

Smile, You're The Best Lady Loser

In an article first published in *Naturist Life*, October 2012, Emma James discusses the state of naturism in the Britain today.



SINCE TAKING UP PUBLIC NATURISM in the summer of 2011, naturism has played an increasingly important role in my life. I spend much of my free time involved in naturist pursuits, including Boules, where I've yet to prove my prowess!

Naturism confers a deep sense of relaxation, liberating me from the worries and stresses of my daily life and I'm not alone in that, hard though it is for some of my "textile" friends to envisage. This inalienable right to be happy, to find that sense of peace and sanctity, is questioned by some and, with the increasing *prudification* of society, continually endangered by government attempts to sanction, monitor and control the naked human form, which is objectified by our society and compounded by the media.

An IPSOS-Mori survey conducted by Capibus on behalf of British Naturism in 2011 determined one per cent of the UK population considers naturism to be criminal. Considering the population of the UK was approximately 63.6 million in April 2012, that's a staggering 63,000 fellow Britain's and neighbours who would happily see us jailed, rather than allow us to sunbathe in the nude.

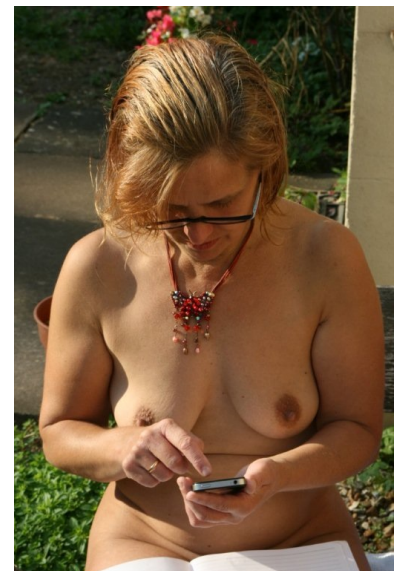
As naturists, at times we have to justify the right to enjoy a clothes-free lifestyle, whether it be to friends, family or authority figures/organisations. That's if we're in the privileged position of being able to be open about our naturism in the first place.

I'm fortunate in that my work, being self-employed and within the sphere of health care, allows me to be vocal about my commitment to naturism.

Others, working in the teaching profession for example, find it necessary to be discreet, lest it jeopardise their professional standing or subject them to ridicule from colleagues or pupils.

Society loves a scapegoat. From bawdy seaside postcards to up-market publications like *Harpers* and *Vogue*, the human body is portrayed as something to be lambasted and ridiculed or

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objectified. The media are constantly touting the perfect body and anguishing over cellulite and the “perfect 10.” It’s no wonder body dysmorphia and eating disorders are so predominant in society and body acceptance almost an alien concept.

When I mention my naturism to friends and family most are, if a little quizzical, accepting. Some are aghast and some questioning: “It’s not right.” “I couldn’t do it.” “All that flesh on display.” At the most extreme: “Naturists are mad.”



Gender imbalance is an undeniable feature of naturism...

No wonder then that many naturists feel happier when they’re cocooned in naturist friendly or clothes-optional environments, inured against the prevailing attitude, yet at

times we have to push the boundaries to gain greater acceptance in society. Publicity and activism are instrumental to changing attitudes, with vital media work and lobbying public organisations/Government taking place through the concerted efforts of groups such as British Naturism and the Naturist Action Group, as well as through individual naturists via social media and local level campaigns, such as beach liaison groups.

For men, joining a landed club as a single person remains difficult. The gender imbalance is an undeniable feature of naturism and bringing more young adults, women and families into naturism is key for public naturism to thrive, but broadening the scope of accessibility to be more inclusive to single males is also a factor.



I believe the emphasis on health, wellbeing and out door pursuits is key as we move forward and, whilst I may not be the best at Boules, it’s enjoyable and it’s a team game, which builds community. This sense of community underpins naturism. In the short time I’ve been involved in public naturism, I’ve discovered how supportive and friendly the naturist community is. There’s a hard core of committed naturists who support events and will travel the length and breadth of the country to pursue their naturism.

Community spirit is rare in modern Britain with our increasing reliance on technology and the transient nature of society eroding relationships and families. How important then is it for us to get back to “brass tacks” to feel the sun on our skin, the wind on our bodies and the sand between our toes?

Leading a life, which encompasses naturism, stripping away clothes, judgements and preconceptions, is how we came into the world and it's how we will leave it. Entirely natural, we lose the facade we build up around ourselves with clothes and material possessions. It's a chance to be at one with ourselves and perhaps more reflective, when we permit the stillness within to have a voice or through meditative practice. The very act of being naked, outside in natural surroundings, arguably encourages a deeper appreciation of life and our fellow (wo)man.



Most naturists encourage friends to experience for themselves how nurturing and expansive naturism is and it's through our individual and collective efforts that naturism will move forward, fostering future growth.

Life is a game which requires active participation if we hope to get the most out of it. What better way to find happiness than to participate in something you enjoy? For me, naturism is key along with golf but my recent introduction to mini-ten could also vie for a place.

Now we just need to see some sunshine, then we really would see some happiness!

