

# Inspired to go the extra mile

*Underwater Photography: Art & Techniques*  
by Nick Robertson-Brown

IT'S UNLIKELY THAT YOU'LL hear anyone complain that there are too few underwater photography manuals about. Every few months seems to bring another contender, or an updated edition of an older book.

It's interesting to observe how the various authors try to carve out a niche for themselves. Much depends on their starting point – do they assume that readers, the wannabe underwater photographers, have never picked up a camera before, or

a very lucid writing style and the benefit of clear, attractive diagrams as well as his own excellent photos as examples and sources of inspiration.

Some of these shots, such as *The Krays* (right), or a dramatically lit lifeboat on the *Salem Express* wreck, you would give a lot to be able to call your own.

The writer is a biologist, so as many of the best underwater photographers are, and passionate about marine conservation, so clearly life-forms are his thing. I like the way he throws in tidbits such as "*Southern sting rays, for example, generally become much easier to approach after mid-day*", and would have been happy to see more of these.

By comparison chapters such as those on wrecks and models do seem a tad sketchy in terms of detailed advice, perhaps reflecting Nick's balance of interest.

Overall, although slimmer than some guides, I found this a valuable and enjoyably readable addition to the photography bookshelf.

**Crowood**  
ISBN: 9781847976574  
Softback, 176pp, £16.99

## SEPIA PICTURE-LED

*The Ships of Scapa Flow*  
by Campbell McCutcheon

IF THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF underwater photography guides, the same might be said about books on

Scapa Flow. The Orkneys wreck graveyard is rightly hailed as one of the world's great dive locations, and there are plenty of volumes about both its history and the diving there.

Several manage to combine the two aspects into compelling and informative narratives.

If you have dived Scapa or are simply interested in military wrecks, you may well own some of these volumes by the likes of Rod Macdonald and Lawson Wood. Whether you consider adding *The Ships of Scapa Flow* by maritime historian Campbell McCutcheon to your collection is another matter.

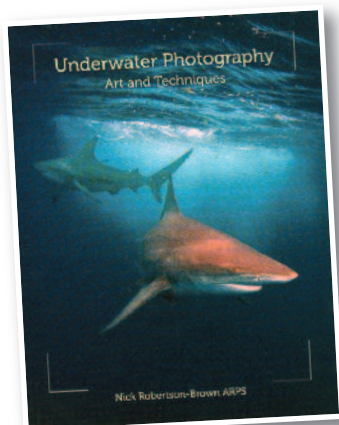
This new book boasts an impressive and evocative collection of sepia warship photographs and postcards from the Great War period and its aftermath.

However, my growing impression as I read it (which even a slow reader like me can do in well under an hour) was not so much that this was "*the story of the ships of Scapa Flow*", as the publisher claims, as a picture collection with added notes.

It's as if the 138 photos (with the odd illustration) were shuffled into groups that then dictated the shape of the book, with a brief chapter to lead into each set of images.



NICK ROBERTSON-BROWN



at least never attempted to do more than get the sun over their shoulder and press a button?

Or do they take a certain amount of basic knowledge as read, and concentrate on the finer points?

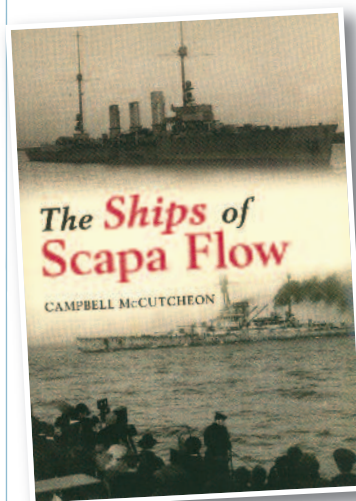
Nick Robertson-Brown has, sensibly I think, opted for the latter course in this, his first book.

While he is careful to cover the vital fundamentals such as the Exposure Triangle (shutter/aperture/ISO), he launches into the book at a gallop without pausing to dot every f/stop. For what I take to be his intended audience, that's what a glossary is for!

The clue is in the subtitle *Art and Techniques*, and it is helping the existing underwater photographer to produce better, more interesting pictures that preoccupies the author, (much as it does Alex Mustard in *Be The Champ!*)

Nick and his wife Caroline run Frogfish Photography in Manchester, and teach their own training course, the modules of which complement the chapters in the book.

The author is helped in getting straight down to business by having



The lack of logical narrative flow is illustrated by Chapter Two, headed *The Phantom Fleets*. While the story of Winston Churchill's successful fleet of decoy merchant ships disguised as warships is a fascinating one, it touches only tangentially on the story of Scapa Flow and the sinking of the German High Seas Fleet.

We get chapters on HMS *Hampshire* and *Vanguard* and on the *Royal Oak*, which remain in situ but, as war graves, cannot be dived. We get very little on the eight great German warships that we can dive, and quite a lot on post-war salvage operations, where previously unseen photographs are available.

In this picture-led history, each chapter seems to exist in isolation. Maritime historians may be tempted by the images, but for less than the £15 this book costs, divers can probably do better.

**Amberley Publishing**  
ISBN: 9781445633862  
Softback, 96pp, £14.99

Reviews by Steve Weinman

## TOP 10 DIVING BOOKS

as listed by [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) (5 February, 2014)

1. *Fifty Places to Dive Before You Die*, by Chris Santella (1)
2. *Raising the Dead*, by Philip Finch (-)
3. *The Darkness Below*, by Rod Macdonald (-)
4. *Manual of Freediving*, by Umberto Pelizzari & Stefano Tovaglieri (-)
5. *The Darkness Below* (Kindle edition), by Rod Macdonald (-)
6. *Scuba Diving*, by Monty Halls & Miranda Krestovnikoff (3)
7. *Amazing Diving Stories*, by John Bantin (2)
8. *Scuba Diving & Snorkelling for Dummies*, by John Newman (-)
9. *PADI Open Water Diver Manual*, by Drew Richardson (-)
10. *Deep Descent*, by Kevin F McMurray (-)