

First lady



It's official!

JULIA BRADBURY gives her reaction to becoming the Club's new President and reveals to us the message she wants to send to members

YES, it's official! I'm the new President of the Camping and Caravanning Club. From now on please address me as Madame President! That's what I said to someone who contacted me on Twitter recently. She happened to be behind me at the Redworth Hall Hotel in County Durham when I attended the Club's Annual General Meeting for the 'swearing in' ceremony. Luckily nobody swore and news of my appointment was well received.

I feel extremely honoured to be your new Club President. A little more so, as I'm the first female President. The Club has a long illustrious history and has had many eminent Presidents in its 112 years so to be the first woman is quite something to me.

From my perspective it's such a thrill to be here and to succeed such prominent people as Robert Falcon Scott, Lord Baden-Powell and now David Bellamy. They are fantastic people to be following in the footsteps of and I only hope I can do the presidency justice.

What am I looking forward to most of all? For me it will be spreading enthusiasm for the outdoors and an appreciation of it.

I'm very lucky because I grew up partly in the Peak District, with its majestic landscape, and partly in Rutland, which has a more serene and gentle landscape.

Every week with my filming commitments I get to explore other corners of our countryside. I consider myself very fortunate because I get more than my

healthy dose of the outdoors. Of course not everybody can, though I think it's an important message to bring to members that what we have here on our doorstep is absolutely worth exploring and enjoying.

Research has now proven that having some time in the outdoors – being in contact with nature and green spaces – is good for your mental, physical and emotional health. I helped promote the Club's own Real Richness research in 2011, which showed exactly that. If being President of the Club spreads that message a little bit further I'll be a happy lady.

Most of my free time is spent being a very doting mum to my little two-and-a-half-year-old boy, Zeph. Time at home now is very, very precious but even when I'm at home in London being outdoors is absolutely key for my son to be happier, so we spend a lot of time in parks and in the garden. He already knows what willow and holly look like and naturally he enjoys jumping around in puddles, just like Peppa Pig. It connects him with nature and that is an absolute joy to watch.

To connect yourselves with nature in the same way, camping is the ultimate means to an end. Our Club Sites across the UK are in wonderful locations and if you can take a week or two out of your diary to explore somewhere you've not been before, it's the best thing in the world.

My first column for the magazine would not be complete without paying

homage to the man I'm succeeding. David Bellamy is an icon. He's been a great ambassador and he's taught generations of people a lot about the natural world.

David's a larger-than-life character, he's great fun and has a good sense of humour. He's much more qualified to talk about a million things than I am, so I'm not going to try to compete with him on that front. But hopefully I'll be able to match him for some of his enthusiasm.

With that, I'd like to send a message to members that I really want to encourage them to carry on with their family camping trips. I believe family time together deserves an important focus and I think it's key to getting younger generations involved in camping. They're fantastic holidays and can be really bonding in every way, for all age groups. I think it's great that grandparents can go camping alongside their grandchildren, and I'd really like to see that continue.

A lot of people write to me and send me Tweets, so I know there's a real passion out there for camping and exploring.

May I say a big thank you to everyone who has welcomed me to the Club so far. I know it's a terrible cliché but, until next time, carry on camping and caravanning!

Wishing you all the best for 2014.

■ Julia will be writing in the magazine on a quarterly basis. See April's issue for her next column.