

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Lewis actor Kevin Whately



'Archaeology fascinates me – how it can unravel what life was like 3,000 years ago from a simple sample of something'

The prized possession you value above all others... My old acoustic guitar. I paid my way through drama school by busking with it for two years from the age of 21. It's a symbol of my independence and it has pride of place in our home, but I've barely played it in 30 years.

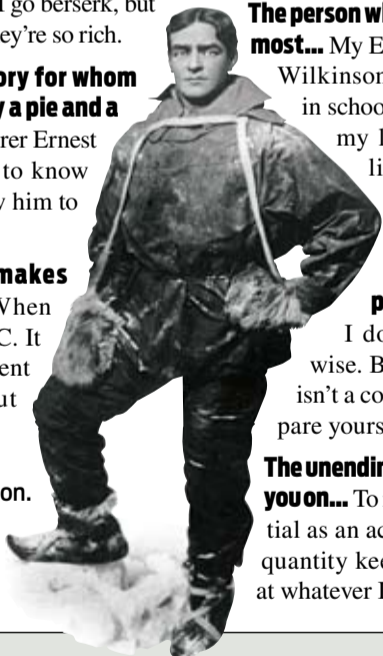
The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not taking a chance to learn to fly. My dad Richard, who was in the Navy, died from a heart attack when I was 17. The Navy offered my brother Frank and me a flying scholarship out of sympathy, but for some reason we didn't do it. We just played cricket all summer.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Cashew nuts. I go berserk, but they kill me because they're so rich.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The polar explorer Ernest Shackleton. I'd want to know what made men follow him to the ends of the earth.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... When people knock the BBC. It nurtures so much talent and its radio output alone is extraordinary.

Right: Ernest Shackleton. Above right: tea. Far right: Bamburgh Castle on the coast of Northumberland



The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie. I love the fantastic characters and the way he ties in so much history and philosophy.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...

I'd slip into MI6 HQ to see what spies really get up to. They might even enlist me – I'm sure I'd be useful if I were invisible!

The film you can watch time and time again... Dog Day Afternoon with Al Pacino. It's so suspenseful – the director Sidney Lumet was one of the greatest.

The person who's influenced you most... My English teacher Alan Wilkinson, who directed me in school plays. He inspired my love of acting and literature. Sadly he died last year.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...

I don't see myself as wise. But I'd tell them life isn't a contest, so don't compare yourself to other people.

The unending quest that drives you on... To reach my full potential as an actor. That unknown quantity keeps me trying hard at whatever I do.



The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm not acting when I play Lewis! I'm not him, and he's not me.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My privacy – if I stop walking when I'm out, someone will come up to me within 30 seconds. But I'm not complaining. People are always nice and fame is a huge privilege. The key is to keep moving.

The poem that touches your soul... Scafell Pike by Norman Nicholson. It's about the highest mountain in England and how it will remain long after humans have been wiped out.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting into Central School Of Speech And Drama. Before that I was studying to be an accountant, but drama school was like landing on another planet.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal the great works of art hidden away in private collections and put them on public display for free.

The song that means most to you... Streets Of London by Ralph McTell supported me through drama school when I was busking. Ralph's a pal but I think I owe him a fortune in royalties!

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd begin with kippers for breakfast at Craster in Northumberland followed by a few mugs of tea – I'm an addict. Then I'd play golf with my son Kieran, 31, up the coast at Bamburgh Castle. Lunch would be by Lake Como in Italy with Kieran, my wife Madelaine, our daughter Kitty, 32, and her daughter Ivy, who's eight. I'd have pasta with truffle and a glass of Rosso di Montalcino wine. We'd take an afternoon stroll in Yosemite National Park in California, then I'd head to the South Pole to see the jagged ice peaks. Later I'd have a few beers with my friends Tim and Jane in Melbourne while watching England play Australia in a Test match. Kitty's an opera singer, so in the evening we'd watch her perform in London, then have a quiet dinner at home in the Midlands.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Kitty's wedding in the summer to Anthony Gregory, who's also an opera singer. I gave her away and Ivy led them through the exchange of rings. I was in tears half the time!

The saddest time that shook your world... When my dad died in 1968, aged 53, just as I was becoming an adult and he was starting to be more of a friend.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I don't really have one! I let things happen and work hard when I get an opportunity.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm fascinated by archaeology and how science can unravel what life was like 3,000 years ago from a single sample of something. My dream is to visit northern Iraq, where civilisation began.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Try to understand the other person's perspective even if you disagree with them.

The order of service at your funeral... I don't want any pomp, just a small cremation service in the woods somewhere. My ashes can be scattered near the 15th hole at Bamburgh Castle Golf Club overlooking Holy Island – it's the best view in the country.

The way you want to be remembered... Just fondly by my family.

The Plug... The complete DVD box set of Lewis Series 1-9, starring Kevin, is out now, £62.99. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



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Tom Kerridge

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