

I WAS about five or six when I learned to swim. I took to it straight away. I was always very good at all sports and I excelled in swimming. At school, I won all the sports day stuff. Swimming is a very good all-round exercise and good for people of all ages and abilities. It keeps you supple and exercises all the different muscles in the body.

I'm originally from Blackpool and my first swimming teacher, Mrs Cheetham, is still alive. She's 94.

I specifically like outdoor swimming. When I was about 13, my parents did a lot of caravanning in the Lake District. The Cross Windermere Swim is 1.25 miles. So I kept going out with my parents in the rowing boats. I was so taken with it. It was a bit scary at first, but I did it breast stroke. The following year, I won it. From little acorns...

The longer the distance, the better I was. The colder the water, the better for me. So it all pointed to me being an outdoor swimmer.

When I was 14, I swam the length of Lake Windermere in junior record time, four hours and 38 minutes, and then I did Morecambe Bay. Ultimately, I wanted to swim the English Channel. When I told my parents, they were a little bit gobsmacked. When I did it, they were all there with me – my parents (Isobel and Philip), my brother, John, and my Nan.

I was 15 when I swam the English Channel solo and 23 years later I did it again, but using the hardest stroke, the butterfly. I made a new world record – 14 hours and 18 minutes, knocking nine hours off the record. I currently hold 20 world records after swimming butterfly around Manhattan last year.

Until recently, my dad has gone on all my swims with me.

I do most of my swimming in the week, but living in Loughborough there's always the university pool and, with the kids on holiday, there was only

## My weekend

**Dr Julie Bradshaw MBE,**  
*world record swimmer,  
motivational speaker,  
open water swimming  
trainer, sports coach,  
therapist, charity patron,  
Cross-Channel Swimming  
Association secretary and  
Loughborough borough  
councillor*

me and a couple of others there at the weekend. It was great. I did five km on Saturday and six km on Sunday, including a few miles butterfly.

On top of that, I did some other bits and pieces – walked the dog, swam and, as a ward councillor, I went to a Jubilee celebration at The Hut, in Ashby Road. It was tipping it down with rain so we were inside, but everyone seemed to enjoy it.

The main reason I got involved with politics is because I like enabling people. Before becoming representative for my ward I was walking with a local county councillor and he said: how about becoming a councillor?

I was elected in May, 2011.

I'm also patron of Home-Start in Loughborough. They asked if I would be interested in doing it last September. It's a good organisation that supports families. I present certificates, attend cheque presentations and help them get publicity.

My life is always so varied. Each weekend tends to be different. The one constant, whether I'm in Loughborough or in the Lake District, is I swim and I walk the dog. Generally speaking, I don't have clients at the weekend.

Last week, I was in the Lake District with three lots of swimmers. I have a boat on Lake Windermere and I coach cross-Channel and open-water swimmers there. Training was interesting. On the Saturday it was about 6C and three days later it was in the high 20s.



## he Mercury small ads

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"We've run out of space," he says. That means the chickens and their attractive wooden home are looking to relocate – for a very reasonable £55 all-in.

"The chickens came from a farm near Loughborough," says Ismail, "and I built their house myself. It's a nice little 4 x 3, wooden, with a pitch roof. I thought I'd make them a nice little house.

"I think Aszal is going to miss them the most. Every morning when he gets out of bed he makes sure they're okay and goes out to play with them."

Rashida, he says, makes sure the

neighbourhood's relentless foxes are thwarted for another day before she goes to bed. "The last thing at night, she'll say: 'Dad, have we locked the chicken shed?'"

The next family debate will be over which pet will make the most suitable replacement, says Ismail.

But it's not just the chickens they will miss, they'll also be saying goodbye to fresh free-range eggs.

"These chickens lay an egg nearly every day," he says. "The thing about the eggs is, they're about as large as you can get. You know how you get large eggs in the shop? These would be XL."