

## AS SHE STROLLS BACK TO OUR SCREENS

# 'I PINCH MYSELF THAT I HAVE THREE KIDS'

**PRESENTER JULIA BRADBURY TALKS TO OK! ABOUT HOW HER MOTHERHOOD DREAM FINALLY CAME TRUE AND WHY IT'S GOOD TO WALK!**

**W**aving goodbye to her three children as she returned to work last summer was something of a wrench for Julia Bradbury. Her twin girls, Xanthe and Zena, are now 13 months old, while her son Zephyr is four – but not going back to television after six months on maternity leave was never an option. 'I feel strongly that I have to be a role model for my daughters,' says the presenter.

Softening the blow was the fact that her 'office' is some of the most beautiful landscapes in the UK! Julia spent seven weeks with a small crew filming the ITV show *Best Walks With A View*, and her companion book, *Unforgettable Walks*, has just hit the shelves. Always an advocate for a healthy lifestyle, the west London-based star is keen to show that anyone can enjoy walking – and of course, covering all those miles helped her shift her baby weight.

The 45 year old truly glows when she talks about her three children playing together – as if she still can't believe her family is real. It almost wasn't – the former *Countryfile* presenter, who has been married to property developer Gerard Cunningham since 2000, suffered endometriosis before giving birth to Zephyr at 40, and then endured five gruelling

rounds of IVF before the twins were born. 'You don't take anything for granted,' she says.

Here, the bubbly Dublin-born star talks about life as a working mum and her plans to get her children into the great outdoors...

### **Can anyone go for a ramble on the trails in *Unforgettable Walks*?**

Yes, that's exactly what this series and book is all about. You don't need to be a serious walker, it's more about visiting the areas and enjoying them. There's a perception that I'm gung ho and up for the challenge, which of course I am, but I'm also very lazy. The walks are all under ten miles, so they're easily accessible and good

for families.

### **You've said that your dad Michael, who was born in the Peak District, is your inspiration. Why is that?**

I was seven when we went for our first walk together and I loved it. He made it into a big adventure. That's the key with young kids; you have to try to make it exciting. Do treasure hunts, have a picnic, give them markers. He did all of that. Then I went through my stropky teenage years where I was bored and wanted to go home, but I grew out of that!

### **Is your mum Chrissi a walker, too?**

Mum was not the outdoorsy one. She would meet us in the car park and bring us tea. She's Greek and what I've inherited from her is the Mediterranean blood – I hate getting cold. When we're filming I gallop around the fields to keep warm!

### **In your book, you talk about having an 'extra parcel of**

### **pregnancy chubby'. Did the walks shift it?**

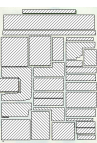
Yes, they did! I remember that first walk in Dorset and I was wearing this electric-blue top, electric-blue waterproof jacket and my leggings and I looked down and went: 'Oh, what's that?' At the end of the seven weeks of filming it had gone.

### **Do you diet or go to the gym?**

No, but I try to eat healthily. I love chocolate and treat myself every day. But I genuinely can extol the virtues of walking because it works. You have to walk with purpose, hold your core in and tuck your bum in. If you can do a minimum of 5,000 steps a day, the NHS is delighted because it means they will be seeing less of you.

### **How hard was it going back to work?**

I was back at work with Zeph after 12 weeks, which sounds absolutely crazy, but I was all: 'No, I'll be fine.' I was doing *The Great British*



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*Countryside* series with Hugh Dennis. Bless him, it was the first time we'd worked together and there I was post-birth, this lactating woman with a baby in the back of the car. He must have thought, what am I doing here?!

**So you did it differently with the twins?**

I was four years older and made a conscious effort to take proper time off. It was amazing and wonderful and exactly the right thing to do. I had a beautiful six months

with my babies, introducing Zeph to his little sisters and really operating as a family unit.

**Did you schedule your filming so you weren't away for long periods?**

I was never away for more than two nights. I did the walks and was home on day three for bath time, couple time and to get Zeph to school.

I realise I'm incredibly fortunate – Gerry is a very hands-on daddy, there are lots of aunts, and our nanny Jenny, too.

**Did you ever think of not going back?**

It wasn't something that occurred to me. I've worked my entire life. I also feel strongly that I have to be a role model for my daughters in particular, as the world is changing. Women have to make their mark and be independent.

**Describe your first night alone...**

It was quite disorientating being in a strange bed in a strange location. I woke up lots in the night and kept thinking I was hearing the babies' cries!

**What's it like having three children under five?**

We struggled to have our little girls – it was a lot of IVF – so you won't hear me complain because we feel very blessed and fortunate. I pinch myself on a daily basis that I now have three children.

**What are their personalities like?**

The girls are firecrackers. Zena is the natural walker. We call her our little chunky monkey, she's gorgeous. She's already taking her first steps and loves climbing the stairs. Xanthe is just hilarious. She's a huge flirt and makes friends with everybody. I think we're in for quite a lot of trouble! And in the mix we have Zeph who is a cheeky chappie but a very sensitive, sweet, lovely little boy. He's trying to be a good big brother.

**Will you have more children?**

No. I've spoken quite openly about being an older mum and if I'd started younger, I might not be saying that so confidently. But I put my body through a lot with the IVF.

**When will you take your first family walk?**

I was seven so I think that's a good age. As with most things if you start them too young and they have a bad experience, you're doomed. But they will be

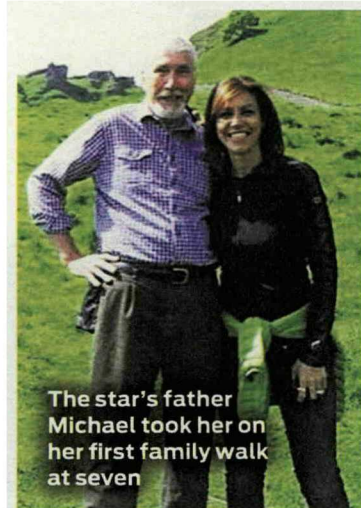
exposed to the great outdoors long before that! **OK!**

'UNFORGETTABLE WALKS' BY JULIA BRADBURY (£16.99, QUERCUS) IS OUT NOW IN HARDBACK.

INTERVIEW BY LISA MARKS  
 PHOTOGRAPHS BY BBC/PLANET  
 PHOTOS, DAVID VENNI/CHILLI MEDIA,  
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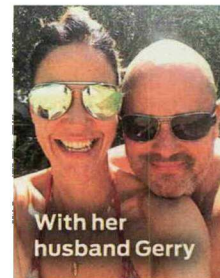
Julia met HRH Prince Charles on a special episode of *Countryfile*



The star's father Michael took her on her first family walk at seven



Julia's twin girls, Xanthe and Zena



With her husband Gerry



Her son Zephyr is now four



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