



From top: horseriding at the Pyramids; *The Great Gatsby*; Edward, 2nd Marquess of Worcester; Scotch whisky; windsurfing; Derek Farr and Margaret Lockwood in *Quiet Wedding*; gems; Cliveden House; and JS Bach

The prized possession you value above all others... An antique comic from the 1750s that was once owned by my great-great grandmother. It was given to my two-year-old son Edward by an aunt for his christening, but I panic if I don't know exactly where it is.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not having known my grandfathers Rex and Lucius well. They were both dead by the time I was 13 and there's so much I'd love to have asked them about their lives.

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

I'd wake up on a sunny day with my wife Hannah and our three sons – Rex, five, Patrick, three, and Edward – in our house in Oxfordshire. We'd have breakfast in the garden then I'd take a long horse ride around the Pyramids of Giza, Egypt, then have an ice-cold beer at the Mena House Oberoi hotel in Cairo. I'd have lunch with the family by Lake Como in Italy followed by windsurfing on the lake. The weather would then turn wintry and we'd go to Cliveden House in Berkshire for a cream tea by an open fire. I'd then go for a brisk walk on Simonside Hills in Rothbury, Northumberland, to watch the sunset. The day would end with a dinner party for close friends at our house in London.

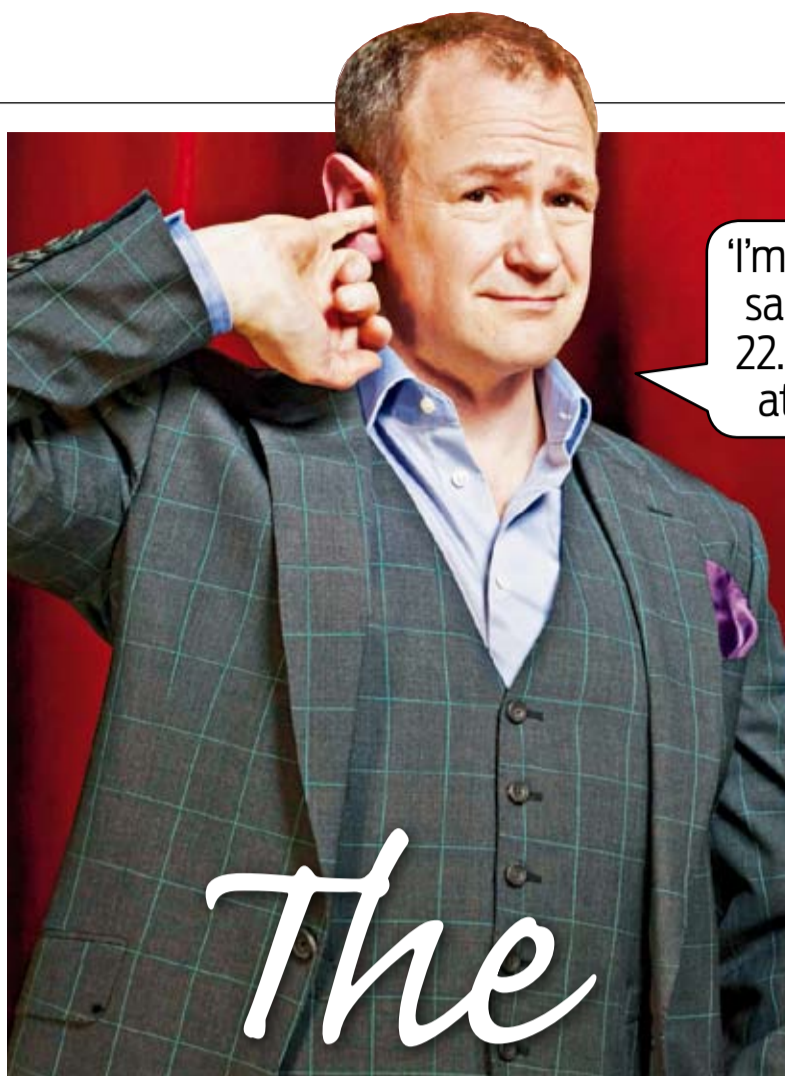
The temptation you wish you could resist... Spending too much money on wine. I can't resist bidding in auctions and now have about 1,400 bottles.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. I've read it at least ten times and I'm still thrilled by its sophistication.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd attend a top secret briefing for the Prime Minister in the Cabinet Office on a matter of national security. It would be fascinating to hear what's really said.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Tutting. It's the peculiarly British noise of a whinger saying, 'Life is awful, everything's loaded against me.'

The film you can watch time and time again... *Quiet Wedding* from 1941, a funny and touching romance written by my great-aunt Esther McCracken. Sadly, my only copy was chewed by my video machine and it's impossible to find another one without paying a fortune for your own print from the National Film Archive.



'I'm a trained baritone and sang in choirs until I was 22. I still get asked to sing at events occasionally'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: actor and author Alexander Armstrong

The person who has influenced you most... The TV producer Jimmy Mulville has been an incredible mentor.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... My ancestor Edward Somerset, 2nd Marquess of Worcester. He had a terrible military career under Charles I, but later invented a prototype steam engine.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Make friends and do all you can to keep them. And try to be useful.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Choral music. I'm a trained baritone and sang in choirs from the age of 11 until I was 22. I still get asked to sing at events occasionally.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The years I wasted having fun instead of learning English at Trinity College, Cambridge.

The unending quest that drives you on... To have a dream country house with a walled garden and a vegetable patch.

The poem that touches your soul... The Irish hymn *Be Thou My Vision* has been sung at every family wedding and funeral since I was a child. It always moves me.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... Some people may think I'm a toff because of the parts I've acted, but I'm not.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Meeting my wife Hannah when I was 32. I started growing up and focusing on family life.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd pull off a sophisticated diamond heist that baffles the world's finest detectives.

The song that means most to you... *Jesu, Meine Freude* by Johann Sebastian Bach is beautiful and has a real sense of life's cycle and of renewal.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The birth of my first son Rex in 2007 was amazing. I still get a surge of joy every time I drive past the hospital in Paddington where he was born.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my cousin Alistair was killed in a car crash in 1987. He was 12 and I was 17. It was the first time I'd ever received truly shocking news.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To do more films. I've made a few but for some reason I haven't been asked to do any lately.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be happy and enthusiastic.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a traditional service at our parish church in Oxfordshire, where I want to be buried. I'd have *Nunc Dimittis* in G, followed by *Gute Nacht* and *Be Thou My Vision*. I'd then lay on a massive wake with plenty of whisky as a nod to my Irish and Scottish roots.

The way you want to be remembered... As a good father and a decent person who was good company – not a bore!

The Plug... The 100 Most Pointless Things In The World by Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman is out now in hardback (Coronet, £14.99). ■

As told Rob McGibbon

PS...

*New Year's Day sees Ewan McGregor and Naomi Watts hit cinemas in tsunami disaster movie *The Impossible*, while Maggie Smith stars in heartwarmer *Quartet*. And *Cirque du Soleil's* new show *Kooza* opens at the Royal Albert Hall next Saturday*



NEXT WEEK

- Join *Weight Watchers* for free as Patsy Kensit, Gregg Wallace and Penny Haslam launch a major new series
- Part one of our essential guide to the best apps
- Jamie Oliver's cockle-warming curries
- Plus Britain's best TV listings