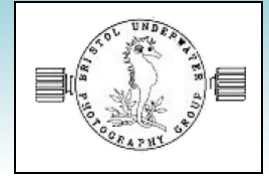


Bristol Underwater Photography Group

April 2024 Newsletter



Monthly competition:

Conservation

Only 10 entries this month – the theme is not an easy one – but there was a broad interpretation with some photographs only meeting the criteria once they had been explained.

In first place was Trevor Rees with a long-clawed squat lobster photographed inside a crisp packet in Lochcarron.

In second was Rick Ayrtton with a Lembeh black water dive of a juvenile pipefish on plastic waste.

Third place was Gill Marsh with an injured seal in Lundy. She said it had a band around its neck the day before but it had gone when she took this photograph.



Presentation by Rick Ayrton

Warship discovery around the British Isles (and its photography)

As most of you will know I recently presented this talk at the 70th anniversary Boston Sea Rovers Conference. Quite an auspicious occasion, this is the speakers list for the Saturday, note the name of the first speaker who happens to be the grandson of Jacques.



My slot was in the rather more “real diving” session of the afternoon. The wrecks I was talking about were as follows:



HMS Victory (1744) – Mid-Channel, the one before the Victory in Portsmouth Harbour and was lost in a storm in 1744 with great loss of life, A known wreck but only opened to recreational technical divers in the last year or so.

HMS Jason, lying up near the Isle of Coll, Jason was located by Bob Anderson and Kevin Heath (Orkney based wreck researcher) I was part of the team that dived her for the first time in 2022

USS Jacob Jones, South of the Scillies, the one the US audience were very excited about, my deepest UK dive at 113m and I was the first to see the ships bell, this has now been raised by a joint US/UK military operation using an ROV

U?? – A U boat lying off the Lizard in about 80m, it could have been one of 3, the U93, U95 or U109, the dive involved scrubbing the propellor to find markings which eliminated the U109 and indicated it was the U95.

LCT488 – A landing craft out in the middle of the Celtic Sea. The team I was diving with have been trying to find the US Coastguard ship Tampa (so far without success). During our searches we dive marks that could turn out to be interesting – We found an inverted wreck with a gun mount and 2 small propellers, discussions post dive thought it might have been a Landing craft, contacts at Plymouth Uni did further investigation and it turns out there was the 9th LCT Flotilla created to take Landing Craft not needed after D-Day to the Pacific. They were to be towed by steamships most of the way, trials were done and confirmed they were good up to force 6 wind. Setting off in September was perhaps unwise and the flotilla was caught in a storm, scattering the fleet several LCT's sank, over 100 sailors needed rescue and more than 50 lost

their lives. Possibly the 488, records showed that the 488 turned with its escort to try to make for Milford Haven, the wreck lies on a line drawn between the Flotilla position and Milford Haven.

HMS Hoste and HMS Negro – these final 2 were considered together, lying between Orkney and Shetland in Deep Water. Once again located by Kevin Heath who had a high degree of confidence that the wrecks were where he was asking us to dive. Again, we would be diving from Clasina with Bob Anderson. We found both wrecks lying is just over 100m and I was able to photograph the bell and step plate of HMS Negro as proof positive of the wrecks identity.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY

All the wrecks were deep technical dives, in such circumstance the photography almost has to take second fiddle to my own life support, controlling my rebreather and acting as an appropriate buddy. As a result of this I have evolved a way to conduct and photograph the dives which works for me in the hostile environment found on deep UK wrecks.

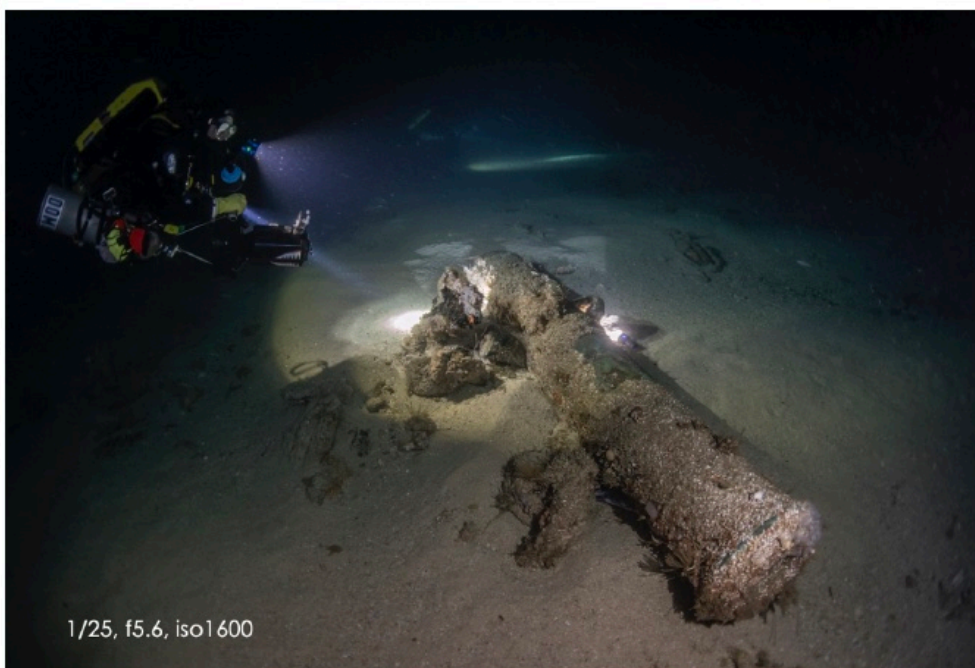
The system is based upon utilising the auto iso capabilities of modern cameras along with video lights rather than strobes, then choosing suitable shutter speed (between 1/25 – 1/60) and aperture usually stopped down a click or too from wide open. Any image at significant variance is probably set up in error!

The video lights are dialed down to their minimum power, the issue being that it is often very dark, a strobe on minimum power still puts out a significant amount of light, exposing for that would take time I don't have & it is possible more distant areas of the image would end up being in irrecoverable dark shadow. I am trying to capture wide views as much as possible, when I do go in close the auto iso adjusts to get a good exposure even if the other settings are not ideal.

The final piece of the photo jigsaw is the camera which can virtually see in the dark, I'm using a Nikon Z9 with its 48Mpixel sensor, I can get useable shots at iso 20000 which a few years ago would be unheard of.

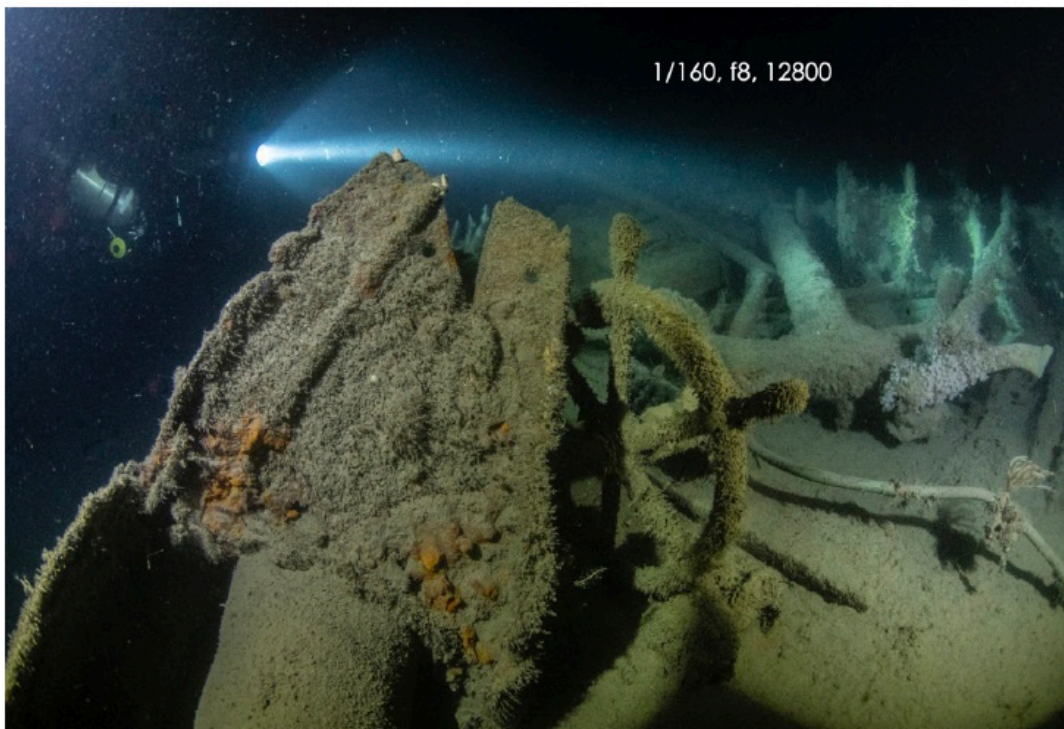
Some examples from the wrecks:

HMS Victory – You will have seen this before, it won the BSOU conservation monthly competition in 2022



I felt the choice of 1/25 was as low a shutter speed as I could go, many shots taken on this dive showed motion blur although the one here is ok, because I am fairly close to the cannon the auto iso has adjusted to 1600. Subsequently I would choose a higher shutter speeds

HMS Jason



I think the 1/160 shutter speed was an error on this shot, but still high iso 12800

USS Jacob Jones



My first view of the bell of the Jacob Jones, again a close in shot so the auto iso drops to 3200

Unknown U-boat



A bit more ambient light around but still iso 10000, good enough image quality for Scuba magazine though!

SCUBA

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The U-boat detectives

How a BSAC technical team finally identified U-95



In Test Centre
**The Paralenz
Vaquita**

Eye on Skye

A vision of the Scottish island's thriving seas

The Whale in the Living Room

Extraordinary stories from filmmaker John Ruthven

Wrecked

Explore North Cornwall's SS Sphene with Andy Hunt

Book reviews

Thai Cave divers share their inspirational stories

Loch life

Discover Loch Duich's marine haven with Paul Naylor



LCT488



Here the low iso is probably caused by the 2 bright lights pointed directly at me!

HMS Hoste



Close in shot iso adjusts to allow the correct exposure

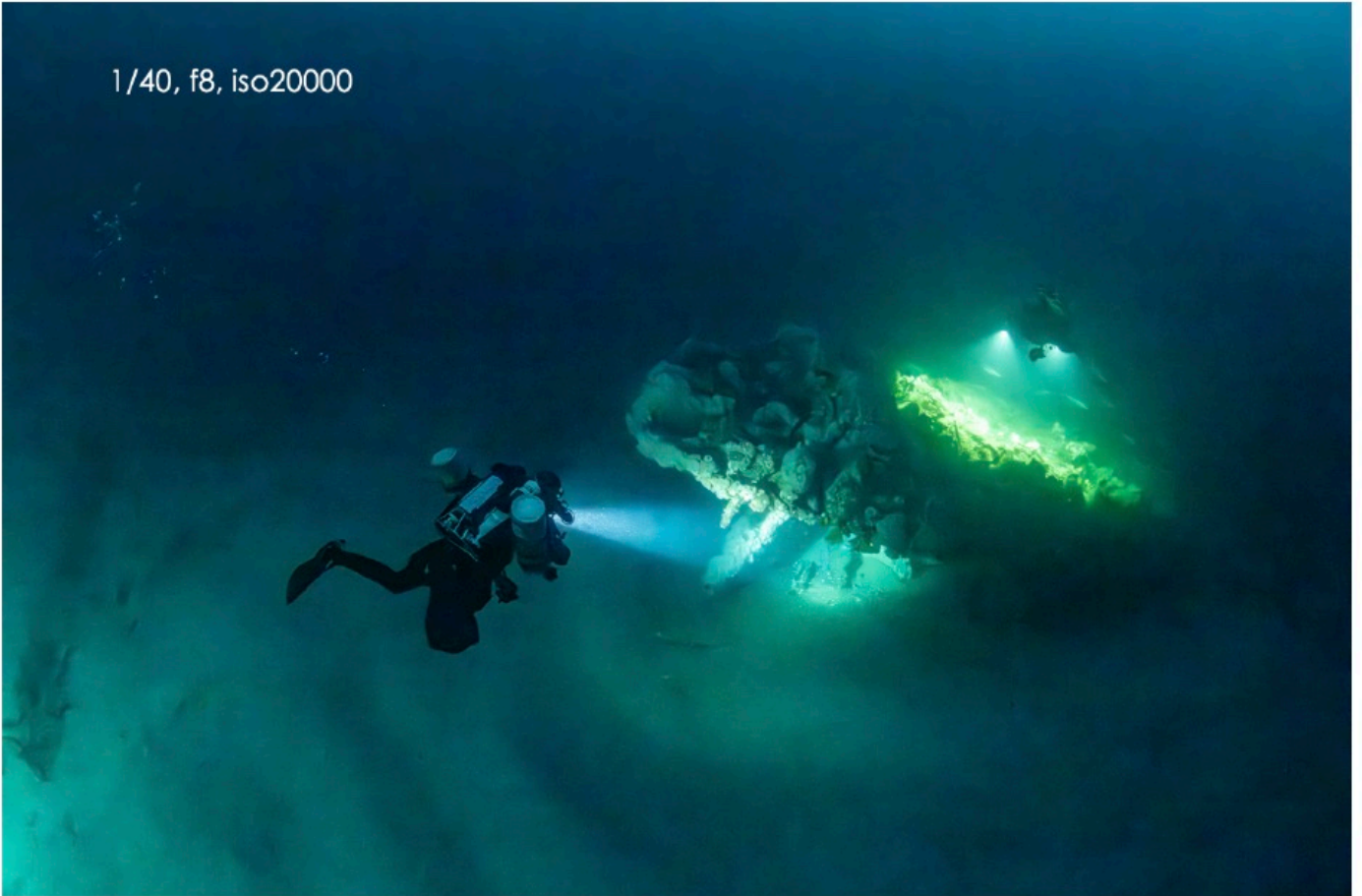
Same with the step plate



Finally a comparison,

Processed image of a diver approaching the stern of HMS Negro – these 2 images I believe show the way camera and sensor technology along side post processing technology are heading. To start, the image is shot at iso 20000, I was heading back to the shot line at this point and had turned off my videolights, I took a series of shots as the diver passed me, At the time it looked like a pointless exercise on the back screen of the camera but I found the camera nailed focus in the very low light and then I was able to recover so much of the image in Lightroom, in this case including the AI denoise process. I believe I pushed the file 3 stops to get the final image, unthinkable even just a few years ago when starting from such a dark file.

1/40, f8, iso20000



1/40, f8, iso20000

Unprocessed

