

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's actress Caroline Quentin's turn



'I'd like to swim naked in the Serpentine, then smear Beluga caviar all over my body. How decadent!'

The prized possession you value above all others... A Father's Day card I drew for my dad Freddy aged six. I was estranged from him after my parents divorced when I was 14. He died in 2011 after a car accident at 88 and his wife gave me the card and said that he'd kept it framed by his bedside. It was intensely moving.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not travelling to Australia to see my actor friend Gary Olsen after he phoned in 2000 to tell me he had cancer. He died two months later at just 42.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Getting into clean sheets fully clothed when I've changed the bed.

The film you can watch time and time again... Elf with Will Ferrell. My kids and I watch it every Christmas and still find it hilarious.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Go-Between by LP Hartley. I read it at 15 and it reminds me of long hot summers and the end of innocence.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... When men refer to any woman over the age of 60 as 'young lady'. It's so patronising. I'm 53 now and I dare say it's about to happen to me soon. Aargh!



The person who has influenced you most... Theatre director Mike Alfreds. He taught me how to act.

The unending quest that drives you on... For the taps in my house to work! I hope my husband is reading this...

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I love painting, mainly watercolours. I'm not very good but I get a lot of pleasure from it.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The playwright Anton Chekhov. I'd ask him how he created his characters.

The poem that touches your soul... Hope Is The Thing With Feathers by Emily Dickinson. It tells you that even in the darkest times, hope will come to you like a bird.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Don't let the b*****s grind you down.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be ready to say yes, not no.

Left: Will Ferrell in Elf. Above, right: Watercolours. Right: The Serpentine in London's Hyde Park



The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That people know me! I'm always being stopped because people think they've met me at a family function. I think it's because I've played homely, accessible characters on TV.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My parents divorcing. I was at boarding school when I got a call to say that Daddy wouldn't be there when I came back. Even now I hate saying goodbyes.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd cut Boris Johnson's floppy hair off to see if we would perceive him differently.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd wake up before dawn on a summer's day at our bungalow in Cornwall and go rowing on the Helford River in my boat, Hot Flushing. I got it when I was having the menopause, hence the name! I'd watch the egrets and cormo-

rants as the sun rises. I'd have a breakfast of dosa (rice pancakes) with tomato chutney and a glass of cool lassi (yoghurt drink) at the Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Mumbai, then be joined by my husband Sam [Farmer, a cosmetics designer] and our children Emily, 14, and William, ten. We'd go for a dip in the hotel's pool then we'd go to galleries in Paris before a spin on the carousel in the Tuileries Gardens. Lunch would be in a typical bistro – lamb cutlets and green beans for me, followed by tarte tatin with a bottle of Merlot. After that I'd nip home to Devon for a bit of gardening. In the evening, we'd all amble around Barcelona, but later Sam and I would have a romantic dinner at a fish restaurant. We'd drink white Rioja, and end the day back in Cornwall.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd swim naked in the Serpentine, then walk into the Caviar House on Piccadilly and eat all the Beluga caviar. I'd then smear it over my body and rinse it off back in the Serpentine. I'd love the decadence of it.



PS...

Bridesmaids star Chris O'Dowd returns to the big screen in *Calvary*

– in cinemas Friday. Alan Ayckbourn's middle-class comedy

A Small Family Business opens at the National Theatre. And

Sophie Ellis-Bextor kicks off a UK tour in Birmingham on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- The stars of *Mad Men* on their final series
- The dysfunctional family who changed the course of British history, by TV historian Lucy Worsley
- Easter treats – with a Jamie Oliver twist
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings