

NORTHERN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

NUPG NEWSLETTER Issue #17, Jan2006 – Mar2006

WINTER/ SPRING ISSUE

NUPG Web Site: www.nupg.org.uk

Bill has wonderfully captured the colourful kaleidoscopic effect this tube fanworm has made, taken around the island of Elba.

It could have been used as a cockade, and unlike Napoleon, it didn't escape the attentions of the Eagle photographer eyes!



This Issue:

- Meeting Information
 - Meeting Dates
 - Meeting Reviews
- Reports & Handouts
 - Cocos Is., Roy Cash
 - Isle of Lewis, NUPG Tour Trip
 - Night Photography Techniques
- Web Links

Date for your Diary:

NEXT MEETING: Monday Apr 3rd 2006, Corbans, 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 Apr 3 rd 2006	Corbans, Hale Barns (A538/J6 M56, towards Altrincham & Hale)	19.30pm - 22.00pm	Judging Winter Splash-In
Monday May 15 th 2006	Corbans, Hale Barns (A538/J6 M56, towards Altrincham & Hale)	19.30pm - 22.00pm	Annual General Meeting

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

As promised more information on the Nov-Dec 2005 meetings, read on after Jan 2006 meeting review!

16th January 2006

A “busy” meeting for the first one in 2006. It was going to run out of time, but Tony just talked faster!

The speakers tonight were Lucy Kay on County Kerry, a change of plan from Connemara, yet just as enthralling a destination, and Tony Gilbert guiding us through his thoughts on techniques for Night Diving. The image competition was of Worms, which is where we begin!

Competition Theme: “Worms”

There are many worms on the land (some in senior positions), they however come into their own when it comes to the underwater realm. Of slightly different construct, with their feeding apparatus usually displayed into the water column as a fan.

The worms being dangled in front of us showing their very colourful plumage tonight were a mixture of Plumose worms (Xmas Tree worms), Fan Worms – of which many were UK based and Peacock worms strutting their stuff.

After a lot of “umm’s”, “aar’s”, “ooo’s”, “arrggh’s!” and squiggles, the judging complete and the winners were:

3rd Place: Jason Gregory, Gozo, Malta

2nd Place: Bill Bradley, Elba, Mediterranean

1st Place: Bill Bradley, Fort Lauderdale, USA

With all of us well wormed, on with the meeting we went, but before we do that, lets have a look at our wriggly winners and “wot” we won...

1st Bill Bradley produced Digital Xmas tree worms, photographed on the new wreck of the Tracy.

All we need now is some tinsel, candy sticks and presents (preferably a Nikon D200 or Canon 350D oh, and plus housings), and the picture is complete!

Well Done Bill!



2nd Bill Bradley went to America and the digital image he shot has wormed its way onto the front cover of this edition.

3rd Jason Gregory produced a nice spread.

This “Gozoan” worm full of Mediterranean promise and was taken with a Nik, 50ASA using a 105mm lens.

At the time he was looking for a seahorse – not much different then, obviously had his “macro goggles on then”!

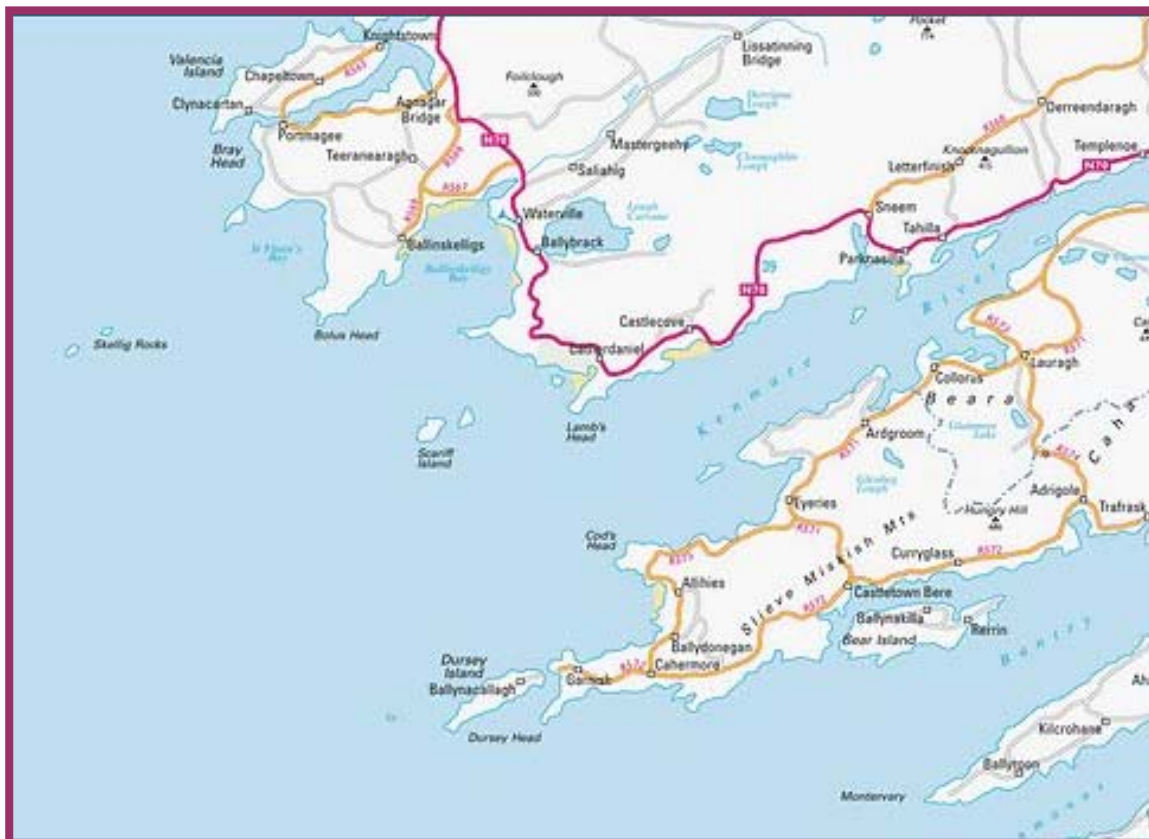


Destinations Talk: County Kerry, Ireland – Lucy Kay

Lucy was telling her story of how she came to be photographing mainly for the marine biology career she was carving out at the time and one of those early expeditions to Ireland, some 10 years back.

Nick Pfeiffer who is better known from Aran Islands Dive Centre had just been starting out with a RIB, rather than the hardboat “Lishean I” he has today.

In these heady days it was a case of let’s go and see what is out there, engage! Nick obliged and took them to the south-westerly coastlines of Eire.



The Islands

Here, small islands erupt vertically out of the sea creating some spectacular landscapes both above and below the waterline. Islands visited and photographed were Scarif Is., Deanish Is., Valentia Is. and The Skelligs.

There were occasions that diving times became altered due to weather and incoming storms, giving the divers a chance to explore some of the islands, in particular the Monks Steps some 600ft up Skellig Micheal. The scenery shots were certainly stunning – and I think we all got vertigo just looking at them!

“Seaweed is really fascinating”

It was now time to see what delights were being laid down within the underwater realm, and as a marine biologist the photography side was a means to an end, in recording the various species for later identification, however this led to the present day love of photography.

It was a little strange when Lucy started with “seaweed is really fascinating” and “kelp is really cool, especially in motion”. She explained though with a series of great photographs of swirling thrashing kelp, a microcosm of movement, and carpets of colourful seaweed intermingled with just as colourful sponges and so on. The islands were home to tightly packed life forms and it’s not only a biologists dream, but also that of the photographer.

“High Energy”

Many of the sites dived were exposed to waves & currents, making them high energy sites, with sea squirts, sagartia anemones, oaten pipe hydroids & jewel anemones vying for position amongst the boulders, swim throughs and gullies, all with a healthy topping of maniac flowing kelp.

The kelp beds were of great interest, with masses of colonies growing upon the fronds, nudibranchs grazing, and the stypes containing a mixture of sponges & hydroids.

Even the spaces between them were packed out so many a dive could be quite shallow.

Marine Creatures

Amongst the selection of images (mostly in May when marine life is at its freshest) were:

- gardens of dahlia anemones
- lone crawfish
- squatting edible crabs
- dense clusters of common starfish
- packs of plumose anemones
- crinoids in their reproductive state

And perhaps a new species to Eire, the Portugues Red Blennie.

Sand dives included:

- Pechia anemones
- Anemone hermit crab

Muddy gravel dive in a small harbour (from shore) was so varied that they dived it twice. The depths were quite shallow, but the amount of interesting, variable & unusual species was quite fascinating. These included:

- Fan worms
- Shell-less molluscs
- Shore crabs
- Mixicola worms
- Long legged spider crabs

So, next time your thinking of a place to dive, why not try the western coastlines of Eire – Paul & others run trips there on a regular basis.

... And, remember, Kelp and Seaweed can make great pictures!

Techniques Talk: Night Diving Photography, Tony Gilbert

A difficult subject to discuss yet Tony attempted to give his impressions, and rather than keeping us all in the dark, impart his wealth of night diving experiences.

