

Changing the lives of those with mental and physical challenges



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Depththerapy team herald most successful training programme yet

A team from scuba diving rehabilitation charity Depththerapy has recently returned from their largest ever and most successful programme yet.

14 wounded in service veterans, all suffering from life changing mental and/or physical injuries, took part in the Depththerapy programme in May at Roots Red Sea, El Quseir, Egypt.

Six veterans successfully completed the PADI Open Water course with five of these continuing on to qualify as PADI Advanced Open Water Divers during the week. A further five completed their PADI AOW Diver course and Deep Specialty. All 11 completed their Enriched Air/Nitrox Course and experienced a night dive at Roots house reef.

Three of the wounded in service veterans assisted in the training programme as Instructors and Dive Masters. The teaching team included Chris Middleton, who lost both legs in Afghanistan and has subsequently worked through the Depththerapy programme from Open Water to Divemaster, as he aims towards his ultimate goal to become the first double amputee PADI Instructor.

Andy Searle, another bilateral amputee who assisted on the programme said:

“If you had asked me just over a year ago if I would be helping to teach fellow veterans to scuba dive I would have laughed. Last week I had that opportunity. How does that feel? I’m not sure I can answer that as my emotions run so high. I have been supported in and out of the water by the Depththerapy team, who have changed my life. To help others, my injured brothers in arms, is just the greatest honour.”

The work of Depththerapy and Depththerapy Education does not stop when the veterans exit the water and return back to their daily lives. As well as life changing physical injuries, 80% of the programme members suffer from acute PTSD and can be considered “hard to reach”. The charity provides 24/7 support to programme members before, during and post diving through the Depththerapy Buddy Peer Support system.

On this trip, one individual disclosed that he had not left the house for the past six years; another, that this had been the first time since his injury and diagnosis of PTSD that he has been able to talk about what happened to him.

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With such high stakes it is no surprise that most of those wounded in service veterans who take part in the Depththerapy programme consider it a life changing and pivotal moment in their rehabilitation and return to civilian life.

Jon Beever was medically discharged from the Royal Engineers and last year suffered a serious motorcycle accident in which he and his girlfriend came close to death. He attained his OW and AOW on this trip and had this to say:

"The Depththerapy programme has given me an insight to the real me and shown that I can do whatever I put my mind to. This has affected me deep down and taught me that it's great to talk. Depththerapy provides an enriched environment where mental illness and physical injuries mean nothing. It teaches that you can do, that you can speak your problems through... and delivers what it says on the packet."

Chris Ganley, formerly of the 1st Battalion The Rifles and who was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident, resulting in him losing an arm, qualified as an OW and AOW on this trip and said:

"It has been an incredible experience... diving is like entering another world. An exceptional experience that will stay with me for my life. The support the team give you is beyond description. Depththerapy say they are a family; I am now a part of that family."

Dr. Richard Cullen, Founder and Chairman of Depththerapy and Depththerapy Education and who led the programme added:

"I am not sure that words can adequately describe our programme this May. It was amazing and humbling, inspirational and life changing, emotional and ultimately, a massive success... Depththerapy and its members are indebted to everyone who took part in the programme and our dedicated support team; particular thanks go to Roots Red Sea, PADI, Thomas Cook Airlines and the Royal Foundation's Endeavour Fund whose funding allowed the programme to take place. This was an experience never to be forgotten."

During the programme, the 14 wounded veterans also joined local Egyptian schoolchildren in Hands Across the Sands. This international event sees people come together to join hands, forming symbolic barriers against spilled oil to promote a clean energy future.

The Depththerapy team is now working towards their next training programme, a liveaboard for 12 wounded in service veteran divers in the Red Sea in June, as well as continuing their active support for all those who have already taken part in the charity's programmes and become part of the Depththerapy family.

For more information about the work of Depththerapy and Depththerapy Education visit their NEW website at www.depththerapy.co.uk.

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Notes for Editors

About Depththerapy: Depththerapy and Depththerapy Education is an English charity since 2014 that aims to rehabilitate seriously injured UK Armed Services Personnel who have suffered life changing mental or physical injuries, through the medium of scuba diving. The charity also provides education in adaptive scuba diving techniques to dive professionals.

Image: The attached image may be used to illustrate this story and shows Depththerapy programme members Andy Searle (bilateral amputee) and Chris Ganley (single arm amputee). Andy assists Chris as he descends on dive one - confined water dive - at Roots Red Sea in May 2017. Please credit the photographer: Dmitry Knyazev.

For more information and further images, please contact:

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