

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Today programme host Nick Robinson

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My Bose SoundLink Mini Bluetooth speaker. It comes with me wherever I sleep, at home or away. I have to get up at 3.30am to present Today and music helps me sleep.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Giving Rory Bremner short shrift in the 1980s when he did some jokey impressions for a BBC show I was producing called On The Record. He told me he wanted to do more serious satire on political figures and I said, 'Oh yeah, really?' and hurried him out the door.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** I'm totally addicted to pork scratchings.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Charlie And The Chocolate Factory. I first read it aged eight and then to my kids [Alice, 21, Will, 19, and Harry, 15] when they were young. It's never lost its thrill.

Right: The Paper. Above right: a Mamod steam engine. Far right: elephants in Sri Lanka

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd listen to our political leaders talk privately. As a journalist you can see the tip of the iceberg but have to guess what lies below the water.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** I've loved steam engines since I was given a Mamod toy one when I was seven. I still have it and I'm gripped whenever I see one.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Oliver Cromwell. I'd warn him he'd become just like the monarchs he detested.

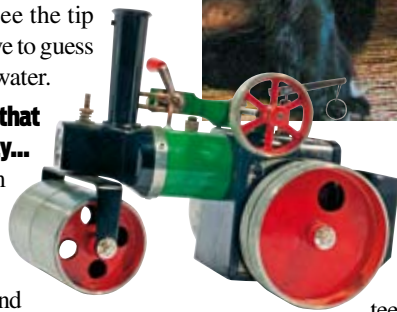
**The film you can watch time and time again...** The Paper from 1994 starring Michael Keaton and Glenn Close. It accurately captures the madness of a newsroom.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** I'm annoyed if people say I'm biased. If I'd wanted to change opinions, rather than inform them, I wouldn't have spent 30 years as a journalist.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Listen.



'I thought I'd lost my voice forever after my operation for lung cancer last year and I cried when I heard myself speak again'



**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** The phrase 'going forward' puts my teeth on edge.

**The song that means most to you...** I loved Living For The City by Stevie Wonder as a teenager and now my kids love it too. It gets us all moving.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My voice. I lost it for a few months after the cancer operation [Nick had surgery for lung cancer in 2015]. I thought it was gone forever and I cried when I heard myself speak again. It's still not 100 per cent.

**The person who has influenced you most...** The late Today presenter Brian Redhead. I knew him from when I was eight – he was my best friend Will's dad. He inspired me to be a journalist.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To understand the world. I'm fascinated by news because each event is another thing for us to make sense of.

**The poem that touches your soul...** WB Yeats's He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven. It's so romantic, and I read it at my wedding to Pippa in 1991.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd relieve certain international corporations of the vast millions in tax they owe.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Being in a fatal car crash when I was 18 in France in 1982. Will and our friend James died. I was very lucky to survive.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd wake up with the family at Yala National Park in Sri Lanka to watch the elephants and other animals. I'd go for a huge American breakfast in Manhattan – a fry-up then pancakes – while reading the New York Times. I'd re-join the family to climb The Old Man of Coniston, a fell in the Lake District, before heading to Orford in Suffolk with our cockapoo Sam (above). There, I'd have a pint of Adnams bitter in the Jolly Sailor pub – with pork scratchings – and eat lobster on Orford Ness beach. Later I'd skipper a yacht on the Turkish coast to take the family to Deep Bay cove. At sunset we'd

have dinner at Blues Restaurant in Camps Bay, South Africa, where I'd have fresh fish with local white wine.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When I found out last summer that my tumour had been successfully removed and the cancer showed no signs of returning. It had been a hellish few months – which my Macmillan nurse helped me get through. He was there to listen to me at my hour of need, when I was at my most frightened. They are incredible people.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Discovering my friends had died in that accident. Parts of my memory were wiped because I was unconscious for a week, but it was dreadful to know what had happened. My son is named after Will, so I have a constant reminder of my dear friend.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To play for Manchester United, but it's their loss!

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** You can't control what happens to you, but you can control how you react.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd like a celebration of my life and for friends and family to get together in the pub and remember the good times.

**The way you want to be remembered...** Tall, handsome, a full head of hair...

**The Plug...** Nick supports Macmillan's World's Biggest Coffee Morning on Friday. To register to hold a coffee morning see [macmillan.org.uk/coffee](http://macmillan.org.uk/coffee). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Matthew McConaughey stars in civil war movie *Free State Of Jones* – in cinemas Friday. Van Morrison's new album *Keep Me Singing* is out the same day. And the world premiere of Samuel Beckett's *No's Knife* is at London's Old Vic from Thursday



**NEXT WEEK**

- Alan Sugar's henchman Claude Littner on the new series of *The Apprentice*
- The final part of our brilliant Bake Off recipe series
- Monty Don on how to train espalier pear trees
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings