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Q&A: Imelda Staunton

'If I could bring something extinct back to life, I'd choose the old Labour party'

Rosanna Greenstreet

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'Tell you a secret? Would it be safe?' Photograph: David Levene

[Imelda Staunton](#), 57, was born in London, the daughter of a hairdresser and a labourer. Convent-educated, she studied at Rada and is best known for her Oscar-nominated role as [Vera Drake](#), and as [Harry Potter's](#) Dolores Umbridge. From 5 July to 3 August, she is in the Royal Court's [Circle Mirror Transformation](#) in London.

When were you happiest?

On my wedding day.

What is your earliest memory?

Standing in my cot.

Which living person do you most admire, and why?

Danny Boyle, for obvious reasons.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Impatience.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

The all-pervasive upward inflection.

Property aside, what's the most expensive thing you've bought?

I dread to think what we've spent on the garden in the last 20 years.

What is your most treasured possession?

My wedding ring.

Where would you like to live?

Exactly where I do live, but with more draught excluders.

What would your super power be?

To change into any animal I wanted.

What makes you unhappy?

Being apart from my family.

What do you most dislike about your appearance?

I couldn't be more delighted (stuck) with this 5ft frame.

If you could bring something extinct back to life, what would you choose?

A dodo, or the old Labour party.

Who would play you in the film of your life?

Toby Jones.

What is your favourite smell?

Irish peat fires on childhood trips.

What is your favourite word?

"Tabard."

What is your favourite book?

Into Thin Air, by Jon Krakauer.

What or who is the greatest love of your life?

Husband, daughter, dog.

Which living person do you most despise, and why?

The bastard dismantling the NHS.

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?

María Callas, David Attenborough, Ernest Shackleton, David Hockney, Lucille Ball.

What is the worst job you've done?

Stuffing envelopes in a pools office.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

Not working at the Royal Court until now.

If you could go back in time, where would you go?

I'd be a teenager in the swinging 60s.

How do you relax?

In the garden, dead-heading.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

A chef.

What keeps you awake at night?

Snoring – and it's not me.

What song would you like played at your funeral?

I like to live in the moment.

Where would you most like to be right now?

In the garden with my husband.

Tell us a secret

Would it be safe?

• *My Body, My Enemy*, by Claire Beeken with Rosanna Greenstreet, is available as an ebook from amazon.co.uk.

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