



Toasting 50 with a cocktail, the TV presenter has many professional and personal achievements – including her three children – and is planning her next adventures

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS

CELEBRATING HER 50TH BIRTHDAY, TV PRESENTER JULIA BRADBURY TELLS HOW SHE THRIVES ON THE GREAT OUTDOORS AND WHY SHE IS SAVOURING SPECIAL MOMENTS

Rambling over the rolling hills of the Devon countryside, exploring its streams, woodlands and beaches, is not a bad way, says Julia Bradbury, to spend a milestone birthday.

The TV presenter was meant to have been in Spetses, Greece, basking in the Mediterranean sun, island hopping and raising a glass or two for a 50th celebration with her family.

But when their flights were cancelled due to the pandemic, she booked The Winery at Higher Wiscombe, a stunning ten-bedroom property set in 52 private acres in east Devon. She decamped there for two weeks with her property developer partner Gerard Cunningham, their three children Zephyr, nine, and five-year-old twins Xanthe and Zena, as well as her parents Michael and Chrissi, for a two-week break.

Together they spent Julia's big day paddling on the beach, enjoying an alfresco lunch and dancing on The Winery's terrace into the early hours.

"Fifty is a significant birthday as it's a good moment in your life to take stock, be grateful and think: 'Okay, what do you want from the next 30 or 40 years of your life?'" says Julia, whose son Zeph also celebrated his birthday in the same week.

"So I'm thinking: 'Right, what have I got left? What do I want to achieve and how do I want to do it?' And then I try to tick them off."

CONFIDENCE TRICK

The former BBC *Countryfile* presenter is speaking with the enthusiasm and confidence of someone who has sustained a high-profile career in TV – fronting programmes such as *Watchdog* and *Top Gear* – for more than two decades and has no plans to slow down. In fact she's been developing programme ideas and firing them off with an attitude of: "Sod it – I can write to anybody, propose anything and the worst they can do is say no," she says.

"But I've also got to that stage where I don't care about rejection any more because you get so used to it in my business. There is stuff that doesn't work out, and then there's amazing stuff that does."

Such as her popular ITV series earlier this year, *The Greek Islands*, one episode of which she presented with her mum Chrissi.

"She was recognised the other day," laughs Julia. "She was buying an ice cream and a woman turned around and said: 'I know you!'"

Full of energy and looking tanned and healthy, Julia keeps up a strict exercise regime of walking, yoga and cardio. "I swear by green exercise, being outside, every day – it's so good for your mental and physical health."

"As far as ageing is concerned, you look at yourself in the mirror and think: 'Oh, okay, that's never going to be the same again.' But then I think: 'I've got

(RIGHT) DRESS: LISOU BRACELETS: LOEL & CO. (LEFT) DRESS: UNNINE



'Fifty is a significant birthday, a good moment in your life to take stock, be grateful and think what you want next'




After her planned Mediterranean trip was cancelled because of Covid-19, Julia celebrated her 50th with family in Devon, marked by a showstopper cake fit for the walking fan (left)

'I have a bit of a duty to women to be proud and positive about the way I look now. I am the age I am'



Simple pleasures on the pebble beach, where Julia and family pottered and paddled on her birthday, and enjoyed an alfresco lunch of crab salad and chocolate fondant, before Julia put on her party shoes (right) and danced into the early hours



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue polka-dot dress, is standing on a pebbly beach. She is in a yoga pose, with her hands pressed together in a prayer position near her face and one leg lifted. The background shows the ocean and a clear blue sky.

'I swear by green exercise - being outside every day. It's so good for your mental health'

three amazing children, and maybe this would have started going south if I'd had kids younger," she says.

Given her public profile, she also feels a sense of responsibility to be comfortable with who she is.

"I have a bit of a duty to women to be proud and positive about the way I look now and wear it as a badge of honour, rather than think: 'Oh God, my jowls are saggy and my tummy's a bit wrinkly.' I am the age I am," she shrugs.

HEALTH SERVICE

She did, however, have a health scare in March when, just before lockdown, on a work trip to Costa Rica, she discovered a lump in her left breast. It wasn't until five weeks later, when a friend messaged her to say she was having surgery for breast cancer, that she took any action.

"It jolted me. I thought: 'You're an idiot. Why haven't you done anything about this?' It was one of those things where I thought: 'It won't be me, I'll give it some time and let it go away.' It was very remiss of me not to do anything."

Following a Zoom call with her GP, Julia was referred to a specialist. Three days later she had a mammogram and was diagnosed with microcysts, which, she has been told, have only a rare chance of developing into anything cancerous.

"I felt complete and utter relief of course, and a little bit foolish that I'd left it, and it has made me very aware," says Julia, who posted a picture of her undergoing the mammogram on social media because she didn't want "people to make the same mistake I had".

"The message that I'm keen to get out there is that if you have something that's a strong indicator of cancer, then please go to your GP and get it checked out."

Before her diagnosis, Julia had tried to keep her anxiety under wraps, so as not to bring "negative vibes" into the house.

"The first thing you think - and I'm sure this is the same for every parent who has a health scare - is that you want to be alive to see your children. You look at their little faces and think: 'I want to see who you're going to be.' It's a scary moment."

Her children, she says, are her proudest achievement, perhaps even more so since she struggled to conceive; her twins were born after four rounds of IVF.

"As a trio they're fascinating to watch, so ▶

Julia finds an inspiring spot for her yoga practice. The presenter keeps to a regular fitness routine that also comprises cardio and walking



After a cancer scare this spring, Julia is urging women not to postpone seeing their GP if they find a lump. "I felt complete and utter relief and a little bit foolish that I'd left it"



different. I'm so proud of the way they love each other and want to spend time with each other.

"They've been running around the fields saying 'baa' to the sheep, and caring for each other. Nothing makes me happier than to see my little crew climbing trees and messing about with sticks. Zena even has a family of slugs.

"And Zeph is obsessed with his sisters. The biggest treat for him is that they can all share a room together."

The past four months during lockdown has been the longest spell of consecutive time that Julia has spent with her children, as work has always taken her away.

"They're loving it and it's been lovely to be able to do," she says.

WALKING TALL

Life is about to get busy again, however. She continues to run her walking website, The Outdoor Guide, with her sister Gina, and will soon start filming a series for ITV that celebrates the British countryside. She's also working towards achieving her one big ambition: a big TV campaign to encourage everyone to be walking fit.

"Even the Government has cottoned on to the fact that we need green spaces to stay healthy – physically and mentally – and it's something I've always tried to promote," she says.

But for now she is savouring the time she has with her family at a special moment in her life.

"I feel incredibly lucky. I don't want to sound smug because that's very unattractive, but I am grateful for the blessings in my life and feel a responsibility to make the most of what I have and not squander anything," she says – before running off to join her children to talk to some sheep.



INTERVIEW: ROSALIND POWELL
PHOTOS: DAVID VENNI

STYLING: GAYLE RINKOFF
HAIR & MAKE-UP: ALICE THEOBALD AT TERRI
MANDUCA USING MORGAN'S POMADE &
INGLOT X MAURA

'As a trio my little crew are fascinating to watch, so different. I'm so proud of the way they love each other'



Julia is joined by her "little crew" in the countryside (and above left). "Children are spending less time outdoors than ever before and research has proven it's bad for them. We all need nature and wildlife," she says, adding that walking in the park will suffice