



FIRST LADY

Six months on from life-changing surgery, Club President **Julia Bradbury** looks to the future, reflecting on health, the magic of trees and her Torchlight DJ set



Julia's family has been crucial to her recovery from breast cancer

The Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show back in February (my first public outing since my breast cancer diagnosis) seems a long time ago, but I remember the excitement we all felt being back out together for the first time in two years.

In the summer of 2021 I was busy filming with ITV This Morning, making a series of short films about some of our favourite woodlands in the UK - from Kielder and the New Forest to the one made famous by Robin Hood, Sherwood. I was in my happy place, surrounded by trees and using the opportunity to spread my love of these magnificent organisms to the This Morning audience.

The films showed off how beautiful, magical trees rejuvenate soil for planting food, suck pollution out of the air and give us more oxygen, and help calm our stressful lives. The Government has pledged to go carbon neutral by 2050 and trees are our best ally for taking carbon out of the skies, but just 13% of the UK is woodland, compared with around 44% on average in the rest of Europe. And only 3% of UK woodland is our traditional, ancient

oak, ash and beech forests. It's time to get planting and help with the big climate fightback - a topic very much in keeping with this issue's theme of sustainability and camping greener.

But it was during the filming that I received the news of my cancer diagnosis. I learned I had a 5cm tumour in my left breast and would have to have a single mastectomy - my breast and two lymph glands removed. It meant saying goodbye to a part of me that had fed my children, son Zeph (10) and twin girls Zena and Xanthe (7), knowing that I was never going to be quite the same person again.

I felt scared and vulnerable at the time, but I let a filming team into my home and into my life, to capture my experiences and spread awareness of this disease that affects one in seven women. The result was the ITV documentary Breast Cancer and Me, which aired at the end of April. Thank you to everyone who watched it and to the thousands who have contacted me with kind words. Also thanks to the brilliant Twofour production team who I know and trust - I wouldn't have let anyone else film me through those moments!

The recovery process has been tough but many women have had to go through so much more, including

double mastectomies, gruelling rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, and multiple painful procedures. The documentary was about my own experience, but I wanted to raise awareness of how a focused and individual approach to breast cancer could help more cases be picked up earlier, and ultimately save lives. And it's also why I subsequently launched the Boots for Boobs campaign - visit the outdoorguide.co.uk for more on this.

Six months on from the operation as I write, I don't yet have the all-clear. I'm not sure anyone walks away from a cancer diagnosis without a tiny thought about recurrence. Tiny cancerous cells called micro-invasions were discovered in my breast tissue and a state of the art SNPs test (which tests fragments of DNA: single nucleotide polymorphisms) shows I've got a higher than average risk of the cancer coming back.

But I'm staying focused on doing everything I can to stop it returning, with changes to my diet, my exercise and sleep routine, and getting outdoors. I meditate every day now as well. And I'm growing to love my remodelled breast, with its silicone implant. The documentary ended with a walk to the top of Mam Tor in the Peak District in the early days of my recovery, which was such a symbolic moment for me and for my family who've helped me so much along this difficult journey (a route map for the walk is plotted on The Outdoor Guide's website). I'm remaining positive, focusing on the future, and, as ever, using nature and green spaces to recover and heal.

I can't wait to see many of you at the Torchlight Festival of Camping in August. As revealed in last month's magazine, I'll be taking to the decks for a one-off DJ set. I've always been passionate about dance music and I'll be there putting out some tunes alongside the impressive Invisible Circus, with all its choreography and light displays, on stage in the main arena. If you're coming along to the festival, I can guarantee it will be a weekend to remember. 🎧

📺 Watch Julia Bradbury: Breast Cancer and Me online at the ITV hub, itv.com