“Lager Time”

The first thing that usually happens when someone says “night dive” is to say, “sorry I’ve just poured 2 pints of lager & a packet of crisps down my neck” or “sorry, I am washing my hair tonight and that of the four dogs next door”.

The best time & place to night dive is while on holiday, whether its shore based or liveaboard, and many are undertaken abroad.

“Where in the World”

The images shown were mainly from Lanzarote (Playa Chica – Safari Diving Beach at Puerto del Carmen), which was shore based, and the Egyptian Red Sea aboard a liveaboard, doing 4 dives a day (of which the last was a night dive).

There is plenty of room for night diving in the UK and Porth Ysgaden was featured; if you don’t know where that is, it’s on the Lleyn Peninsula in North Wales, with easy shore access!

7 Reasons to NIGHT DIVE

- Previously unseen marine creatures come out at night
- Shrimps are more bold, Octopus & Cuttlefish hunt
- Many hard & soft corals spawn or feed
- Large populations of sea hares or similar graze
- Some creatures are more easily approached
- Certain fish sleep allowing the photographer easy access
- Colours & backgrounds are more accentuated

Advantages to Night Diving

- Photographs from more variety of creatures
- Colours of soft corals more vivid & rich
- Spawning, feeding & mating can be captured
- Coral polyps open wide for feeding, accentuating imagery
- Waters can be more settled during night time
- Backgrounds are less cluttered than daytime
- Photographers able to concentrate minds more in the dark

Additional Material covered in the show:

- Safety & Dangers
- Dive Kit Preparation
- Dive Briefing & Which Lens
- Camera Kit Preparation
- Entry & Exit, shore & boats
- Backscatter
- Macro
- Strobe positioning, single or twin
- Wide Angle

Technique Examples

The main techniques covered were:

- “Subject” – such as Lionfish, Red Pencil Urchin, Octopus
 - Choose subject carefully to fill frame
 - Consider background and angles
 - Colour
- “Lighting” – subjects like Octopus and Stonefish
 - Whiteness of subject or background
 - Single or Twin Strobes
- “Background” – for Fan worm, Ghost Crab, Cuttle
 - Background medium is important
 - Black
 - Sand
 - Another creatures colour
- “Colour” – Spanish Dancer, Parazooanthids, Urchin, Locust Lobster
 - Colour RED, use wisely but use it if you can!
 - Contrasts, such as Silver, black
 - Masses of different colours
 - Yellow polyps feeding with black background
- “Angles” – Long lizardfish, filefish, alcyonium palmatum, angular sand star
 - Long fish subject, which angle, front or side?
 - Filefish, turning or flat on?
 - Diagonals
 - Mixture of angles
- “Animal Portraits or Behaviour” – Parrotfish, Shrimps, Crabs, Scorpionfish
 - What is the subject doing
 - Peak of the action
 - Sleeping
 - Attacking or defending
 - Polyps open or closed?

Other techniques covered were:

- ❖ Larger critters at Night
- ❖ Wide angle, scenic
- ❖ Wrecks
- ❖ Backlighting
- ❖ Mixed Colours / Backgrounds
- ❖ Action Shots
- ❖ Divers in Darkness
- ❖ UK Night Diving & Considerations

A Powerpoint slide presentation was shown (available on request), and see “Handouts & Attachments” section in Newsletter for a list of images per technique.

So, go on, illuminate yourself with a night dive!

12th December 2005

Bill Bradley was one of the speakers at the December meeting. He presented an audio-visual slide show and here is how he did it...

My slide show with music presentation was made using Adobe Photoshop Album 2, which I believe is now part of the latest incarnation of Photoshop Elements. I also used Winamp, (www.winamp.com), a downloadable software utility to record music from my CD's to hard disk. This enabled Album 2 to embed the music files into the slide show.

Album 2 is a program designed to keep track of digital images on a computer or digital storage medium. Some kind of catalogue or tracking facility is essential to keep tabs on your ever-increasing repository of photographic masterpieces and I find that Album 2 is easy and intuitive to use. It allows you to make and name your own generalised tabs for tracing digital files and even lets you assign parts of your photo's to the tabs' icons.

It takes only minutes to create a slide show once you have selected your images and music, but if you want to synchronise the music to the start and finish times, a little trial and error may be necessary. The program also allows you to select images of any size, alter the resolution and compression ratio, and export them en masse for email or CD distribution etc.

File management has got to be near the top of your digital priorities and a program like Album 2 will help steer you clear of many pitfalls. If anyone who is considering digital photography wishes to have a talk, please collar me at one of our meetings and I will be happy to relate my experiences.

Happy Snapping!!!

21st November 2005

With a very busy NUPG 2005 year, and just as busy members it has been sometimes difficult to arrange or squeeze all the information & imagery into recent newsletters, however we have the pleasure of including the November 2005 Meeting Image Competition results. Apologies to those winners whose images we haven't been able to publish until now.

As a reminder the competition theme was "A Blend of Colours". Well done to all.

1st Neil Blackie

A great shot of a scorpionfish "with the blues", trying to mingle into the background, taken in Wakatobi. Image is from a slide.



2nd John Spencer

An interesting starfish looking more like a collection of sponges and is probably called Nobbly Styles! Digital



Joint 3rd John Spencer

“The Eyes Have It”. A cuttlefish blends into the body well. Digital



Joint 3rd Derek Haslam

A slide image of a (Coryphella?) nudibranch running a Marathon.



REPORTS and HANDOUTS

Cocos Islands, by Roy & Pat Cash

One of the talks of the Dec 2005 meeting was Roy's talk on the Cocos Islands, here we feature it.

Travel Log, Costa Rica and the Cocos Islands – Roy Cash

Roy gave a talk, illustrated with slides, on a diving holiday to Cocos Island, Costa Rica, accompanied by his wife, Pat. Flights were from Manchester via Newark, New York, to the capital city, San José with a few days stop over in the Hotel Bougainvillea. The latter is situated on the outskirts of the town but there is a regular free bus service into the town centre.



Most of the session concentrated on diving around Cocos Island. This involved a 2 hour coach journey from the hotel followed by a 36 hour boat ride to Cocos, situated a few degrees north of the Equator in the Pacific Ocean west of Costa Rica, along a similar volcanic line to the Galapagos Islands situated further to the south.

A number of slides showed the characteristics of Cocos Island with its mountainous terrain covered by almost inaccessible tropical rain forest and its coastline typified by steep cliffs and large numbers of nesting sea birds.

Pictures of divers sunbathing on deck then sudden thick clouds and torrential rain highlighted the variability of the local weather with its tropical temperatures and heavy rainfall (8 metres pa).

There were a number of slides highlighting the local scenery and the variety of activities that can easily fill time in this wonderful country. These included pictures of cloud forests, coffee plantations, rumbling volcanoes erupting gases and ashes, Pat looking very concerned sliding high in the tree tops in a harness on steel cable “ropeways” plus many other pictures illustrating rural and urban life in Costa Rica, including the local town drunk asleep on his feet.





These conditions were also reflected in some of the diving pictures along with the heavy swell that characterises some of the dive sites.

The heavy rainfall is responsible for the many waterfalls along the forested coast – scenes that were used in the film Jurassic Park.

The boat used for the trip is the very well equipped Sea Hunter, which can cater for 18 divers.

Pictures of the boat and the accompanying comments relating to diving facilities, accommodation, catering, the dive crew and safety considerations were very positive (every diver is provided with an epurb as well as a delayed SMB and whistle). Everyone is encouraged to dive on Nitrox because many of the dives are over 30m, often square profiles on sea mounts. Nitrox courses are available on board if needed.



Rebreather diving is also supported. All diving is from two small boats (pangas) which accompany the Sea Hunter. Diving kit is left on board between the three daily dives and the cylinders are filled in situ. Wall diving is common as well as sea mounts but coral reefs are not the typical scenery of Cocos Island. Instead, the diver can expect to see much bare volcanic rock with steep walls, overhangs, caves and swim-throughs.

Marine life is dominated by large animals – sharks, including whale sharks, rays (eagle, marble and mantas), dolphins and turtles, plus big shoals of fish such as bat fish, barracuda and jacks, often being attacked by large yellow fin tuna. The main reason for diving Cocos is the abundance of sharks, especially the shoals of hammerheads.

A typical dive is hauling yourself down the shot-line, often in a strong current, clinging on to the sea mount (reef hooks are a useful accessory), sometimes in a thermocline, and waiting for hammerheads to appear for cleaning.

In the meantime white-tips and rays commonly appear as well as shoals of jacks. In fact white-tip sharks abound on most dives, also expect to see other types of shark including grey reef, silky and nurse sharks.



There are subjects for macro-photography including nudibranchs, lobsters, crabs, smaller fish, etc but it takes a bold photographer to reach for a 60mm or 105mm lens when there is such a wealth of wide-angle subjects.

Especially exciting is the shallow night dive when the sea floor is carpeted with a swirling mass of white-tips just below the divers' fins hunting for an evening meal.

There are subjects for macro-photography including nudibranchs, lobsters, crabs, smaller fish, etc but it takes a bold photographer to reach for a 60mm or 105mm lens when there is such a wealth of wide-angle subjects.

