

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: legendary film critic Barry Norman

The prized possession you value above all others... A wall tapestry my late wife Diana commissioned about 25 years ago. It's embroidered with our initials, along with those of our two daughters Samantha, 50, and Emma, 48.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... That I didn't witness Samantha's birth. It was a home delivery and just at the last moment the midwife ordered me to boil more water. By the time I got back the baby had arrived.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... William Shakespeare. He was a pure genius.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Cheddar cheese. I have to ration myself because of my cholesterol.



William Shakespeare

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Right Ho, Jeeves by PG Wodehouse. I was 15 when I came across it and it made me want to earn my living from writing.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd watch over a Cabinet meeting and find out what politicians are really up to.

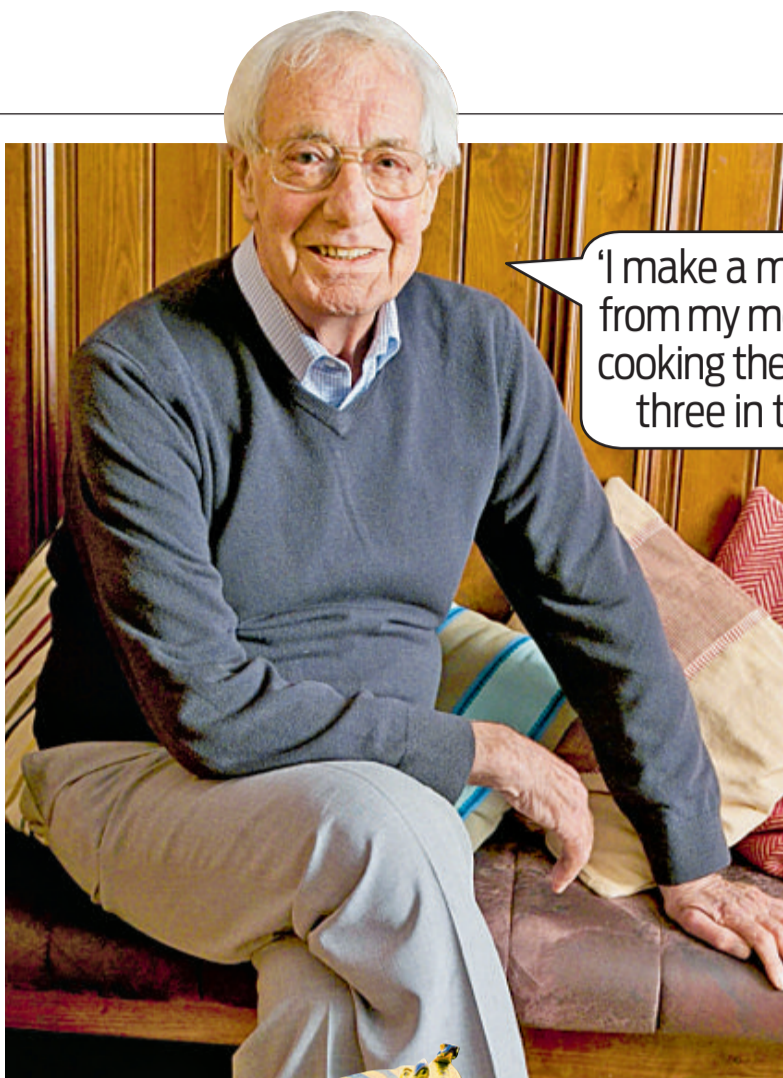
The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The use of the word 'incredible' to describe things that are just 'good'.

The film you can watch time and time again... I refuse to answer this. I've seen 12 to 15,000 films. Anybody who says there is *one* great film is an idiot.

The person who has influenced you most... My father Leslie. He left school at 14 and worked his way up to become a distinguished film director and producer. He taught me anything is possible. We had a wonderful relationship and I loved him deeply. He died aged 81 in 1993.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... To thine own self be true.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Cooking. I make a mean Christmas pudding from my mother Elizabeth's recipe and I've been cooking them for 40 years. I'll usually have three in the freezer ready for Christmas each year.



'I make a mean Christmas pudding from my mother's recipe – I've been cooking them for 40 years and have three in the freezer every year'

Right: Tutankhamun's gold burial mask.
Below right: Venice

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The elasticity of my body. There was a time when I could run and jump but I'm 80 now and I just land with a thud.

The unending quest that drives you on... To do everything better than I did it the last time.

The poem that touches your soul... If by Rudyard Kipling is inspirational.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... People assume I can only talk about films. I have lots of opinions on other subjects.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being made redundant by the Daily Mail in 1971. I'd been the showbusiness editor for 12 years. It turned out for the best because within a year I was presenting the BBC's Film programme.



The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a piece of Tutankhamun's gold treasure from the museum in Cairo. It's beautiful.

The song that means most to you... Diana liked I Love You Samantha, sung by Bing Crosby in High Society, so much we named our daughter Samantha.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd begin with a full English breakfast at The Savoy. Then I'd head to Lord's for the opening day of an Ashes Test. I'd score a century, then bowl out the Aussie side. Lunch would be with friends at the best fish restaurant in the world, wherever that is. I'd have Beluga caviar and lobster and Burgundy wine. Then I'd go to Venice, stopping at St Mark's Square before exploring the backstreets. I'd end the day at Treasure Beach hotel in Barbados with my daughters and three grandsons – Bertie, 20, Harry, 18, and Charlie, 16. I'd just manage a couple of rum punches and steak and chips.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... A night in Paris in the 90s when Diana and I were having dinner. We were both reading and it looked like we'd run out of things to say. But it was quite the contrary. That moment typified our companionship.

The saddest time that shook your world... Diana's sudden death at the age of 77 on 27 January 2011. She died of heart failure in her sleep. We were married for 53 years and the pain was overwhelming.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To speak French.

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

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a service at All Saints in Datchworth, Hertfordshire. I'd like the hymn Lord Of The Dance to cheer people up and Abide With Me because we had that at Diana's funeral. I'd be buried there alongside Diana.

The way you want to be remembered... As a good husband, father and grandfather who was not bad at his job.

The Plug... My memoir See You In The Morning is out now published by Black Swan. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: JENNY GOODALL, ALAMY, PHOTOSHOT

PS...

Downton's Michelle Dockery hits the big screen in thriller Non-Stop on Friday. Imelda Staunton plays a struggling single mother in Good People at London's Hampstead Theatre from Thursday. And Beck's first album since 2008, Morning Phase, is out on Monday



NEXT WEEK

● Lara Pulver takes us behind the scenes on sizzling drama Fleming ● Sweet and savoury fillings for a flipping tasty pancake day ● Jamie Oliver's unbeatable beetroot dishes ● PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings guide