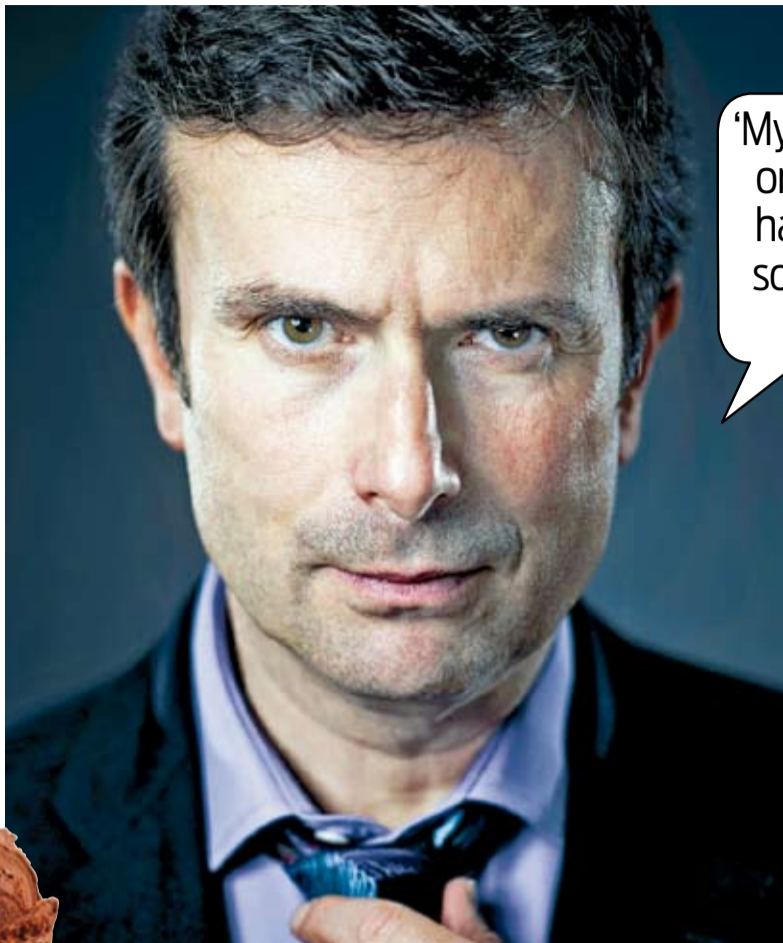


# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: BBC economics editor Robert Peston



'My voice comes out stilted on the BBC – something happens that makes me sound weird. It's not how I speak all the time'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** All the letters and notes left by my wife Siân [author Siân Busby, who died of lung cancer at 51 in 2012]. On the day of her funeral I came across the letters we wrote to one another in our early 20s, which was wonderful.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not working hard at Oxford University. In three years I only attended one lecture. I took far too keen an interest in wine, women and song. I had a wonderful time though.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** I'm obsessed with 70s music – new wave, punk, The Clash, Roxy Music and David Bowie. I've got 3-400 albums and often go to gigs by old bands like Blondie and the Pixies.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Chocolate ice cream. I have a habit of making late-night freezer raids.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Hardy's *Far From The Madding Crowd*. I read it at 14 and was moved by its romance.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd attend a meeting between Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger and the club's directors to see who's responsible for our parsimony in the transfer market.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** People smoking outside buildings.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** *DodgeBall* with Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn is a great family favourite. We've watched it countless times and it always makes me laugh.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Siân. She saw through my weaknesses, like my tendency towards vanity. She'd poke fun at me and made me understand that it's more important to think about others than myself.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Karl Marx. I'd love to know what he makes of what Stalin and Mao did with his ideals of Communism.



**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** You have to respect yourself in life and, to do that, you have to respect others.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** Three rings I gave Siân, which were stolen in a burglary in 2012 – an engagement ring, a platinum wedding band that was my grandmother's, and a gold one which spelt out the word 'darling' in semiprecious stones. I'd hoped to give them to the boys [Max, 17, and Simon, 28, from Siân's first marriage].

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. It's not good enough.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*. It's about how you must seize the day. It's very romantic – and I'm a terrible romantic.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That the way I speak on the BBC is how I speak all the time. My voice comes out stilted when I'm broadcasting. I can't explain it – something happens that makes me sound weird. But I'm not complaining because people recognise me and Rory Bremner does impressions of me.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Getting a job as a journalist on *Investors Chronicle* in 1984. I'd been a stockbroker, which I hated. Then I got the job on the *Chronicle* and discovered journalism. I've never wanted to do another job.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd imprison all of Black Lace the day before they were due to record *Agadoo*.

**The song that means most to you...** Here, There And Everywhere by The Beatles. Siân put it on a tape she made for me early on in our relationship.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd spend the day with Max and Simon doing a tour of cities. We'd start in Havana with fresh mangoes, which are delicious there. I'd seek out a decent cup of coffee, which is hard to come by in Havana. We'd walk around all morning then have lunch in Beijing. I'd get a Chinese mate to take us for a spicy Sichuan meal. Later we'd walk around the hutongs [ancient neighbourhoods] then visit the Forbidden City, which would be emptied of tourists.

We'd have tea in Mumbai, then go to Istanbul for the evening. We'd walk round the sights then have a big dinner of local dishes, houmous and grilled meats with decent white wine. I'd end the day at home in north London.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When Siân and I got back together in 1994. We'd gone out in our early 20s, then drifted apart. We met up again in our early 30s and over dinner at The Ivy we worked out that we wanted to be together forever.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** The 3rd of August 2012 when Siân's doctors said they couldn't prevent the cancer from killing her.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To dive elegantly.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Try to do the right thing.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd like the Busch Quartet's recording of Beethoven's String Quartet No.14 Opus 131 played while people eat delicious food and drink the best claret.

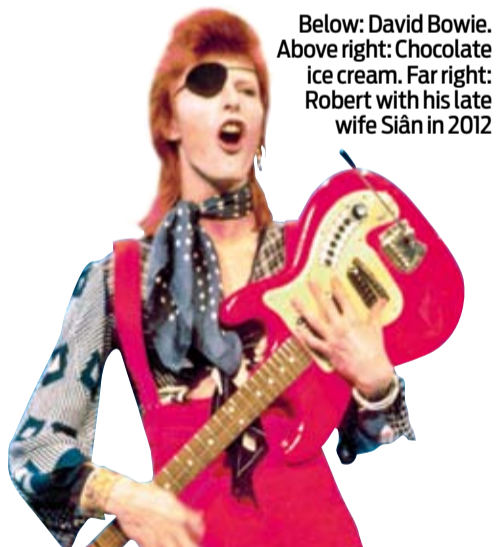
**The way you want to be remembered...** For doing some decent journalism and for the charity I set up...

**The Plug...** Speakers For Schools provides leading speakers to state schools free. [www.speakers4schools.org](http://www.speakers4schools.org). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: ROBERT WILSON/CONTOUR, ALAN DAVIDSON, REX



Below: David Bowie. Above right: Chocolate ice cream. Far right: Robert with his late wife Siân in 2012

## PS...

Megan Fox takes the lead in the new live-action *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie, in cinemas Friday. Imelda Staunton is Momma Rose in *Gypsy* at the Chichester Festival Theatre. And Jessie J's third album, *Sweet Talker*, is out on Monday



## NEXT WEEK

- Ex-EastEnder and lifelong history geek Larry Lamb on the rise of ancient Rome
- Tom Kerridge's best ever recipes
- Monty Don on the tree every small garden should have
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings