



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS

AFTER HER DEVASTATING DIAGNOSIS
JULIA BRADBURY
ON HER DETERMINATION TO HELP
OTHERS WITH BREAST CANCER

We're used to seeing Julia Bradbury surrounded by the British countryside, trekking over hill and dale and encouraging us, with her boundless enthusiasm, to get outside, enjoy nature and protect our environment.

But this October, the *Countryfile* and *Britain's Best Walks* presenter is putting her motivational clout behind Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

"I've always been very supportive of cancer charities and the amazing work they do," Julia, 51, tells **HELLO!** in our exclusive interview. "And now it's personal."

In September, Julia publicly revealed she had breast cancer. She will undergo a mastectomy to remove a tumour in her breast this month and a lymph node will also be removed for a biopsy.

Living with uncertainty has become the norm, she says.

"I know what the surgery will entail. I don't know – nobody does – what awaits me on the other side. I don't know if the cancer has spread or if I'm going to need chemo."

Julia is determined to focus on the "knowns" rather than the "unknowns", but has run through a gamut of emotions in the meantime.

"Fear of death is what you think of when you first hear the 'cancer' word. And then it's fear of the unknown. Then there's a grieving process, as well, and disbelief."

However, the presenter, who has three

Julia is determined to use her diagnosis to help others, wearing a pink ribbon for Breast Cancer Awareness Month (right). She has always done her bit for cancer charities, and particularly supports Breast Cancer Now, Pink Ribbon Foundation and Prevent Breast Cancer. "Now it's personal," she says

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children – Zeph, ten, and twin daughters Zena and Xanthe, six – with her partner Gerard, is determined to learn as much as she can about her illness. She wants to help the one in eight women – "a staggering number" – who develop breast cancer in their lifetime by sharing her knowledge and advocating for them.

It's one of the reasons she's urging her legions of fans and keen walkers to "put their boots on for boobs" and join in one of the many walking challenges being organised by some of Britain's biggest breast-cancer charities this month.

"After my news became public, I needed to focus on getting myself ready to deal with everything. But as it coincided with Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I thought it would make perfect sense to kick-start it with a walking campaign," she says.

"There are all sorts of charity walks people can participate in – either a set number of miles over this month or one long walk, so a lot of challenges out there."

SPEAKING OUT

She acknowledges her campaigning, which is second nature to her, is also a coping mechanism.

"It's a way of me processing what I'm going through and protecting myself."

"I'm going through this on a deeply personal level and I've found it incredibly upsetting. I'm seeing a counsellor and I'm taking every available help and kindness that's been offered to me," she adds.

"I'm not saying I'm just breezing through this and that losing a breast is nothing. Of course not. But I feel fortunate in the support and access I have to medical professionals who have reached out to me as a result of my diagnosis and have offered me their help, support and knowledge. And I can't keep that to myself."

"I realise I'm very lucky and, yes, that helps me process my own pain. But I'm not going to squander that privilege."

As a public figure, Julia has felt a level of responsibility to be open about her illness.

"I know that as a result, lots of women have checked themselves, lots of friends as well, and I've had such kind messages from people supporting me."

"There are also so many women going through it at the same time, or they've been through it, and you realise how horribly common, sad and cruel it is."

Putting your head above the parapet has its downsides – there have been grumbings on social media, she says, with comments such as: "Why is she special because she's got breast cancer?" But her reason to go public was a deeply personal one.

"I didn't want somebody in the industry to have found out. The chatter would have got out there – a paper could have got hold of it second-hand and then my kids, family and friends would have found out in the most horrible, damaging way," she says.

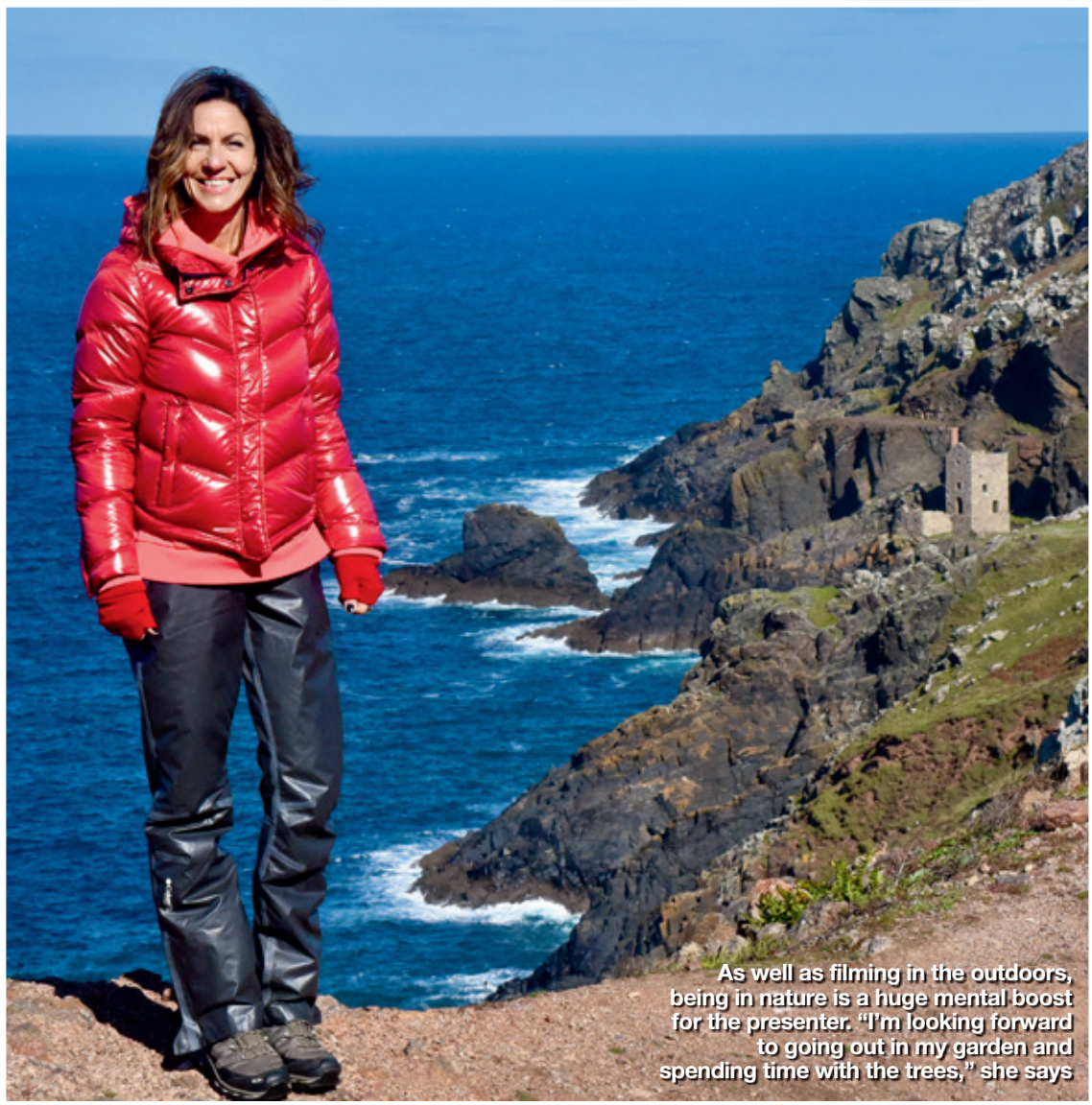
"I wanted to protect my family and ▶



'We were driving to one of my appointments and my mum said: "This is a real bummer, isn't it?"'



Julia spoke out to protect children Zach, ten, and six-year-old twins Zena and Xanthe. "A paper could have got hold of [the news] second-hand and then my kids, family and friends would have found out in the most horrible, damaging way"



As well as filming in the outdoors, being in nature is a huge mental boost for the presenter. "I'm looking forward to going out in my garden and spending time with the trees," she says

friends and there was also some good that could come out of it by raising awareness. "My lovely mum has been here supporting me and we were driving to one of my appointments and she said: 'This is a real bummer, isn't it?'" she adds of her mother Chrissi, who has survived colon cancer. Her father, Michael, also survived prostate cancer.

STRONG SUPPORT

"Cancer isn't just about you; everybody around you is affected by it. I find it hard dealing with that because of the kindness and sorrow that you can see and hear people feel, and it makes you sad that you're putting them through it. It's a hard thing to deal with," she adds, sounding tearful for the first time. "I just hope other women going through this have the support and kindness I have. A school mum dropped off hand-picked flowers from their garden and left them on the doorstep when she heard. Another friend organised for me to have a reflexology session. "I feel so lucky and I want to thank everyone." For now, Julia is taking a holistic approach to her health, carrying on with her yoga, stretching and exercising, walking for at least 20

minutes every day, eating good, nutritious food and taking vitamin C, zinc, protein and collagen.

MENTAL STRENGTH

She is also looking after her mental health through practising mindfulness and talking therapy. "I had a really powerful session with my counsellor yesterday who taught me how to listen to myself and my body, how to look inward for ten or so minutes, to make sure my stress levels don't go through the roof. "You can get overwhelmed with all the information, people, messages and fear of it all." And if she does feel overwhelmed, she goes walking for some green therapy. "I'm looking forward to going out into my garden again and spending time with the trees," she says. "At the moment, I'm being very regimented with my time. "There is me-time, walking time and the time in the day when I have a little cry. Then it's: 'Okay, come on. Let's carry on with preparing the body for what's coming my way.'"

INTERVIEW: ROSALIND POWELL

For more info on Boots for Boobs, visit theoutdoorguide.co.uk/boots-for-boobs-fundraiser.

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PHOTOS: DAVID VERNI/CHILLI MEDIA, ITV