

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's author and ex-MEP Stanley Johnson

The prized possession you value above all others... Our hill sheep farm in Exmoor, which my parents bought in 1951. It has 500 acres and is beautiful. My heart and soul is there.

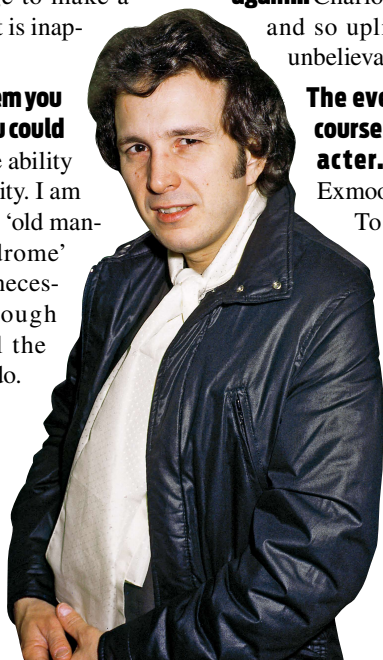
The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not continuing to write poetry properly after I won the annual Newdigate Prize at Oxford for my poem *May Morning* in 1962 [past winners include Oscar Wilde]. I hit the jackpot, but then stopped. I still compose from time to time, but poetry is a high calling; you have to work at it.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Crack on and give it your all.

The temptation you wish you could resist... The urge to make a joke even when it is inappropriate.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The ability to enjoy tranquillity. I am 77 now and have 'old man-in-a-hurry syndrome' because I don't necessarily have enough time left for all the things I want to do.

Right: Don McLean. Above right: penguins in Antarctica. Far right: yurts and a snow leopard in Kyrgyzstan



The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Bad grammar, especially on the radio. Even top shows like the *Today* programme are not immune.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The *Book of Common Prayer* from 1662. Its language is ingrained in me from my days at Sherborne Prep School in Dorset.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Winston Churchill, who was my first political hero. I'd ask him if he really knew about the attack on Pearl Harbor in advance.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Chariots Of Fire* is fantastic and so uplifting. The music is unbelievably good.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Moving to our Exmoor farm when I was 11. To grow up amid such beauty shaped my love for the environment and wildlife.

The song that means most to you... *American Pie* by Don McLean. It reminds me of the 1970s when I did my first stint as an MEP. It was a time of optimism for Europe.



The person who has influenced you most... My mother Irene. She had an enduring optimism, and believed anything was doable. She died in 1987 aged 80.

The unending quest that drives you on... To do what I can to protect our diminishing wildlife by reducing the ravages of the human race.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd drive an old banger into a Rolls-Royce owned by one of those Harley Street doctors who perform female genital mutilation. It's extraordinary that it is still allowed to happen in this country.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Since I'm A Celebrity... I've become interested in social media. I went into the jungle with five Twitter followers. I now have more than 30,000 on Twitter and 135,000 on Instagram. I can see how one can waste a great deal of time on such things.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Maximise your own potential and deliver some good to the world.



'Since doing *I'm A Celebrity...* I've got 30,000 Twitter followers. I can see how one can waste a great deal of time on such things'

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

Breakfast would be porridge and a cup of coffee, then I'd do a charity walk along the entire South West Coast Path to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. I'd then go to the Antarctica Peninsula. I'm a lifelong environmental campaigner so I'd go by boat to ensure my journey has zero CO2 emissions. I would be joined by my wife Jennifer, my six children and 12 grandchildren. I'd like to check the ice and see how the penguins are. I'd be at Lord's for the afternoon session on day three of the first Ashes Test. I'd have a beer and a sandwich and watch England play tremendously well. In the evening, Jennifer and I would go to Sydney. We would have supper by the harbour, then watch Mozart's *Magic Flute* at the Opera House.

The order of service at your funeral... What is laid out in *The Book of Common Prayer*, at the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Winsford, Somerset. I want the slow movement to Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* – the bit in *Out Of Africa* – and my ashes scattered at our farm, looking over the valley.

The way you want to be remembered... Father, grandfather, great-grandfather, husband and friend.

The Plug... Stanley Johnson's thriller *Kompromat* (£8.99) is out in paperback on 1 March and available to pre-order. Visit stanleyjohnson.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That because I'm cheerful and addicted to making jokes, I cannot be serious. I have spent my life fighting for serious issues. I have also written 25 books.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The tranquillity of reading in between looking at the horizon during my voyage to Brazil at the age of 19.

The saddest time that shook your world... This is not something that I have experienced. Yes, people I love have died, but man is born to die.

The poem that touches your soul... *Ulysses* by Tennyson. It makes you want to jolly well smash on.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To do what I can to limit the growth of the world's population. It is the single root cause of environmental degradation.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd pitch a yurt in Kyrgyzstan and wait for snow leopards to drop by. They are so elusive.



PS...

*Rachel McAdams and Jason Bateman star in action comedy **Game Night**, in cinemas Friday. UB40's new album **A Real Labour Of Love** is out the same day. And Martin Shaw opens in **The Best Man** at London's Playhouse Theatre tonight*



NEXT WEEK

- The final part of our series on Britain's forgotten past in glorious colour ●
- Afternoon tea recipes from the National Trust
- PLUS Britain's biggest and best TV guide