

Shadow Divers
(Robert Kurson)
ISBN: 0375508589
Published by Random House
£8.99

THIS IS the novelised account of a true story about a small group of experienced deep air divers and how they locate and dive the wreck of an unknown, Second World War, German submarine. The wreck lies in 230 feet (between 70 and 80m) of water, 60 miles off the coast of New Jersey and this book tells her story from the discovery in the early 90's to her identification in 1997.

The book follows the exploits of Bill Nagle, an experienced deep air diver and skipper of the *Seeker*; John Chatterton, experienced air diver and veteran of diving the *Andrea Doria*; and Richie Kohler, another 'Doria' veteran.

These are not the only group members, but the three central characters, and a biography of each of the three is also given. The first dive makes interesting reading, especially when they realise what they are diving. Since the group seem to dive solo at such great depths it is a bit on the frightening side.

The early part of the book tends to be over dramatic, especially when describing the effects of narcosis and decompression sickness, but if you stick with it, it soon turns into an interesting read.

The story details how the divers researched the layout of the wreck (referred to as U-Who) and recovered artefacts, including a knife with the name Horenburg carved into its wooden handle. This makes for a fascinating read. The gruesome discovery of one the subs crew reminds the divers, and the reader, that the wreck is also a grave. U-Who sank with all 56 of her crew aboard.

Personal tragedies litter the book, from the diveboat skipper's descent into alcoholism, to the loss

of three divers, including a father and son team, and the strain that the diving and research placed on family and marriages.

Chapter 12 is especially poignant as it gives an account of the days before the sailing of U-869. Here we are introduced to the crew of the ill fated U-boat, especially Martin Horenburg a 'funkmeister' (radio master) on board and although it will never be known what exactly happened on that last mission, this Chapter tries to piece together the jigsaw and the story is probably as near to reality as it could be.

There are three sections of photographs in the book which show the cast of this great adventure along with shots of the wreck itself. The last section shows photographs of the crew and their families.

There is some light humour dotted throughout the book including an account of how one of the group switched to trimix diving while the other divers of the group opted to stick to 'safer' air, well it was the 90s.

This is a very enjoyable book, if you skip over the overdramatised sections, but don't let your non diving loved ones read it as they might just lock up your kit.

Kev Watson



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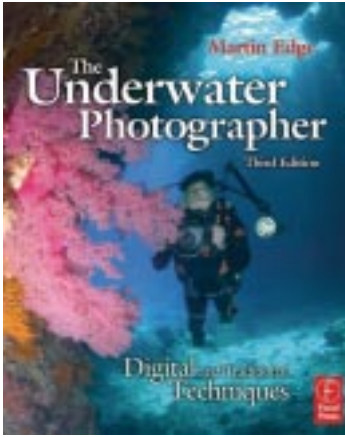
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The Underwater Photographer: Digital and Traditional Techniques (Martin Edge)

ISBN: 0240519884
Published by Focal Press
£24.99

THIS THIRD edition has been extensively updated to cater for the increasing use of digital cameras amongst underwater photographers. At 392 pages it is a substantial book; on arrival, a quick thumb through, shows extensive usage of colour pictures throughout.

The author has split the book into five sections: The Basics and Beyond; The Digital Revolution; Using SLR

Cameras and Compact Digitals Underwater; The Mindset (author Martin Edge's own philosophy on how to approach underwater photography) and the Big Four (Composition, Lighting, Macro and Wide angle). He states at the start that it may be read cover to cover or dipped into as a source of reference as and when required.

Some degree of understanding is assumed, although there is a brief overview of photographic principles and underwater photography.

Initial impressions are very positive; Martin's style is easy to follow and enjoyable to read. He addresses technical issues clearly and comprehensively, every so often he highlights ideas for the reader to try; both on land or underwater.

These involve the reader and do go some way to assist learning of the subject under discussion. Clear diagrams also aid the learning process. References throughout are made to other sources of information, particularly web sites. Although the links revealed much useful additional material, I do wonder how valid the links will be in a few years time.

The key to getting the most out of this book and hopefully go on to produce better pictures is the 'think and consider (TC) system'. This is simply a structure of events to be

considered when taking a photograph and has been employed and developed by Martin throughout his career as an underwater photographer and teacher of the subject. Hopefully adopting this technique will prevent flat 2D 'snap shots'.

I have only used the camera underwater once since finishing the book and I did notice a bit of improvement - less hurry to take a picture of the first thing that you see!

It is difficult to find any negatives with this book; I did think that the book was biased towards digital format, in particular D-SLR users (this may only be a problem if you are still using film) and it was definitely biased towards clear warm tropical waters (only a problem if St Cath's is your usual haunt!) although the skills do transfer; I know which waters I would rather be diving in.

Overall, a very useful and up to date book, anyone looking to start taking underwater photographs should read the early sections before investing in expensive kit; while those who have the kit may learn a thing or two. I now think more about the pictures that I take and what could be done to improve them, although I reckon it will be a while before I achieve pictures to rival some of the stunning images that fill this book.

Alan Lissimore



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