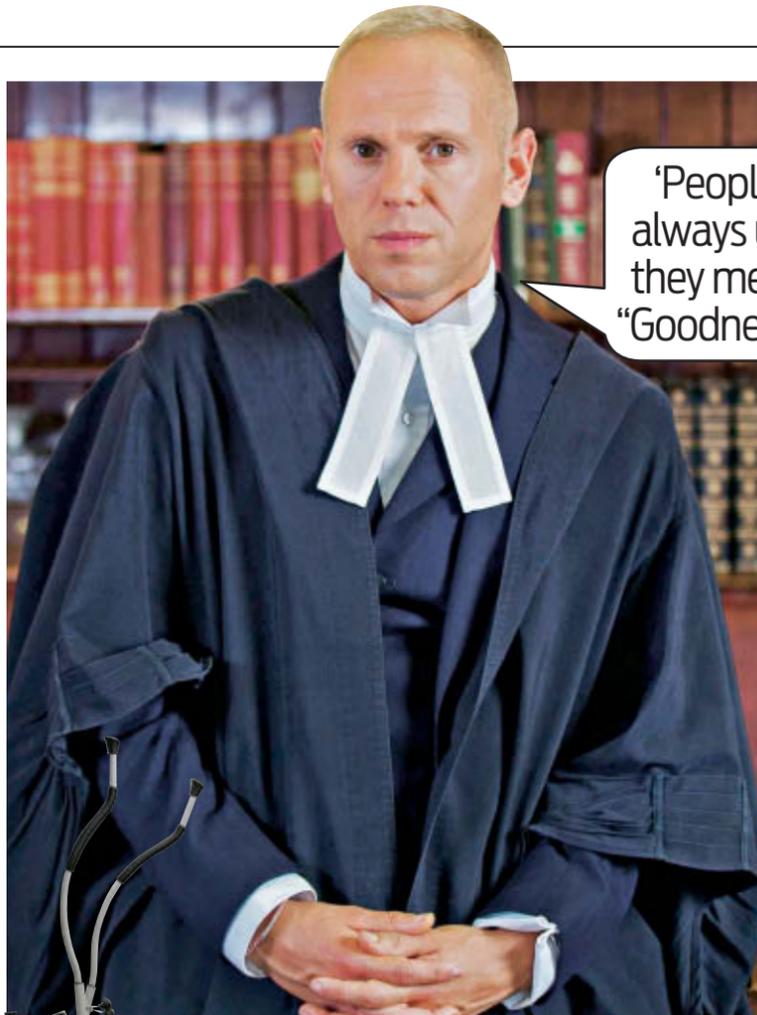


The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's barrister and TV judge Robert Rinder



'People mistakenly think I'm always unkind and rude. When they meet me they'll often say, "Goodness, you're actually nice!"'

The prized possession you value above all others... My lucky pen. It's just a Parker ballpoint, which came into my life on what was a rather good day 16 years ago. I sign everything with it.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not getting into exercise until I was 30. I spent my 20s being unhappy and fat and then I discovered that being fit made me feel good physically and psychologically. I train five days a week and run marathons.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Being truthful over mindful – it means you can upset people.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Gulag Archipelago by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, about life in the Soviet labour camps. It is a meaningful and hopeful book.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd listen to people after we've had a meeting to hear what they say about me.

The film you can watch time and time again... Pollyanna with Hayley Mills – it's unendingly cheerful.

Right: Hayley Mills in the 1960 film Pollyanna. Above right: exercise equipment. Far right: figure skating



The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... When someone says, 'I'm going to double-check.' It's nonsense and inaccurate. Just 'check'!

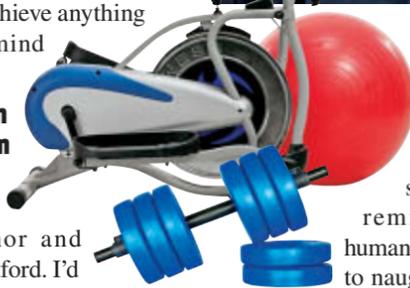
The person who has influenced you most... My mum Angela. She taught me that you can achieve anything if you put your mind and back into it.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The author and activist Jessica Mitford. I'd get sozzled with her at a fabulous party then have her give me a breakdown of everyone there.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Don't get bogged down by what other people say or worry if you don't fit in. Eventually, you will find your people.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm obsessed with figure skating and follow it on YouTube. It's eccentric, but so beautiful.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My childhood excitement for things. Age brings with it a creeping pessimism that things will go wrong.



The poem that touches your soul... Percy Shelley's Ozymandias. It's sobering to be reminded that all human endeavour comes to naught when it competes with nature and time.

The unending quest that drives you on... To have emotional and financial security and to love others and be liked in return.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... When I was 16 and Mrs Grice, my politics teacher at sixth-form college, said, 'You're really quite clever.' Until that moment I'd been floundering in education. She inspired me to work incredibly hard and go to university.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I couldn't possibly commit a crime because it would weigh too heavily on my conscience – and I'd get disbarred.

The song that means most to you... Diggi-Loo Diggi-Ley by Herrey's, who won Eurovision for Sweden with it in 1984. I was nearly six and I loved it.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm always unkind and rude. People meet me and often say, 'My goodness, you're actually nice!' I also get, 'Gosh, aren't you short!' I'm 5ft 8in.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I wouldn't jet off to exotic locations – happiness is being with family and friends in London. All I ask is that it's sunny. I'd begin with the 8.20am bootcamp workout at Barry's gym in Euston with my friend, the rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner. Then I'd have breakfast with my mum at her home in north London. I'd have a toasted bagel with herring, onion and cream cheese. We'd have a chat and then I'd go for lunch at my friend OJ's place in Ealing. She'd make a perfect chicken soup. I'd have coffee with my barrister friend Jeremy Brier near his chambers at Lincoln's Inn. In the evening I'd watch the cellist Natalie Clein play at Wigmore Hall, followed by a party at Randall & Aubin restaurant in Soho with all my friends and family.

We'd eat grilled squid and have plenty of decent red wine, but not the finest – I can't tell the difference when you get past 30 quid!

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When my grandfather Moishe met one of his old friends by chance in Poland when we visited together in 1998. He had been in concentration camps during the war and she had no idea he had survived. It was beyond happiness. He died in 2001 aged 78.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my stepsister Victoria drowned aged 23 while swimming in Malaysia on 8 July, 2001. We were the same age and very close.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play the lawyer Billy Flynn in Chicago in the West End. I could bring a dimension to him that isn't just about womanising!

The philosophy that underpins your life... Treat others as you would wish to be treated.

The order of service at your funeral... Obviously, I want people in tears. It's a cliché but I'd like The Lark Ascending by Vaughan Williams, then Gracias a La Vida by Mercedes Sosa and The Trolley Song by Judy Garland.

The way you want to be remembered... As a wonderful friend.

The Plug... Judge Rinder celebrates its 1,000th case on Tuesday 17 April at 2pm on ITV. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Naomie Harris stars in action movie Rampage – in cinemas Friday. The 21st anniversary edition of Gary Barlow's Open Road album is out the same day. And Cuba Gooding Jr opens in Chicago at London's Phoenix Theatre on Wednesday



NEXT WEEK

● In the second part of our unmissable series The Rise And Rise Of Meghan, meet the Harry lookalike she nearly married ● How to cook the tastiest British curries ● PLUS The best and most comprehensive television guide