



The prized possession you value above all others... My home in North London, which is a big apartment in a converted 19th-century hospital. Michael [her third husband, property developer Michael Pattemore] and I bought it seven years ago. It represents security and is my sanctuary.

The big regret you wish you could amend... That I didn't go to university. I went to drama school right after my A-levels. I'm 65 now and I've always felt insecure intellectually.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd have croissants and café au lait for breakfast in Montmartre, Paris, with Michael. We'd spend the morning walking around the city then fly to Positano, Italy, for lunch with my sons, Michael [30] and Robert [25] and my stepson Brad [24]. I'd have seafood linguine and some Neapolitan potato croquettes – potato with mozzarella and a basil leaf inside. I'd have a glass of Amarone red wine, then a nice doze on the beach. I'd take my first trip to Tokyo in the afternoon for a tea ceremony with my sister Jean [60]. In the evening I'd see a new play on Broadway, then have an omelette Arnold Bennett – made with smoked haddock, cream and Parmesan – with chips for dinner back in London at The Delaunay. Michael and I would end the day in the bridal suite at London's Athenaeum hotel, where we spent our wedding night in 2008.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Clotted cream. It's paradise, but it's so bad for you on every level.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Wind In The Willows. My granny gave it to me when I was eight and I still have that copy. I read it to my boys, so it has a nice constant thread in our family.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd stop men hitting women. I suffered domestic violence in my second marriage, so I know the damage it does.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People who don't respect others.

The film you can watch time and time again... Lawrence Of Arabia. I must have seen it 20 times. I had a crush on Peter O'Toole... those blue eyes!

The person who has influenced you most... My father Donald. He was a bomber pilot in the Second World War. He had such humility and integrity.



'Getting cancer was a shock. The biggest change is I no longer feel in control, I don't take anything for granted'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's actress Lynda Bellingham's turn

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Joan of Arc. I'd love to understand how she found strength in her faith.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Don't let anyone frighten you. No one has the right to do that.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Serial killers! I've read loads of books about them. My life has been so happy and full of love that I'm intrigued by the darkness of evil.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My singing voice. At drama school I was tipped to perform in musicals but I was forced to hit 'top Cs' in productions that over-stretched and wrecked my voice.

The unending quest that drives you on... To see my children own houses. I'm horrified at property prices.

The poem that touches your soul... Shakespeare's Sonnet 116. It's about love and what makes it last.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm calm and have things sorted. It takes a lot of stress to appear the way I do!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting cancer. I was diagnosed in July and it was a shock. The biggest change is that I no longer feel in control and now I don't take anything for granted.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd free girls trapped in sex trafficking, then round up all the men who run that business and make their lives miserable.

The song that means most to you... Yesterday by The Beatles. This is Paul McCartney at his cherubic best.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Knowing that I'm not going to die any time soon. On the day of my cancer diagnosis, I was told that the prognosis is positive. I might have to take medication for the rest of my life, but so do people with diabetes.

The saddest time that shook your world... My parents dying in 2005 – my father at 86 from a heart attack, and my mother, Ruth, 84, from a stroke. They adopted me when I was a baby; when they died I felt like an orphan again.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To win an Oscar.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Do to others as you would have them do to you.

The order of service at your funeral... It'll be at St Stephen Walbrook church in London where I got married. I'd come in to Elgar's Enigma Variations and go out to All You Need Is Love by The Beatles. As I reach the door there'll be a blast of There's No Business Like Showbusiness. I'll be buried in the cemetery at Crewkerne in Somerset where Michael has booked us a plot.

The way you want to be remembered... Simply as a good woman.

The Plug... My first novel Tell Me Tomorrow is out now (Simon & Schuster, £12.99). www.lyndabellingham.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

From top: Montmartre in Paris, a Japanese tea ceremony, Mole from The Wind In The Willows, Shakespeare, a university degree, Paul McCartney, an Oscar and Peter O'Toole in Lawrence of Arabia

PS...

Woody Allen's new movie *Blue Jasmine*, with Cate Blanchett, is in cinemas from Friday. It was a book, a film and now a musical

– *The Commitments* is at London's Palace Theatre from tonight.

And Jessie J's latest album, *Alive*, is released on Monday.



NEXT WEEK

- Screen star Sir Derek Jacobi at home in his private haven ●
- Monty Don's guide to growing terrific tulips ●
- Jamie Oliver's delicious veggie dishes that will save you money ●
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings