

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's Baroness (Jean) Trumpington

The prized possession you value above all others... My flat in Battersea, south London. I've been here since 1988. Every old bird needs a nest and this is mine.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not having more children. I have a son, Adam, so I'm lucky. My husband [historian and writer Alan Barker, who died in 1988] and I tried for another child, but it wasn't to be.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Cigars. Twice a month I like a Cuban Cohiba – a big fat cigar for a big fat girl! I smoked 50 cigarettes a day, but I quit in 2001. Cigars are a naughty treat.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Alan's *The Civil War In America*. It brings to life the tragedy of the war. He dedicated it to me.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd go to a men's Turkish baths then become visible, just for the fun of seeing the shock on their faces!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... If you are in any doubt, go by your instincts.

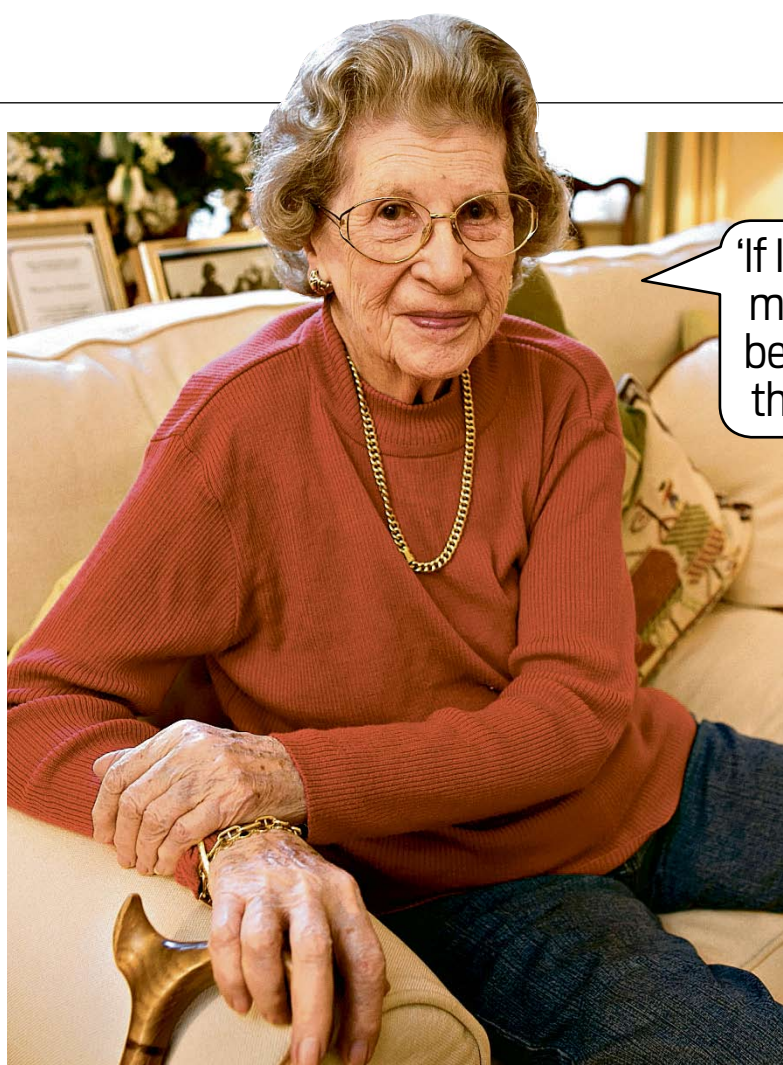
Right: George Clooney.
Above right: A Rolls-Royce. Far right: Celebrations in London on VE Day

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

I'd have eggs and bacon with coffee for breakfast at The Farmers Club in Whitehall with Adam. I'd swim in Lake Como, Italy, before lunch at the House of Lords with Baroness Turner. She's a great buddy, even though she's a trade unionist! I'd have pan-fried skate with anchovies, salad and a carafe of white wine. After, I'd play tennis with Roger Federer at the River Club in New York, and I'd win. Later I'd wander around Turenne in France and have a glass of champagne. I'd have a spicy Bloody Mary at the Knickerbocker Club in New York, then dinner there with George Clooney. We'd have lobster and vintage Armand Rousseau Gevrey-Chambertin red wine. I'd end the day dancing at Annabel's in London – with Mikhail Baryshnikov!

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Rafa Nadal picking at his underwear when he serves. I love tennis but I find that so unattractive.

The unending quest that drives you on... To go to sleep at night with no regrets.



'If I was invisible, I'd go to a men's Turkish baths then become visible just to see the shock on their faces!'



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Needlepoint. I used to make cushions for rich friends with images of their fine houses, but I'm 91 now and my eyesight is bad, so it's not possible.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My mother's and grandmother's recipes dating back to the 19th century. They were destroyed in a fire. It's very sad.

The poem that touches your soul... Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier*. I lost three boyfriends at Dunkirk and another one and a cousin at El Alamein. I knew the pain of losing people I loved and that poem brings back the raw emotion.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I don't get nervous when I'm doing public speaking. I'm all of a quiver beforehand.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting married in 1954 at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. It was lovely to be able to share things in life, to love and be loved. Alan and I were very happily married and I miss him dreadfully.

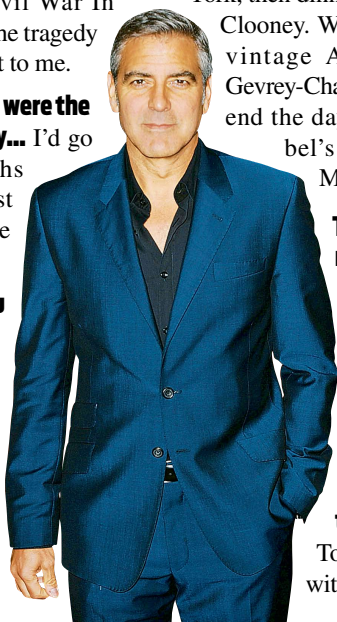
The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a Rolls-Royce with a chauffeur and a police escort! I worked for the Queen in the 80s [as a baroness-in-waiting] and had to greet heads of state at Heathrow. Driving back to London with a police escort was thrilling.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Casablanca*. It's so romantic. Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart are wonderful together.

The person who has influenced you most... Rab Butler [a Tory minister in the 40s, 50s and 60s]. He was a generous and wise advisor and friend.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Charles II. He turned England back into a lovely place to live after Cromwell. He was jolly attractive, so we'd probably have a good flirt!

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be prepared to take chances.



As told to Rob McGibbon

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE TIMES/NEWS SYNDICATION, REX, GETTY

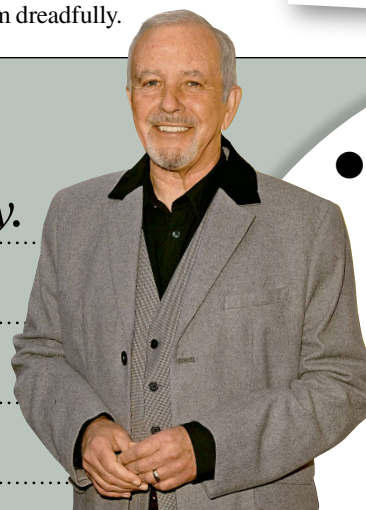
PS...

*David Essex stars in Brit thriller *The Guvnors*, in cinemas Friday.*

*Harper Lee's classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* returns to Regent's*

Park Open Air Theatre on Thursday. And Kate Bush begins

her 22-night residency at the Hammersmith Apollo on Tuesday



NEXT WEEK

- Animal magic... the true heart-warming story behind BBC1's new drama, *Our Zoo*
- Create a dazzling display with Monty Don's white garden
- PLUS Britain's biggest and best TV guide