In summary, diving around Cocos Island is exciting because of the abundance of marine life especially large animals and big shoals of fish. Cocos Islands are a shark diving heaven.

Water temperature is around 28°C, currents are variable, sometimes strong but sometimes non-existent, many dives are 30m plus and the swell is sometimes strong at some locations.

Cocos is a suitable destination for divers with experience of varied diving conditions and who are comfortable in currents



Isle of Lewis, a long-awaited Trip Report by Tony Gilbert

Isle of Lewis - Diving on the Edge

Paul Kay had organised a trip in July 2005 to the Island of Lewis and on the second week many NUPG members attended, along with other well known faces, such as Vicki, Liz, Whiskers.

A wee-dram of driving

The Outer Hebrides, northwest of far northwest, not just your average “around the corner” diving. Oh no, our intrepid band of 12 divers soon found that to dive this “ivory tower” would mean some sacrifices in the form of a serious amount of driving into the Scottish wilderness. A few took the scenic road via the “Black Fort”, also known as Fort William, along the well trodden A82, stopping off overnight in Chéz Debbie’s in Craginlarich, whilst others decided upon a more “10 Red Bull’s” approach to the 11 hour full driving hit! Setting off at 0030 arriving in the one-horse town of Ullapool around midday saw our throng eagerly awaiting the next Caledonian MacBrayne ferry. Lunch was bashed and shortly afterwards the ferry hove to, a look of anticipation on the faces of said divers.

The rather mundane ship-borne trip involved walking around the windswept exterior in an attempt to keep awake, or chat aimlessly to unsuspecting passengers, commonly known as “the normals”. This was closely followed with a sampling of the culinary delights on offer from the ship’s galley, “yummy”!

At last 3 and half hours later Stornoway was reached, an outpost in a remote island. David, driving, used the technical advances made in satellite navigation (“me Tarzan you (TomTom) Jane”) pressing on across a dodgy boggy wildernees of a one-track road, ahead of the pack. Surrounded by wild flowers, peat & sheep – we saw lots of sheep, eventually arriving at the guesthouse on the east side of Loch Róg (Roag). One marvelled at the décor, the appointments, and wondered how the landlord had actually managed to get this lot out here!



Anyway after an initial briefing and breakfast in the morning, a quick diversion over to Calanais (Calanish) Stone Circle, a veritable collection of nice Gneiss (nice-nice). Gneiss is what this island is made up of and there is plenty of it, it’s a form of metamorphic (transformed) rock and it’s “aaarrddd” (more than a Glaswegian kiss)!

These 33 stones are arranged several circles and lines, transecting the various cardinal points in order to reveal to the locals the times of when to plant, harvest or pack up for winter. The layout was similar to a Celtic Cross.

Cibhe Malvaig

An hour after leaving Calanais we eventually arrived at a no-horse pier in the middle of nowhere, where our “boot” was awaiting, skippered by the whimsical Murdo Macdonald, and crewed by his family.

Like everywhere else it seems that sheep are always around, some prettier than others. They come in different colours, usually white, white or white, and have a blob of colour, of red, yellow or blue. Some are horny others are not, some are shaggy, others shorn. What they like doing most is eating grass, so it's a low carpet of green all over the surrounding rocks.

Nearby to the jetty is the fish farm service buildings, a motley collection of prefabs, corrugated and brick, in front of which is usually a mass of a mess. This consists in the main of discarded items, bits of metal, bags, just strewn around the place. It's a weird place with strange comings & goings, the seagulls pecking away at the bags of fish feed. Nearby, and an unused West Change of Direction buoy thrown into a forgotten corner.

The dock is used to land crustacean catches and one such shipment we witnessed. About 10 large keep crates, of around 1000 edible crabs, sorted onto trays and placed into a cooler van. They were followed by 3 large keep-crates of around 2000 tightly jammed in velvet crabs and a single crate of lobster. We asked, and all were destined for the Spanish markets. The bait for these lay in several trays, mostly fish bits, including small anglerfish.

On the (old steamer) pier Seatrek ran excursions around the islands in either a RIB or sailboat. It was from this same pier our journey begins.

Cuma

MV Cuma was a survey vessel of sorts whereby the idea behind the boat was to cram as many scientists in as is humanely possible (hah!).

In our case, we had the luxury of an upright cabin, more suited to Dracula, as the beds were coffin size, making for some cosy surrounds! The soap bar was actually bigger than the corner washbasin!



There were two sections to the boat, “First Class” & “Steerage”, along with our Hartford chums - guess which end we all had.

As for the 1st Class area, there was air conditioning, light large airy bedrooms; all that was missing was a butler for “breakfast in bed”. I hear tell the room service had “gawn-orfff” for the duration of the trip. No amount of shouting up to galley or down the windpipes would summon even a cup of tea! Too right!

The saloon or “salon” was amply spacious, until all the camera systems were put onto the 4 tables! This was great for a time, but we had to put our toys away back in their boxes after playtime, as we wouldn’t get anything to eat otherwise.

Area 51

The weather could be misty “X-Files”-ish outside, but inside it was definitely more mysterious. In steerage, a rabbit warren of dark doors leading off into the nether regions, of time, never quite knowing which door would open “Pandora’s Box” or a time corridor into another world.

The working toilet/shower room was more like an interrogation room, with sweaty walls, flickering lights and strange whirring sounds – or so it seemed. During the night, strange events took place as countless fumbled around aimlessly in the dark, either returning from an alien abduction, or just the toilet. It was hard to tell and never quite sure as most in the morning had something scary look about them, like bright red undersuits or a “certain sheepy look” or “scary electrocuted hair”!

Boat Life

Boat life is always interesting to watch, the comings and goings of people, the “dances” that we do.

Hospitality & Food

The hospitality and food on the Cuma was second to none, with masses of home cooked food, and plenty of it. Order a “Jock with Humans” for breakfast and Skipper Murdo’s wife Kathy knew exactly what it was! (A Full Scottish Breakfast with (human) beans). The vegetarian contingent was amply catered for and we were lucky to have naturally caught salmon on one night. The crew worked very hard to please us, and we reciprocated by at least clearing and setting the tables.

Each dive followed by tea, coffee & biscuits and some delicious cakes, like ginger, chocolate or fairy, and lunch, scrumptious grilled luncheon meat barms!



Gaddaf, Ginge and Dirk messing around with their toys – or perhaps toying around with their messes.

Cameras and Compressors

The decking space was more than enough for us divers, although with the weight of camera equipment (all 12 sets) it's a wonder we weren't diving the Cuma itself! Luckily several had brought along large tubs for camera washing – ideal.

The one-shot compressor was brill as it didn't rattle your eardrums being located below decks in the engine room. By the end of the week a pipe and gauge had to be replaced! The topside compressor was a different matter, more like a roaring lion at the back of the boat (in steerage of course). Keith "Chubby" Lloyd was chief "smooth" operator; Mark "Gaddafi" Thomas & Derek "Dirk" Haslam trusted assistants. After each dive the "genny" was cranked up to full throttle, whilst the remainder trundled their tanks around.

Morning & Evening

Daylight occurred around 0430 to 2300, giving ample opportunity for those more sportily inclined to run down the Bhaltros (Valtros) pass or around the peninsular next to MalBhaig (Malvaig). Lucy was found one morning down a rocky pass at 0730, perhaps some 1st-class nightmares? An occasional swarre into hinterland, 10pm still daylight, revealed a small community of people & buildings, and an enormous one of sheep, and even bigger one of wild orchids with a small collection of sundew plants – exquisite.



Above, a small sea spider.



Right, a large crawfish.

As space is limited in the newsletter, further images of Lewis can be seen on the NUPG Website or Paul Kay's website.

Diving

This is what we all came here to do and we did! The weather could have been better, but heh, it's one thing you can't order. A mixture of rain, sea mist, overcast and sunny days. The rocks above continued below (obviously, duh!), and many "virgin" sites were dived, giving rise to some spectacular diving and encounters with seals.

Incidentally, I heard tell that a dive gave rise to a seal encounter, which was more like Stanley & Livingstone's encounter with native Africans, the latter of whom had never seen a European before. A seal seemed to be quite interested in the light-things of a certain video camera, as well as being quite furtive towards the diver. The second encounter, same diver & seal, was a "role-reversal", whereby the seal had learnt to operate the video camera and started taking pictures of the diver!

(PS: The seal & diver are getting married next year).

Day 1

Good conditions on the northwestern coastlines at Gallan Head, a place called **Leac Iain**. Our first dive started down a bumbling slope of boulders in gin-clear water. These were covered in a smattering of deadmans and a mere sprinkling of various nudibranchs sea spider and tompots. Photo-divers spent most of their time in 20m on the sparkling white sand, particular to the area. Some spotted John Dory and the target for the remainder of the trip was to photograph a Compass Jellyfish,

Day 2

When is a Blue-Cave not a blue cave? When you don't quite dive the site that was briefed (ask Paul about that one)! It didn't matter that there wasn't a swim through cave as the dive site was just great anyway. "**West of Geoda Gorm**" was a small wall at 20m behind which, a proliferation of deep cut gullies existed. The former a haven for many forms of starfish, cup corals and scarlet fan worms, the latter many forms of kelp. The second dive was a "bug-hunt" on **Geile Sgeir** (perhaps Girl Rock). Our four-some were last in, Liz, Vicky, David and I, craving for a little depth in the turbulent surface current on the southerly corner. Finding some depth at 22m the site reminded me of Skomer North Wall with a dusty coating yet minus the enormous sea fans. There were shed loads of scallops (we didn't bring any up), sea squirts, sagartia and crabs.lobster of varying descriptions. David and I were last up, the boat being over the far side of the island. The calm waves at the beginning of the dive were now large & lumpy and trying to drag us onto the rocks. I was "lucky" enough to find a shelf not 1 metre deep in the middle of nowhere. I am sure Murdo must know about it cos' it would ground a boat very quickly.

We swam around the other side much to our relief – this is why both divers need to carry SMBs, but of course Murdo new exactly where we were!

Day 3

Under the towering lofty rocks, **Stacanan Neiderclibh** (rock stack) a pinnacle breaches the surface by about 2m. Jewel anemones completely carpeted the sheer vertical north wall, reminding me of Carreg Hen off Anglesey. We toured the rock in sunlight before saying bye to the wrasse and large numbers of crustacean, gliding over rock trenches. Later, **Leac Iain** was revisited, but closer in. Some, like us, decided upon going through the cavern swim through. At the mid-point it became very difficult to move in or out with the current moving 6m one way and back again. The last resort was to grab hold of kelp stypes and boulders to "claw" our way out, and eventually the current spewed us forth into nowhere.

We rested before going deeper in the green water, finding crawfish, John Dory and a playful pipefish.

Day 4

A outstanding wall was dived, not once, but twice today! The mid-east part of the island of **Campaigh**, where the surface interval served to reload the cameras of either film or memory sticks. Only about 50% of the divers on the first dive found the wall, due to its camouflage covering of kelp.

The wall reminded me of High Point in Dale, an undulating cliff between 14 and 22m deep, bordered by rounded rocks and fronted with large areas of heavy sand. "It's Alive" with all manner of sponges, starfish, crabs, nudibranch varieties and wrasse. Above, terraces and trenches were home to ling & crabs. A single lobster held sway in a small crevice, both Paul & I had photographed it on the first dive, commented to each other about it, and we took more photos of it on the second dive. The most outstanding features of this site were at least 2 corner pieces of overhangs, one containing bright yellow jewel anemones, and the other vivid lilac. Normal you would say but the size of each individual jewel was very large – about 2-3cm and only 1 colour per wall, in their thousands!

Day 5

Bhacsaigh Island, remote in its own way, another un-dived site provided a wall of sponges, anemones, cushion stars, leopard spotted goby, and at its base a mass of inquisitive cuckoo wrasse. One just kept on coming up to the port and luckily I had the 60mm lens on.

The nearby island of **Fuaidh Mor** in complete contrast to the previous site, being a silted bug-hunt. The dusty wall gave way to a surreal no-mans land of hermit crabs, crossaster sunstars, scorpion crabs, "ghost" long legged spider crabs, whereas the small walls and overhangs had many small shrimps, crabs and suchlike. Particular of note was the dumbbell jellyfish spools and the curiously large fish sitting under a piece of kelp. Derek spotted a species of clingfish not previously seen, and I spotted a nudibranch, which doesn't seem to be in the books (you never know).

Day 6

Could it get any better, well, yes! The day was bright & sunny, and we dived the northwest corner of – **Bearasaigh**, twice. As far as we know, no other divers have dived this! Our first outing was to a wall containing scores of different nudibranchs, sponges, anemones, blennies, scorpionfish and suchlike. It started around 12m to 18m, and beyond this a field of large boulders.

The ultimate dive was had further around, in between a small adjoining rock and main island. Here, a towering vertical wall of "John West" packed marine life was laid before us. Derek and his Dominoes had found a nearby trench suitably apportioned with similar marine life, where they merrily flashed away for an hour.

The whole area was comparable with the west coast of Ireland and we dived a truly spectacular 20m high wall extending to at least 250m. Large angular boulders having fallen to the bottom now covered in similar marine life, with dahlia anemone gardens and free-range lobster.

We encountered seals as well as Lion's Mane & Compass jellyfish, and many in-water column nudibranchs, a truly awesome & memorable dive with 15-20m visibility, a fitting end to the trip.

A big thank you to Paul & Lucy for organising this excellent trip, and to Murdo Macdonald & family in providing a great boat, good laughs & fun, superb food and lastly some great frontier diving.

NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES,

by Tony Gilbert

(From the Jan 2006 meeting)

Night Photography Notes

IMAGES 1

Subject

Red Pencil Urchin Sha' Ab El Erg, Egypt

Easy Subject to photograph

Lionfish Gubal Barge, Egypt

Unpredictable Subjects – and dangerous!

Octopus Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Take only a few shots. Colour changes. Good place is where this shot taken as there are many octopus around.

Lighting

StoneFish Gubal Barge, Red Sea

Single Strobe - Allows Contrast. With Stone & Scorpionfish light can bounce back

White Spotted Octopus Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Single Strobe – on one side, picked out white spots, rather than flat

Jewel Anemones The Cave, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

TWIN Strobes – softened contrasts

Background

Ghost Crab on Teddy Bear Coral Sha' Ab Umm Usk, Red Sea

Red on Black - a classic background of contrast. At night soft corals polyps come out more.

Cuttle in Sand Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Sand Background can work to an advantage

Fan worm on Encrusting Sponge Sha' Ab Umm Usk, Red Sea

Using another marine creature's colour as background

Colour

Hermit Crab – RED Playa Chica, Lanzarote

RED stands out very well at night

Spanish Dancer Sha' Ab Sabina, Red Sea

RED with a hint of white

Parazoanthids Cave Entrance, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Rich deep YELLOW colour contrasts well with black. Polyps feeding helps a lot to define depth

Urchin Perhentian, Malaysia

Black, White contrasting with Silver, an interesting combination

Locust Lobster Cave, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

A mass of colour in the background. Complimented with the colour of the interesting subject

TWIN strobes were used so shadows were removed

Angles

Lizardfish: Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Single Strobe and Angle has created "image depth"

Filefish Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Triangular angles of the fish is different and pleasing

Alcyonium Palmatum Playa Chica Drop Off, Lanzarote

Angle of polyps & colour combination

Sand Star – Astropecten Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Colour, Lighting & Angles all come into play in this composition.

IMAGES 2

Animal Portraits & Behaviour

Parrotfish House Reef, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Negative Space. Pinks & Reds well lit. Slight smile on face

Scorpionfish Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Skittish in some places, unmoveable in others. Determined creatures

Pufferfish Perhentian, Malaysia

Free swimming close to bottom. Shy and swim into overhangs and away from diver

Splendid Crab Perhentian, Malaysia

Most crabs tolerate divers, the larger ones at night are likely to be hunting

Two Banded Shrimps Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Bold creatures that like to run around

Sharpened Pufferfish Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Inquisitive, happy to have photo taken

Parazooanthid The Temple, Red Sea

Polyyps fully open, but they will close when divers approach!

Larger Critters @Night

Butterfly Ray House Reef, Lanzarote

One flash is not enough – get in close! 20mm Lens

Crocodilefish Gubal Barge, Red Sea

Get in as close as possible. 35mm Lens

Octopus Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Make good subjects. 60mm Lens

Large Yellowmargin Moray “George” Gubal Barge, Red Sea

Morays are good to photograph at night. 35mm Lens

Large Parrotfish Sha’ Ab El Erg, Red Sea

Macro shot of the fish – but don’t too close! Macro 3T and Framer

Wide Angle, scenic

Burrowing Tube Anemones Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Get in as close as possible. Use a large wide-angle lens

Wrecks

Locomotive Coal Tender Thistlegorm, Red Sea

Use wide angle, get in close, twin strobes better

Soft Corals Thistlegorm, Red Sea

Many marine creatures are available on wrecks at night

Wreckage Thistlegorm, Red Sea

Try and photograph a piece of RECOGNISABLE wreck!

IMAGES 3

Backlighting

Backlit Gorgonia Fan Coral Sha’ Ab Umm Usk, Red Sea

Mixed colours / backgrounds

Crinoid on Orange Background Sha’ Ab Umm Usk

Locust Lobster on Mixed Background Cave, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Vase Sponge, Teddy Bear Coral, Parazooanthids Sha’ Ab Umm Usk

Luna Shrimp on mixed background Cave, Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Action shots

Moray Side Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Moray Frontal Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Attacking Crab Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Tube Anemone in current Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Cerianthid in Surge Playa Chica, Lanzarote

Divers in Darkness

Diver in The Rez Leek, UK

U. K. Night Diving

Free roaming shrimp Porth Ysgaden, N. Wales

Dogfish Portrait Porth Ysgaden, N. Wales

Baby Crinoid, mid water Loch Bay, Skye

Baby Luidia Ciliaris Loch Bay, Skye

LINKS

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

<http://www.MarineLifePhoto.com/>



Nice site with plenty of marine photographs.

<http://www.marlin.ac.uk/>

Similar to the other site web URL, with many marine images to choose from when identifying those critters.

