

# Who are you calling ugly?

FRANK URQUHART

THEY have quaint names like the fangtooth, the roundnose grenadier, the chiasmodon niger, the spookfish and the dolichoteryx longpipe.

But they are some of the most frightening-looking and ugliest creatures on earth – denizens of the deep which inhabit the darkest reaches of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, one of the most inhospitable places on the planet.

For the first time in Britain, a series of stunning pictures and specimens collected from the volcanic mountain range in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean are going on public display.

This summer, members of the public are being given the unique chance to get up close and personal with these monsters of the abyss in a new exhibition, Deeper than Light, which is being staged at Aberdeen's Maritime Museum.

The exhibition is based on the work of an international research project in which scientists from 16 nations, including marine experts at Aberdeen University's Ocean Lab, took part.

The exhibition, providing an unrivalled insight into the life and environment of the deepest parts of the Atlantic, displays findings from an expedition in 2004 to research the marine life and ecosystem along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge between Iceland and the Azores.

Sophisticated subsea technology was used to study marine life along the Mid-Atlantic ridge to a depth of 3,000 metres (almost two miles). Despite the inhospitable terrain, researchers identified a staggering 300 different species of fish, of which five were new to science, and a myriad of other organisms during the expedition.

Nikki King, one of the scientists from Ocean Lab who was on the 2004 expedition, said: "The members of the public who visit the exhibition will never have seen anything like this before.

"The exhibition features preserved speci-

mens, from quite small species about two centimetres long, to quite big fish up to 40 to 50 centimetres long.

"And it also features a series of stills and video footage taken by remotely operated vehicles at depths up to 3,000 metres and others of the organisms once they were taken on board."

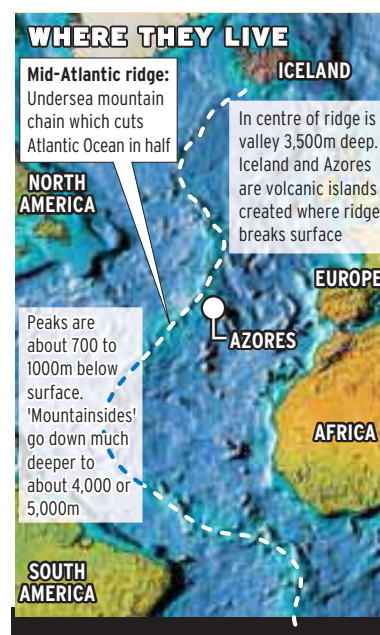
She explained that scientists were, in many ways, only beginning to scratch the surface in studying the rich variety of life in the deepest reaches of the Atlantic.

Professor Monty Priede, director of Ocean Lab, explained: "The old marine biology textbooks suggest that as you get deeper, life gets sparser and less interesting. But between America and Europe, we have this massive 'alpine' range of mountains with very interesting life-forms all over it.

"There is no bit of ocean where there is no life. There is always at least one animal per cubic metre."

A spokeswoman for Aberdeen University said: "Deeper than Light combines new scientific discoveries, unusual deep-sea life-forms, advanced marine technology, biological samples, film, photos, paintings and scientific illustrations, and is a visual interaction between art, science and technology."

The exhibition runs at the Maritime Museum until 2 August. Admission is free.





From top: the deep sea angler fish; oreo; nemichthys, or snipe eel; benthoctopus

Ref: 13363286





**Anoplogaster, fangtooth to its friends, is found in the darkest reaches of the Mid-Atlantic ridge**  
Picture: David Shale

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