

IF I COULD SEE ME NOW

Julia Bradbury

50, TV presenter and author



Julia Bradbury, 'the extrovert', aged five, presenting Britain's Best Wildlife in Person, below

What would your younger self make of your life today?

Like a lot of children, I was an extrovert. You don't have the fear or boundaries that you sometimes have as you get older. I remember being very much the showgirl - I liked to entertain, and I would pull funny faces and mimic my teachers.

I look back on some of that and I find it a bit cringy and, although I haven't become shy, I'm a little less youthfully exuberant. That younger me, who loved to perform, wouldn't be surprised I've been on television, but would probably want me to be dancing or acting, maybe performing in a musical like *Bugsy Malone*, rather than presenting *Countryside* and *Batchelor*.

But there was another side of me that was drawn to quiet meaningful moments in a woman's life. I watched *Joan* and I remember thinking that she seemed very wise, beautiful

whom I also loved watching. Bakewell was commanding in the way she told stories. Even as a child, I appreciated the power of television to tell a story, tell it well, and to sometimes change people's lives. That younger version of me would be pleased to know I've found work within the same medium as those heroines of mine.

A lot of my presenting has involved walking or generally being outdoors, so



and my younger self would recognise that and credit it to my parents. My dad, Michael, is a real outdoor enthusiast, and we would go out walking together from when I was just a toddler. He's a Derbyshire-born man and he would take me walking in the Peak District after school and at weekends.

My mum, Christa, isn't as keen on walking, but we used to garden together a lot. I remember helping her a lot in the garden in Rutland, which, along with Sheffield, is where I grew up, lifting logs and planting flowers. They were brilliant, engaged, loving parents, and I hope my younger self would see some resemblance in the way I mother my own children.

Despite all the gardening and walking, the young me would be taken aback by what I now see as the restorative power of spending time in green spaces. In just a generation, we've lost our connection to nature. There are some people who don't even

Interview



In a generation, we've lost our connection to nature. Some people don't even touch soil

fundamental connection, even though we need it for our mental and physical health. I'm always talking about this, and I think my younger self would be proud of me for encouraging people to get outside, but I think I might need to emphasise to her the importance of making green spaces central to her life.

That's partly because I've lived in cities all my adult life. When I left school, my dad advised me that television and acting were quite precarious, and that I should have something to fall back on. I thought advertising and marketing would be a good second choice, and I spent a couple of years working for an advertising agency in Hammersmith. After that, I worked with my mum and my sister on their fashion label for another couple of years, but I still wanted to pursue my ambition of being a television reporter, so I made it my mission to knock on doors and offer my services as a runner. I just kept going until I got a few lucky breaks and managed to get some stuff on to a ratty old show reel. My big break was becoming Los Angeles correspondent for GMTV - even my 20-something self couldn't compute how huge an opportunity that was.

Since then, I've been very lucky through my job to have travelled all over the world. I've done extraordinary things, from spending time with tribesmen in Indonesia and jumping out of aeroplanes to microchipping a tiger at Victoria Falls and travelling through Mormon country. But the thing that would make my younger self happiest, if she could see me at work today, would be my longevity. I've been on television for more than 25 years, and I want to remain relevant, stay motivated, and keep creating opportunities. The young me would be proud of that energy.

Interview by Tom Ough

Julia Bradbury, is co-founder of *The Outdoor Guide* (thetouterguide.co.uk), co-hosts the podcast *A Little Bit of Positive*, and is

chairman of the *patron of Indian* for the *Wanderlust Prize* for *Nature Writing*. The winner will be announced in September.