

Editorial

Sinking ships

Augusto Salgado's excellent article about 4 new Portuguese shipwrecks sunk in the last couple of years is a good reminder of how sinking old ships on purpose is a win win win situation. The Government gets money back, the diving community get a lasting and very valuable asset and the marine biologists get 4 new research labs.

The driving force behind the project was Luis Sá Couto who raised 2.5 million Euro through the Ocean Revival project. "After a long road, littered with obstacles, all of the technical and bureaucratic difficulties have been overcome for the realisation of an innovative project that has never before been seen in our country".

His vision has produced an industry which will provide income not just locally but nationally. In the first 8 months when only 2 ships had been sunk over 4,000 dives were made and he anticipates that by 2020 that figure should increase to 90,000. Whatever the eventual figure is, everyone will benefit.

Here in the UK I'm ashamed to say we have sunk just one vessel - HMS Scylla in Whitsand Bay,

Cornwall and that was 10 years ago next year. Just this one wreck has brought millions in tourist money into the local dive community, hotels, B&Bs and restaurants.

A couple of years ago we had the golden opportunity to buy the aircraft carrier Ark Royal but the powers that be decided to sell it for £2.9m for the scrap metal.

Had she been sunk off the Devon coast divers from all over the world would have come to dive on her and that would have brought revenue to pay off the initial investment in just a few years.

And last year 4 frigates suffered the same fate; sold for scrap rather than to create artificial reefs and income.

Of local interest to me is HMS Plymouth which was decommissioned on 28 April 1988, and was the last Type 12 in service. She saw action in the Cod Wars between the United Kingdom and Iceland and also the Falklands War in 1982. Argentinian naval officer Alfredo Astiz - head of the South Georgia garrison - was first to surrender to the British Task Force in 1982 on HMS Plymouth

She would make a great local attraction. How cool would it be to have HMS Plymouth to dive on in Plymouth! but no, sadly, she will be sold for scrap.

Un - bloody- believable.

Dive the Philippines

Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda brought devastation to parts of the Philippines in November this year with thousands dead and millions displaced.

Disaster appeals were set up and were well supported but what the Philippines needs is for us underwater photographers to go there and dive to support their local businesses. This was emphasised in a message from the owners of the Sogod Bay Scuba Resort as follows:

"We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to our neighbors in Leyte, our friends in Malapascua and throughout the region.

The Philippines are very resilient. To our customers and friends our resort is open for business. Padre Burgos, Southern Leyte sustained minimal damage from typhoon Yolanda. Our resort is powered with a backup generator until power is restored in Southern Leyte in the coming days. The biggest help to us now is your continued support - we are operational and would love to see you at our resort. At this time we are unsure of Tacloban airport. The best alternative is arriving in Cebu and traveling by ferry to Leyte. Contact us for current travel advice. Thank you for all your emails and support!"

Nudibranchs are hip

News of Dan Bolt, Terry Griffith and Bernard Picton's new iBook "Nudibranchs of the Southwest" coming out soon is welcome and helps to confirm that these gorgeous creatures are attracting cult status with dedicated trips to photograph them in such hot spots as Gulen in Norway and Anilao in the Philippines

They make great subjects; they don't move very fast and they are available in an extraordinary range of colours, shapes and sizes.

The other really good news is that they aren't, as far as I know, edible to humans although I'm sure some desperate entrepreneur has attempted to deep fry one to create that unique 'dining experience'. Fortunately such experiments have never caught on and that should ensure their survival and their continued appeal to us underwater photographers.

A good news story to come out of the sea for once.

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