

My sanctuary

Julia Bradbury

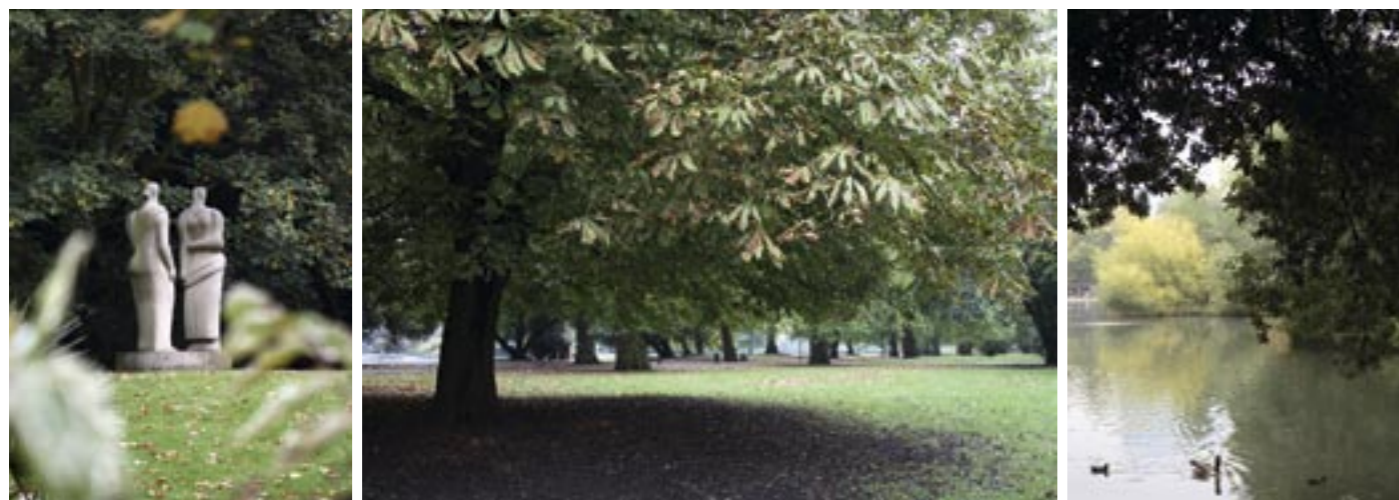
Watchdog presenter Julia Bradbury finds an oasis of calm and tranquillity at the Buddhist Peace Pagoda beside the River Thames in Battersea Park

FEATURE KATHRYN CUSTANCE PHOTOGRAPHS LYDIA EVANS

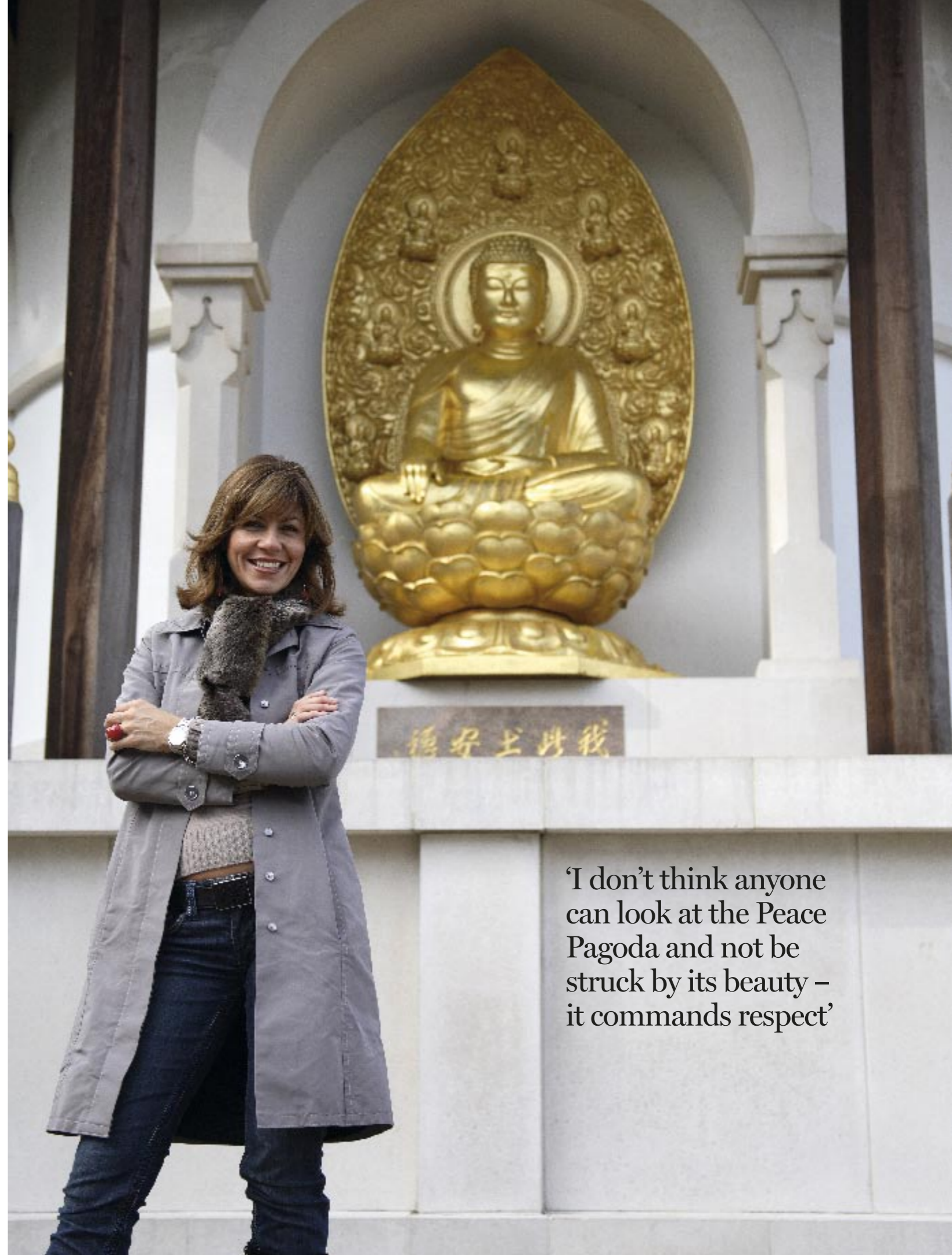
I moved to Chelsea 10 years ago and have been visiting the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park ever since. Some might say it's incongruous, but I think it's part of what's fantastic about London – that medley of buildings, structures, shapes and cultures. That's what I enjoy about the city, you can walk around a corner and there's a giant gherkin, or a beautiful old church. I love the surprise of the Peace Pagoda. I don't think anyone can look at it and not be struck by its beauty. It's never vandalised and no one leaves litter around it. I think it commands respect. I'm more spiritual than religious, but if there is a religion I'm most drawn to it would be Buddhism, it appeals to my contemplative side. The story behind the pagoda is that the Reverend Gyoro Nagase, a member of a Japanese Buddhist order, came to Britain in the Seventies to erect a Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes, one of many around the world built to promote world peace. He then moved to London with a group of Buddhist monks and nuns who came to live in the park, where the children's zoo is now, and built the pagoda.

Battersea Park is one of my favourite parks in London. Everyone comes here – mums with strollers, dog walkers, joggers, businessmen here for a lunchtime breather, tourists. The park has something for each of them, too – a zoo, the lake and fountains, the Pump House art gallery, tennis courts, and tropical gardens. I love looking at the sculptures as I'm walking around the park. I like modern art, especially outdoor sculptures – I think it's something to do with the solid forms against a backdrop of trees that gets me. The Henry Moore sculpture of *Three Standing Figures* is my favourite. I've been a walker since I was a teenager. When I was at school in Sheffield I used to go walking on the Derbyshire moors. I came across Alfred Wainwright, fell-walker and guide writer, as a child because my father had one of his walking books, so when the BBC asked me to do *Wainwright's Walks*, following in his footsteps, it was a dream job. Who wouldn't want to spend the summer walking around the Lake District? Castle Crag is one of my favourite walks, it takes no more than two hours, it has

streams, pools and the summit is mystical, like something out of *Lord of the Rings*. Walking is my way of keeping fit, so if I'm in London and not filming in the Lake District enjoying the great outdoors, this is my walking patch. I go from home over Chelsea Bridge, through the park then back over Albert Bridge. Battersea Park is always on my route, and I never come here without visiting the Buddha. I have my iPod on a random shuffle, so I can listen to everything from Razorlight to Elgar. The park has fantastic views of the London skyline. I love the view of Battersea Power Station from here – it's the most beautiful ugly building in the world and it's magical catching a glimpse of it through the trees. It's always a shame to leave the park, but, with a bit of luck, there will be the ice-cream van outside the gates. I can never resist a Mr Whippy 99!
* Watchdog is on Wednesdays at 8pm on BBC One.
* Julia is presenting a new series of *Kill It, Cook It, Eat It* on BBC Three in January.



From left: Julia enjoys gazing at the many sculptures, such as Henry Moore's *Three Standing Figures*, dotted around Battersea Park, and taking in the peaceful views of the lakes surrounding the Buddhist Peace Pagoda, which was erected in 1985



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