

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: England cricket captain Alastair Cook*

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My collie, Tess. She works the sheep on my wife Alice's family's farm in Bedfordshire brilliantly.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Being run out first ball when I went for a second run in an England Under-15 match against India, which took place at Eton in 2000. The coach said, 'You won't do that again.' He was right!

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** The second or third bowl of ice cream. Nothing tastes as good as the first!

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** I can't say they resonate deeply, but I loved Stieg Larsson's Millennium crime novels, especially *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. On tour in Australia in 2010 I read all three in ten days.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'm fascinated by the SAS and SBS [Special Boat Service], so I'd watch their briefings to see what missions are being planned.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** I hate when I'm chatting to someone and they keep looking at their phone.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** *Gone In 60 Seconds* with Nicolas Cage. I can't say it's an all-time classic, but I'm a bit of a petrolhead and I like watching it for the cars.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Alice. Before we met when I was 18, cricket dominated my life, but she's opened my eyes and shaped me for the better. She's shown me how farms are central to a community.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** The Australian batsman Don Bradman. He was the best – I'd be in awe of him.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Find something you enjoy and work hard at it, but never expect anything to be given to you. You have to work for everything.

**The song that means most to you...** The Peppa Pig theme features heavily in my life! My two-year-old, Elsie, gets excited when she hears it.



**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd pull off an Ocean's Eleven-style robbery on a casino in Las Vegas. They can afford it!

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Darts. I always take a dartboard on tour. It seems such a simple sport, but it's actually not.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** The cricket ball I kept after taking a wicket in a Test match against India at Trent Bridge in 2014. I'm a rubbish bowler but I put myself on for fun at the end of the day and I got Ishant Sharma caught behind. I have no idea where that ball is now.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** I never want to be someone who didn't fulfil his potential. The only person who can judge how hard you've tried is the one looking back at you in the mirror.

**The poem that touches your soul...** I'm not a poetry man, but the hymn *I Vow*

To Thee, My Country means a lot to me. I was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral School and sang it many times in a packed cathedral. It always stirs me.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm dull. I've even heard people say to their friends after chatting to me, "I always thought Cookie was a boring b\*\*\*\*\* until I met him!" There's a bit more to me than people might think. Probably!

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Auditioning to be a chorister at St Paul's when I was eight years old. Boarding there meant being away from my family, but I'm glad I did. It led to a music scholarship to Bedford School when I was 13 and that's how I later met Alice, who was at a nearby girls' school.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd start with a walk with the dog near home in Bedfordshire, followed by breakfast on a beach in the Maldives. Then I'd go skiing at Les Arcs in France – I haven't been able

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to ski since I was 16 for insurance reasons. I'd spend the afternoon on a grouse shoot in Yorkshire with friends. We'd have lunch out on the shoot. I'd watch the sunset in Barbados with my family, then we'd have dinner at Lone Star restaurant on the island. I'd have sushi and then steak. The day would end at home in my own bed. I don't get to sleep there enough.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Scoring a century on my Test debut in India in 2006 after I was brought into the team at the last minute.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** When my collie Floss was run over and killed in 2013. I cried.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To shoot a left and right pheasant – two birds with two shots in the same drive.

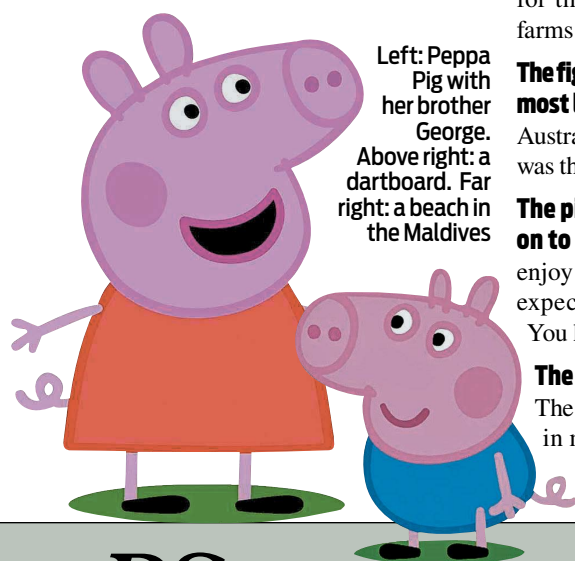
**The philosophy that underpins your life...** The harder you work, the luckier you get.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd have a traditional church service with *I Vow To Thee*, *My Country* and *Jerusalem* because it's so associated with cricket. I'd like a big dinner afterwards with people sharing memories.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a decent bloke with good morals.

**The Plug...** Investec is the title sponsor of Test match cricket in England. For more on Investec private banking, visit [investec.co.uk/banking](http://investec.co.uk/banking). ■

*As told to Rob McGibbon*



Left: Peppa Pig with her brother George. Above right: a dartboard. Far right: a beach in the Maldives

## PS...

*X-Men: Apocalypse, with Jennifer Lawrence and James McAvoy, is in cinemas from Wednesday. A new dance production of Jekyll & Hyde comes to London's Old Vic theatre on Friday. And Bob Dylan's 37th studio album, Fallen Angels, is out on the same day*



## NEXT WEEK

- Behind the scenes on the new series of *Springwatch*
- Deliciously simple suppers from Bake Off winner John Whaite
- Rachel De Thame's favourite roses
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings