

**Anthea Turner**, 56, is a TV presenter. In her 30-year career she's appeared on numerous programmes, including *Blue Peter*, *GMTV* and *Top of the Pops*.

# Anthea Turner

## “I Remember”

### ...BEING IN A CARAVAN IN RHYL.

It was on a beach and was owned by our next-door neighbours, so we got to stay in it. I remember having ice cream and mum and dad being there, as I was an only child—my sisters hadn't arrived yet and I was two-and-a-half years old.

**...OUR BUNGALOW.** It had probably been built around the 1920s by my grandfather. It was a beautiful house. My mum was born in that house, we were born in that house—everybody was born in that house!

My sisters Ruth and Wendy and I all have our birthdays between

May 25 and June 6, so we'd always have our birthday parties together in the summer. I remember lots of little girls running round at the parties—it was very much a family house. We had extensive gardens too and I could probably climb every tree in them. The whole family is very into their gardens.

### ...MY PARENTS WORKING.

My mum Jean was a teacher at a secondary school and my father Brian worked for the family business, which was the cabinet makers Turner & Sons. It was

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(Above) Anthea with her sister Wendy; enjoying a family holiday with her mum and her younger sister Ruth



*Sporting a beret for "Le Walk" through the Channel Tunnel in 1994*

set up by my great-grandfather and they used to do a lot of work attached to pottery, as we come from Stoke-on-Trent. They'd make display work for Wedgwood and Royal Doulton. It was an industrial time for the UK that unfortunately isn't there any more.

**...MY NORTHERN-MIDLANDS UPRISING.** It's an environment where you just get on with stuff, where "that's the way it is and you better just deal with it"

It's a good thing. My sister Ruth was particularly handicapped so nobody ever had the time to be a

princess, as there were always other things to deal with.

**...HAVING PONIES.** We used to get on them and go off for what felt like miles. In those days you didn't have a mobile phone with you and Mum just said, "Be back for your tea."

**...MY JUNIOR SCHOOL.** It was a five-minute walk down the road. There was a group of teachers there who particularly enjoyed putting on concerts and plays, so a lot of drama seemed to go on at school. In those days teachers had more of a free rein to teach how they wanted to teach. I don't think there was much form-filling to do.

**...I LEANED TOWARDS MAKING ANYTHING,** painting anything—through to music, drama and dance. That was definitely my preference, probably because I'm dyslexic. A lot of dyslexics are always looking to do things where you don't have to write stuff down.

**...GOING TO A GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL.** The headmistress there, Mary Edwards, was quite forward-thinking and inspirational. I'd had a tough time before arriving at that school because I'd been to a large comprehensive where they didn't deal with anybody who wasn't on track. This was the 1970s, when you

“  
***My headmistress sent me to an educational psychologist, and they discovered this amazing word: dyslexia***  
 ”

were written off as remedial if you had any problems.

Some very good friends of my parents suggested I see Mary Edwards. Of my writing, she said, "Whatever it is, this doesn't transfer into her vocabulary and she clearly knows all the answers. There's obviously a problem with her written work and we need to find out what it is." She took me on at this grammar school and sent me to an educational psychologist, and they discovered this amazing word that nobody can spell: dyslexia. From then on we were able to deal with it.

**...I DANCED CLASSICAL BALLET.** I started when I was about six—as far as I was concerned, it was my thing. My most enduring memory is aching feet, and dipping toes into surgical spirit to harden them up when I was 12 or 13. If I smell surgical spirit now, I always think of ballet.

**...WORKING FOR THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION.**

As much as I loved it, I wasn't sure about ballet as a career, and when I was nearly 20 I just needed some money. The Automobile Association was shift work, which suited me, and while I was there they asked me if I wanted to do some broadcasting on the road-traffic reports. I did that and then some traffic reports for the local BBC station—and quite liked it!

**...GETTING A JOB AT A COMMERCIAL RADIO STATION.**

I ran the record library at Signal Radio. I liked the business of radio and TV more so than the actual on-air stuff, though I did some of that too. I fibbed

*Anthea rides in style with her father Brian*





a lot—as I wasn't quite sure I could do the job—but I really loved it.

### ...LEAVING TO GO AND WORK FOR A RECORD LABEL IN LONDON.

My boyfriend at the time had got a job working at Radio One and I was going to work for Magnet Records (part of WEA Records), but then I met somebody at a party who said, "Oh, they're looking for a girl to do some video jockeying on Sky."

Sky was in its infancy at the time and I did the audition on a bit of a whim. I linked a few videos together and chatted about music—and I got

*Anthea presented Blue Peter from 1992 to 1994. "Those were the glory days of children's TV"*

the job. It was the era of Gary Davies and Pat Sharp. I never really looked back from there. I was 26.

### ...BEING AT BLUE PETER AT A VERY EXCITING TIME.

They'd celebrated 30 years so it was one of their landmark birthdays. At the time, we'd end up with 6.5 million people watching—far more than watch now. Those were the glory days of children's TV.

© DAVID GEE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**I've been in this business since I was 26 and fame is a by-product of the job. You sort of get caught up in this strange life**

### ...TOP OF THE POPS WAS GOOD FUN.

It was an iconic TV programme and it's great to have done something like that. It was the New Romantic era. Meeting my heroes went with the territory, but it's not a meet-and-greet—it's a massive juggernaut. They come on, they do their song, they go off. It's a factory.

### ...BEING OFFERED A JOB AT GMTV.

I would have preferred to have stayed at *Blue Peter*, but from a career point of view it wouldn't have been a good idea. It's always very difficult for people to move from children's to adult TV. So I went to *GMTV*—and I met some of my dearest friends in the business there, who I'm still very close to.

### ...WORKING WITH THE REVEREND STEVE CHALKE.

He was the resident vicar on *GMTV* and when there was a story that had a moral dilemma, he'd come in. He raised quite a lot of money, starting with a hospital in Bangladesh and then founding an organisation called

Oasis, which has helped people worldwide. When I first met him, he had two or three employees—now he has 2,500 all over the world and has really changed lives. He's definitely top of my inspirational list.

### ...REALISING I'LL NEVER, EVER HAVE THICK SKIN.

I've been in this business since I was 26, so that's 30 years, and what's said in the press will always bother me. Fame is a by-product of the job—you sort of get caught up in this strange life and it can be a feeding frenzy.

Once there was a time when there were just a few newspapers and a couple of magazines out. When I started, *Hello!* magazine didn't even exist! Thankfully, I think the reality stars take the brunt of it now. You either make a decision to get out of it and not have anything to do with it any more, or you just grin and bear it.

### ...ADMIRING PEOPLE WHO'VE MADE A SUCCESS OF THEIR PERSONAL LIVES.

It's lovely when you see people who have done incredibly well financially or in business—but I'm always impressed when I see people who have done very well personally. Sometimes that's more difficult.

### ...GETTING TO AN OLDER AGE GROUP.

All of a sudden, you realise your mortality. I've got friends who have had scares or have actually got

cancer and it's frightening. Cancer research should be close to all our hearts because statistically, we're all at risk from a type of cancer. There but for grace of God go all of us.

**...I DID CELEBRITY FIRST DATES RECENTLY**, because £10,000 went to Cancer Research UK if I did it. At the time I was single and I suppose it would have been a bit of a curve-ball to have met somebody. Fred, the maître d', was delightful. It was a bit of fun and it was all done in the spirit it was meant to be in.

**...SOMEBODY ONCE SAID TO ME**, many years ago, "Aim to be the best and the rest happens." I've always been suspicious of those who chase money. You can be the best window cleaner, the best car manufacturer, the best mum, whatever. It doesn't matter what, do your best—you can't do any more. ■

**As told to Joy Persaud**

Anthea is taking part in Shine Night Walk on September 24. Visit [cancerresearchuk.org](http://cancerresearchuk.org) for more details on the event and how to support Cancer Research UK.



## POP QUIZ

The hashtag **#ExplainAFilmPlotBadly** has been causing much hilarity over on Twitter. Can you match the acerbic descriptions to the correct films?

### Descriptions

1. "Boy spends seven years being a third wheel."
2. "Leonardo DiCaprio wanders a frozen wasteland in search of an Oscar."
3. "Everyone tries the ice-bucket challenge."
4. "Group spends nine hours returning jewellery."
5. "Talking frog convinces son to kill his dad."

### Films

- a) *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy
- b) *Titanic*
- c) *Star Wars: Episode V*
- d) *The Revenant*
- e) The *Harry Potter* series

SOURCE: BORED PANDA.COM

Answers: 1.e) 2.d) 3.b) 4.a) 5.c)