

Parting Shot

Having been an avid fan of UWP Mag for some years now, I have taken to getting a little more adventurous and experimental with my underwater photography, having been inspired by various articles in the magazine.

One such trip out was the Thursday before Christmas (21st December 2006) when my buddy, Paul, and I decided to do a night time shore-dive on everyone's favourite wreck; the Louis Sheid off Thurlestone Beach in South Devon. Having dived and snorkelled this wreck dozens of times over my 18 year diving career, I was surprised to realise that I had never dived her at night. So off we trotted through the winding lanes of Devon heading for our entry point.

Being such an oft visited sight I already have a large album of images from her, and I wanted to take this opportunity to do something a little different. I decided to put my camera (Oly SP350 with Epoque 0.56x wide angle lens) on a cheap tripod and hold the strobe (Epoque ES-150 DS) in my hand to fire manually. When we arrived it was pitch black so we couldn't see if the visibility would allow my plans to work, but we decided to give it a go anyway.

In my mind's eye I was holding the 'Dancing With Light' article by Leigh Bishop from UWP Issue 30, and the cave diving article by Neil Vincent in issue 10. Sadly though we were greeted by quite disappointing 5m of clear water, quite a large swell. If nothing else this dive was going to be a challenge and I was amazed I got anything at all from the dive. In fact finding the wreck was a bonus in itself.

I had been through the camera's manual to

work out how to put it into 'Bulb' mode, and for this I had rigged up an elastic-band to hold down the shutter button. All a bit Heath Robinson I hear you say? And yes, you'd be right as the elastic band flew off on my first attempt never to be seen again. Not to be put off I was now limited to using the 10 second self-timer to give me a head start before opening the shutter for the maximum 15 seconds allowed by the camera. And to my surprise this worked fairly well.

Composition and focusing for the wide-angle shots at night was a bit hit and miss to start with. For focusing I simply used the camera's manual setting at about 6 foot - knowing that by also using an aperture of F8 and a wide lens everything from that distance out should be in focus. Composition was a little harder and was basically down to reviewing the previous shot and trying to remember where exactly I had been when I fired the strobe. If nothing else, it was a great exercise in buoyancy and night-time navigation!

Given that this was my first attempt at doing these kind of shots I was, if not impressed by them, certainly encouraged to try it again using improved planning of the dive, the kit, and the camera settings.

My favourite shot, if I had to have one, was a self-portrait while swimming back over the sand to the beach. It has quite a surreal feel to it as I managed to fire the strobe twice which makes it all look very ghostly. (And yes I am in a wet-suit, and yes the water was only 11 degrees, and yes I was cold after 70mins!)



It was a great dive, and the beginning of another learning curve about night-time photography for me. I can't wait for the clear winter waters to arrive when I will be planning further night-time expeditions to the Louis Sheid to see if I can do better next time. So a big 'Thank You' to all at UWP Mag for the inspiring articles and encouragement to go out there and try something a little different.

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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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