

in focus

Winter 2007/8

no. 89

40th
Anniversary

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Underwater Photographers





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in focus - 40th anniversary issue - Winter 2007/8

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Cover shot: Diver with camera *by* Colin Doeg.

www.bsoup.org

Editorial

Welcome to this special, bumper sized 40th anniversary issue of 'in focus'. I view this as a tribute to the many people who have been involved with the Society over the years and I very much hope you enjoy it.

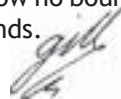
First my very sincere thanks to all the - er - more senior members (is that OK Colin?) who have been kind enough to donate their engaging reminiscences to this issue. Some have shared their wonderful and fond memories of the early days, others have opined about the state of underwater photography today and still more have shared some priceless experiences 'in the field'. We also have our regular slot by Alex Mustard, musing on muck diving around Mabul.

Both our outgoing (Martha Tressler) and incoming (JP Trenque) Chairs share their own musings. You can also enjoy some fantastic early images from the days when the genuine pioneers used to do their own developing and build their own housings and flash units, at the beginning having no idea whether they would explode or electrocute the water if they leaked.

In the early days, when members joined BSoUP they were issued with a standard 'Data Book'. This was a blue ring-binder stacked full of information about every aspect of underwater photography available at the time. I have a copy and it is absolutely mind-blowing! Of course we now have the web and our website contains a world of useful facts and figures but in those days everything was manual, even the knowledge sharing.

One aspect of the early meetings that has come through again and again is the wide open nature of the members. Experience was shared freely and generously with no hesitation. People came to the meetings thirsty for knowledge and would almost interrogate the more senior members and they would welcome it. Nowadays so much knowledge, information and support is available in the public domain sometimes we forget the value of plain, honest conversation.

The two co-founders of BSoUP are still attending meetings 40 years on. They and many of their early colleagues are still regularly available and willing to listen and discuss. My advice is to take advantage of the continuing presence of these amazing, awe-inspiring pioneers and come and talk with them if you possibly can. Their knowledge and experience know no bounds and for me, it is a huge honour and privilege to call them friends.



BSoUP meetings 2008

January 16

Photo techniques: Shooting at high ISO *with Simon Rogerson*
'focus on': Best shots of 2007
Main event: Diving the Delta *with Tony White*

February 20

Photo techniques: Creative *with Tony Baskeyfield*
'focus on': Animal behaviour
Main event: Shooting the military part 2 *with Simon Brown*

March 19

Photo techniques: Using models *with Zac Macaulay*
Annual event: Theme portfolio competition
Main event: Wreck photography *with John Liddiard*

April 16

Photo techniques: Photoshop *with Heather Hammond*
'focus on': Wrecks
Main event: **Alan James**

May 21

Main event: An evening with **Martin Edge**
'focus on': Close-up

June 18

Photo techniques: **Gavin Parsons**
'focus on': Wide-angle
Main event: BUIF review

July 16

Annual event: Splash-in review

August 20

Main event: An evening with **Colin Doeg, Peter Scoones, Tim Glover & Geoff Harwood**
'focus on': International 'focus on'

September 17

'focus on': Movement

October 15

Annual event: Best of British portfolio

November 19

Annual event: AGM
Annual event: Beginner's portfolio
Annual event: 'focus on' final
Main event: **Gavin Parsons**

December 17

Annual event: Open portfolio
Annual event: Christmas party

Profile of co-founder Colin Doeg

Co-founder Colin was BSoUP's first chairman. As well as being the first person ever to take a photo of a basking shark underwater, Colin continues to contribute more to British underwater photography than probably any other person ever has. He still attends all BSoUP meetings and still actively serves on the committee. The man is, quite simply, a legend.



Sunbathing was never Colin Doeg's thing. So, when he was on holiday in the south of France, he bought himself a pair of goggles, waded into the warm sea and was fascinated by what he saw. That was some time in the 1950's.

The following year, while on holiday in Cornwall, he saw two men diving in wartime frogmen's kit and became hooked. At first he wore woollen pullovers to ward off the cold while he was snorkelling but subsequently he joined a branch of the BSAC and trained and took his basic tests in an open air swimming pool at Westcliffe-on-Sea.

For warmth he made his own wet suits, cutting them out and gluing them together on the kitchen table. Tanks were small in those days. Nicknamed tadpoles, they were previously used as oxygen cylinders in aircraft.

Colin started work on local newspapers in Romford, Essex at 16 during the bombing and attacks on the area with V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets - yes he is that old! From the beginning he worked with photographers and continued to do so when he moved into public relations. Those photographers included renowned photojournalists and ex-Life magazine staffers from whom he learned much as his enthusiasm for taking pictures in the sea developed.

His first camera cost £10.00 and was used in a crude housing given to him by Bob and Dennis Wright at Divers' Down in Swanage. It was a large Perspex tube sealed at one end. An industrial glove fitted over the other end and was secured by circlips.

To keep the water out you pumped air in but then it needed 16lb of lead to counter its buoyancy. Said Colin: “You stuck your hand into the glove so you could operate the camera and were stuck like that until you came out of the water.” By then he had bought a 7s 6d paperback on how to take pictures underwater.

It recommended processing your own films. “I was using black and white film exclusively” so he bought the necessary chemicals, read the leaflets and discovered you also needed a processing tank. At that time he was also mostly using ex-War Department film because it was cheap.

After two dismal years with that outfit he bought a CalypsoPhot, the forerunner of the Nikonos series of amphibious cameras and his pictures immediately improved to the point where he began using fresh film, particularly Kodak Tri-X. He continued to process his own films, usually in a tent or a hotel room and frequently caused consternation when he washed his camera under a tap at campsites.

By then he had his own regulator and tank and used to dive with other people about his own size until he could afford a contents gauge. Out of necessity he began diving on his own because he was frequently working while branch dives were taking place and it suited his passion for photographing fish and scenery.

He taught himself how to print his negatives - using the kitchen or bathroom once it was sufficiently dark - but eventually moved into a larger house so he could create a darkroom. He went on to become the first photographer not working in the photographic industry to become British Underwater Photographer of the Year. He also took the first picture in British waters ever to win an open international underwater photographic competition.

Work and a family began to limit the time he could spend underwater so he started photographing various land sports - “mostly anything involving wheels or water”. This led to him beating 500 other portfolios to become Amateur Photographer magazine’s Sports Photographer of the Year. It also led to him photographing various sports for the Daily Telegraph and his work also appeared in other national and monthly publications for many years.

He writes the monthly Big Shot feature for DIVE magazine, the BSAC’s official journal, and has now switched to a digital slr and a digital compact camera but he retains a Nikonos for black and white photography.

Profile of co-founder Peter Scoones

Co-founder Peter is one of the world's leading wildlife underwater cameramen who has been dubbed 'the godfather of underwater filming'. A Bafta and Emmy award winner he is perhaps best known for his stunning cinematography in the BBC's 'Planet Earth', 'The Blue Planet' and 'Life in the Freezer'. He still regularly attends BSoUP meetings with his partner Georgette.



When Peter Scoones was serving in the Royal Air Force in the Far East in the early 1960's the shops only stocked facemasks. He bought one so he could more easily see to scrub the hull of his racing dinghy.

However, one glimpse of the colourful fish and scenery below was sufficient to arouse a passion that has taken him to the highest ranks of the world's most highly regarded wildlife underwater cameramen.

He trained as a naval architect but, when he was due to be called up for National Service, instead decided to sign up for the RAF and "let them teach me something useful".

That was photography and he learned to use and repair everything from 35mm to 5in x 4in film cameras as well as cine models. He also did everything from pack shots and portraits to air-to-air photography.

At the same time he made housings in Perspex so he could take his photography underwater and soon began to produce results that went on to win gold medals at international film festivals.

Also at the same time, he and his friends formed their own diving club, devised training programmes and taught themselves to dive with the assistance of the local Royal Navy unit.

At the end of his time in the RAF Peter returned to the UK and began working in the photographic trade as colour manager of a Fleet Street processing laboratory. That was when he met Colin Doeg and together, in 1967, they formed the British Society of Underwater Photographers.

The Society's first splash-ins were at Shoreham and Swanage, on the south coast. Later they moved to Fort Bovisand at Plymouth and the on-the-day shoot-out format that Peter devised is now the basis of competitions throughout the world, including the CMAS world title event.

Led by Peter, some of the members used to process the day's films in the dungeons at the fort and the audience voted for their favourite images, a practice adopted by BSoUP to overcome the fierce controversies that usually followed judges' decisions at contests.

Peter moved on to join a company that made housings and underwater cameras for the oil industry as well as providing film and photographic services. He used to amaze his friends with his ability to return from an assignment in tropical waters one day and be packed and ready to fly to Aberdeen the next morning to work on a North Sea oil rig.

While he was working for that company he had his big break. The BBC heard that he had developed a special low light television camera and wanted to hire it for an expedition to the Comoros to film coelacanths, the oldest fish in the world. Peter said the camera was only available if he came along to operate it ... and that is how he first met David Attenborough, who is instantly recognisable throughout the world as the voice and face of wildlife films.

The method of controlling the camera was crude. It was dangled deep in the ocean at the end of a steel hawser that was raised, lowered and twisted to direct it. Eventually the camera met its fate when it was trapped in a gully and torn adrift from the hawser but the expedition led to a continuing involvement with the BBC's Natural History Unit and strings of awards for the films and videos for which his work was a major or total part.

In the process he has dived everywhere from the tropics to beneath the ice. He knows the world's oceans like most people know their own garden or street. He is the only person to have been awarded the title of British Underwater Photographer of the Year twice.

The start of something big by Kendall McDonald

Reproduced from the Evening News, Wednesday, December 6 1967 and 'in focus 34', September 1989.

I have just seen a society formed. Not a very impressive statement? Well, just how many societies have you seen formed - actually been there when the rules were drawn up, the subscription decided, and the very first chairman elected? Can you stand outside some magnificent building in the heart of London and say proudly "Yes, attended the very first meeting y'know. Course we never thought that from that humble beginning would come all this..."?

Well I can't actually do that yet either, but I can see it all coming in the future - the great sweeping marble staircase up to the main salon ... the busts of past presidents lining the alcoves on either side ... the queue of young hopefuls submitting their work in desperate attempts to gain admission to the ranks of the immortals.

Of course, one or two of us had this future state of things well in mind when we voted for the title of the new society. The British Society of Underwater Photographers. Sounds just right for such an august body.

Actually, our first meeting was in a nice house in North London and there is no sign of the Corinthian building that will be our final home. But it will come. Mind you, we're not a pompous lot. We noted with glee for example that our initials spelt B SOUP. Well, that's all right. Not only does it accurately describe the conditions that we and our cameras often meet beneath the surface of the seas around our coasts but a nickname is usually a good clue to popularity.

Basically the idea of the society is to get all those who are interested in photography underwater together and give them a central clearing house for their ideas. And there are more of these diving-photographers than you would think. Some 20 of us gathered in North London and some of those present had driven from Brighton. Most had won prizes for their photographs taken underwater. Together they present an array of experience and skill that it would be hard to beat.

They plan to put this combined knowledge at the disposal of anyone who wishes to join. For example: Anyone who wants to know about techniques of photographing the giant basking sharks that enter our seas should speak to Colin Doeg, our first chairman. He's done it.

Anyone who wants to know how to take super close-ups of a starfish should talk to Geoff Harwood, who was elected “Underwater Photographer of the Year” at the Brighton conference of the British Sub-Aqua Club last year.

Anyone who wants to know about equipment, such as a housing to waterproof your own pet camera, should talk to another committee member, Tim Glover. Anyone who wants to know about colour printing of those fabulous underwater scenes should speak to the new secretary Peter Scoones. Ask him, too, about photographing the poisonous lion fish in the Red Sea and he’ll tell you. The experience of all those experts is not confined to British waters. They own, without doubt, the finest collection of underwater photographs shot in this country’s seas. But their collection probably has just as many showing the marine life of other countries in the world.

Remembering early BSoUP by Peter Rowlands

(member no. 123) www.uwpmag.com

Peter is the publisher/editor of the online pdf magazine ‘Underwater Photography’ and is half of Magic Filters (www.magic-filters.com). Peter also maintains websites in memory of two Naval shipwrecks www.hmsroyaloak.co.uk and www.hmsdasher.co.uk



I was very fortunate to have joined BSoUP just as disposable flash bulbs were being replaced by electronic flashguns. To todays underwater photographers this may sound like the 1930’s but it was, in fact, the early 1970’s. It was a time when ‘trannies’ didn’t mean what they do today and a ‘dome port’ was something you aspired to.

I honestly can’t remember where I first heard about BSoUP. It had been going 3 or 4 years before I discovered it and attended my first meeting in a smoky room over a pub in Holborn. Those were very exciting times for me. I was in my early 20’s and mad keen on underwater photography and here I was in a room surrounded by people with the same passion. I found it very difficult to sleep after BSoUP meetings as my mind was still trying to process all the information and excitement each meeting brought. When I joined I remember I was ‘Member 123’. My diving buddy at the time, Evan Morgan, was Member 122 which annoyed me because in those days your number

indicated how early you had joined BSoUP and created a sort of class system.

I well remember chatting to someone who I didn't know but he had a useful knowledge of how to machine an O ring groove. When the conversation ended and he (it was definitely a he for I don't remember any she's at meetings for several years) drifted off to speak to someone else, Evan put the back of his hand to his mouth and discreetly whispered "46". Wow. This was someone to look up to, someone to be treated with respect and reverence. When I then got chatting to someone who I now know as Peter Scoones, Evan couldn't hold himself back and, after the conversation, he dragged me away by my coat lapels (which were very wide at the time) and stared at me with equally wide eyes and hissed "2". It was like I had been to the top table and mingled with the Gods and so BSoUP became my new religion.

As with all societies I had joined, I hid my lack of knowledge by producing a newsletter. It gave me a reason to approach members 1-9 without nerves and, to a man, they all imparted their knowledge and helped me reproduce it in writing. Prior to my doing this, as part of your membership, you were given the "Databook" - a blue, ring bound file which I cherish to this very day containing what seemed like everything that was known about underwater photography at the time - how to choose an O ring, a circuit diagram to allow flashguns to be triggered underwater without electrocuting yourself, a formula to correct chromatic aberration, and how to glue Perspex and blow a dome port. Magical stuff to me at the time.

It was the Databook and monthly meetings which typified BSoUP. Here was a bunch of guys which, including myself, I was later to refer to as 'mild eccentrics' but who were prepared to tell all, and to all, in the true amateur spirit for the greater good of progressing the mother of all problems, how to get a better picture underwater. And that was the important thing. The picture was king. It was just that in those days you had to go through so much to even achieve a picture. You had to actually understand what was going on and every improvement felt like a step on the moon.

Today, fortunately, the picture is still the king, it's just that now we have everything at our disposal, finances permitting. You don't need to understand underwater photography to get a good picture and that, to me, is fine but I feel privileged to have experienced those early days of BSoUP and I bow to the founding members. They paved the way for what has become an important contributor to the image of the diving community and created a visual awareness in those who have not seen underwater that it is a beautiful place.

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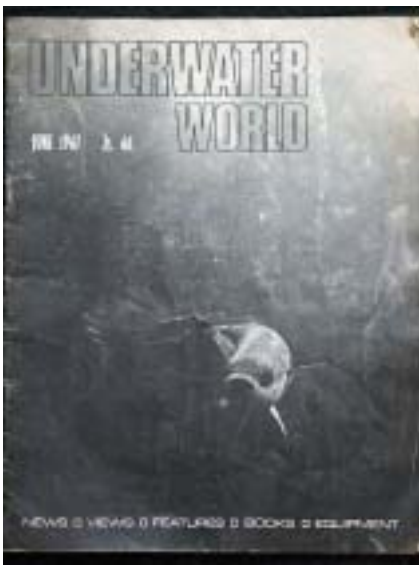






Colin Doeg's ground-breaking shot of a basking shark, the first ever photographed underwater.

Colin was in Devon using a Nikonos camera.



Colin Doeg's beautiful shot of a turning mullet, his first really successful picture. It was taken with a Calypso-Phot amphibious camera in Dorset. Colin developed it himself. Unwilling to wait until dark, Colin dived into the end of two joined sleeping bags covered in blankets in a tent, armed with his developing tank, and emerged with this wonderful image.



Another of Colin's lovely, early shots. A simple depiction of weeds and sunlight.

Open Fotosub El Hierro by Linda Pitkin

Linda Pitkin has been an underwater photographer and member of BSoUP for 27 years. She has published four books and won many awards in national and international competitions. She currently has an exhibition at the London Zoo. More information about this and her photography at www.lindapitkin.net



Linda Pitkin was an invitee on the jury to an annual underwater photography competition in the Canary Islands. The 11th Open International Fotosub Isla de El Hierro was held from 22-28 October, 2007. Here Linda recounts her impressions of an eventful and very enjoyable week.

The horn sounds at 9 a.m. and the race is on. A fleet of RIBs speeds out of the sunlit harbour of La Restinga, jostling for position as they carry the competitors to their allotted dive sites, each team keyed up for the stressful task of making the best possible photos in 60 minutes underwater. The three days of competition of the 11th Open International Fotosub Isla de El Hierro have started now in earnest.

The Fotosub is a prestigious annual event with big money prizes, and this October it attracted 22 underwater photographers with their models or assistants, mainly from Spain and the Canary Islands and a few from Germany and France. As fate will have it, something is bound to go wrong for somebody when it really counts, and German photographer Andreas Koffka had a disastrous first dive when the memory card in his digital camera persisted in giving an error message despite him surfacing twice, getting back on the RIB, and opening the camera housing to try and fix the problem.

Incidents like this made me glad I was on the jury, and our boat left half an hour later for us to enjoy a relaxed dive with no pressure other than the watery kind. Fine weather meant that we did not have to contend with the rough seas that made the competition more challenging the previous year.

Had it been choppy I would have been much more confident in our large, sturdy and powerful RIB than swamped by waves in the floppy little Zodiacs my husband Brian and I were diving from at the Brothers a few weeks before. It was my first visit to the Canary Islands and, after 28 years of diving, my first experience of something in between Britain and the tropics, and I was pleasantly surprised.

Firstly, as I hit the water, it was a relief to find I could manage OK in the still warm season with my one piece 5 mm wetsuit, plus hood, and I didn't regret that I'd been unable to squeeze the second piece, my top jacket, into my bulging luggage. Then, the water clarity was impressive, 20 metres or more visibility, and the marine life was fascinating as it was all new to me.

I could see plenty of scope for the photographers in the competition, with striking volcanic scenery all around and a good diversity of fish and other animals including an abundance of some of a tropical nature, such as parrotfish, trumpetfish and filefish. El Hierro has a richer fauna because it is the most southerly of the Canary Islands with slightly warmer waters than the others. Helping to preserve the coastal area around La Restinga, at the southern end of the island, is a marine reserve where there are restrictions on fishing and diving is mainly limited to sites marked by buoys.

Not much English is spoken on the island and, struggling to recall any of my rusty Spanish picked up during fieldwork in Costa Rica 11 years ago, I was glad that the dive briefings just before we dropped in off the boat were brief. For Brian and I it was a case of suck it and see. On one dive I followed Brian to a small pinnacle at about ten metres, but I knew we must be in the wrong place. Straining my eyes far out into the hazy blue, I caught a glimpse of bubbles, and heading across a stretch of open water we eventually found our group diving around a massively tall pinnacle that dropped to the sand at 40 metres.

I enjoyed all the dives we did, especially El Bajon and El Desierto. Pelagic fishes swirl around the sheer current-scoured faces of El Bajon, and several large groupers too, but my favourite grouper had to be docile and photographer-friendly Pancho, the resort's 40 kg mascot that lives at El Desierto among the rocks 30 metres or so down. There is currently a move to save him from the threat of being fished, so that he can enjoy the full 50 years such a grouper might live to.

The competitors dived twice a day and submitted two photographs to be judged each of the first two days, plus two extra on the third day, that they had taken on any of the three days.

The standard was very impressive and a pleasure for us in the jury to see, but quite hard work to make the all-important decisions in the scoring, especially on the last day when we had to go through all the 176 pictures to make the final selection of the top ten teams, best wide angle and macro, best model, photo most representative of El Hierro, and our favourite photo of a Canary Islands parrotfish.

This fish is the emblem of the event and something of a local speciality not just in the water but rather disconcertingly on the restaurant menus too. It does seem just a little bit unfair to spend the dive establishing a rapport with a fish and then go and eat it for dinner!

The jury was made up of three from Spain and the Canary Islands, plus the Hungarian underwater photographer Tibor Dombavani and myself, making for an international mix. After much deliberation we were happy to pick as the overall winner Arturo Telle from Gran Canaria with his model Teresa Rodriguez. Arturo's collection of eight images was spectacular. Second place went to David Barrio and Luisa Quintanilla, and third to Julio Díaz and Esther Torrent.

The organisation of the Fotosub was excellent and a credit to the tireless efforts and attention to every detail of Carlos Minguell (three times world champion of underwater photography) and his team of helpers. The scale of the event was amazing in the small, quiet, fishing village of La Restinga. El Hierro is the smallest and least touristy of the Canary Islands, and the Fotosub is the event of the year for local people too, young and old.

The enormous marquee erected on the harbourside to stage the shows was full to overflowing on the night of the awards, when we were entertained by an amusing and cleverly put together film of the competition, and a terrific instrumental band including a brilliant timple player (a characteristic Canary Islands instrument).

In the main street of La Restinga a fiesta continued through the night, and as we prepared to leave for our early morning flight home, the young locals were still dancing to the throb of the disco.

Those were the days *by* Colin Doeg

Really Peter Scoones and I should be writing this together. Because the launching of BSoUP and its early success was very much a joint effort.

However, it happened by accident. Peter and I had each entered a photographic competition run by a diving magazine which, sadly, is no longer in existence. After the contest had been judged, some transparencies were posted by mistake to my home. They belonged to a photographer called Peter Scoones.

I didn't know him at the time, but I knew that he had won a gold medal for an 8 mm film at the Brighton Film Festival a short time before! And I knew I wanted to meet him, especially as he did not live far away in London. So off I went with the trannies. I knocked at the door of his house... and we did not get off the doorstep for something like three hours. We were too busy talking about underwater photography and another idea which had been buzzing around in each of our minds - an organisation for underwater photographers.

We found we both complemented and inspired each other in our ideas, our contacts, and in the skills and enthusiasm necessary to launch such a body. The outcome of that chat and subsequent phone calls was a notice sent to many diving clubs and people who we knew which declared:

“Because of the widespread interest among British divers in underwater photography it is proposed to hold a meeting to discuss the formation of a society to enable closer co-operation among all those interested in this branch of photography.”

“The proposed society would also foster and stimulate interest in underwater photography in all its aspects.”

“The idea of forming such a society has resulted from talks with many divers. The general feeling is that a society should provide a forum for the discussion of ideas and problems associated with underwater photography in any way.”

“It should also foster interest in all aspects of underwater photography as an art by holding exhibitions of work representative of the trends and techniques.”

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Some images of the excellent BSoUP stand at the Dive Show in Birmingham, October 2007.



Our best stand ever displayed a wonderfully diverse range of material including a special 40th anniversary collection on the double back stand and an impressive rolling DVD showing the history



and characters of the society over the years.

A major thank you to all those who helped put the display together and helped out on the stand over a very successful weekend.





The first ever splash-in at Fort Bovisand, Devon.

Splash-in 1982, Fort Bovisand, Devon.



“The society would also be concerned with developing techniques and equipment for use underwater.”

“In particular, the society would be open to anyone interested in underwater photography and not in any way limited to an experienced few.”

Recipients of the notice were urged to display it on their club notice boards and then Peter and I waited for the response.

Meeting

It came in the form of a meeting in Peter Scoones’s front room attended by 16 people. Among them were Dr John Betts, Mike Busuttilli, Tim Glover, Geoff Harwood, Kendall McDonald and John Meredith.

The minutes record that the meeting was “called to bring together a society for underwater photographers and others interested in the field.” They went on to state that the meeting started with an ‘informal discussion’ - you should have been present for some of them - “on items that those present considered such a society should attempt.”

We were thrilled by our visions of the future. And our ideas were suitably wide-ranging and far-sighted. They were:

- making an arrangement with a photographic agency to handle member’s work
- formation of a print/slide clinic to help members who would like advice on their work
- a postal portfolio of underwater photographs
- the holding of meetings to discuss problems, exchange ideas and show photographs and films
- formation of a Technical Exchange Service to put members in touch with others who wanted assistance or had information that might help others
- investigation of the possibility of underwater photo-safaris to more equable climates
- provision of a forum where members could air their views and complaints

BSoUP christened

It was agreed that the Society should be called The British Society of Underwater Photographers and Kendall McDonald, with the agile mind of a Fleet Street national newspaper editor, promptly pointed out that it would be known henceforth as BSoUP, which was a pretty good description of the stuff we dived in and in which we attempted to get recognisable images.

The annual subscription was set at three guineas “payable in advance”. Now there was a touch of class. Guineas. For those who haven’t heard the term, a guinea was one pound sterling and one shilling in real money. The first officials were:

Chairman: Colin Doeg

Secretary: Peter Scoones

Treasurer: Juliet Scoones

Committee Members: Geoff Harwood, Tim Glover, Kendall McDonald, Don Allen and Phil Smith.

It was decided to hold the first meeting of the Society on 5 December 1967 at 7.30 for 8.00 p.m. Members were asked to bring six pictures for display ... and so began the scurrilous suggestion that BSoUP was only formed so that we could show each other our prints and slides!

BSoUP logo

It was also decided that the Society should have a symbol. Various members undertook to think of ideas. Kendall McDonald went back to the newsroom of the now defunct London Evening News and explained the problem to one of the newspaper’s artists. Without hesitation, he said “this is what you want”. The genius then did a few scribbles on a piece of paper ... and so was born the outline of a fish in the middle of a frame sight.

With a burst of generosity, we rewarded the designer with a packet of twenty fags for his work. Today the creation of a logo and a house style would cost a packet ... of money.

Early days

For those involved at the outset, they were exciting times as we bubbled over with our visions of the future. Some have been achieved already. In fact most have. Others are still to be fully met. Above all else commercialism and competitiveness had not emerged to the same extent, so everyone was eager to share ideas, talk about techniques and help each other produce better results. Those were days when it was a triumph to produce a recognisable image of the underwater world, even if it took you several years to manage it the first time. The formation of BSoUP and the forum it provided began to help people to produce satisfactory results much more quickly.

Over the years, underwater photography has leapt ahead, but I always hope that those who take it up will continue to have as much fun and excitement as the founders of the Society, which is now world-wide in its membership and influence.

The early days by Jan & Mike Maloney



Stalwart members for over 35 years, the Maloneys remain involved in all areas of the society. Jan also did a committee stint as an excellent meetings secretary.



Our introduction to underwater photography started in the mid 1960's when we bought a second hand Nikonos II and an underwater flash. It was a great camera but the flash was fired by the use of underwater flash bulbs. These were carried in a small-netted container. Each time you created an image you were required to change the bulb. The contacts had to be scrupulously clean to fire and it was a bit hit and miss at times, but they gave a warm light to the image. The bulbs were expensive and our thoughts turned to putting a land flash in an underwater housing, which at the time we were unable to buy.

We then heard of BSoUP. They must have experts who would be able to help in our quest for better lighting, so it was off to the Princess Louise Pub in Holborn where meetings were held monthly. We were impressed straightaway. Nice, friendly people all talking underwater photography and the knowledge and expertise was freely available.

When joining they gave you the famous BSoUP blue ledger with diagrams and instructions of how to make not only underwater flash housings but housings for your land camera as well out of a sheet Perspex. It also gave wiring and switch details, what Perspex, case catches and O-rings to use and where to purchase these. What members had tried and what had failed, thus saving wasted time on trying yourself.

We recall Peter Scoones bringing the equipment to demonstrate processing at home with all the chemicals, trays and hangers. We moved venues often to start with, once to the elegant Challenor Club just behind Harrods, which was frequented by members of stage, screen and TV mixing with us when we used the bar.

In the 70's the annual BSoUP splash-in started at Fort Bovisand overlooking Plymouth Sound. Members met there in late May/early June for the weekend. Same format as now, shooting your one roll of film between 9am and 4pm, a display of prints and choosing your two best images to be screened that evening, these being judged by the whole audience.

Of course it was not that simple, the Fort did not have the flats then and members stayed in the large casement bunk houses, or you could stay in a camper van parked on the quayside which is what we use to do. Great until during the night the wind increased and the waves started crashing down on the roof of the van forcing us to beat a hasty retreat to a quieter area. All film had to be processed on site, someone having to bring all the equipment and chemicals down and having the arduous task of processing up to 45 rolls of film between 4pm and 9pm, down in the basement of the Fort. Luckily there were willing members to do this.

Once a small fire in the processing room damaged some of the film, which obviously did not go down too well. The Saturday evenings ran to sometimes after midnight, what with the processing, drying, distribution, choosing images, projection, judging and counting of votes. Even in those early days we were always amazed by the incredible images members submitted.

Members spent months preparing their props for the humorous category, testing and trying them out in their club diving pools. On BSoUP's 25th anniversary, Les Kemp had an imitation iced cake with 25 candles which all lit up underwater and won him first prize. Martin Parker from AP Valves had an image which coincided with the BSAC bringing out their new dive tables, a real desktop computer complete with a diver trying to come to terms with the tables, again first prize. Alex and Tamara Double arrived with a huge gilded bird cage complete with a life-like parrot inside. We have been lucky to win the humorous category twice. These props and ideas are great when they succeed but there are many times when it all goes pear shaped and floats away. Well there is always next year!

In the early days members brought their inflatables to the weekend, either RFDs or Zodiacs. Once we towed our club Zodiac down and being a little green then, unhitching the trailer from the car it broke away and careered down the slope just missing crashing into the parked cars. No damage to the boat but unknown to us the trailer sustained severe damage and after the weekend towing it up from the fort it totally collapsed at the top of the hill, necessitating calling out the AA, having the boat and trailer put on a low loader and taken back to London. Yes many memories of the early days of BSoUP.

The Old Man and The Pier *by* Colin Doeg

The Old Man first began to tell his son about The Pier when the Boy was very young. The lad used to play in the waves and swim about in his shorty wet suit and gaze with envy every time his father waded into the sea in his scuba gear.

Then came the great moment when he was eleven years old and the Old Man first took him into the sea with his own scuba equipment. Mind you, it was not a great expedition but, to the Boy, it was an enormous adventure. He was trembling with excitement as he put on his specially-bought small tank, buckled his weight belt round his waist, fitted his fins, spat in his facemask like a professional and leaped into the clear water.

At first the pair swam shoulder to shoulder, holding hands so the Old Man could sense every reaction of the youngster. As the dives became more adventurous, the Boy became more and more fascinated by what he saw: crabs, small fry hiding in nooks and crannies safe from predators, colourful wrasse in their mating plumage and big, dark-backed pollack keeping their distance from the pair.

Then, one never-to-be forgotten day, the young Boy held out a morsel of fish and a hungry wrasse began to feed from his hand. He bubbled with the excitement and wonderment of the occasion and treasured the photographs his father took of him with the fish nibbling at the delicacy in his fingers.

But, though his father kept on talking about The Pier and how, in the early days, you could leave your wet suit and all your scuba gear out overnight and they would still be there in the morning, the pair never actually dived under it though they paced up and down its timbers and he told more stories of the creatures that lived beneath it.

As the Boy became more knowledgeable about diving, he began to wonder at some of the Old Man's tales. Six and seven dives a day. In the water from 10am to 7pm, except to come out to go to the gents, reload his cameras with more films or collect a fresh tank. Surfacing by inflating his Fenzy - an early form of a buoyancy device - and shooting to the surface while he finned! Always diving over-weighted because it was better for photography in British waters. But, wonder of wonders, he was still alive and he even began to secretly linger at five or six metres for a few moments before he surfaced though he would always deny it.

Then, one sun-blessed day in June, when the pair were in Swanage, an enchanting seaside town in Dorset, a green and undulating part in the south of England, the Old Man suddenly said: 'Shall we dive The Pier?'

The response was instantaneous. 'Yes,' said the Boy, who in fact was now a grown-up young man...

The sky was a blue dome but there were not many people about. Slowly the Old Man drove onto the pier that, in many ways, had been the birthplace of underwater photography in Britain because it was so easy to park your car a few feet from the water's edge and then clamber or jump into the sea with all your cameras and other heavy equipment.

The Old Man was even slower at assembling his equipment than usual. Secretly he feared venturing under The Pier. It would be like the first time his son pedaled faster than him up a hill on his bicycle and then dropped back beside him to call out encouragingly: 'Come on Dad, you're doing great.' Or the moment when it was clear that the horseplay between them would have to stop forever because the Boy had become stronger and fitter and could clearly beat the Old Man if he chose to do so.

How, the father wondered, could he live it down if it was a dreary dive, if the fish had gone away, if the weed and the sunlight were no more? But he had told his tales for so long and this now was the moment of truth. He owed it to his son to take him under The Pier, even if it was a humiliating disappointment for him.

So they walked down the concrete steps and eased themselves into the water. The weed flirted and swayed in a fantasy of green and gold in the sunlight. Long brown fingers of kelp swayed to the rhythm of the sea as they strained towards the surface. Small fry lurked in their midst. The water deepened as they swam out among the pillars of The Pier encrusted with weed, sponges and marine growth of many subtle colours.

Dragonets trundled about on the seabed like miniature tanks, pausing to dredge up mouthfuls of sand and pump out the fine grains through their gills in tiny clouds. The Boy, who by now was a confident young man and a trusted dive buddy, remembered the Old Man telling of the many times he had tried to photograph this behaviour and how he had always failed. They swam further under The Pier and gazed at the tiny tompot blenny peering out of its hole. It was still there in the place the Old Man had described.

the art of

DIVING

and adventure in the underwater world

Written by
Nick Hanna
Photographed by
Alexander Mustard

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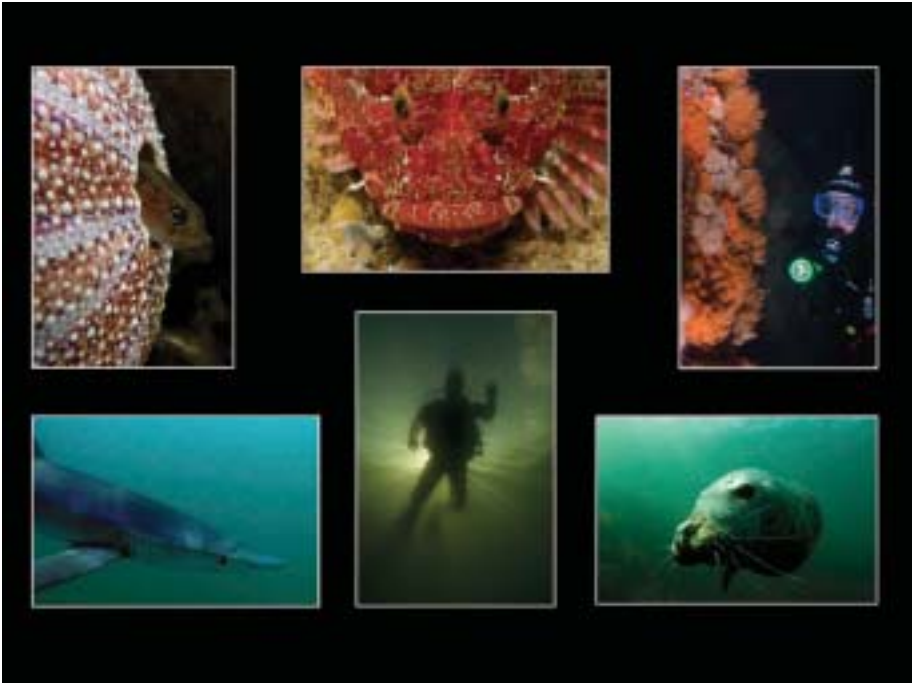
portfolio 2007



**Winner
Trevor Rees
on page 58**

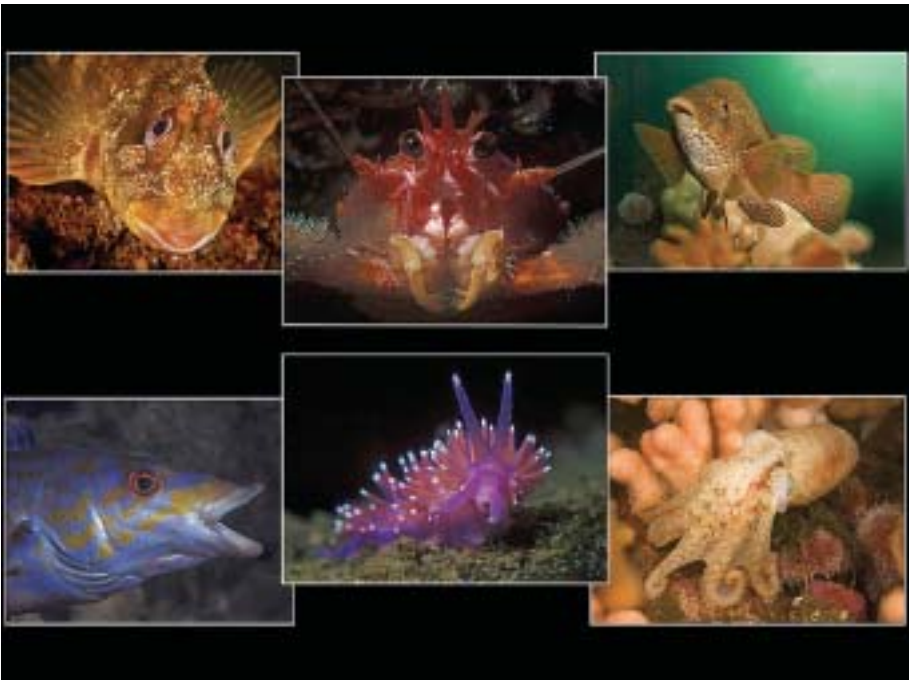


Best of British portfolio 2007 - runners up



2nd - Robert Bailey

3rd - Len Deeley



Its head was poking out of the tube it had claimed as its residence just as it did in countless pictures taken by numerous photographers. The fish looked extraordinarily comical with the peculiar appendages poking out of its head. Suddenly a shoal of fish flashed into view and began to wheel and swoop around the two divers. The sun glinted on their silver flanks that were streaked with grey lines. The mullet were searching for food, their heart-shaped mouths nuzzling up the tall green strands of bootlace weed as they roamed about. The pair were entranced. Their bubbles raced to the surface in huge, excited chandeliers, the jiving globes of air caught in the dancing shafts of sunlight that fanned out through the gaps in the planks of The Pier and gave vivid life and fantasy to the lingering, inquisitive shoal.

Long since, the Old Man had often showed the Boy the black and white picture of which he was still so pleased. It showed a single mullet in mid-water, turning with remarkable flexibility and now a similar scene was unfolding right in front of them. All too soon the magical moment was over. The mullet went on their way, their bulbous lips now sucking up delicacies from the seabed as they disappeared out of sight into the green distance, their powerful tails sweeping from side to side.

After a moment, the pair ventured further into the gloom of the interior of The Pier. Wrasse swam among the weed and pollack hovered beside the piles. Ropes still lay on the seabed showing the route for novice divers to follow. Suddenly the water shivered and trembled as a pleasure boat docked and began discharging its daily cargo of visitors, the noise of its engine and the thud of its propellers startling the pair as they were fining lazily amid the protective structure of The Pier. The propellers stirred up clouds of silt that were slowly carried away by the gentle current.

Ghostly white shapes appeared in the gloom. The Dead Men's Fingers reached out in the lazy current, their polyps straining to catch particles of food. Reluctantly, the pair turned back towards the shore and retraced their journey. Their air supply was running low ... but nowhere near as low as in the Old Man's accounts of the past - perhaps he was learning after all! As they stood up in the shallow water near the concrete steps, the Young Man's eyes sparkled as they always did after a dive and he blurted out: 'That was fantastic. That was marvellous. That was unforgettable. No wonder you kept on telling me about The Pier.'

The Old Man was very quiet. He did not dare tell his Son just how lucky they had been on that incredible morning! It had been like no other dive he had known under The Pier in over 35 years.

Mucky musings by Alex Mustard

www.amustard.com

Committee member Alex Mustard is a regular contributor to 'in focus'. *Reefs Revealed*, the first book he has both written and photographed, was published in October 2007. It recently won the 'World grand prize for best book of underwater photography' at the Antibes Festival, joining landmark volumes from the likes of Doubilet, Newbert, Amsler and BSoUP's Mike Wong that have been awarded this prize down the years.



Most people get into diving to head beneath the waves and see what's down there. When we first start to explore the underwater world most of us are on the lookout for the big and exciting. Wrecks are big with a whole host of A-list celebrity creatures to get excited about: sharks, turtles, dolphins, rays and colourful coral reef fish. But, over the years as our experience grows, we learn to appreciate the small stuff too.

Muck diving is the epitome of this progression. Satisfied that we have seen plenty in reefy areas we head out over the seemingly lifeless sand in search of macro oddities. Muck diving is not for everyone. Some try it once and vow never to return. Others, usually identified by the large camera they are carrying, fall in love and return time and again in search of another special encounter. Most BSoUP members fit that second category.

Despite the popularity of muck diving amongst photography sorts and therefore the coverage it receives in diving magazines, it has never fully appealed to the majority of divers. The average diver will take a wreck or the abundant life of a reef and a handful of the big boys every day of the week. Or so I thought. In May I ran a trip to East Sabah and I was surprised to see that the diving mainstream now flows a different way.

East Sabah is a superb dive destination blending the distinct charms of Sipadan, Mabul and Kapalai islands.

So much has been written about Sipadan that it is hard to know what more to add. Even experienced divers run out of superlatives to describe its rich reefs, dramatic walls, thriving schools and high voltage big animal encounters. The nearby islands of Mabul and Kapalai offer the perfect foil as real critter capitals. They have lower viz and less spectacular scenes, but are home to some real macro treasures.

On my previous visits it was clear to see that the average diver always preferred the adrenaline rush of Sipadan. But something was different this time. More and more divers were saying that they preferred Mabul and Kapalai. It wasn't the diving that was different. It was the divers. Today the average diver IS a photographer. Divers used to use their hands for the OK sign. Now they are used for carrying compact digital cameras.

Compact digital cameras really are fantastic and capable of taking excellent photos. But their weakness, without accessory lenses, filters and flashes is photographing wide vistas and fast moving fish. Their strength is with slow moving subjects that allow the photographer to get close to minimise the backscatter caused by the internal flash. In Sabah terms: ideally suited to Mabul and Kapalai, less so to Sipadan.

It is no secret that one of the main reasons muck diving subjects are so popular is that they are easy to photograph. If you can photograph a stone you can photograph a stonefish. But the whole story of our photographic attraction is more involved. Life out on the sand is tough, it is an eat or be eaten world with few hiding places. As a result most creatures have good defensive strategies and most of these lend themselves to photography.

Many species are poisonous, either with spines, bites, stings or toxic flesh, and it pays to advertise. For example, everything from nudibranchs to the blue ring octopus publicise their toxicity with bright warning colours. Perfect for colourful photographs. Other species form alliances, co-habiting for their protection. Again ideal stories to tell in a photograph.

But perhaps the most popular defence is camouflage, such adaptations are by their nature visual and therefore bespoke for capturing photographically. Furthermore, one of the key elements of concealment is not to move, making life particularly easy for us snappers.

The challenge for the experienced photographer is no longer just to tell these simple stories. The onus is on us to do something different with these charismatic and cooperative subjects to produce images that really stand out.

Wide-angle has become increasingly popular on muck sites, as have unusual lighting techniques as underwater photographers try and break new ground. If we don't we will soon find that our photos look just like those that nearly every diver is taking with their compact digital.

Not only have compact digital cameras transformed the average diver into a flash-card carrying underwater photographer, but they are changing what people are interested in seeing and the way they dive. This increased interest in underwater photography can only be good news for BSoUP although it also means that we will have to keep pushing forward to make sure our images of the macro supermodels really stand out.

Forward to the past - or the ramblings of someone who has spent far too many days at sea by Charles Hood

Charles is senior correspondent for Dive Magazine. His images have won countless competitions and sold successfully around the world. He is also the author/photographer of '100 best dives in Cornwall'. Charles has been a BSoUP member for over 20 years.



When I was a freshman at BSoUP I was repeatedly being told "it's not like the old days, it's so much easier now". That was in the early eighties and my new set-up consisted of a second hand Nikonos III, 35mm lens, Oceanic 2000 strobe, a set of Ocean Optics close-up rings and a book claiming to teach you what to do with it all, by someone called Rowlands.

As I enquired further as to what the 'easier' word used in the first sentence referred to, I was generally informed "you've got nothing that's homemade!". Today, a similar analogy could be made about modern kit. Underwater photographers starting out in the 21st century have every conceivable gizmo at their disposal. All one has to do is purchase a popular DSLR and suitable lens, encase them both in one of the myriad housings that are available, connect a couple of strobes, switch everything to auto and one will achieve results which we would have only dreamt about when I first started out.

However, this is not an article harping on about how easy it is now to take underwater images. On the contrary, today it is much harder to get good results. Let me explain.

As we have embraced modern electro-photographic technology, no longer do correct exposure, sharp focussing, film stock limitations or framing form part of the equation. We all now get these for free. So everyone today is taking good pictures. Indeed, within a few trips the majority of underwater snappers are taking excellent pictures. A few, whom should be congratulated, experiment with filters, slow shutter speed pans, wacky lens combinations and multiple lighting set-ups with stunning results, but essentially the majority rely on techniques that can be recreated in Photoshop or some other digital imaging software to try and distinguish themselves from the rest.

But to really separate ones images out from the crowd today you need to think. You need to plan. You need to discuss ideas with fellow shooters. You need to form alliances, share objectives and jointly develop strategies. Evaluation and critiquing these goals as they are developed with your colleagues is paramount. Taking and giving of constructive criticism should be what we do as the norm - the best judges of your own images are other people not you. If the image is crap let's say so, and at the same time let's not be all 'pc' and lovely about it but explain why and how it could be possibly improved.

Now this may all sound fairly obvious, and it is. And, what's more, we used to do this at BSoUP meetings. Back in the days of a smoke filled underground room hidden in the backstreets of Mayfair, underwater photographers all used to 'pool' their knowledge each month. We would then all go away and return the following meeting to compare our results. And guess what, we all improved - well most of us did! It was fun comparing other divers images when we had all started from the same hymn sheet. I can remember techniques such as double images, TTL with two strobes, rear curtain synchronisation, filters, strength of close-up dioptres and remote flash gun firing all being born out of meetings at BSoUP. But what was far more important than the techniques alone was that they led to new and exciting images. The majority of the time I was absorbing knowledge from others, but I did, I think, have some input along the way and with feedback the team as a whole progressed.

So, it could be said that life was easier back then. The information flow was readily available and much more open.

Photographers weren't afraid to experiment and no one was laughed at for suggesting sometimes quite outrageous concepts. So what's changed? Why don't we do this today? I think we all started to get very competitive. We started to clam up. We developed a good idea, tried to perfect it on our own and if the results won a prize we kept the knowledge a secret. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm all for competitions per se, but not if it is to the detriment of the progression of underwater photography as a whole.

Let me give you an example. In my opinion macro shots win competitions far more times than they should. Nowhere in any other sector of photography do slugs consistently win prizes. Why is this so? I believe it is because they are easy to snap. So people like taking them, they achieve good results, and they enter them into a competition. A macro shot wins, maybe theirs, maybe not, but it's a macro shot reinforcing a good choice of subject matter, and, it's easy. I call this, 'the never-ending cycle of comfort zone photography'.

Let's ban macro shots for a year - we've all seen enough bloody pygmy seahorse images to last a lifetime anyway! I can imagine a lot of you saying, "no way, why should we?". But subconsciously are you really saying "I don't know how to take anything else?". If this is the case, and you abandon your macro lens for 12 months, then you'll probably have to seek advice from others and so the learning process begins. The ideas start to be discussed. You get the inevitable "well I'll show you mine if you show me yours" scenario and, just maybe, underwater photography will become as easy as it was back in the eighties.

For those who don't know me, I was fortunate enough to have had a disagreement with my previous employer just after the turn of the last millennium. As we parted company an opportunity opened up for me with a little known (at the time) diving magazine called Dive International (now DIVE). So I decided to give it a go and try to make a living from underwater photojournalism.

Subsequently, we sold our house in London and moved to a cottage in Cornwall less than a mile from the coast. The shiny 5 Series was swapped in for a 12 year old Landcruiser and half ownership in a RIB. One book and 743 published articles later the guy who does the figures and I have different views as to whether I make a reasonable income out of it all. But to me, my wife and my two newly qualified diving children the days spent on the water are far more important than worrying about what constitutes making a living.

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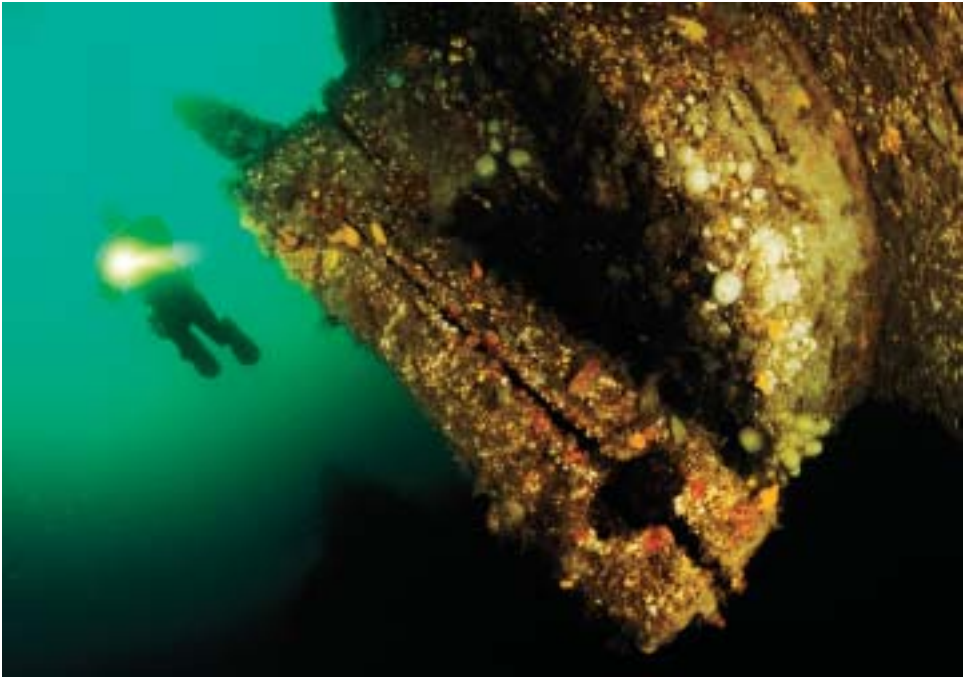
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Charles Hood's silhouette of a hammerhead shark.

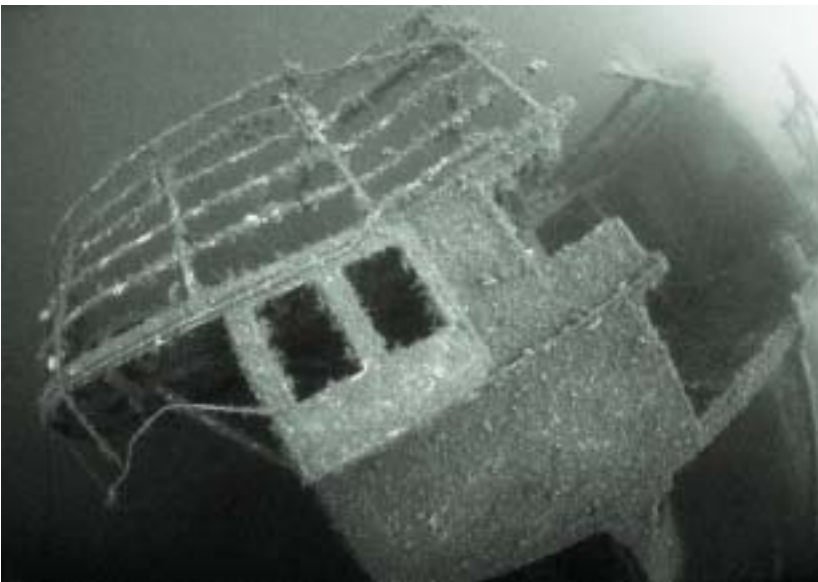
The range-finder from the Cöln, one of the most colourful of the German wrecks. Nikon D200, ISO 400, 1/60 sec @ f/3.2, 10.5mm lens



One of the 5ft 9” guns from the Cöln is now home to a conger eel. Nikon D200, ISO 400, 1/80 sec @ f/4.5, 16mm lens



Some of JP Trenque’s pictures taken on a recent trip to Scapa Flow.



The bridge of the Brummer, a German warship scuttled in Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919. Ambient light, 30m, Nikon D200, ISO 1,000, 1/50 sec @ f/2.8, 10.5mm lens



Gavin Parson's winning shot in 'the world in our hands' focus on competition in September (on page 58). A striking image of a stranded manta ray, by-catch of local fishermen in Tanzania.

Musings from the outgoing Chair *by* Martha Tressler

Martha first picked up a marine camera in the mid 90's but counts her underwater photography from a trip to Sipadan in 1997 after which she traded in her Nik V for a housed SLR and never looked back. As the enthusiastic and energetic BSoUP Chair from 2004 - 2007, Martha has done a huge amount to raise the profile of BSoUP.



During my time as an underwater photographer I've had it relatively easy. The technology I started with meant that getting well exposed sharp images was (well, should have been!) straightforward and film choices (as was) provided a range of options on colour results. From modern film cameras to the digital age, the technical side of photography was sorted out, and all I needed to concentrate on was the other bit; finding the subjects, 'seeing' the image, creating the final result. All a bit different to the earlier days of BSoUP - and I've only been around for about 25% of its existence.

Imagine the early days, when land photography was a technical challenge and getting a camera to provide underwater results was even more so. BSoUP's founders and early members were in the forefront of taking on this challenge, and much of what we can do under water today is partly thanks to them. Without the BSoUP environment, which brought the innovators together and provided a forum for them to generate ideas, challenge each other, test things out who knows where we would be. For example the concept of changeable ports on housings came from Peter Scoones - imagine needing a separate housing for each lens!

40 years on the goalposts have moved but in many ways the concepts are the same. It's easy to get a well exposed sharp image, but that means we have to do much better than just well exposed sharp images as anyone can do that. Now it's about ways to create different images - using filters, creative use of lenses, use of digital compacts in ways that SLRs can't be used - and BSoUP members are still creating, experimenting, pushing the edge, and sharing their experiences with the rest of us.

One of the things I have always loved about BSoUP and UK underwater photographers generally is the willingness to share. With very few exceptions, everyone up to the most experienced professional is more than willing to answer questions and share techniques and experiences. Not only are they willing to take the time to help, there is no attitude of secrecy, no suggestion that their experience and ideas should be kept a secret. And BSoUP continues to provide a ready forum to share experiences and ideas and to ask questions of each other.

When I joined BSoUP I knew little about cameras, photography, underwater issues and even (compared to today) the animals I was photographing.

When I think about how much I have learned in the last decade it is amazing and it's mostly down to time spent with BSoUP people, which after all is what BSoUP is - the members.

For the past three years I've had the privilege to Chair the Society. It's been a busy few years, one of enormous change in the world of photography and consequently for the Society. We've moved from film to digital photography more quickly than anyone anticipated, and even for most of those still shooting film to the digital treatment of images. The digital age has allowed BSoUP to connect more closely with members and non-members outside of the London area with electronic entries to competitions and with a superb website. It has also opened up underwater photography to many more people, with the far lower entry cost provided by digital compact cameras. One of our challenges has been to attract this new breed of underwater photographer and to convince them that BSoUP is indeed for them too!

Our premier annual event, the splash-in and its associated print competition, is now held in association with the National Marine Aquarium and receives sponsorship from a long list of 'friends' in the underwater photography and diving industry. Our open competitions receive entries from around the world and our profile continues to grow.

All of this has been made possible by the hard work of a whole group of people, and of course it's a moving target - the change continues and the work goes on. I look forward to continuing to be involved with BSoUP and with the committee but am delighted to hand over the Chair to JP Trenque who I know will do an excellent job taking the Society forward over the next few years. Best of luck JP and let me know whenever I can be of help (if I'm not in Indonesia, or Thailand, or the Red Sea, or...)!

Musings from the incoming Chair *by* JP Trenque

www.jptrenque.com

JP dived virtually as early as he walked. He has won many u/w photography competitions both here and abroad, including BBC News Photographer of the Year 2005. Involved in many aspects of the society he has now taken on the mantle of - his words - chief anorak.



So, BSoUP is 40 years old. I've already heard comments by some long-standing members like "it's gone so quickly" or "I can remember that first meeting like it was yesterday". Personally, I have to admit it was well before my time, and I don't mean before my time living in Britain. The greying hair might give me this wise man's appearance and I may have recently been entrusted with the chief anoraks job, but in November 1967 I don't think I was even a glint in my father's eye.

I discovered BSoUP by reading the news section of a diving magazine in the mid 1990's, shortly after I moved to London. At the time, I was still a UK diving virgin, having only dipped my fins in the Med and the Red Sea. Oh, and some Belgian quarry called Vodelée that made Gildenburgh Water look like a Sandals resort. I remember thinking then: "Soupe de B? Is that what ze English call a pun? Surely they must mean Soupe de Pea". My first taste of British diving confirmed this. Hanging on to the shot line with as much grace as a French flag flying at half mast after a rugby world cup semi-final defeat, I slowly swam down through that dark expanse of water called the Clyde towards the wreck of the Wallachia. As I hit the sand and missed the wreck, I thought: "Sod that". How photographers could come up with such wonderful images as Colin's groundbreaking basking sharks was beyond me. Shortly after my Scottish experience however, I discovered that not all UK dive sites were as murky as the Clyde wrecks.

When the weather was too inclement to dive here I flew abroad and soon wanted to bring memories back. In 1997 I bought my first Hi-8 video camera and hired housing lights to shoot some footage while on a northern Red Sea liveaboard. It was a revelation. Suddenly, I was diving for a purpose rather than just swimming underwater. The images were of poor quality, lacking punch, contrast and colour but I just loved it.

A couple of years later I upgraded to a mini-DV camcorder. The quality improved a bit until the camera took a bath on the Thistlegorm. Lesson No 1 was learned: ensure the housing is properly sealed.

I hadn't yet attended a BSoUP meeting, but names such as Linda Dunk, Brian Pitkin and of course Peter Scoones were already familiar. Shortly after I met Jane (Morgan, my lovely wife), she developed a very keen interest in still photography and bought a second-hand Motormarine II. On Martin Edge's advice, she soon traded it for a housed F90x and decided to attend the portfolio workshop in mid-2002. I remember entering the Holland Club and staring at all these famous underwater photographers. "Look! I think that's Ken Sullivan". I chatted to some young bloke behind me during the break. He seemed like a good laugh. When the competition results were announced he stood up to describe his winning shot. A couple of months later I learnt that he'd won a handful of prizes in Antibes but had stayed at the bar instead of attending the ceremony. His name was Alex Mustard and he certainly didn't look serious enough to be a doctor!

While Jane was enjoying success with her stills I was struggling to put interesting stories together on video so in 2003, I moved to the dark side and bought a D100. Yes, I started in photography by going digital and no, I've never shot film underwater (well maybe once or twice when I managed to wrestle Jane's camera out of her hands).

BSoUP meetings were a real source of inspiration. Each month, the technical talks had something new while the focus-on competitions and main talks were an inexhaustible source of ideas. Putting all these into practice, my shots started to look more decent, thanks mostly to the immediate feedback that digital offered and, of course, to Photoshop! I started entering competitions which were a great way to compare my images to other photographers' and keep improving. Nowadays, the standard has become so high that I'm glad I'm running the monthly 'focus-ons' rather than entering them!

I was told that at the early BSoUP meetings, when the WOMoUPs (*Wise Old Men of Underwater Photography*) debated this and that, discussions could get a tad heated. In the late 60's, when information and equipment were scarce they created a wealth of underwater photography knowledge, tools and gizmos that we all benefited from. Recently, Warren Williams summed it up when he told me "in the past, we taught the younger generation how to take pictures underwater. Nowadays, with the advent of digital, we're learning the new technology from that generation. It's a complete role reversal". Warren, I'm very touched.

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photo: Simon Rogerson



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Some of the WOMoUPs (see page 48). Warren Williams and Tim Glover discuss Peter Scoones's HD lens and housing.



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Warren William's picture of his friend Conor with a D.P.V. - see page 53

Aqaba, Jordan 1978 by Warren Williams

Warren was building his own camera housings and accessories from the early days of BSoUP. He has won numerous medals, trophies and other honours in national & international competitions and is still a familiar face, not to mention character, at the monthly meetings.



An invitation to visit came from a buddy of mine called Conor Craig, based in Aqaba, so I joined him out there in September 1978 for three weeks. I had first met Conor in 1974 when Tony Rood and I went on our first warm water dive trip. After diving in UK water for a few years it was good to feel warm, but the visibility was a bit duff at times due to phosphate in the water which came from the ships being loaded with it in the harbour. Our diving was done from boats and some shore dives, with transport to the sites in a crew bus. This mode of travel meant passing through military checkpoints along the road which led to the Saudi border.

The underwater images were taken with my housed Praktica Type L with a modified WWII German prism mounted in the housing which gave me full frame viewing with a face mask, cutting edge stuff in those days for an SLR along with my housed DC3 flashes. All this gear was carried around in one of my white boxes which always attracted the attention of customs at airports and latterly Sam Bean of BSoUP. After a day's diving we returned to our hotel, had dinner and then I would start processing my film with Kodak E4 in the bathroom, yes, 'E4' preceded 'E6', well it was 33 years ago.

Conor met me at Aqaba airport with a jeep; we loaded up the gear and set off for his house in town, stopping off at the ice cream shop for a big one. I set up my equipment at the house then rested while Conor went off to work at the Royal Palace Aqaba, no - not the hotel! By this time Conor was in the employ of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan as water sports instructor involving diving, yachting, water skiing etc. for the Royal family and guests - WHAT A JOB!

Conor returned and we ate and chatted about the diving. Next morning Conor was off to work so I walked round the town and checked out the dive shop which had changed hands since Conor had previously worked there.

Our dive programme was fitted around Conor's duties at the palace. The next eight dives were fairly average, but one thing I noticed was we never had any problems with the military check points. The jeep would approach, the guards would see Conor at the wheel and the King's man with passengers would be waved through - no problems. You see, in those days there was a lot of trouble with different factions fighting and the Royal Family was a target as well.

Two dives were very memorable out of the twenty eight. One was the day we were joined by four very clean cut, fit looking Americans, with rather lumpy bulges about their person. (*No! Joss Woolf - not that sort of bulge!*). So whilst they were kitting up on the shore line I said to Conor "who are these blokes?" and to my utter amazement he said they were CIA agents who were at the palace advising the King about matters of security. "And what about those bulges?" I asked. "Small arms" he replied. We were joined by another two but these were not divers so they sat on the sand guarding a big cool box of cold beers and fruit juices.

Conor said "Warren, you buddy up with one of them and I will take the other three" - *after all, he was a higher echelon PDI instructor* - "and, Warren, don't let him down or we'll be in the excrement!" So that dive I made sure I was looking after my buddy and did not take many photographs. After the dive we sat on the sand and had drinks and stories to tell, then back to the Palace gates for them. Unfortunately, I did not have the right security clearance to enter whilst the King was in residence, so I had to wait outside for Conor to return and head back to his house for a scrub up and then off to the Holiday Inn for dinner with the CIA, bulging pockets and all!

We planned a visit to the Marine Science Station in Aqaba to meet some French scientists who were collecting plankton. They said they had lost a plankton net over the side of their boat and asked us to look out for it if we dived the area. Apparently these marine biologists could not dive.

A few days later Conor and I dived in the named area and used a Faralon DPV diver propulsion vehicle. The scooters pulled us down about twenty five metres and the search began. Some time later a view of the 'Marine Garden of Eden' was spoilt by the sight of several flattened cardboard cartons strewn on the sea bed. Annoyance at the despoiling of this idyllic scene and tinged with a dash of curiosity, we drew closer to the spot where we discovered clusters of bottles containing amber colour liquid. The labels on these bottles had long since gone, but the seals appeared to be intact with the makers names indicating the nature of the liquid within, namely

whisky. It seemed like ‘Whisky Galore’ all over again. Excitement mounted as more bottles were discovered and collected together for hauling aboard the boat. A happy task that took some time to complete as one hundred and fifty bottles were recovered. Not wishing to be greedy (*tee hee!*), some bottles were left on the site for the delight of other divers who might visit the location, or for marine archaeologists to discover perhaps many years hence. Speculation then arose as to how these bottles arrived at such an unlikely setting. The consensus of opinion was that they were being smuggled from Jordan to Saudi Arabia (*a dry country - no alcohol allowed*) when the boat was intercepted by the Coastguard and the illicit cargo was, we’re sure, heaved reluctantly overboard. Naturally enough the tasting was not delayed for too long, the critical palates amongst the party determined that a small amount of sea water had entered the bottles, but the contamination was not sufficient to deter the quaffers.

Incidentally, the plankton nets were found! We returned them to the Marine Science Station and some of the staff helped with the drinking of the find!!!! Steve Warren of Ocean Optics has one of the unopened bottles – or at least it was unopened the last time I saw it!

Manado by John Langford

A veteran BSoUPer, John has enjoyed an ongoing love affair with Manado and its surroundings for a long time. John continues to serve on the committee and was the film competitions secretary for many years.



As I alight from Silk Air at Manado for the second time this year, I silently curse to myself ‘why don’t I get my visa in the UK?’. The queue for ‘visa on arrival’ is too long, and too slow, you move from window to window at a snail’s pace. Eventually, you pass through immigration. Next, it’s the X-ray machine. For hand baggage? I guess this is to check in case your bag is too heavy for you. The x-ray man may take one bottle to ease your load.

Collect your bags and make your way to the outside to a sea of eager faces all shouting and waving their notices “hotel this”, “hotel that”, “taxi” etc. I hear a voice “hey, Mr John, over here”. Two guys from the dive centre, Mini Hasa, grab my bags and I am on my way. It’s a 30 minute ride and they drop me at the village Paal Ampa where I will be staying. I start diving in a couple of days, as usual they will send the car for me.

Diving began in the Manado area around 1974 when a Mr Lockie bought a swamp at Molas. He filled it with builders rubble, built divers cottages and a village for his employees and families. Eventually there would be 120. This first set-up was Nusantara Dive Centre (NDC). I had seen a presentation at BSoUP by Malcolm Hey on Manado and I was impressed by his pictures. I chatted with him and he told me about NDC. Very soon after that I booked my first trip to Indonesia. These days I always have my own guide and always there is something new to photograph.

I used NDC for many years, until there was a kind of financial slump and NDC was sold in 2005. I next moved to Barracuda dive centre, 10 bungalows situated overlooking Manado bay. Good shore diving and ten minutes from the wreck, but they too seemed to decline and are difficult to contact. So, next I tried the Mini Hasa Resort around the far side of Manado Bay. Very close to the Poh Poh dive site, famous for the yellow rhinopias. Divers came from all over the world to photograph it, then one day it was gone. Poh Poh is a sandy slope down to 30m. Although no rhinopias there are still surprises. Mostly in the macro department. A good guide will always have something just round the corner.

As arranged the car collected me at 8.30 from the village taking me to Bitung, a hair-raising 90 minute ride. Bitung is on Lembeh and is the main port for North Sulawesi. It is also a large fishing port. Tuna come ashore here and are soon put in tins at one of the many canneries along the main road. It is always busy at the jetty, fishing boats checking nets, unloading fish or taking on huge blocks of ice. My liveaboard for the week is Aurora, it's just under one year old. First we have to get aboard the tender, but it's low water and this involves climbing down via old tyres under the gaze of all the fishermen now stopping and watching us. Safely on board we manoeuvred out, ducking under all the mooring ropes.

There were many familiar faces among the dive guides and crew. I was allotted Nordi, he has guided for me many times. "Welcome, Mr John, OK to dive in 30 minutes?". Being the only guest for two days I was to dive from the small tender (with a very good ladder) next to the police landing stage. In 90 minutes I saw four frog fish, various shrimps and the usual, unusual black sand dwellers - this was typical diving. Two days later two couples joined me and we moved to dive Bangka Isle. On the way we were to dive beside the derelict Paradise Hotel. The Aurora anchored about 500m from Paradise Pier, we entered from the dive platform. A bit disappointing on the way down to 20m, very poor viz, lots of plankton. At the seabed sand dunes, a cuttlefish, a couple of flatties. Oh dear - then we came to the jetty. How can I describe it? Like Swanage Pier, only with fish, wall to wall fish.

I counted five different shoals all in their own groups. All the pier legs were covered with corals and fans, sun streamed through the planks. Great for wide-angle and me with my 60mm. Anyway, searching through the pier legs, very well hidden I spotted a giant green frog fish and just above him was a giant hairy brown frog fish. They both seemed to enjoy posing for me. Just then, the jacks started flashing through the shoals, the small fish don't seem to scatter but just make a hole for the jacks to speed through. Just above the shoals the water is clear of fish for 1m. Pop your head down and you are in the fish again. It was a good dive, worth another visit? Yes, and with wide-angle next time. Waking next morning I found us moving back up the strait, weather had changed, too rough for Bangka. Never mind, I will get there one day.

Now for a final trip down memory lane. We visit a slightly more recent event - here is an extract from a press release sent out by Colin Doeg in July 1982:

The first major public showing of underwater photographs ever to take place in Britain has opened at Bath. It is being staged by the British Society of Underwater Photographers as part of the Royal Photographic Society's Maritime England exhibition and runs until September 11.

The colour and monochrome prints in the display span the work of BSoUP members over the last 15 years and have been taken in all parts of the world, from rock pools to the depths of the oceans.

Some of the films were even processed in hotel rooms or tents so the photographers could inspect their results soon after they had taken the pictures. Many of the prints are the work of the photographers themselves though among the commercially produced photographs are some using the latest laser-printing techniques.

Several of the photographs are unique. They include the first picture ever taken of a live coelocanth and others of previously unknown species of marine life. The selection ranges from extreme close-ups of tiny creatures to shots of divers at work and fashion photography where the models are 'tied' to the seabed and supplied with air between exposures.

Said BSoUP chairman Colin Doeg: "This exhibition is a most important point in the development of underwater photography in Britain. The Society regards it as a great honour to have been invited by the RPS to stage this display. The approach reflects great credit on the standard of the pictures taken by our members, from the pioneer work to that being produced currently."

Competition results

September 19 - 'Focus on' - The world in our hands

Congratulations to Gavin Parsons who was the winner of the September 'focus on' competition with a striking image of a stranded manta ray caught as by-catch by local fishermen on the coast of Tanzania. Gavin won a copy of 'REEF: Exploring the underwater world' by ScubaZoo, donated by publisher Dorling Kindersley.

Mark Webster was runner up with an image of a basking shark caught in a net set in Mounts Bay, Cornwall. The shark was subsequently freed from the net and swam away.

1st - Gavin Parsons - 87 pts

2nd - Mark Webster - 55 pts

3rd - Alex Mustard - 36 pts

4th - Mark Webster - 27 pts

5th - Paul Biggin - 16 pts

6th - Gavin Parsons - 15 pts

October 17 - Best of British portfolio

A total of 18 portfolios were submitted to the hard fought 'Best of British portfolio competition' this year. Congratulations to winner Trevor Rees, who received more first placings than runner up Rob Bailey who had an equal point score. Trevor won the BSoUP trophy and a cheque for £100 kindly donated by Sport Diver magazine. Check out Trevor and the runner up portfolios on pages 32-34.

1st - Trevor Rees - 47 pts

2nd - Rob Bailey - 47 pts

3rd - Len Deeley - 36 pts

4th - Sally Sharrock - 34 pts

5th - Dave Peake - 21 pts

6th - Elaine Whiteford - 20 pts

Trevor Rees describes his winning portfolio:

I was very excited to have won the 'Best of British' portfolio. I had hoped to have a good showing in this category as I very rarely dive overseas. I decided that after my winning image in this year's 'splash-in' British UK prints I would structure my images around a couple of split level images.

1) Rock pool & jumping boy

My son was jumping over a rock pool in Cornwall while I was standing up to my waist in it. My son was happy just to keep jumping until I got just the shot I wanted. I had hoped to shoot with available light but with the sun low in the sky the underwater scene was just too black. Therefore, I was forced to use strobes to illuminate the kelp. I used the camera's maximum flash sync speed which was only just fast enough to freeze the action.

This is a straight shot with no manipulation and the RAW file looked great. Nikon D80, 10.5mm lens, fisheye dome, dual Sea & Sea YS110s on low power, f10 @ 1/200sec 200 ISO.

2) Seal and fins

Lundy Island, September 2007. The visibility was very poor. My buddy had long since run out of air leaving me alone with this seal, doing what seals do best - creeping up behind you and nibbling your fins. I like the comical nature of my frog fins in the frame and thought it made a simple and slightly different take on a seal shot. It fitted nicely in the top centre of the portfolio. Nikon D80, Sigma 10-50mm @ 18, compact dome, available light, f8 @ 1/50sec 400 ISO.

3) Rock pool, boy & crab

This split image balanced the first one. I was trying to capture the many happy hours I've spent with my son messing about in rock pools. The viz in these rockpools is often gin clear but I've never photographed in them before. We hiked for a while with my camera and drysuit in a rucksack to find a suitable location. Afterwards we had to beat a hasty retreat up a cliff to escape an advancing tide. I have to confess that this image is a composite. The original edible crab we found in the pool was too small for any drama in the picture. My son was still fascinated but I've added a bigger crab from a shore dive from Scotland. Please don't look at it for too long! Nikon D80, 10.5mm lens, fisheye dome, dual Sea & Sea YS110s on low power. F16 @ 1/100sec 200 ISO.

4) Nudibranch

This nudibranch, which I think is *Flabellina brownii*, was from Salcombe. There were hundreds of these particular slugs feeding on Oaten pipe hydroids. With a busy top row in the portfolio and a lot for the viewer to take in, I thought a couple of bright, simple coloured images with black backgrounds were needed to plug the bottom corners. The red colour matched the red on the boy's sweat shirt which helped tie in the colours. Also, it was a chance to include a macro image. Nikon D80, 60mm lens, dual Sea & Sea YS110s, F22 @ 1/200sec 100 ISO.

5) Diver Sunburst Silhouette

I was struggling to know what to put here and played with a couple of images. In the end, two weeks before the competition, I asked Rob Bailey for a dive in Stoney Cove and said I had an idea for an image that I needed, with him as a model. We posed for each other against the sun, swapping places and just kept going until we both got something we were happy with. I liked the idea of this in a British portfolio because it is more the sort of shot you see in overseas images. Rob's image of me appears in the same position in his runner up portfolio. Nikon D80, 10.5mm lens, fisheye dome, available light, F8 @ 1/640sec 200 ISO .

6) Male cuckoo wrasse

Finally I picked a simple image of a male cuckoo wrasse. The blue colour seemed to compliment the blue sky in the top row and so tie in the colours. As with the nudibranch shot, the viewer does not need to think about this one. I can think of no other UK subject with this kind of colour impact. Nikon D50, 60mm lens, F11 1/250sec 200 ISO, YS90 & YS30 stobes.

November 21 - 'focus on' final

The first and second placed images from this year's monthly 'focus on' competitions went head to head in the final. There were a total of 14 images and each was projected twice and the audience present invited to vote for their favourite three. Congratulations to Shannon Conway, a BSoUP member now living in Australia, who won the 'focus on' trophy and the beautiful new book 'REEF: Exploring the underwater world' by ScubaZoo.

1st - Shannon Conway - 49 pts

2nd - Alex Mustard - 45 pts

3rd - Tony Baskeyfield - 40 pts

November 21 - Beginner's portfolio

A record 49 portfolios were submitted for the annual beginner's portfolio competition, although one had to be subsequently disallowed as it was discovered the photographer had previously come second in an international competition. Huge congratulations to Anna James, this year's winner of the Diver trophy and a cheque for £100 kindly donated by Diver magazine. Also congratulations to the runners up and thank you to all for submitting your entries.

1st - Anna James - 45 pts

2nd - Duncan Robins - 34 pts

3rd - Jason Spafford - 27 pts

4th - Tamsin Eyles - 24 pts

5th - Martin Bailey - 23 pts

6th - Eleonora Manca - 21 pts

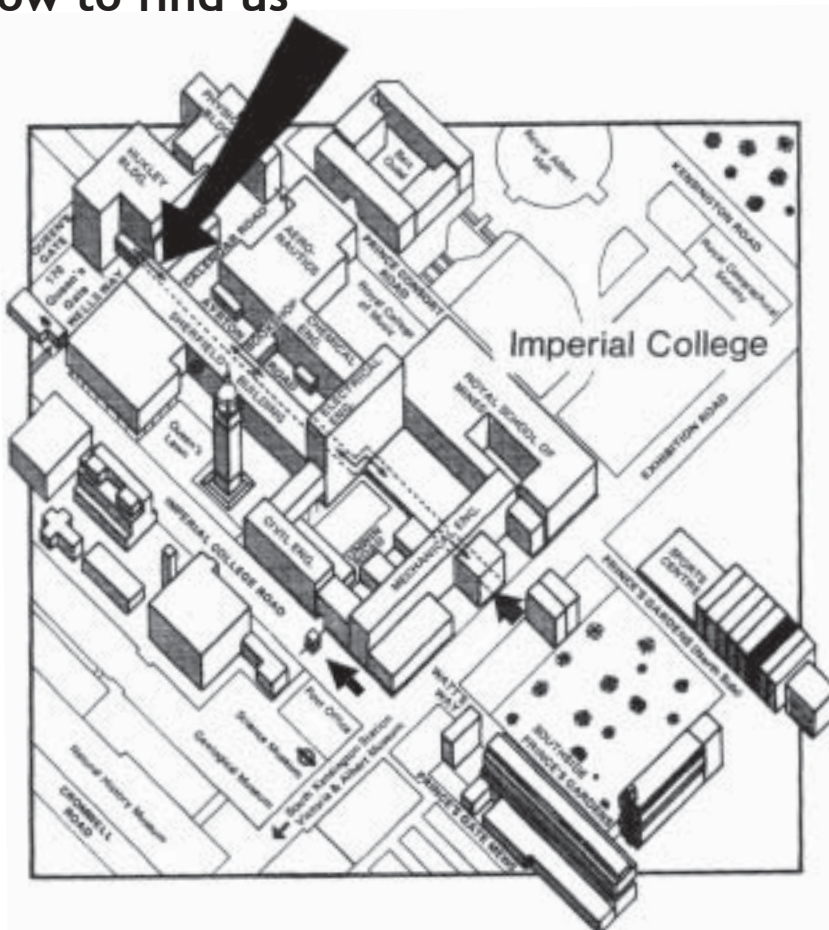
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BSoUP meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 20.00hrs in the function room at the Holland Club, Imperial College, London. From South Kensington tube take the tunnel to the Museums and Exhibition Road. Continue north and turn left into Prince Consort Road. Turn left just before the far end through gates into the entrance to the grounds of Imperial College, walk down the hill and go through the white double doors facing you into the Holland Club. By road, turn into the College grounds from Exhibition Road, take a parking ticket at the barrier and ask directions to the Holland Club. On leaving you must pay at the barrier (£8.50) for the evening (strictly **after** 18.00hrs). Alternatively, there are parking meters in the surrounding roads until 18.30. Beware as there are many 'residents only' bays which operate 24/7. There are bar facilities in the club.

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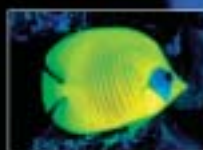
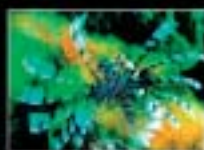
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