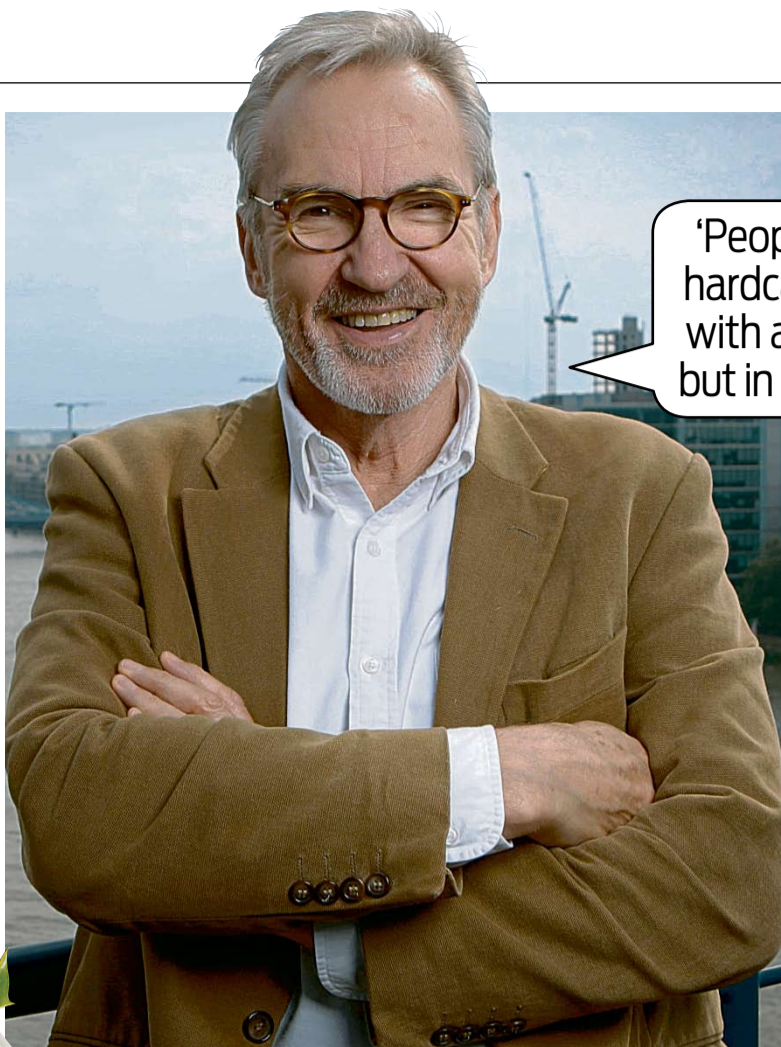


# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of actor Larry Lamb*



'People often assume I'm a hardcase because I'm 6ft 3in with a working-class accent, but in reality I'm pretty gentle'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A little wooden jetty, leading to a small lake, that I made at my house in Normandy. It's precious because I used to see one just like it on my way to school and think, 'One day I'll have one.'

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not seizing the chance to see Pavarotti perform in Verona in 1987. I was there for a TV show and got an invitation to watch from the wings. Instead I went to a party and got drunk. What a cretin!

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd gather up all the religious leaders of the world to get them to stop all the suffering that takes place in the name of God.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Rude, thoughtless people.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** I enjoy working with timber. I particularly love the smell and feel of oak.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Napoleon. I'd like to understand what made him tick.

Right: Napoleon. Above right: Christmas cake. Far right: the Himalayan foothills, Nepal



**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Christmas cake. I can eat a whole one by myself.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The Long Walk by Slavomir Rawicz, about his escape with six other prisoners from a gulag in Siberia and their walk across the Gobi desert and the Himalayas to freedom in India. It's an incredible testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** The search for knowledge. I'm always reading and trying to expand my mind.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My primary school French teacher, Miss Smith. I was rubbish at most subjects, but she inspired me to be good at French. I now speak it fluently.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Make sure you're nice to people on the way up – because you might meet them again on the way back down!



**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** An ancient axe head I found while digging the foundations of my Normandy home about 25 years ago. It disappeared ages ago and I have no idea what happened to it.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Argo, about the CIA plot to infiltrate Iran in 1980 and free hostages by pretending to make a movie – the tension is nail-biting.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Kipling's The Young British Soldier about the Afghan war of 1878-80 is so moving. It sums up the utter futility of that war with the lines, 'When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains, And the women come out to cut up what remains, Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains, An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.'

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** People often assume I must be a hardcase because I'm 6ft 3in with a working-class accent. In reality, I'm pretty gentle. I used to get angry, but I've calmed down a lot. I'm 68 now and I've finally grown up!

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The day I jacked in my job running a construction business to be an actor. I was 27, living in Canada and very successful. I'm glad I had the guts to do it – my life's been far more interesting thanks to acting.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd fiddle the Lottery so I'd win a massive jackpot, then use the cash to help out poor people – and I'd keep a nice bit for myself!

**The song that means most to you...** Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries by Billy Eckstine. The lyrics say it all – that life is for living and for laughing.

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

After breakfast on my own in Paris I'd get my extended family together [Larry has been married three times and has four children] and we'd take a cruise down the Thames to the sea, where we'd have cockles and winkles. Then we'd walk in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal and settle down in a lodge

to gaze at the Annapurna mountain range. Later we'd check into The Imperial Hotel in New Delhi and have Indian food on the lawn, then drink cocktails on the deck at the Gritti Palace Hotel in Venice watching the gondolas go by. I'd have mineral water because I gave up booze five years ago. I spent too many years drinking! Finally there'd be a big party at the house in Normandy and I'd cook big ribs of beef over a fire.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** I was over the moon when I got my first job paying proper money. I was 23 and working in the Libyan oil fields.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Losing three close friends five years ago, two from cancer and another in a car accident. It was a terrible time.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To learn to sail. I was put in charge of a big sailing boat for a TV show recently and I loved the power of the wind as it hit the sail.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Everything will be OK in the end.

**The order of service at your funeral...** All I want is a bunch of old mates telling funny stories about me, and I'd quite like to be buried in the little old graveyard near my place in Normandy.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a generous and decent bloke.

**The Plug...** Larry Lamb is a guest curator of the ING Discerning Eye Exhibition, Mall Galleries, London, until 22 November. Visit [discerningeye.org](http://discerningeye.org)

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

*Jennifer Lawrence is back in The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2*

*– in cinemas from Thursday. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre's*

*magical Wendy & Peter Pan returns to Stratford on Tuesday.*

*And Adele's eagerly awaited third album 25 is out on Friday*



**NEXT WEEK**

- Time to prepare your Christmas pud and mince pies – Royal cake maker Fiona Cairns shows you how
- Monty Don solves your garden problems
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide