

Parting shot

This certainly was not a champagne moment. I was in the Isles of Scilly channel that separates the islands Bryher and Tresco, trying to get under the sea swell. But at a depth of 25m I could still feel the swell and swaying in front of my eyes was my Cobra 440 – my land flash gun liberated from its underwater housing.

Shock and horror gave way to total denial. I reached for the flash gun and put it back in its Perspex housing and pressed the shutter a couple of times. No flash.

Reality returned. The first day of a diving holiday and no back-up and little likelihood that the one camera shop on the Isles of Scilly would have anything remotely like the flashgun I had taken for a very wet dive. “Drowned is it. Can't you revive it with a bit of artificial respiration?” quipped one of the non diving photographers when I got back into the boat.

I looked at the dripping flash gun and had a Eureka moment. Back into the seawater went the gun.

Some of BSoUP's seven rules for drowned cameras had surfaced in my mind. First was “Don't panic! Second was “Immerse in fresh water and keep in housing if housing will hold water”.

Well I had no fresh water so sea water would have to do. Once back on the main island - St Mary's - I could effect the third most important rule:

“Dunk in methylated spirits”.

“Got to keep the air away from the gun,” I explained to my bemused buddies.

My reputation (such as it was) was plummeting. On St Mary's I traipsed around the shops with my flash gun in water asking for meths! And my popularity (well we do delude ourselves) took a nose dive at the guest house. I headed straight for the bathroom and rinsed the gun several times in fresh water, immersed it in meths and then left it on top of a bedside table lamp to dry out. The heat from the lamp – I thought- would do the trick. It did but it also stank out the guest house.

Would my sacrifices be worth it? The following morning armed with fresh batteries I switched the gun on. It briefly whirred and then fell silent. I didn't give up. Out came the batteries. I shook the gun and replaced it on top of the table lamp. Over the next couple of hours I repeated the process of shaking and warming several times. Finally the red light came back on. I pressed the shutter.



Cobra 440 flash gun on TTL in home-made underwater Perspex housing; Nikon 801 in home-made Perspex housing. Nikkor 60mm macro lens. Velvia 50. Manual on 1/60th at f8.

Eureka. It flashed followed by a green light. Not only was it working manually, but also on TTL.

Incredibly the gun worked flawlessly on TTL throughout the diving holiday and helped capture this

image and many others.

So remember if you are in a tight spot don't panic and don't forget the meths!

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Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?

If so e mail me and yours could be the next “Parting shot”.

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