



From top: St Tropez, Top Hat with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Dracula, a 1957 Riva speedboat, Mary Tudor, Fern's husband Phil Vickery and Dionne Warwick

The prized possession you value above all others... A pussycat soft toy called Johnson. He was bought for my older sister Cherry but I fell in love with him when I was two. He's always on the bed but Phil [her second husband, chef Phil Vickery] chucks him off.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I have regrets, but nothing I haven't dealt with. You have to learn from mistakes, tidy them up and move on, or they'll finish you off.

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

I'd have breakfast in my garden in Buckinghamshire with Phil and the children [twins Jack and Harry, 18, Gracie, 14, and Winnie, ten]. Then I'd hang a perfect row of laundry. For elevenses I'd stroll around St Tropez, then zoom round in a 1957 Riva speedboat. I'd have a massage on a tropical island, then go to a West End theatre for a good laugh. Supper would be lobster, new potatoes and Hellmann's mayonnaise with Phil on a Cornish beach. I'd end the day at home watching Antiques Road Trip.

The temptation you wish you could resist... It would be good to curb my internet shopping – I buy everything online, from underwear to gadgets.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Bram Stoker's Dracula.

When I was 14, Cherry and I read it to each other with a bottle of port. We thought Dracula was misunderstood!

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd nip into the Treasury and see how much we have in the coffers, then apportion it properly.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... I can't stand people whistling. It makes me want to kill them.

The film you can watch time and time again... Top Hat with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The dancing is sensational. I love old films.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother, who's 88. She taught me that 'everything passes'.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister. She had a horrible childhood: abandoned by her father, forbidden from seeing her mother. No wonder she cracked up.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Hard work brings good things. And I don't just mean professionally. You have to work at relationships and friendships, too.



'Half of me is mumsy and cuddly... but the other half likes to drink margaritas and dance on tables'



The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's TV presenter Fern Britton

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm hopelessly addicted to Formula One motor racing and even play in an online fantasy league.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My grandma's gold wedding band. I was really upset when a burglar stole it in 1990.

The unending quest that drives you on... To always keep my mind alive and interested in new things. I don't want to ever feel my life has stopped.

The poem that touches your soul... Robert Frost's Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening. It is so evocative that I can feel the chill.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... People assume I'm a cuddly, mumsy girl next door who's a bit naive. That is 50 per cent of me, but the other half likes to drink margaritas and dance on the tables until 2am and is not shocked by anything. People underestimate me.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting a job as a continuity announcer at Westward Television in Plymouth when I was 23.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd be a crack assassin and shoot world leaders who are oppressing their people.

The song that means most to you... Dionne Warwick's I Say A Little Prayer. It reminds me of the earliest days with Phil. We played it as we walked down the aisle when we renewed our vows [in 2008, after marrying in 2000]. It's our little song.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Knowing that Phil and I had fallen in love. I was saying goodbye after our first weekend together and neither of us wanted to be apart. Two months later we were living together.

The saddest time that shook your world... Having fertility treatment and failing three times in the early 1990s. The disappointment was crushing, but on the fourth attempt I had the twins.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To have a perfect garden with borders that consistently change through the seasons.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Just DO it!

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like fairy lights on my wicker coffin and my ashes to be scattered during a speedboat ride in Padstow, Cornwall, one warm summer's evening. My children always joke that they'll put 'Shut that bloody door!' on my gravestone.

The way you want to be remembered... I don't expect to be remembered by anyone other than my children. I envisage being in an old people's home and telling people I used to be on television and everyone thinking, 'Oh dear, she's finally lost the plot!'

The Plug... My second novel, Hidden Treasures, is published by HarperCollins on Monday, priced £12.99. I'm supporting The Genesis Research Trust's cycle ride in Sri Lanka in 2013. Please join us by visiting www.ioqt.org.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Julia Roberts gets evil as the Wicked Queen in Mirror Mirror, in cinemas Monday. David Suchet stars in Long Day's Journey Into Night at London's Apollo Theatre. And the UK leg of Il Divo's world tour kicks off tomorrow at Glasgow's SECC



NEXT WEEK

● Downton it isn't! What goes on when hard-up aristos let the hoi polloi stay for the weekend ● A tale of two Churchills: David Starkey on Winston – and the ancestor who inspired him ● Jamie Oliver's seasonal Easter lunch ● PLUS Britain's best TV listings