



Jane O'Hara meets Cherry Baker

Exercising your choice ... Pineapple to Glossop success

PILATES has grown in popularity in recent years, partly due to the achievements of the pioneering Cherry Baker. Cherry, who runs The Pilates Studio in Glossop with her husband John, has developed a contemporary approach to the method of exercise, first created almost 100 years ago by Joseph Pilates in Germany. Her Modern Pilates system, designed in partnership with Cheshire-based physiotherapist Chris Norris, is different from many traditional types of exercise. It promotes gentle, harmonious movement which not only aids rehabilitation from illness and injury, but is also enjoyed by many who simply want to be more toned, flexible and strong.

Cherry spends most weekends travelling the UK teaching other tutors how to lead Modern Pilates classes. Most weekdays she leads classes for her loyal followers in Glossop, where she has been a fitness and exercise instructor for over 25 years. Walk into any of her classes and you will hear people claim that her exercise routines have transformed their lives. You will also hear the sound of laughter, as Cherry is renowned for her enthusiasm and great sense of humour.

Cherry was a competitive athlete in her schooldays and had originally planned to become a PE teacher, until she realised that not all children loved PE as much as she did. Instead she went to work as a gym instructor just as the aerobics and popmobility crazes were hitting the UK in the early 1980s. She went to Pineapple Dance Studios in London ("in a stripy leotard and white headband") and threw herself into aerobics training. When she returned home, she started popmobility classes of her own in a room above a pub. "I couldn't believe how popular the classes were," laughs Cherry. "I felt really well-off for an eighteen year old!"

She first became interested in Pilates nearly 15 years ago when she heard Chris Norris speak about a system of exercise primarily designed to strengthen the back and address muscle imbalance. "I could see that this would also flatten abdominals, so I took Chris's principles and created an exercise programme called Abdominal Revolution that could be used in used in a class situation. I toured the UK presenting the programme to other instructors and it was a huge success. I also created a training

"DVD which was so popular we couldn't produce enough copies to keep up with demand. After gaining some Pilates qualifications, I realised I wanted to create a new type of Pilates which incorporated many of the principles I'd seen Chris use. So Chris and I fused our expertise to create Modern Pilates, and developed a national qualification for exercise teachers and physiotherapists."

Cherry is constantly updating her skills and recently gained a level 4 qualification, the highest level in the fitness industry, in postural stability for older adults – an area she and her team now specialise in. She is also recognised as a leading expert in exercise during pregnancy, and has published a book on the subject, *Pregnancy and Fitness*, as well as another entitled *Total Core Stability on the Ball*. She and her team at The Studio run dedicated sessions for pre and post-natal women, as well as specialist classes for wheelchair users and back pain sufferers.

Despite her busy professional life, family always comes first for Cherry, who is mother to three teenage daughters. She moved to Glossop from her childhood home of Rochdale to live with John at the age of 21. "I just love Glossop people. My teaching makes me feel part of the community. I could never live anywhere else."



● Cherry Baker: creating new type of Pilates