

# Strength to strength

Cobham Pilates is five years old and owner **Donna**

**Pourteymour** reflects on the past 12 months with Brian

Alexander – and looks ahead to exciting innovations and plans



**Q When we last met up, the new studio in Cobham had only just opened. Has it been a good year?**

**DONNA:** We are delighted with the past year. Cobham Pilates has recently turned five years old, so we are not new to Cobham, but what surprised us when we opened the new studio last autumn was how many people had absolutely no idea that we were here. There were also many clients who wanted to come to the studio before, but they couldn't because we didn't have the ability to fit them in for sessions. So the new studio has given us that capacity.

**Q Even during tougher economic times, has your business continued to grow?**

**D** We are growing, but we don't focus on that. I think in a tough economy, people are careful. We all are. Our goal is to offer every client an incredible experience every single time they walk in our door. And we try our absolute best to do that, and I think our clients realise that. And so they tell their friends, and they bring their husbands and their wives and their children, and so we grow.

**Q What range of clients do you have?**

**D** There is really no typical client. We have every age from teenagers to retirees. We have people who come to us to get fit, the flatter tummy, the Pippa butt, better posture and more flexibility. Many people don't realise that we have a significant rehabilitative practice at the studio, working with clients who are referred from physiotherapists, osteopaths and surgeons, who come to us to 'fix' an injury or in many cases to alleviate their pain.

**Q Are any men brave enough to use the studio?**

**D** Yes, many. About 15 per cent of our clients are men. They tend to come at the quieter times, in the early mornings, evenings, and weekends. Men are more hesitant to walk up the stairs, definitely, but once they start, and they feel and see the benefits, they get hooked.

**Q Why is Cobham Pilates so successful? What do you provide that other studios don't?**

**D** We have this incredible core belief that absolutely everyone can learn to do pilates, and learn to do it well. And we are passionate about ensuring that everyone reaps the incredible benefits that pilates can deliver. We think that everyone deserves to feel strong, no matter what has happened to their body in the past. The physical strength and well-being that clients find at the studio often translates into the rest of their lives. A client told me recently that when she walks out of our door, she feels like there is nothing in the world that she cannot do. That's pretty powerful.

**Q Do you have any exciting projects or programmes in the pipeline?**

**D** Absolutely. In the past year we have put a lot of effort into diversifying our class offering, whilst staying true to our roots of a pure pilates studio. One big focus this past year has been to bring the benefits of cardiovascular exercise into the studio and we have done this with reformer jump classes (horizontal jumping for half an hour, easy on the joints and a great cardio workout), studio circuits (the benefits of working on pilates equipment in an intense small-group environment), cardio mat classes (these have a cult following already!) and the NYC ballet workout (not dancing but the workout the dancers do to get those legs). Many of our clients come three to four times a week and they have greatly appreciated the diversity that we now offer. For 2012, our first innovation is that we are moving our pilates retreats to an amazing location in Mykonos, Greece and I will tell you all about that next month. ●

## essence info

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