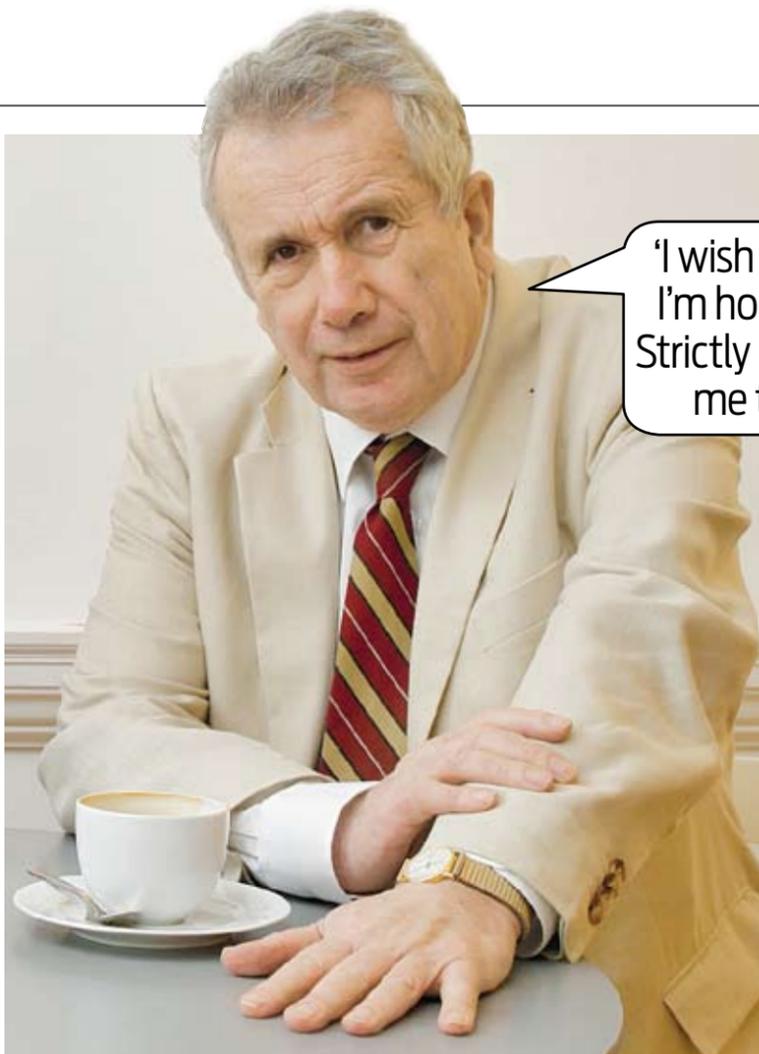


The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: journalist and ex-MP Martin Bell



The prized possession you value above all others... My military memorabilia. I covered 18 conflicts as a BBC correspondent and brought back souvenirs. I have bullets from Vietnam in '67, a shotgun cartridge from Rhodesia in '72 and shrapnel from the Yom Kippur war in '73.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Leaving my wife H el ene for another woman in 1980 after ten years of marriage. We had two young daughters at the time. I was lucky that H el ene and I remained friends until she died from cancer in 2001 when she was 57, and my daughters and I are close.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Third Man. The screenplay is beautifully written by Graham Greene, and Orson Welles is superb.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Collected Poems by Wilfred Owen. He writes wonderfully about the waste-fulness of war.

Right: Orson Welles in *The Third Man*. Above right: Bushmills whiskey. Far right: Norwich City winning a match at Carrow Road



The temptation you wish you could resist... A glass or two of Bushmills Irish whiskey at the end of a day.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd follow George Osborne around. I'd like to see how he balances the work in his constituency with holding a high office of state.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Classic FM! The music is OK, but the inanity of the chatter is dreadful.

The person who has influenced you most... The BBC broadcaster Charles Wheeler. He taught me that it was possible to be fair, but not necessarily neutral when it came to the armed and the unarmed.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Rudyard Kipling. I read the *Just So Stories* to my grandchildren and I would be fascinated to get to know him.

The song that means most to you... Amazing Grace by John Newton, particularly when played on the bagpipes. It's the song of songs and the ultimate hymn.



The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Lift up your eyes off the screen and look at the world. I'm 75 and I'm concerned to see the amount of time children spend in front of a computer.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I love military music and often listen to regimental marches. They're stirring and full of historical resonance.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A wooden windmill made by a German prisoner of war which I bought when I was seven. When you wound it up a little woodman chopped wood. It was stolen from my house five years ago.

The unending quest that drives you on... To make sense of the experiences I had in my career.

The poem that touches your soul... Kipling's *Epitaphs Of The War*, which he wrote after his son John's death at the battle of Loos in 1915. He wrote, 'If any question why we died/Tell them, because our fathers lied.'

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm holier than thou because I stood against Neil Hamilton and Tory 'sleaze'. I'm full of flaws. But my parliamentary expenses were always most reasonable!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being wounded in Sarajevo in 1992 when I was hit by shrapnel in the abdomen. Before then I'd been totally cavalier with the risks I took. But I stopped taking things for granted after that.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd fly first class on an economy ticket. For most of my life I've turned right when boarding, so I'd enjoy the thrill of turning left.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd have a full English at Simpson's-In-The-Strand, then fly to Saint Helena in the South Atlantic – it's beautiful. After that, I'd have lunch in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, and look at its ancient skyscrapers. Later, for old time's sake, I'd nip into the bar at the Europa Hotel in Belfast – the most bombed bar in Europe – for a Guinness and a Bushmills. Then I'd watch Norwich City win

at Carrow Road. The day would end in Normandy at my daughter Melissa's house with my three grandchildren – Max, 15, Natacha, 13, and Clementine, ten – and my other daughter Catherine. I'd cook roast lamb and spend the evening relaxing.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Waking up from the anaesthetic in Sarajevo and knowing that I did not have a life-changing injury.

The saddest time that shook your world... My father Adrian's death in 1980. He was 79 and died of old age. He founded *The Times* crossword puzzle in 1930 and I admired him hugely.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To dance with freedom and grace, but sadly I'm hopeless. I'd love to go on *Strictly Come Dancing* and win. They've asked me twice, but I never will.

The philosophy that underpins your life... To try and leave this world in a little better shape than when I found it.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a church service with music and readings, but one with more fanfare than sadness.

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who did his best to make a difference and as a professional broadcaster who didn't make things up!

The Plug... My memoir, *National Service*, about my two years in the Army stationed in Cyprus, will be published in November. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Scarlett Johansson spices up Jon Favreau's feelgood comedy

Chef – in cinemas from Friday. Former Spooks star Richard

Armitage is in The Crucible at London's Old Vic Theatre.

And X, the new album from Ed Sheeran, is out on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- BGT winner Paul Potts reveals how he contemplated suicide in his darkest days
- Behind the scenes at royal jeweller's Asprey
- TV chef Rachel Khoo's sweet and savoury p at es
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide