

Club President **JULIA BRADBURY** discusses why it's vital we encourage young people to get outdoors and develop their independence

# First lady



**AS WE ALL** look forward to a lovely summer I've been thinking back to 2011 and the Real Richness research the Club conducted with Liverpool John Moores University.

In a nut shell the research revealed that campers feel happier and healthier. I'm pretty sure you all know that anyway...

But here's the most compelling reason I can think of to get your kids out camping: nearly 80 per cent of parents surveyed said their children hugged them more!

There are kids out there that have never camped before. According to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the likelihood of a child visiting a significantly sized bit of outdoor green space has halved in a generation, and don't get me started on childhood obesity. Oh okay do. According to Public Health England, by 2050 obesity is predicted to affect 25 per cent of children if the current trend continues.

Children have a natural appetite for new experiences and the bottom line is that camping is exciting, the perception of it is fun. That is camping's great advantage over other activities. The Club's research found that 79 per cent who had never camped said they would like to, so it's not a hard sell.

The other good thing about camping is that teenagers still enjoy it, unlike walking, which seems to become a bit dull when the hormones kick in. Maybe it's that first taste of independence and the chance to be free. They might be with brothers or sisters or best friends adventuring together for the first time, but the good thing is that they can do it in relative safety with an adult just a sheet of canvas away. As a parent you can literally see them grow in confidence and emotional resilience.

Real Richness also revealed that connecting with nature results in a positive

effect on learning, with children doing better at certain subjects if they spend time outdoors on a regular basis.

I would say make it an ambition to take your children camping. Encourage a friend to come along, invite another family, involve everyone.

In this magazine you'll find more about the Camping Club Youth and the Youth Test – a sort of rite of passage for our teenagers within the Club. It's a hugely worthwhile group to be involved in, full of healthy, outgoing, happy young'uns. But it needs our continued support, so if your son or daughter is aged between 12 and 17 encourage them to give it a go.



**Julia talks to children at her son's school**

I recently did my bit at my son Zeph's school, giving a talk to the children about the outdoors and then getting them to build natural shelters and pitch tents in their playground.

The teachers even said

they learned stuff.

It was lovely watching the class appreciate and absorb facts about nature.

At the end of May, the Club also ran its annual National Camping and Caravanning Week, which promoted the theme Get Kids Outdoors with Camping. You may have seen me perched on top of the O2 in London a few weeks ago helping to kick-start the event. That definitely counts as the most unusual pitch for me, and it was a world first – nobody has slept up there before and I don't blame them. Fifty-six metres up was pretty blustery.

I did it as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Diamond Challenge 60th Anniversary project as well, which is asking everyone to challenge themselves by doing something out of their comfort zone this year. You get a bling 'Doff' diamond pin and everything.

So, if you know a child that has never been camping before... get them out there.

#GetKidsCamping #GetOutdoors  
#ChallengeYourself.



Now that my series on ITV, *Best Walks with a View*, has finished, I wanted to say how great it was to see the number of people and families that took on the walks (and others) for themselves. Thanks for all the photos and messages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If you'd like to own the series, head online to [www.myccc.co.uk/theoutdoorguide](http://www.myccc.co.uk/theoutdoorguide) where you can buy the DVD, plus a Buff neck warmer, for a special price of £25.

