

# Screen presence

BRIAN MARTIN catches up with TV personality Julia Bradbury and her family

**T**HE career-wise rise and rise of Julia Bradbury equates approximately to the busy TV personality's spirited surges up the Lakeland fells in her hugely inspiring BBC series *Wainwright's Walks*.

Clambering in the footsteps of the late Alfred W – a notoriously private man who, over a long life, rigorously charted some of the finest treks in the Lake District for lesser mortals to enjoy – remains just one of the many joys for Julia in an upwardly mobile career.

And she owes much of it to Rutland, where she was raised, and a family, based at Edith Weston, which has remained a constant source of support. "We are Team Bradbury," she asserts. "We're very close and I don't know what I'd do without them."

Few TV presenters possess the ability to metaphorically prise audiences from their armchairs to join them on great adventures. Yet Julia's enthusiastic – yet never gushing – personality beams ever stronger from our screens. And there are more pinnacles to climb.

Lithe and tanned – and looking at least a decade younger than her 35 years – she metaphorically takes TV viewers with her wherever she goes. She even took them to the top of The Old Man of Stoer, a forbidding 200ft sea stack which she scaled as part of a programme called the Ultimate Rock Climb.

"I had never rock climbed before," she says. "I wasn't expecting to make it without a fall. But I did."

Her CV easily covers two sides of A4. She was in at the launch of both Channel 5 and Live! TV, became GMTV's Los Angeles reporter, is currently travelling the world for the highly popular *Rough Guides* series, flew with the Red Arrows, drove for Top Gear and roared through Speedway Grand Prix and Honda Powerboats – as befits a woman who passed a motor maintenance course and can strip an



Julia with the family dog Lotte.  
Images: KIP CARROLL PHOTOGRAPHY

engine from a car if required.

And she is equally at home in the studio. She has proved a polished co-presenter on *Watchdog* – BBC1's consumer show which has millions of viewers and gets around 7,000 letters a week – and fronted an emotional debate on the killing of young animals for food in BBC3's *Kill It, Cook It, Eat It*.

Add appearances on the National Lottery, *Exclusive!* and *Just The Two Of Us* – a showbiz talent show in which she duetted with ace crooner Tony Christie – and you have the complete picture of a versatile all-rounder who can tackle anything and still come up smiling.

"She has a great personality and tremendous stamina," says elder sister Gina, who handles her PR and 'manic' schedules.

She's certainly hard to track down. Her hectic filming schedule takes her from A to B to Z, and despite surgery for endometriosis – an inflammation of the womb – she shows no sign of flagging.

Julia still finds time to support charities. She is a staunch supporter of the British Heart Foundation and I was lucky to catch her en route from visiting a Marie Curie cancer hospice in Bradford. 'Home' for Julia is officially central London but she makes regular, joyful, visits to the family home at Edith Weston.

Born in Dublin, the daughter of steel executive Michael Bradbury and his wife Chrissi, a high-class couturier, Julia moved to Sheffield with her family at an early age. First signs of an entertainment career emerged at the famous Crucible Theatre where she appeared as a mermaid in Peter Pan alongside future TV stars Joanne Whalley and Paula Wilcox. She attended Edith Weston Primary School first when the Bradburys moved from Dublin, then moved to Sheffield.

"It was a lovely little place and I have many happy memories of playing hopscotch!" she recalled. "I always wanted to be a reporter or work in advertising, but though I was good at English I was rubbish at maths. I remember two teachers in particular. One was Mrs Barnes, who did so much to help me. The other was a man, whose name I forget. He had a big, black moustache and I was fascinated by his digital watch which had a huge red dial!"

She later joined the family fashion business, moved to London to work with Gina, gained experience in marketing and PR and got her first big break when Janet Street-Porter launched Live! TV. She has since interviewed such greats as John Travolta, Tom Hanks, Jane Fonda and John Cleese, and one of her highlights was introducing TV fashion coverage last year from Royal Ascot when she interviewed her mother and Gina wearing the latest Chrissi creations. ➤



Team Bradbury from left – Gina Fox, Julia Bradbury and mother Chrissi Bradbury at Ascot last year. Chrissi created Julia's outfits for this year's Ascot and worked with Rutland hatmaker extraordinaire JoJo as well as Philip Tracey on the hats she will wear.



Julia, Gina and Chrissi Bradbury at Chrissi's home in Edith Weston. Images: KIP CARROLL PHOTOGRAPHY



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It made a sedate change from her usual hectic adventures which regularly push her lean 5ft 7in frame to the limits.

"I've always loved the great outdoors," she said. "When I was younger I played tennis, ran miles and went for long walks in the Peak District. I've also got loads of CDs so I enjoy music and dancing. My TV favourites, amazingly, are David Dimbleby and Miss Piggy. My dream is to host a Star Trek convention with the latter and do a comedy routine with David!"

What you see on TV is what you get. Julia prepares religiously for each programme but manages to appear totally spontaneous on screen. She's well-known for ad libbing, and remains highly popular among production teams who, almost literally, follow her to the ends of the earth.

Every filmed programme includes its fair share of re-takes but Julia is so professional she makes the finished product look seamless. Most of all, she enjoys herself. One 'out-takes' video compiled by Gina includes a particularly hilarious moment when Julia tries to remove her Kagool in a fierce wind, gets it wrapped round her head and ends up spluttering with laughter as she tries to say her lines to camera.



Action woman Julia on a climbing shoot. Photo: Firefly Productions

On Live! TV she 'corpsed' while presenting an item about dreams when a viewer phoned in to say he dreamed he had lost his teeth. The studio expert suggested he visit his dentist ASAP and Julia fell about.

In addition to flying to Bali for the latest Rough Guides she has just completed a series called Railway Walks and is writing a

book. And there's more – much more – to come. A boxed set of Wainwright Walks DVDs is currently available. Yes, it's that man again. "What do I think of Wainwright as a person? He's been described as curmudgeonly but I reckon that, secretly, he really liked people. I've certainly warmed to him over the years!"

## The ultimate eye for style

**S**UMMER'S HERE – or so we're told – and that means the inexorable approach of The Season with its unbeatable jamboree of Ascot, Wimbledon, Henley and high society dressfests.

It also means weddings – and to high class couturier Chrissi Bradbury of Edith Weston that means a special seasonal challenge. The charming designer creates sublime outfits for all occasions.

Chrissi remains close to her daughters Gina Fox and TV personality Julia Bradbury and is particularly keen that the bride's mother should make the most of her great day. "To many, it's the highlight of their lives," she says.

Chrissi, whose boutique is called CiBi, was featured with Gina in last year's BBC1 Ascot fashion slot, which was presented by Julia. The bubbly trio – known collectively as Team Bradbury – dressed from top to toe in elegant Chrissi creations and outshone many a racecourse mannequin.

Of Greek extraction, Chrissi grew up



Couturier Chrissi Bradbury

in Wales blessed with an eye for design. She married steel executive Michael Bradbury and they lived first in Ireland before moving to Rutland with the family when he joined British Steel at Corby.

Having started her cottage industry at Edith Weston – where it is still based today – Chrissi began selling to Harrods and exclusive boutiques as part of a predominantly wholesale business. When Michael moved to British Steel in

Sheffield, she opened her first boutique there and found she much preferred working with the public rather than the buyers.

Gina then joined the business and, having lived in London for a time, moved back to the capital to open a shop with her mother in an exclusive area of Knightsbridge called Beauchamp Place, just around the corner from Harrods. For more than 10 years Chrissi and Gina ran both the Sheffield shop and its Beauchamp Place counterpart simultaneously before selling to concentrate their business interests in Rutland.

Chrissi has rightly attracted a strong client base locally and nationally with designs featuring spectacular hats resplendent in feathers and twirls, and radiant dresses in a delicate riot of pastel shades. She also attracts loyalty – many of her staff have been with her for 30 years and their expertise is renowned.

■ Chrissi works mainly by appointment. Call her on 01780 722077 for more details.