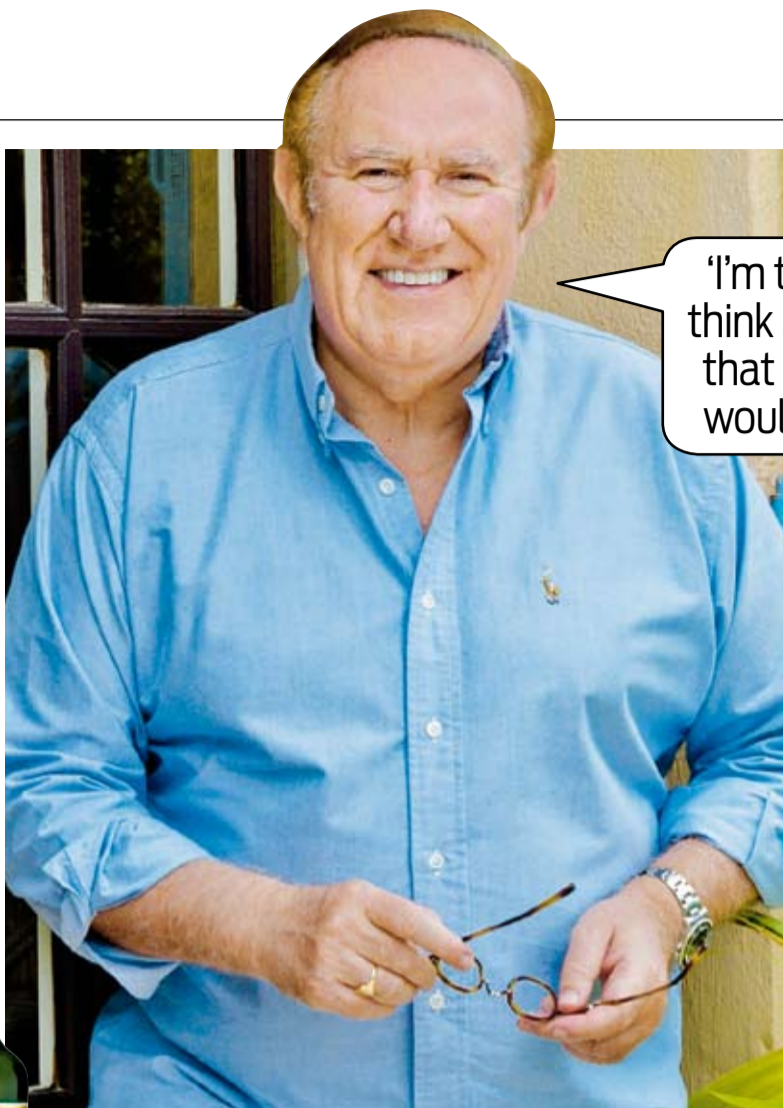


The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: political broadcaster Andrew Neil



'I'm too quick to say what I think and I've made enemies that way. Biting my tongue would be more diplomatic'

The prized possession you value above all others... My iPad Pro. I'm always on the move and use it for everything: email, music, booking flights. It does everything – except make a cup of tea!

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Falling out with people for no good reason. Losing friendships is so unnecessary and pride can get in the way of putting things right.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Being too quick to say what I think. I've made enemies that way – biting my tongue would be more diplomatic.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Adam Smith's *The Wealth Of Nations*. I read it at university and it was heavy-going in parts, but its radical edge gave me a new view on the world.

Right: George Washington. Above right: Jameson whiskey. Far right: the Maldives



The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd stand next to an England batsman at Lord's as he hits a century to win The Ashes, and lap up the glory with him.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The general yobbery in Britain. Drunks litter the streets and rude behaviour is everywhere.

The film you can watch time and time again... Arthur. It reminds me of fantastic times living in New York between 1978-82.

The person who has influenced you most... Alastair Burnet. He gave me my first job in journalism at 24 and was my editor at *The Economist*. He was my mentor and someone I aspired to be. I read the eulogy at his funeral.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... George Washington. I'd ask him about the War of Independence and if he thought it was avoidable.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Don't make too many plans. Trust your instincts and be ready to seize opportunities.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep enjoying work. I'm very lucky because I don't know where work ends and leisure begins.



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Steam trains. I was a train spotter when I was a boy and I'd cycle miles to watch them. The Flying Scotsman has been refurbished and I'm determined to go on it.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My four years studying politics and economics with American history at Glasgow. I did enough to get through exams, but it was a lost opportunity. It was a privilege that I'd now devour with a passion.

The poem that touches your soul... I'm moved by Edward Elgar – his music is poetry. It makes me feel very British.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I never back down from an argument. If I'm faced with a well-argued case, I will change my mind. I can be swayed!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Becoming editor of *The Sunday Times* at 34. I'd never worked on a national newspaper before and it took me from the obscurity of *The Economist* to the frontline.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal the House of Commons Mace and put it on my dining table so I could have a good argument across it with any guests.

The song that means most to you... Fire And Rain by James Taylor. It's such a beautiful song that takes me back to the 70s and makes me feel wistful.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start at dawn white-water rafting with my wife Susan down the Grand Canyon in Colorado. Then we'd have eggs and bacon cooked over a fire on the riverbank. After that we'd go scuba-diving in the Maldives, followed by lunch in the vineyards at Hunter Valley, Australia. We'd have fish with a local chardonnay. Back to the Maldives for afternoon tea with cucumber sandwiches on a sand bar in the middle of the Indian Ocean. In the evening we'd take our four dogs for a walk in the forest near our home in the South of France before dinner at the Colombe d'Or restaurant in Saint-Paul de Vence. I'd have steak with a bottle of Calon-Ségur red

wine. The day would end on the terrace at home with a Jameson whiskey and a Montecristo No.2 cigar.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When I married Susan on 8 August 2015. Many people said it would never happen, including me! But it seemed the natural thing to do.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my brother Jim in 2009 from pancreatic cancer. He was only 70. We'd been so close and he was the best big brother you could hope for.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To anchor a General Election results show. Better people have had a grip on it, so that ship's left the harbour. You can't have everything.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Play hard, work hard, and never judge people by where they come from.

The order of service at your funeral... A burst of Elgar, Fire And Rain and Being Boring by the Pet Shop Boys – because my life has never been boring. Then back to our house in France for a party and to scatter my ashes in the garden. The guests can raid the wine cellar!

The way you want to be remembered... He was harsh but fair, and he was always fun company.

The Plug... Please support the wonderful Macmillan nurses: donate on 0300 1000 200 or at macmillan.org.uk ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Julia Roberts and Nicole Kidman star in mystery thriller Secret In Their Eyes – in cinemas from Friday. Jean Genet's The Maids with Laura Carmichael begins at London's Trafalgar Studios today. And Wet Wet Wet's UK tour kicks off tomorrow night in Rhyl



NEXT WEEK

- That jazz-loving sleuthing vicar is back in Grantchester
- Can't wait for Poldark? Then why not try original star Robin Ellis's healthy Mediterranean recipes
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide