

Torbay Splash-in 2022

by Tim Allen

The sixth annual Splash-in underwater photography competition run by the Torbay branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) took place on Saturday, 18 June. A Splash-in competition is one where the photographs must be taken on a single day, and sometimes within a certain area (in our case, Torbay). There were four categories of entry: Beginner, Compact Camera, Wide-angle, and Close-up/macro.

The weather was kind to us this year, and 18 competitors submitted a total of 69 photographs. An evening dinner and presentation were held at the Royal Torbay Yacht Club, where all the photographs were shown, and a 'Popular Vote' held to select a "peoples' favourite". Judging was conducted anonymously by Peter Rowlands, the well-respected photographer and editor of Underwater Photography Magazine, who provided insightful and interesting comments on each photograph.

Peter Rowlands opened the results: "Thanks for the invite once again. It is a pleasure to come here and as I'm driving over, I think of all the work that's been put in by all

of the entrants. And it's a pleasure to look at the images that come out of this snapshot of the area. Judging was much harder this year; it's been easier in the past and I guess that's because conditions have been quite favourable. The standard of the images was very good and it was quite difficult to get them into the order of first, second and highly commended. But that's what it's all about."

Beginner Category (prizes sponsored by O'Three) First Prize

James Rogers

Peter Rowlands: "The Beginners Category, as its name implies, is anybody who hasn't won something before. So, you can have somebody who has been diving and taking pictures for a long time who still hasn't won anything, or you could get people who are literally just beginning. And I've no idea who's who – I look at the images as they are, and there's a lot of images in here that stand up in the higher quality categories. You have to begin somewhere, but there's some quality stuff coming up. Taken today, this is a



fine shot and it would be a fine shot in the non-Beginner categories. It's just a nice delicate shot that puts you in the frame, sort of makes you want to be there. Compositionally, you could argue that it's a bit slap bang in the middle, maybe a little bit over to the left would have improved it, but it's a shot that I kept coming back to time and time again. It's a nice scene and I kept coming back to it."

James commented: "As for why I took the shot. It's mainly due to me really liking Jellyfish. But this particular one (Hydroid medusae)

looked particularly pretty being highlighted by the sun in the shallows at Babbacombe. It wasn't a planned or looked for shot, more of a happy encounter that turned into a lovely shot showing how pretty UK diving can be. The camera was an Olympus TG6 in the Olympus Housing with a WeeFine FWL02 Wide Angle Lens."

James won a voucher from O'Three for 50% off on a new drysuit.

Second Prize
Tim Allen



Peter Rowlands: “This is a very competent shot that many experienced underwater photographers might not have got - they’re small and detailed, they need good lighting, and this one has been helped an awful lot by the top right hand, out of focus, yellow whatever it is, that just gives a bit of balance and takes away the starkness. A very competent shot.”

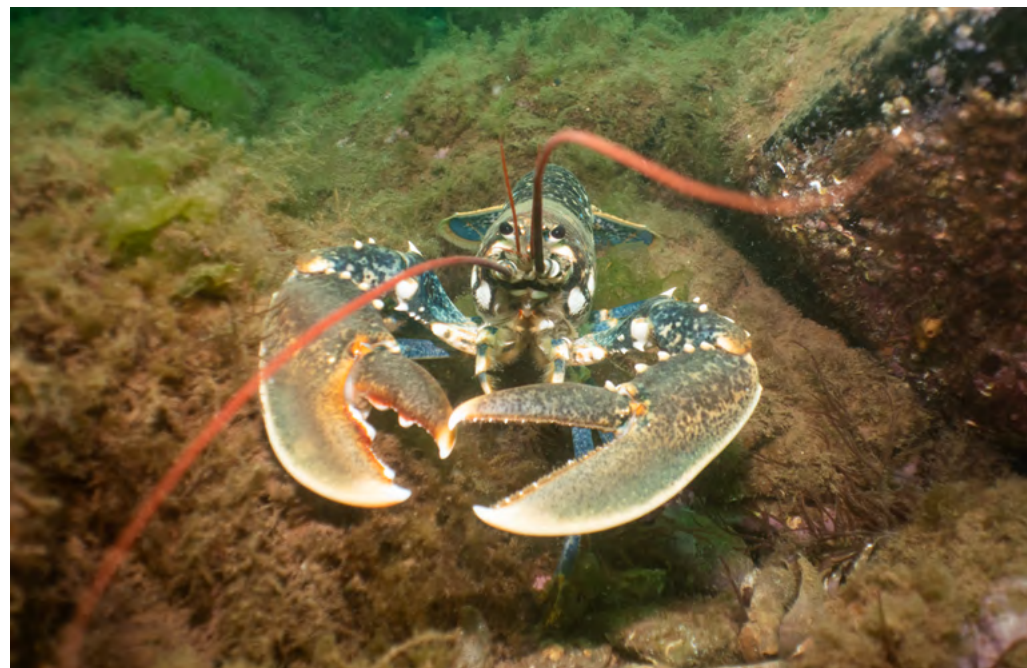
Tim commented: “I was looking for macro subjects on top of the Morris Rogue, a shallow reef just off Meadfoot Beach, and these Light-bulb sea squirts caught my light. I took a few pictures with my standard Zeiss 50mm lens, but then flipped in my Nauticam CMC-1 wet lens to get this macro shot. I was using a Backscatter MW-4300 video light with the Optical Snoot attached. Camera was a Sony α6000 in a Nauticam housing.”

Compact Camera
(prizes sponsored by Teign
Diving Centre)
First Prize
Jo Cale

Peter Rowlands: “Compact cameras are not as capable as expensive SLRs, but if you play to their strengths, you can take really nice portrait shots like this iconic subject. Either by luck or design, it’s in a nice pose and the background is complementary. It’s a shot that you can’t tire of looking at and every time I came back to it, it still worked for me. So well done, Jo Cale.”

Jo commented: “Just as I turned the dive to head back, this lobster was spotted walking towards me. Settling still for a few minutes, the lobster made its approach. A few back and forth as it was deciding what to make of the camera and diver. I captured the moment the lobster started using its antenna to get a good feel and explore of the camera. It’s interactions like this that are very special in diving”.

Jo won a voucher from Teign Diving Centre for a Cressi mask.



Second Prize
Jon Bunker

Peter Rowlands: “This nudibranch is coming towards us, the focus is in the right place. You could argue that it’s a little bit small in the frame but you could also argue that the background pastel greens add to the overall calmness of the picture.”

Jon commented: “The red and white nudibranch (*Okenia elegans*) with a yellow fringe was a new one for me, especially strange to my eyes as it seemed ‘hunched up’ and a bit squat in comparison to the elongating, *Polycera* I’m used to in the sea grass around Portland. I really struggled



to work out the front end, despite the prominent rhinophores. Taken on a Sony RX100 Mk1 in a Polaroid housing with twin Inon S-2000 strobes and an Archon focus light. I also used a Nauticam CMC-1 wet lens for magnification.”

Jon also won a voucher from Teign Diving Centre for a pair of Sinner flip flops.



Wide-angle

(first prize donated by Dr Paul Naylor)

First Prize

Dan Bolt

Peter Rowlands: “Well lit, very nice balance, good eye contact, colouring, but the little bit of light on the right-hand side has lifted this in terms of scale and spaciousness, that if you didn’t have that, it would be a less powerful shot. It’s an undeniable winner.”

Dan commented: “On my final dive of the day, I was still without a decent wide-angle image to submit

that evening. My buddy and I decided to walk to London Arch and do it as a shore dive – not one for the faint hearted! Behind the arch itself there is a cave just big enough to fit two divers inside. The walls of the cave are literally covered in marine life; with colourful sponges, fish, crabs and corals all clinging tightly to the vertical space. I used two strobes to light up as much of the cave as I could and a fisheye lens that let me include my buddy in the shot.”



Second Prize

Tony Reed

Peter Rowlands: “In terms of grabbing you, this image certainly grabs you, but it didn’t say exactly what’s going on. Visually it’s very strong, very striking and you can’t ignore it. But sometimes you need a reason, you need to know exactly why, and I still don’t know why with this one, but it is an image that jumps out and in competitions, that puts you ahead of the game.”

Tony commented: “This was taken with the Insta360 ONE X2

camera! I had the idea to use it for a split shot as it has a lens each side of the camera making it easier to capture both under and above the surface at the same time. Using a couple of Odepro WD43 lights and a Light & Motion Gobe video light, I set the scene on the steps. My buddy Donna used her other bright torch to shine at me from under the surface and I managed to get the shot after about 10 minutes of light positioning.”

Close-up/Macro

(first prize donated by Dr Paul Naylor)

First Prize

Dan Bolt



Peter Rowlands: “This has got both of its rhinophores in an obvious place, lovely diagonal shape of the horns or the yellow bits at the bottom and the negative space on the left adds to the drama of it, and the little speckles too are working in this picture. They may appear inconsequential but actually they are contributing to this picture. But overall, as soon as this came up on the screen, it looked pretty obvious that it just stands out and that is what you need in competitions.”

Dan commented: “Torbay is a bit of a ‘hot-spot’ for the rare *Okenia elegans* nudibranch and I was lucky to find one at Beacon Cove. This one was on a large frond of kelp and using a snoot on my strobe I was able to light up just the animal and not its surroundings. The outlandish colours and truly elegant pose help to make the subject jump right off the image.”

Second Prize

Dan Bolt

Peter Rowlands: “There were no other images like this and sometimes in competitions, when there’s nothing like it, it really works to its advantage, but photographically, the use of diagonals is a strong thing for eye appeal. And the eye contact here is undeniable. Lovely portrait and the background is drop-dead gorgeous, but it’s so subtle and it’s doing so much, and less is more sometimes.”



Dan commented: “I found this Broad Nosed Pipefish swimming slowly over the sand underneath Paignton Pier during a night-dive, just after the competition started at 10pm. I used a standard kit-lens with a close-up adaptor and, combined with the slow swimming speed of this little fish, I was able to get close enough to take a series of portrait shorts of this beautiful creature.”

Popular Vote

(prize sponsored by Teign Diving Centre)

James Rogers

Peter Rowlands: “This is the Peoples’ Choice, it’s your choice... and for the last five years, I’ve never got this right (actually, he has!). But it is a



very useful thing because underwater photographers choosing underwater photographers’ photographs is a little bit incestuous and sometimes you need to have fresh eyes to look at different things. So I feel gratified that I got it right this time and I can go home happy.”

James also won a voucher from Teign Diving Centre for a Scubapro mask.

Peter Rowlands summed up: “Thanks very much for inviting me again to do this. It’s always a pleasure to look at underwater images anyway, but hopefully the feedback for those who took the pictures is taken in the right way, it is given with help in mind. Sometimes it’s critical, but the truth helps you move forward and improve things. Thanks very much indeed.”

Tim Allen

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