



Relaxing at the Barbados resort Little Good Harbour, where she is spending a fortnight with her family, Julia declares that posing for our



ever had and that it was like a Saturday night in a town centre," chortles Julia.

Two weeks later, she hosted the exact same evening again, for the TV crew, an event that, she says, "was equally hilarious". "I still love dancing and going to parties, but suddenly you think, 'Oh my God, you just look like an old...'" she laughs.

Julia was persuaded to do *Come Dine With Me* by her sister Gina, who helps manage her career. She thought it would show a different, more relaxed side to the rather wholesome, sensible image we see on *Countryfile*, on which she's worked for five years. "It's a guilty secret for some people," Julia says of the programme she co-presents.

"They sidle up to me and whisper, 'I really like *Countryfile*.' And I go, 'Yeah? And what's wrong with that?'"

The appearance of Prince Charles as guest editor on the 25th anniversary edition this year also helped its credentials. "He was charming, engaging and very passionate and knowledgeable about his subject matter.

felt a sense of the importance of that moment."

Though Julia loves the meaty stories the programme covers, she isn't one to stay in one place too long. "I'd be very bored if you sat me down and said, 'You're going to do this job for the next ten years.' I couldn't do it. It would be my idea of hell," she says with a slight shudder.

She will be presenting a one-off health programme, *Long Live Britain*, on BBC1 in July in which people, particularly men, will be invited to test for preventable diseases such as diabetes and told how to manage them if diagnosed. There's also another project in the pipeline, which, she promises, is "the opposite to everything else".

"I'm in a happy place but still ambitious for my career and the energy I have so far hasn't dissipated," she says, shooting off to wake her son from his nap. "And now with Zeph I feel even more spurred on."

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PHOTOS: BBC, BRIAN ARIS

FROM 'COUNTRYFILE' TO THE CARIBBEAN

JULIA BRADBURY

SWAPS HER BARBOUR FOR A BIKINI AS SHE ENJOYS FAMILY TIME IN BARBADOS



'People would be surprised at how lazy I can be. I actually love lying on a sun lounger because I spend my life running around'

We're used to seeing Julia Bradbury stuck on the side of a mountain, dressed head to toe in Gore-Tex while the rain falls in sheets. So the offer of being plucked from her natural environment for a **HELLO!** photoshoot to model elegant beachwear against a Caribbean backdrop of white sand and crystal waters was one the *Countryfile* presenter couldn't resist.

"Like any woman, I love to dress up," says Julia. "There's a misconception that I'm always in fields. Of course, I spend a majority of my working life doing that, but I also love my shoes and my frocks, so this shoot was like a dream."

Julia, 42, spent just over two weeks on holiday in Barbados with her partner, property developer Gerard Cunningham, and their son Zephyrus (or Zeph), enjoying doing very little but swimming, snorkelling and reading.

"People would be surprised at how sloppy and lazy I can be," she says. "I actually love lying on a sun lounger because I spend my life running around doing everything and anything. When I get to a place like that, I love it."

HOLIDAY HIGH

When **HELLO!** meets Julia at her West London home, she's still on a post-holiday buzz. But then her energy levels are naturally high. Warm, friendly and quick to laugh, she speaks loud and fast, rarely sits still and peppers her sentences with quips.

"It's the moustache," she jokes when told she looks like her father Michael, who is sitting in the kitchen with her Greek-born mother, Chrissi, from whom she has inherited her gusto, as well as her dark hair and olive skin.

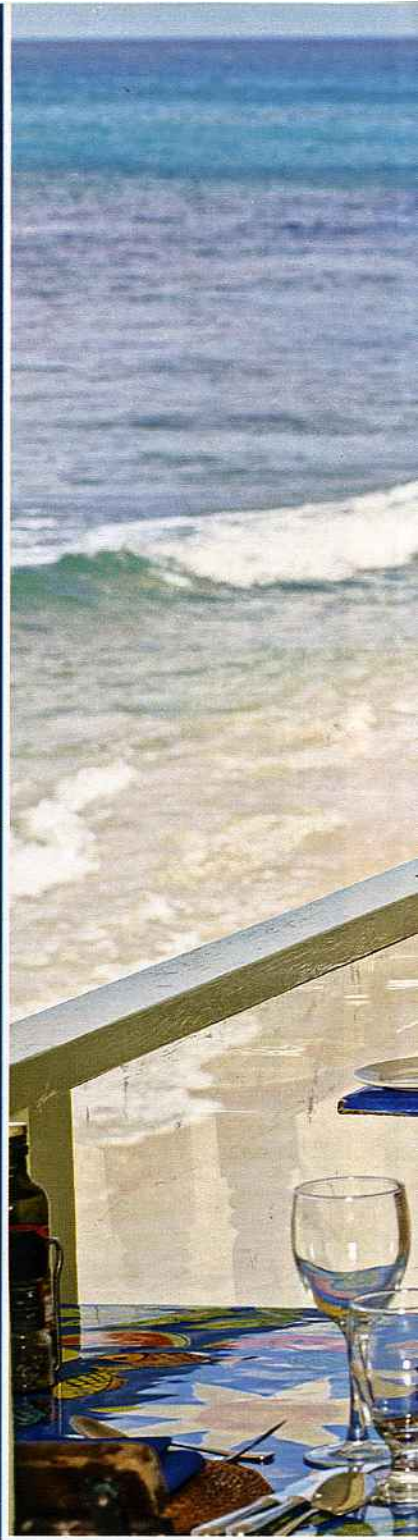
"My mum's in her 70s and still has this incredible energy," adds Julia. "Sometimes it can be a bit overwhelming and people say to me, 'Oh God, shut up!' But I can't help it. I'm really excited by life."

As well she might be. She travels the country with the ever-popular Sunday evening BBC1 programme *Countryfile* – recently guest edited by the Prince of Wales – reporting on anything from worm diggers in Norfolk to otters in Bristol. She's also presented a number of walking programmes, including her *Wainwright Walks* series, as

'I'd have five more children if I could. But I feel incredibly lucky that I've been able to become a mum, so I'll count my blessings, feel lucky and enjoy Zeph'



(LEFT) KAFTAN & BIKINI: MELISSA ODABASH. SARONG: SOAKED IN LUXURY. BRACELET: AZUNI. (RIGHT) DRESS: MELISSA ODABASH. EARRINGS & BRACELETS: AZUNI. SUNGLASSES: CELINE



by her job – even for *The One Show*, for which she has to make sure she isn't wearing anything that looks "like a massive balloon on top of my lap when I sit down", she says, miming an imaginary fat stomach.

She's given up on looking out for stylish outdoor clothing, telling us with a laugh: "When I'm chasing a farmer across a field, a wedged wellie isn't that helpful."

But despite the cagoule and gaiters, she's known as the "walking man's crumpet" to many of her admirers. "Well, I suppose someone has to do it," she jokes. "I could be called worse."

"I think some of the wives hate me," she continues. "They'll say things like, 'It's because of you I'm having to do this walk.'"

"There's a romantic image that certain men have that I'm this outdoor woman who lives and breathes mountains and railways and canal walks. So sometimes if



She has a refreshingly honest attitude towards her looks. She likes the photos from **HELLO!**'s shoot because she looks natural – which is, of course, a large part of her charm on TV. “I haven’t got amazing legs – they’re what I least like about myself – but I look okay.”

ROLE MODEL

Julia stays fit and eats well, but says she inherited her tall, slim physique from her father. “I’m in that lucky camp of women where I can eat what I like, including chocolate every day,” she says. “But it’s something I’m conscious of when I think of younger female viewers. I think there’s a responsibility if you’re on the telly to be measured when it comes to body image and my maxim is to be healthy and happy with yourself and take advice from family and friends.”

She quickly returned to her normal weight after her pregnancy, an achievement she puts down to breastfeeding and a frenetic schedule – she was back at work 12 weeks after giving birth.

Zeph, who is two in August, is the “miracle” baby she thought she’d never have. At 33 she was diagnosed with endometriosis, a condition of the womb lining that can cause fertility problems.

and I thought, “God, I’m approaching 40 and I’m going to be a childless career woman, which I don’t want to be.”

Around the same time, in what she calls a “nice coincidence”, she got together with Gerard, a former boyfriend whom she’d known for 20 years. Discovering she was pregnant left her “dumbstruck”.

“Zeph is the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” she says. “I’m completely thrilled and overwhelmed by motherhood and I love him more and more every day.”

Has motherhood changed her? “Hmm,” she ponders. “It’s relaxed me in some ways and made me more anxious in others. From a career point of view, my priorities have completely changed. I love working, I need to work, but if someone asks, ‘Do you want to go to Mongolia for six weeks?’ the answer is no. Up until two years ago the answer was always yes – I thrived on the spontaneity, the variety, the constant learning process, which I still have, but everything shifts.”

As much as she would love to have more children, Julia believes that ship has sailed. “The dichotomy is that half of me wishes I’d started ten years ago, because if I had, I’d have five more children if I could. But the other half knows that it

Julia enjoys a cocktail at the resort’s Fish Pot restaurant (above) and takes a beachside stroll (left). Though she is keen to make the most of her tropical break, Julia is careful to keep Zeph (with Julia when he was a baby, below) out of the sun. “As an ambassador of the Melanoma Research Fund, I insist on protecting him from the harmful effects of the rays,” she says





'Prince Charles was charming, engaging and very passionate and knowledgeable'

and followed my career path the way I did. I feel incredibly lucky that I've been able to become a mum, so I'll count my blessings, feel lucky and enjoy him."

Though she has a good support system, which includes her parents as well as a live-in nanny, Julia won't be away from Zeph for longer than a week – when she was in Minnesota for five weeks filming black bears for *Planet Earth Live* last year, the family came too – to ensure she doesn't miss any of his milestones. She was at home when he took his first steps.

NOT THE MARRYING KIND

One thing having a child hasn't changed, however, is her thoughts on marriage. "It's not something I ever really wanted to do," she says. "It's not that I don't believe in marriage, but marriage just isn't for me. I think the most important thing is for a child is to have two caring, loving parents in a secure environment. Not a piece of paper."

Her own childhood, she says, was "idyllic" – a happiness she'd like to replicate for Zeph. She was born in Dublin but grew up with her older sister Gina between Rutland and Sheffield. Her father worked in the engineering and steel industry and her mother ran her own fashion business, hence Julia's abiding passion for "a nice bit of cloth and a good cut", not to mention her strong work ethic.

Growing up, she wanted to be Joan Bakewell and she got her first contract with L!VE TV. By 1996, she had moved to GMTV as the show's LA correspondent, a role that made her mother worry that Julia would get swept up in a party lifestyle.

"I was a woman in a notorious industry and she was fearful that I'd go down a slippery path and not ever get out of it, so I had to keep reassuring her," says Julia.

"I was always very ambitious and focused and I wasn't going to mess anything up by falling out of a taxi or found slumped over a coffee table. But I will get on a coffee table and dance in a heartbeat," she laughs.

This lust for life might explain why her dinner party for *Celebrity Come Dine With Me* a few years ago was one of its most raucous.

Serving a heady cocktail of the Swedish spirit Aquavit along with champagne and wine, the hostess and two of her guests, Christopher Biggins and former *Brookside* actor Philip Olivier, got merry and danced until 2am. Abstemious

LEFT: KAFTAN, BIKINI & HAT: MELISSA ODABASH. SHOES: LUCY CHOI. LONDON. RING: AZUNI. TOP: RAOUIL. TROUSERS: SEA NY. SHOES: LUCY CHOI. LONDON. RING: AZUNI.