



From top: Antarctica, a Longines watch, cyclists, Japan, Admiral Nelson, ginger biscuits, Citizen Kane and Freddie Mercury

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A Longines watch my wife Brenda bought me for Christmas 25 years ago. It's a timeless classic that's become part of me.

**The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** I regret not being the best of husbands during the first year or two after Brenda and I got married in 1982. I'd been divorced from my first wife in 1979 and I was quite gloomy, but we got through it and have been happily married ever since.

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

I would begin with a hearty bowl of porridge for breakfast at our home in Surrey, then travel with Brenda on a high-speed TGV train through France for coffee in Cannes. We'd have a pre-lunch glass of rosé wine in Madrid, then have the catch of the day for lunch at a restaurant in Stanley on the Falkland Islands. From there I'd fly to Antarctica to stand on a glacier and marvel at the landscape. For dinner we'd go to Buenos Aires for a huge steak and maybe one more glass of rosé and spend the rest of the evening wandering around and joining in the spontaneous dancing in the streets.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Ginger biscuits. I can eat an entire packet in one sitting, although I'm lucky because I don't put on weight.

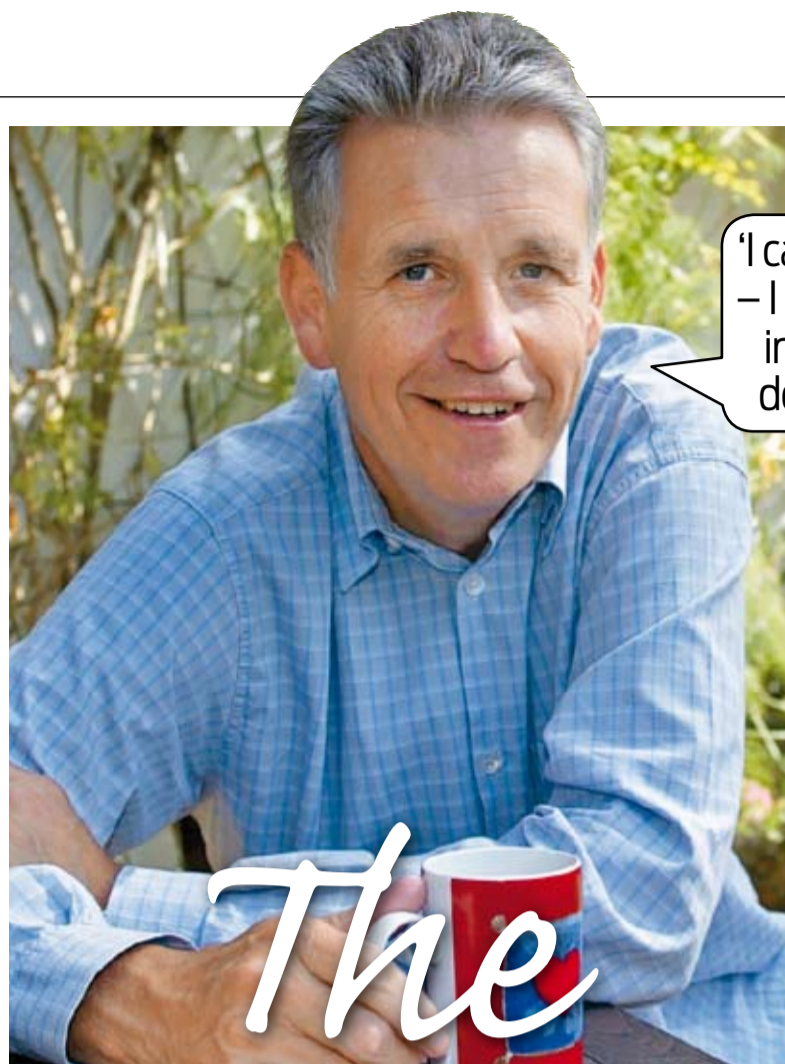
**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby. I read it when I was ten and I was gripped by the cliffhangers.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I would travel all over the country by train sitting next to the drivers in their cabs. I have loved trains since I was about four.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Cyclists! I can't abide how they break the rules, riding on the pavement and going through red lights.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Citizen Kane. Orson Welles' performance is so great that the film never diminishes.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My father Tom. I was eight when my mother, Edna, died of rheumatic fever and he was in his mid-30s, so he had to deal with the most ghastly situation, yet he maintained such incredible stoicism. He always encouraged me to be my own man. He died from pancreatic cancer when he was 61 in 1981.



'I can't resist ginger biscuits – I can eat an entire packet in one sitting! I'm lucky I don't put on any weight'

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: BBC newsreader Nicholas Owen*

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Horatio Nelson. I'd love him to explain the qualities needed to be a great leader.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** If a door is open, go through it. There's nothing worse than regret.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Playing bridge. It's all about memory and concentration, both of which I'm bad at, but it draws me in every time.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My right kidney! A cancerous tumour was found on it in 2002 and it had to be removed. I was incredibly fortunate it was discovered early and I've made a full recovery.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To keep working in news.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Ozymandias by Percy Shelley. It's all about the frailty of humanity and that all things must pass.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm the TV presenter Nick Owen! Nick has the same problem and is always introduced as me at events, but we've decided not to bother correcting people any more.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The death of my mother when she was just 34. My world was blown away and because I never had a normal family set-up, I felt an outsider. But it made me never take anything for granted.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I would steal £100,000 – no more, or less – from one of the big insurance firms and distribute it to family and friends.

**The song that means most to you...** The Great Pretender by Freddie Mercury. You have to be a performer to be on television, so it chimes with me.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** My wedding to Brenda at Gateshead Register Office. There were only us and three others, but it was very romantic.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Losing my mother. An aunt told me she'd died and I cried until my insides hurt and my tears ran out.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To visit China and Japan. I've travelled a lot, but that part of the world has always eluded me.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Carpe diem – seize the day. I've taken this approach since my brush with cancer. I say 'yes' and get on with it.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd want a quiet, private cremation with a reading of John Keats' poem To Autumn with the Lacrimosa from Mozart's Requiem and the beautiful hymn Morning Has Broken. I'd want my ashes scattered in my garden in Surrey, in view of the North Downs.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He got on with it.

**The Plug...** My memoir Days Like This is out now (Blenheim Press, £9.95). [www.blenheimpressltd.co.uk](http://www.blenheimpressltd.co.uk) ■

As told Rob McGibbon

PS...

*Anne Hathaway's big-screen version of Les Misérables hits cinemas on Friday. Rowan Atkinson treads the boards in tragi-comedy Quartermaine's Terms at the Theatre Royal Brighton. And the Rolling Stones' DVD Crossfire Hurricane is in shops on Monday*



**NEXT WEEK**

● Gregg Wallace reveals how Weight Watchers helped him shed the pounds and still live life to the full ● The real Miss Selfridge – from 1938! ● Jamie Oliver's Far Eastern soups ● Plus Britain's best TV listings guide