We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s Sky’s Royal Commentator Alastair Bruce, who chatted to the Queen about her coronation in a recent documentary.

The prized possession you value above all others… My grandfather’s cocked hat, which he gave to me for Christmas when I was eight. He [Vice Admiral Sir Peveril William-Powlett] was governor of South Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) from 1954 to 1959. He died in 1985.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance… Crowns And Coronations, A History Of Regalia by William Jones. I was given a copy aged 12 and it set me on fire.

The philosophy that underpins your life… If at first you don’t succeed, try, try and try again. It was said by Robert the Bruce, who was my ancestor.

The person who has influenced you most… My mother Vernon, 90. She is full of love and forgiveness. She taught me to talk to people in shop queues. She is also practical and totally unshockable.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise… House numbers that are not easy to find. The Queen happens [for BBC1 documentary The Coronation, which aired in January]. The hope it might happen was painful.

The poem that touches your soul… By Rudyard Kipling. I wish I could live up to the line about filling the unforgiving minute, but I’m lazy.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child… My mother says, ‘Remember, people can be very disappointing.’ Once you accept this, life becomes easier.

The present item you lost and wish you could have again… Three diaries I kept during my senior years at school.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint… St Dunstan. He was a fascinating English saint and wrote the first coronation ceremony.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever… Ringing my father, Henry, to tell him I’d been made head boy of Milton Abbey School in Dorset. It’s every boy’s dream to make his father proud. My father died in 2011.

The unlikely interest that engages you… I love buildings in which man has lived for 1,000 years. It so eloquently conveys emotion.

The event that altered the course of your life and character… Fighting in the Falklands changed me. Fellow soldiers gave me the hunger to live life more – for me and for them.

The song that means most to you… Zadok The Priest, composed by Handel for George II’s coronation in 1727. It’s every boy’s dream to make his father proud. My father died in 2011.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you… To commentate on every constitutional event and make the story accessible to everyone.

The saddest time that shook your world… When my orderly, Guardsman Jim Reynolds, was killed by mortar fire in the Falklands. He was 19 and giving first aid to a comrade. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

The order of service at your funeral… It would be at Winchester Cathedral, where I have worshipped all my life, but others can choose the details.

The way you want to be remembered… It so eloquently conveys emotion.

The Plug… Please support the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which cares for cemeteries and memorials in 154 countries and helps educate new generations about the cost of war. Visit cwgc.org.

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS…

Glenn Close plays an eccentric mother in the comedy Father Figures, in cinemas on Friday. Seal’s UK tour kicks off in Edinburgh today. And Ben Batt opens in The York Realist at London’s Donmar Warehouse on Tuesday.

NEXT WEEK

● James Martin serves up amazing recipes from his American adventure ● Which houseplants are the height of fashion? Monty Don reveals the latest trends ● PLUS Britain’s best TV guide