoming summer splash-in and print competition, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2005.
- **Venue**  
The current venue although very suitable to the needs of NUPG is the largest expenditure throughout the year. In order to reduce costs and therefore have further monies for other activities (rather than raise the membership), committee members canvassed other venues. It was duly agreed to change the venue for future meetings, so this meeting was the last one at the Swan!  
The new venue is Corbans in Hale Barns just off the Wilmslow/Altrincham M56/A538 junction. This place is cheaper by £20 per night, offers the same facilities as the Swan, also has a beamer and screen, and is relatively free Monday evenings.  
(See new venue details)
- **Meetings Programme (Dates, Start/Finish Times)**
  - ❖ **Frequency**  
Since many people were on vacations during the UK summertime, it was agreed to reschedule the meetings accordingly. Usually there are about 7 meetings per annum, the new schedule increases this to 9. The next meeting is September 2005, and subsequent meetings occurring on a monthly basis through to the AGM in May 2006.
  - ❖ **Dates**  
Meetings are still to be conducted usually around the first Monday of the month.
  - ❖ **Start/Finish Times**  
It was duly noted that for those people who had longer distances to travel finishing at a more sensible time would be more feasible. Since the frequency of meetings has increased and content has become manageable, then it makes it easier to pan meetings out.  
The start time of 1930 would remain, however agreement was given to round up at 2150 for finishing at 2200.
  - ❖ **Programme & Content**  
The meeting format seems to be working better, with individual committee members organising a single meeting. It was agreed to keep to a programme, which would be within the bounds of the meeting times, and thus allowing time for discussion and a short break.  
It seems a good idea for a meeting agenda to be presented each meeting. Guest Speakers, Technical & Technique Talks, Fave 5, Slide Comp form the main topics, along with Destination Talks, post-image processing, clinics. The audience was invited to think about / suggest any guest speakers, repeat techniques/technical talks and any other ideas.
  - ❖ **Guest Speakers**  
Finding guest speakers is difficult and sometimes time consuming, so the audience was invited to suggest any possible candidates.

- **Other Events & Ideas**

The emphasis is on the NUPG members as a whole, you don't need to be a committee member to suggest an event or idea, and it doesn't necessarily follow that the person putting it forward will need to do the work.

Ideas and events could take any form, and suggestions were NUPG UK and overseas trips, day trips and a NUPG Social evening (or BBQ).

Paul Kay put forward a September 4-day Long Weekend in 2006 (poss. Sept/Oct) to Seal Island (South of Oban), using Dave Ainsley's 11m Revenge hardboat – Porpoise II. There were immediately several takers.

Another suggestion was El Hierro for 2006 (yes please! Ed.).

Tony Gilbert suggested a day trip on hardboat Shearwater out of Pwllweli, perhaps for later on in the year, like October. This boat runs around the Llyn Peninsula, including Bardsey, St. Tudwal's & Seagull Islands.

### **New Membership Cards**

Its tradition to replace the membership cards each year with a new image. The image is drawn from the previous year's NUPG Slide Competition Winners – one reason to submit you slides!

This year, Colin Doeg kindly consented to judge the winners and select the shot most suitable to grace the card for 2005/6. Here are the list of winning images and the winning image:

- ⊕ Steve Smithson – Coral Fan & Diver (from Gorgonia & Sea Fans)
- ⊕ Jason Gregory – Diver's face in mask (from Diver Portraits)
- ⊕ Paul Webster – Tropical Sea Sponges (from Sponges)
- ⊕ Paul Webster – Eagle Ray & Fish (from Best of 2003)
- ⊕ Ken Byrne – Capernwray Trout (from Best of 2003)
- ⊕ Paul Kay – Fireworks Anemone (from Anemones)
- ⊕ Derek Haslam – Seal Portrait (from Animal Portraits)

3<sup>rd</sup>

- ⊕ Derek Haslam – Baby Jellyfish (from Best of 2003)

2<sup>nd</sup>

- ⊕ Jason Gegory – Hilma Hooker Bonaire (from Wide Angle)

**The Winning Shot!**

- ⊕ Ken Byrne – Tompot (from Best of 2003)

(See Handout and Attachments for Colin Doeg's critique)

## **The New Membership Card:**



## **The Royal Charter Wreck, Simon Fielding**

### **2am on a night in October 1859, Bae Lligwy, Anglesey, North Wales**

A very bad storm and a ship in distress, foundering on the rocks to the side of the bay.

One of the biggest maritime disasters of the day, the weathered steep rocks just metres away from the broken ship, heavily clothed Victorians, many of whom couldn't swim, struggled in the violent seas. Within this small area over 400 people perished.

Simon described the disaster in graphic detail to the silent audience.

Nearby Moelfre purportedly became the richest town on Anglesey from the Royal Charter wreck.

### **Present Day**

A headstone monument stands alone on the headland adjacent to the disaster, and Simon emphasised that another (cross) stood in a churchyard near Amlych. Nearby the Captain's grave, deliberately left largely untended even today – thought as the cause of the disaster.

### **The Wreck**

The remains of the wreck usually covered in shifting sands, which is a feature of many of the Anglesey coastlines and inshore wrecks. Simon explained this is a result of large strong tides in the area. £370,000 of gold was in the strong room at the time of the sinking, and the Victorians were not about to leave this lying around! They ripped into the stern and salvaged pretty much all of it. Later, professional salvagers also worked on the wreck in 1971, then in 1985/6.

The wreck itself lies embedded in the sand with a few small bits of spars sticking out of the heavy sand. The bow lies in the direction of Lligwy Bay, then midships, and the remains of the stern in the direction on Traeth Bwychan, mostly in 1-4m, although a hole goes to 7-8m.

### **Expeditions to Excavate**

Over a number of years Simon, Neil and others have dedicated themselves to extracting artefacts from the wreck site, many of which are donated to local museums, and others are first sent off to preservers. 10ft of anchor chain is in the Sea Life centre at Moelfre.

A base camp is set up, off the van. Usually each expedition lasts a week of 3 dives a day per diver, with divers constantly rotating during the day. This is no mean feat as there are many obstacles to overcome, the main one being of fatigue due to the difficult conditions. Sea state doesn't always allow diving, and some days are sat waiting for tides and sea to become calm.

The cliffs around here can be steep, slippery grass covered extending some 50ft downwards. A network of ropes, pulleys are used to assist divers and gear into the water, and to return same as well as items from the wreck. It's all about timing Simon explains, when to get in, and out.

### **The business end of Excavation**

Once underwater conditions are worse, usually the visibility is much reduced. Two 6inch air dredgers are used, these have powerful suction and diving suits are usually worn with overalls and gardening gloves!

Lying around as the sand is sucked slowly from the wreck are bits of metal, wood, rocks and all manner of natural and man made debris. The box hole created can go to 8m in overall depth. Simon show many shots, especially of the bulkheads, hull, divers in action with the dredgers and just how bad the vis can get with much backscatter being prevalent on all camera shots.

### **Artefacts**

The wreck isn't just the ships hull, but a microcosm of artefacts from the era in which it perished. The reason for doing this task is mainly for the archaeological aspects, however if the odd gold bar presents itself...

The rewarding side is to find something that tells a story about the past, and Simon continued to show a final set of images, those of the cleaned & preserved artefacts:

- Deadeye (block & tackle pulley end from sailing ships)
- Women's silk glove, complete.
- Small porcelain jar.
- Gents leather boot.
- Small (brass/pewter?) picture frame about 1mm thick.
- Candle bracket
- China cup, suitably reassembled, with a couple of missing pieces.
- The end of the carpenters measuring rule.
- Pistol. When encrusted only the loading ramrod showed.

### **Derek's Digital Fave 5**

Derek, a staunch supporter of film SLR, last year, went digital in the wink of a shutter eye. He picked up a Fuji S2 attached a 10.5mm Fish-Eye lens and jumped into Capernwray many times. The results spoke for themselves at the meeting as he presented his digital favourite 5!

- Split land/water shot of the clubhouse. He's done this shot in the past with film SLR, and I think Derek was showing just what the digital could do for the same image. The underwater part was that of the wall.
- A gloriously framed shot of trout and sunburst.
- Two large black cylindrical floats lie on the surface in the centre of the Capernwray pool, below which a series of ropes and cross beams are set. This is the staging trapeze. Derek framed it against a sunburst.
- Air bubbles – what are these all about then – quizzes Derek. He noticed in the clear sparkling water huge lumpy air bubbles coming up from below him. The large rounded domes of the air bubble tops mirrored anything in the water. The idea was to photograph the bubbles with the photographer's reflection in them! (Ok, the Cessna was in the background, so its all done in 12m of water).
- Probably his best shot, judging by the audience's appreciation, and one that rivals images in the coffee table books. The fish eye's round world beautifully portrayed in the 1-2m shallows around the corner of the rescue area. Encompassing a twisted tree dangling precariously into the water, whilst small fish dance underneath. Add to this the piercing bright blue sky and creamy coloured quarry walls, and here we have a great composition!

I think these images of Capernwray show us all the photographic qualities & benefits of the place, which is why it's a good idea to hold the splash-in's here – so are you waiting for?

## **FUTURE Splash-Ins, Events & Exhibitions**

### **6<sup>th</sup> Summer Splash-In (and Print Competition), Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

For details of this summer splash in, see previous newsletters and watch out for e-mails from the organisers.

#### **Events (other than splash-ins)**

None currently planned, however, if any of our readers have any suggestions they would like to make, or even organise an event, don't hesitate, contact a member of the committee.

#### **Exhibitions**

None currently planned, however, if any of our readers have any suggestions they would like to make, exhibition venues perhaps, or even organise an exhibition, don't hesitate, contact a member of the committee.

## REPORTS

### *Report on Winter 2005 Splash-In*

March weather is usually Spring like with temperatures teetering just above freezing, a hint of snow, or a slight bite to an Easterly wind.

Not so today! Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March was more in keeping with an early Summer's day, with an air temperature of 19-20C, perfect blue skies and hazy sunshine from around lunchtime onwards (the "wintry easterly winds occurred at Easter one week later!")

[This is my tale of the Splash-In Day, organised and hosted by Ken Byrne.](#)

My journey as usual started at around 5am, putting as much as I could in the car the night before. It's just typical that I'd bought a second hand NX90 and F90 along with ports and the week before the splash-in, had obtained a wide-angle lens – even paid for a courier. The one piece missing was the aperture gear, but heh that's life, so back with the Motormarine then.

A meandering drive along the M6 to casually drop into Forton Services at around 0745, looking out for any of our compatriots in arms, none to be had. I'd picked up my friend Steve, who'd volunteered to be buddy & model for the day. Our club (New Horizons) was there, about 5 instructors, with a throng of willing trainees. After a well-earned cup of coffee and a quick apple tart, it was time to get thee down to the car queue.

Meeting Ken in the long queue at 0845 was no surprise, luckily they opened early, and I asked Chris, the dive centre manager if I could park to the left rather than the direction he was intending for me to go. He was obliging, thankfully, lucky I knew him; I parked the wagon up to the remaining NUPG members attending the splash-in. That would be Ken, myself, Derek as the participants, Mark Wakerly as an observer, and my buddy Steve.

It was a little disappointing to see so little of the NUPG membership attending on such a fine day, hopefully the splash-in will continue next year.



*Assembling  
the Gear*

*Assembling  
the Diver*



Derek was quick off the mark, as was Ken, both straight into the undisturbed water, closely followed by us. At the water's edge, we couldn't believe our eyes, you could actually see the bottom, 10m down, it was so clear. The surface a veritable mirror, almost perfect. The throng of trainees were milling around their respective dive centre vehicles, and most of the other trainees were either congregating around the rescue exit/entry point, or a few near the slip.

This meant initially the slip area was crystal clear with a modicum of suitable photographic targets, trout, to photograph. I could see Dirk and Ken blazing away with their pixel-film "Gatlings". I took a few shots of my 36 rack, 34 actually as I'd expended one as a strobe test and a second as an ugly mug shot. After surfacing we moved to the far side of the quarry, the first over there, in actual fact the first to be any more than 25m away from the entry points.

[The water was a cool sapphire blue, and even at the bathyscape there were trout, the bottom at 10m, clearly seen.](#)

The road way here goes east and south-south-west, the former to the Lynx Helicopter and the latter to the Orca. Our route was between them over the escarpment, where the sheer "cliff" created by the roadway led to further photographic opportunities, in the form of weed tumbling over the rocks, a sort of underwater Hanging Gardens of Babylon, complete with the underwater version of "slugs", Zebre Mussels.

At this point, so far away, we were astounded to spot the dim outline of the Sea-King Helicopter resting on an old container, only a few metres closer and the outline became distinct, the yellow cockpit looming mid-water like some dragon snout coming out of the mist. This was about 15m away, so the visibility here was outstanding, as were the



*Two views  
of the  
superb  
visibility  
that the  
Winter  
Splash-In  
divers had  
to endure!*



After touring the helicopter, we looked for further targets to shoot, so a rough North East course took us to the trapeze, which was surrounded by spoil heaps and next to part of the roadway. It loomed mid-water, dangling precariously in a rhomboidal fashion, with a variety of ropes and poles. As it was a trapeze I half-expected Burt Lancaster to swing around – so shook my head to clear this thought, before I received the “red card” to say your narked!

Swimming on, eventually we hit the back wall at the deepest part of the quarry, the sump (with the bump), also known as “the duck”, and were amazed to be able to see the whole sump and dip into it, as well as a large proportion of the vertical back wall and quarry bottom. The clarity was so good, it was positively disorientating – literally!

Our last piece of the journey took us back, passing a clearly defined “Herbie” car which had seen better days, closely followed by the rapidly deteriorating minesweeper – Podsnap. Hang on a moment, this is not possible, we can see the African Queen from here, a mere 15m away. Venturing over, the slope behind it was enormous, rising up to around 0.9m below the surface.

The sun was now out, and Snell’s Window manifested itself near the concrete jump off entry point, close to the rescue boat. At least the whole swim had provided huge numbers of photographic opportunities as well as a pleasant dive.

In typical fashion, the end of the journey occurred at the main slip, where now the visibility has gone completely, as a result of the large amount divers, and some young children who’d brought along a bakery full of loaves to feed the already fat trout. Getting out was a bit of chore, it was like a rugby scrum of old trout and divers!

As a slight diversion, I was chatting to a diver recently who said he was cut by needle sharp almost indistinguishable marks of trout teeth in the shallows, the result of which was much blood around his face. This was due to particles of bread he’d taken down and had drifted & stuck to his hood!

Back at base, no others had turned up, and as we enjoyed our surface interval, whilst waiting for a tank refill, Ken and Derek, once more ventured into the cobalt blue, a nice comfortable 7C!

Our second, non-NUPG dive was made as a “grand tour”, starting off at “The Duck”, crossing over to the Cannon, and hitting the Gnome Garden square on, where the biggest ever gnome I’ve seen was squatting on a rock – wonder if its been fed bread as well!

The sturgeon was nowhere to be found, although Derek did say it’d been seen on the 10m shelf near the bathyscape.

Returning was even easier, just cross the central hinterland until you hit a vertical wall of the roadway, ascend and pass between it and the huge western spoil heap, to be met by a bunch of techie divers doing the froggie swim.

Incidentally, we didn’t spot Mr Froggie, he must be on his Winter Vacation!

As the day was glorious it seemed a shame to waste it and the 120 bar we had left in the tanks, so flitted over to Devil's Bridge at Kirby Lonsdale, whilst Ken chatted with some of his club members, and Derek had gone off to sort his weight belt out.

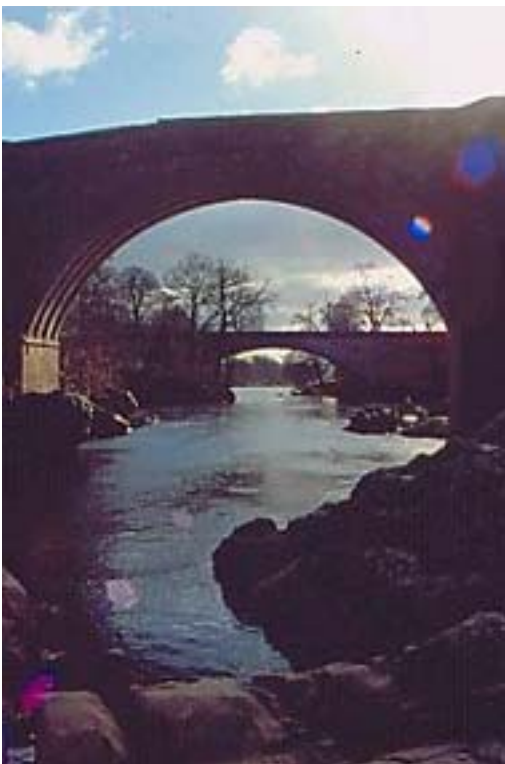
The meandering back roads eventually terminated at the A65 over which was Devils Bridge and about 10 showrooms worth of motor bikes, all lined up and cleaner than showroom bikes. Canoes all 12 of them were throwing themselves down the rapids, so it left little room for us, however we persevered and managed to get in to the strong currents, me with a camera as well! Before I knew it, I was under the bridge with no buddy, and clinging horizontally on to the bottom – not quite what we'd planned. Steve eventually made it and we rendezvoused here. The vis was to say the least, not so good, dare I say it, a sort of brown colour – probably ..... mmmhhh.

Anyway, peaty colour has its advantages, and a little further on after wedging myself in an already wedged branch, I turned the camera on the sun, a dull sparkling ochre orb in the brown mist.

A short while later, as is the case with these drift dives, we were in the eddy pool and backwater sand slope where all the flotsam congregates. All manner of things, some of which I am not going to describe here, others were golf balls, toy cars, branches, litter, but made for some interesting foreground in 2m of water.

It was time to get out of here before the canoe herd came calling. A great day out, one worth repeating, so, to those who haven't attended so far, try to next year, it's a social thing and a bit of fun!

### ***A "Bridge Too Far" perhaps?***



***View from the Bridge,  
easily spot the divers***



***Camera's at the ready, mind that canoe!***



## ARTICLES

If you have a small piece you would like to see included in the Newsletter, please send it in .rtf format to the Editor and maybe a selection of images. It can be humorous, something about underwater photography, an interesting slant on diving, whatever really.

**By Jason Gregory**

### Xlendi Bay - by Night

Most divers are familiar with what Malta and its smaller neighbour Gozo have to offer. Good quality diving, close to home and good value too. With plenty of marine life, impressive underwater topography and endless viz, many thousands of divers choose to dive there and many return for more. I think it's fair to say that most British divers tend to head for Gozo rather than the mainland for its mix of quality diving *and* a holiday chill out. Malta itself has more to offer if you're looking for late night fun. One of the best dive bases on Gozo has to be Xlendi. Located towards the south west of the island, Xlendi has a naturally sheltered bay. It's a great diving base, and is also kiddie compatible. A rare mix that keeps everyone happy!



You can choose to let the boats take you to dive sites, or jump aboard self-drive jeeps or minibuses that rattle their way around the island to many superb shore dive sites. If you are an experienced diver and have valid medical (not a self certified type) you can dive 'unaccompanied' In other words, you have *dive freedom!* No guides or other people's schedules to follow which is great, and of particular benefit to photo divers.

But how many of us make the effort and squeeze an extra dive in after dark? It's rather tempting to pull off the neoprene, pull on the glad rags and hit town.

And so tramping down to the water's edge, passing holiday makers settling down to their candle lit evening meals, may seem like you're missing the après dive fun. But oh no, there's more underwater adventure to be had yet, your meal can wait.



The village of Xlendi is squeezed into a narrow valley which opens up into a small bay, complete with a modest but useable beach. Many divers that base their holiday there use the safe, shallow bay to do a warm up dive. Keep in mind boat traffic - use of an SMB is recommended - and this can be a decent little dive. Navigation is easy and depths are no more than a few metres. A cave that cuts through the headland can be explored which adds extra interest. For some the cave provides a first taste of the cavern type dives that are the hallmark of Gozo diving.



The sea bed in the bay consists of sandy areas with patches of sea grass and a few boulders. During the day there is a fair amount of marine life to investigate.

But it's at night that things really start to happen!

You don't have to stay up late and miss out on your evening meal with your buddies.



Just allow it to go nicely dark and the nocturnal beasties will be out and about ready to greet you. Some creatures are seen both during the day and night, but others are definitely night owls - or the marine equivalent of owls anyhow.

So keep an extra cylinder to one side, have an afternoon snooze and ensure your torch has fresh or re-charged batteries (Local supply is 240v). As with any night dive a spare torch is advisable.

I would suggest taking the right hand side of the bay, to keep clear of the local rod & line fishermen as they are also out for the increased fish action.

If you are staying in Xlendi your accommodation may well be within a short stroll of the sea. It's probably easier to kit up first, and then simply walk down to the water! You may feel a little self conscious and will certainly attract puzzled stares from non diving diners as you pass the bars and eateries. But no matter, there's diving to be done.



Entry couldn't be easier, a gently sloping beach wade in. As soon as you begin snorkelling out to start your dive the amazing glittery sparks of bioluminescence will accompany your fin strokes. Thousands of tiny creatures in the open water seem to respond to movements and produce little bursts of light, a phenomenon often seen on night dives. So it's lamps on, and prepare for spooky sights to be seen. The amount and variety of life is tremendous. Fish are either out and about and busy, or snoozing and easier enough to get close to. Crustaceans hardly ever seen during the day wander about confidently on the sand and amongst the rocks. Moray eels shy indeed but a little bolder at night. As for octopus, expect to see several on a single dive. Just keep a slow pace and a sharp eye, there are masses to see. Amazing, considering this is just a shallow, 'fun for the kids' type bay.



So, say you get in at about 8pm and do an hour's dive, then back for a quick shower and change. By 10 bells you could be tucking into your pizza, sipping the vino and looking down at the water thinking, "I've just been in there".

Cheers!



Images - all taken by JG at the site described, summer 2002.

Xlendi - a small beach keeps the kids happy.

Xlendi bay - an easy access shore dive.

A Two Banded Bream.

A colourful shrimp.

Moray Eels - shy, but out and about at night.

Goat Fish (juveniles) - sometimes seen in pairs.

An eel - if spooked they will hide in the sand.

An octopus out hunting.

## LINKS

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

☀ [www.photolibrarywales.com](http://www.photolibrarywales.com)

**A commercial site, the images are copyrighted, so cannot show the front image here. The site is fantastic, showing some stunning shots of Wales. Paul Kay has a few images on here as well! I was enthralled by some of the images both coastal and landside. An easy to navigate site, with a map to pick a specific area.**

**North Wales areas of Anglesey, Llyn, Wrexham are all featured, with mountains, rivers, coastlines, sun, sea, sand and snow! South Wales including Skomer is just as enchanting.**



**I think if you are doing audio-visual work or talks for UK diving and are looking for ideas for topside supporting images, take a look at these. There are a couple of “well-known” underwater images on here as well.**

**Lastly, it just goes to show how much history is left lying around the beautiful landscapes of Great Britain, and this is just Wales! And, when you get out diving to The Smalls, remember to get some shots in as there are none on here (yet-I’ve some good ones at home).**

 [www.ascidians.com](http://www.ascidians.com)

Arjan Gittenberger has provided to the world a photographic database of ascidians. The photography ranges from really good to really not so, as I think this is more of a scientific identification site. As photographers, it's one thing taking a photograph of "urrrh?", and another thing identifying it. If you think it's an ascidian then look in here.

Ok, what's an ascidian? One reasonably official definition is "a minute sedentary marine invertebrate have a sack like body with siphons through which water enters and leaves" (sounds like the mother-in-law (oops!, only joking)). What are we talking about here, well something like a tunicate, a sea squirt, light bulb squirt. I think most people know a few squirts (probably above and below) and can relate to this, so some good photography can be had, and you can utilise Arjan's site to identify what you've taken. All Dutch speak English so if you have taken a shot of an ascidian and don't know what it is – why not contact him (in English) and send him an image for id and use on his database?



Lastly, Lucy & Paul, I am sure you know what the creature is that on Arjan's front page, he's in desperate need to identify it – perhaps Rohan knows immediately?

**Must see!**

Ok, a slightly Netherlands flavour this month, after all we are in the EU, so there is nothing wrong in a little knowledge sharing. (No, I don't want to get into a political wrangle about the EU or the Euro!)

One of my work colleagues was showing me his friends website, and I've taken a look at it several times over now. I've got to say Victor has a real talent, certainly in my mind (and who am I to judge), for producing some superb topside natural photography that seems to be quite original in its concept.

Our club although underwater focussed, is also focussed towards the natural environment, and many of the speakers have been towards the terra firma side of the planet.

Victor has managed to capture nature at its most sparkling moment, a "wink of an eye", a "drop of moisture from ice", a "beating of a wing", the "summer shade of a flower head".

Many of the images are super macro taken with fast shutter speeds, others moody wide-angle shots. I particularly loved the insect captured "static", the ice droplets, the misty oak, he's certainly in tune with nature and knows how to capture its beauty.

One last thing on many images, look at the backgrounds, which appear to be generally in harmony with the foreground. I know we're taught this for u/w photography but he's put it to good use, negative space, blue or lit. I am sure there are plenty of ideas that could be considered under the water with similar subjects.

It's an easy to navigate website just click on the image groups and drill down. There is an index, which may take a little more of a challenge.

## HANDOUTS & ATTACHMENTS

### SELECTING THE MEMBERSHIP CARD IMAGE, COLIN DOEG

**Of the NUPG Winning Slide Competitions, Colin Doeg was asked to judge these and select a winner, here are his comments below.**

**First:** Tompot blenny. This is my favourite because the shot catches the eye as soon as you look at the sheet of slides. The Tompot is well lit, its mouth is clear and sharp – a feature that is often hard to get right, and I like the pose. It gets away from the cliché head-on shot and the head is cocked at a jaunty angle. There is space round the fish for type so I think the image will work well on the membership card.

**Second:** Wreck with diver. This is a well-composed shot of a wreck with the diver well-positioned in the top right-hand corner. It is interesting that there is not a cliché-sunburst in one corner. The lack of it works well as does the even lighting.

**Third:** Baby jellyfish. A well-lit, well composed image. You can even see the hairs on the jellyfish's arms. Could be cropped at the top to give even greater impact. But an intriguing, eye-catching image.

Gorgonian fan and diver. The gorgonian is well lit and it is good to see the photographer has not followed the traditional formula by shooting this close-focus wide-angle shot as a vertical. However, while I appreciate how difficult it can be to get a shot like this perfect, it would have more impact if frame was cropped on the right and the diver was nearer the surface. The diver's pose is good – a perfect model.

Close-up of diver's face. I am sure this photo has delighted the young snorkeller's parents and family. To carp, I would have liked to have seen a clean facemask without any small bubbles inside it. A good, recognisable portrait. The face and eyes are well lit. It would have been interesting to have experimented with a three-quarters-on shot and the diver allowing a small stream of bubbles to rise in front of the face, making a tight horizontal picture.

Sea squirts. Never easy to make a natural history illustration dramatic but the shot could have had more impact if it had been possible to move in much closer. In effect, cropping tightly on the diagonal line of sea squirts

Eagle ray and fish. A good wide-angle shot. Well-taken to avoid any bubbles ... or was the photographer using a rebreather? The water is a pleasing blue, the ray and sunburst are well positioned. An example of how it is not always necessary to observe the rule of thirds or the need for diagonals to produce a good photograph. The ray is in the right position, slap bang in the centre of the frame.

Trout. This must be a rare photograph. The fish is well-positioned in the middle of the frame with a hint of its natural environment beneath and the sun above. Why do fish almost always curve away from the lens when my obsession is to get them curving their body towards the camera so you can see even more of the body and fins as well as the flexibility of its body. Well worth going back and taking more shots. Images of trout must have commercial potential.

Fireworks anemone. Good natural history illustration with the waving arms of the anemone nicely filling the frame. Well-lit so neither white tentacles nor sandy bottom are over-exposed.

Baby seal. Could be cropped on right for greater visual impact. Good, winsome expression on the seal's face.

General comment. I know it is easy after the event to suggest shots should be more tightly framed or cropped when this is impossible to achieve at the time but it does point up how easy it is to make these changes with digital photographs. There was an interesting variety of themes for the year's slide competitions which was refreshing.

## **Resume of NUPG Meetings and Activities of 2004/5, Tony Gilbert**

Another busy year for NUPG and it seems to have flown by. Many a new face amongst the regulars as well as a few leavers.

This year has seen the "conversion" of many photographers, and indeed within NUPG, to using digital cameras, a clear indication of the strength of the digital camera market.

The market of digital compact cameras seems to have flooded the camera market as a whole.

Digital SLRs seem to be steady on a crest of a wave, with new systems coming out only this month, like the Canon EOS350D and the Nikon D70S.

This is in contrast to the film SLR market, which seems to have taken a plunge into the abyssal depths and bottomed out. Even now Film SLRs are regarded as "Classic Cameras".

Within NUPG, several members, including myself, have taken advantage of the lowered prices of film SLR systems, especially the good second hand items, and either upgraded their existing housed systems or "converted" over from wet cameras to housed.

### **Meetings**

These have had a varied attendance usually very good and have included many non-members. A thank you to Chris Holden for the kind use of his beamer equipment for the projection of digital images.

The meeting content has also varied, and we were still finding that the content sometimes exceeds the time we have for the meetings! Many of the committee members were and are actively involved in organising individual meetings.

### **Guest Speakers, Non-Technical & Technical Talks, Xmas Mini Talks**

A wide and varied subject matter, and I'll think you'll agree that a lot of work has been put in by all those giving the talks. Technical Talks now contained much in the way of hints & tips for the digital side of photography as well as traditional methods and ideas.

List of Speakers this last year:

**Trevor Gee – Raja Ampat Islands**

**Alan Mildren**

**– Audio Visual Presentations, On James Eagan Layne, The Oceans, Basking Sharks**

**Steve Smithson – Life under ice in Norway**

**Jason Gregory and Colin Samuels – Bonaire**

**Tony Gilbert – Photographing Wrecks in the UK**

**Antonio Capucino-Sanchez – Guadalupe Island**

**Dr. Alex Mustard – The survival guide to Photography**

**Ken Byrne – Digital Available Light Photography**

**Jason Gregory – Macro and Super Macro Photography**

**Jason Gregory – Scanning Slide Images**

**Paul Kay – Use of the Unsharp Mask**

### **Slide Competitions**

A special thank you to Jennifer Wolstenholme and Gail Samuels for counting many of the slide competition slips for judging.

The committee continue to think up new, original & sometimes difficult subjects for the slide competition. If you'd like to see a particular subject air as a comp, let one of the committee know. This last year couldn't be much more diverse!

- Nudibranchs and Sea Slugs
- Kelp
- Wreck Photography
- Corals
- Cute n Cuddly
- Best of 2004, Tropical and Temperate

Winners and Runner's up included:

Mark Walker, Tony Gilbert, Paul Kay, Lucy Kay, Jason Gregory, Richard Lockett, Paul Webster, Ken Byrne, Colin Samuels, Derek Haslam, Steve Smithson

Thanks to all who showed submitted their slides.

### **Favourite 5 & Members Favourites**

This last year has seen a sporadic Fave 5, usually as a result of meeting overrun.

Gail Samuels – on just those slides I like

Jason Gregory – St. Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve

### **Other Activities**

#### **Trips**

No full blown NUPG dive trips were organised, however, Paul had a few places on some of the trips he was involved in. Sadly, the 2004 weather put a stop to the trip to the Aran Islands in Western Ireland. Even those who got out were blown back by the bad weather last July. Those who went out later (in ad-hoc fashion in August) were lucky enough to do some diving, even though Boscastle was being flooded across the Irish Sea!

If anyone has an inclination, ideas or wants to organise a trip for NUPG, whether it's a day trip, weekend or week long, please do so, let one of the committee know and we can send out invitations.

#### **Web Site**

A thank you to Ken Byrne for resurrecting the Web Site and keeping it up to date. This now contains the latest meeting dates, back issues of newsletters and a selection of member's images.

It is the intention to keep the web site as evergreen as possible and as a useful resource of information.

#### **Newsletter**

The Newsletter has over the year undergone a few changes, mainly to facilitate faster downloads from the web site, so has become more regular, rather than "bumper" issues.

Aside from the resumé of meetings past, it also provides information on future meetings, events, splash-ins, reports and useful web links. If you've any web links to share with others, then let the editor know.

#### **Dive Show**

We were able to share a stand at the Birmingham Dive Show in October 2004, and it was very rewarding for all those who manned the stands. Perhaps this may become a regular thing?

It is a chance to share ideas with a wider photographic audience, many of the scores of divers we talked to had a variety of systems and we offered advice where we could.

Entry-level compact cameras featured highly. It was also a chance to meet some of the BSOP members and gain experience in selling photographic clubs!

#### **Splash-Ins**

A thank you to the organisers of last years Splash-Ins & Print Comp. Ken Byrne, Lucy & Paul Kay, Mark Walker.

Splash-In Competitions have evolved also, seeing the advent of on-the-day digital images.

Unfortunately last Summer's Splash-In had to be cancelled owing to inclement weather, however, there is another one this year, so why not come along.

The Winter Splash In was very successful in its imagery, yet the attendance seems to suffer from "winter-blues".

SLIDES

#### **Committee**

Both Ken Byrne & Gail Samuels last year came onto the committee.

And, now its time for the next NUPG Year.