

The core of Cobham

Cobham Pilates has moved to its stunning new studio as Donna Pourteymour's fitness revolution continues apace. **Brian Alexander** visits the hub of health and well-being

In four eventful years, Donna Pourteymour has turned Surrey on to the life-changing fitness discipline of Pilates. And the opening of her state-of-the-art new Cobham Pilates studios is testament to her hard work and how her methods have achieved great results.

The new purpose-built facility, which is airy, spacious and full of the latest equipment, is a joy to behold. It has already become a hub for the pursuit of well-being and Donna's business has boomed during times of recession.

The studio will host its first annual 'Pilates Week' in Cobham from October 21 to 28 when the highly-respected Diane Wise from New York's Kane School of Core Integration will be one of the first in a series of planned high-profile visiting master teachers. Donna says: "It promises to be an amazing week of master classes, teacher training and exciting new offerings coming out of America such as the NYC Ballet workout. Diane's incredible sense of purpose in creating strong, healthy and mobile bodies will motivate everyone who visits us that week."

Having relocated this August from their original studio above Farrants, Cobham Pilates is now able to offer more than 50 weekly classes for all levels of ability. Due to



The Studio

unprecedented demand, it is adding new reformer classes weekly and private tuition is also now available every day of the week with one of its team of very experienced teachers, all of whom hold internationally recognised qualifications.

So what is Pilates? Donna says: "It's a method of exercise and physical conditioning designed to stretch, strengthen and balance the body. Pilates strengthens all the muscle groups, but particularly the deep 'core muscles' which are so important to both our posture and our overall health and well being.

"Practiced faithfully, Pilates yields numerous benefits. Increased lung capacity and circulation through deep, healthy breathing is a primary focus. Strength and flexibility, particularly of the

abdomen and back muscles, coordination – both muscular and mental, are key components in an effective programme. Posture, balance and core strength are all dramatically improved. Bone density and joint health improve and many experience positive body awareness for the first time in their lives.

"And it teaches balance and control of the body, and that capacity often spills over into other areas of life."

Pilates takes its name from Joseph Pilates, a German-born émigré to Britain and then America, who devised the method in the early 1900s.

He was the original personal trainer, with a varied student roster, ranging from Scotland Yard to Rudolph Nureyev. People often think that Pilates is quite new to the UK, but there is a long and interesting history in England.

Most of the professional equipment was originally developed here using English hospital beds, with springs and pulleys attached. When you look at the Pilates equipment today, all sleek and modern in wood and leather, its British hospital bed origins are still recognisable.

Donna adds: "The results you see from Pilates won't just remain in the studio. You will learn to incorporate what you learn into your daily lives – how you stand and walk, how you

page 40 ►



October 2010



The core of Cobham



◀ page 39 sit at the computer or drive a car, as well as more physical activities such as football, skiing, tennis, running, cycling, hiking, dancing or swimming.

"Pilates is for everyone interested in improving the way they look, feel and move. Our students range in age from 12 to 79 and vary from those whose work demands too much sitting to those who sit too little. We work with athletes, busy mums, stressed out executives with bad backs, people with acute injuries and chronic pain, and expectant mothers. Pilates brings benefits to those who have never exercised before as well as to those who always have and always will."

Donna's introduction to Pilates came when

her body was 'gave up' after years of participating in extreme sports and spending too long sitting on aeroplanes. Her injuries, combined with having two children in two years, left her body in what she describes as "a mess" She admits: "At 35, I felt old."

An osteopath referred her to Pilates, which produced incredible results in only a few months. She practiced the method for another five years and decided to train with Body Control Pilates.

Donna is quite rightly very excited about the new studio. She says: "With this set-up we can now cater to all requirements under one roof: group matclasses, group reformer classes, duets, private lessons and continuing education

for other Pilates teachers. As we have several Pilates teacher trainers now working at Cobham Pilates, we will expand our teacher continuing education offering quite significantly in 2011."

2011 will also see Cobham Pilates expanding its very popular retreat offering. Retreats are currently offered at La Serrania in Pollensa, Mallorca but will be adding UK retreats in the coming year.

Group matclasses are recommended for those who have no serious injuries, who like the social aspect of a class environment and who can commit to a scheduled time each week. They are run on a school-term basis and are organised by ability level.

There are matclasses for every conceivable level of ability, while the teen classes (for 11 to 18-year-olds) and for pregnant mums are proving popular.

I am assured that my 'core' is hiding somewhere behind my stomach, so perhaps the Gentle Beginner class will do for me. ●



● essence info

● Cobham Pilates

- 31 High Street, Cobham KT11 3DP
- (above M&Co). Open Monday-Friday
- 9am-5.30pm, Saturday 10am to 3pm.
- **Telephone:** 01932 588707
- **Email:** info@cobhampilates.com
- **Website:** www.cobhampilates.com