



Ruth Langford

## EXCLUSIVE BEHIND THE SCENES WITH

**Louise Alexander-O'Loughlin** goes behind the scenes of the work and personal life of TV presenter Ruth Langford.

It is virtually impossible to meet up with my good friend Ruth Langford due to her gruelling work schedule – co-presenting ITV's *This Morning* with husband, TV legend Eamonn Holmes, and anchoring *Loose Women* – along with being mother to their 12-year-old son Jack. Whilst catching up on the phone, Ruth mentioned that Eamonn was taking Jack to play golf one Saturday and that she would be home alone to relax. So, I seized the opportunity and pretty much invited myself over for my exclusive interview. I've known Ruth for a long time, so some of my questions to her should be read with tongue rather firmly planted in cheek... Luckily, she gave as good as she got!

**Ruth and Eamonn's home is set in tranquil Burwood Park. I fondly call their house 'Holmstead Langsfork', and it's nothing short of the kind of place in which you'd expect two of the UK's most popular TV presenters to reside. Nevertheless, it's a proper home and has a warm and inviting feel thanks to Ruth, who's a real homemaker. Ruth greeted me at the door with her beloved rescue dog Maggie and offered me a coffee. I assumed this would be produced from her shiny, new built-in coffee maker – but no, I got a kettle job... Was I not allowed a proper coffee?**

Lou, be my guest if you can work it – I haven't got a clue how to use it! I've made one cappuccino, but it took me two and a half hours... The machine looks nice though, doesn't it?

**Why did you and Eamonn decide to move to Burwood Park – was it because it's round the corner from me?**

Well obviously Lou, that was a big contributing factor – but that's also why

# Ruth Langsford

we've gone somewhere with great big gates and upped our security with 24-hour surveillance to stop you calling by unannounced! We loved living in Weybridge, but after almost ten years we just fancied a change. Eamonn loves looking at houses and found the one we're in now. When we went to see it together we just knew it was for us. Burwood Park has a great community feel and it's lovely and leafy – we can walk the dog and go out with Jack on the bikes.

## **When you aren't working, what do you enjoy doing as a family in and around Surrey? Or do you sit around and watch recordings of yourself on TV?**

I'll ignore that last bit Lou, ask a silly question and all that! We spend so much time out of the house, but actually we are real home birds. When it comes to time off, we love to just chill out at home with Jack and Maggie, just recharging our batteries. We have recently joined Foxhills, where Jack plays golf with his dad, and we enjoy going out for meals locally.

Eamonn and I do enjoy the occasional treat. We both have a common love for spa treatments, so we've visited the Four Seasons Hotel in Hampshire and now and again after work we'll head off to the Mandarin Oriental Hotel's spa for a bit of pampering.

## **Is that why you both have such smooth skin?**

Oh, do be quiet Lou and stick to your questions...

## **Where do you go out to eat locally?**

We love La Cassa in Weybridge: Nic and his wife Aurora's restaurant has a lovely family atmosphere and the food is always good. We like Sunday lunch at The Alexander and the added bonus is you can take your dog. Another favourite, especially for Sunday brunch, is Fego's in Cobham where they do the best coffee in town.

## **So not much time for home-cooked meals then?**

Yes, there's always time for cooking. It's relaxation for me, like a hobby. I like to shut the door, put music on and cook up a storm! I always do home-cooked food for guests, as you well know – I put on a banquet when you come over, Lou.

## **Do you dance round the kitchen, Ruth?**

Always, Lou, to music, and sometimes I even sing into a spatula!

## **Does Eamonn ever tell you to slow down because you're constantly on the go?**

Eamonn is lovely, he often says to me: "Don't go to all that trouble", but I genuinely love it. I'm not a fancy cook – I'd call my style more 'peasant cooking'. I'm a spag-bol, shepherd's pie kind of girl – see what's in the fridge and chuck it in.

The Great British Bake Off. They do make me have palpitations, though, as I can almost feel what the competitors are going through.

## **Bit of insider information here – can I tell everyone you cook daily for your dog, or would that make you sound a bit like a weirdo?**

I don't care if it makes me sound weird! I love Maggie and she deserves the fresh chicken I cook for her every day. That's why she is so shiny and healthy.

## **I like the new 'tucked behind your ears' look that you are sporting on This Morning. The new hairstyle makes you look much younger, Ruth.**

Cheeky! Most women I know, including yourself, Lou, like to change their look. But the problem with TV is that there's no hiding place. It's hard to try out

Louise on the set of This Morning with Ruth



## **Weren't you a contestant in Marco's Kitchen Burnout – and would you like to do another competitive cookery show?**

No, absolutely not. I have to say, I would never do it again and I am still having the therapy to prove it! It was all just too stressful for me.

## **Which cookery shows do you like watching?**

I love watching shows like MasterChef and

a new style, especially if you don't like it. Fortunately, I have Leo Bancroft on side: I have my hair cut and coloured in his salon in Weybridge and he is also now the resident stylist on This Morning, which means I can nip in for a crafty fringe trim at work.

## **You have been wearing some really vibrantly coloured dresses lately on TV. How do you decide what to wear every**





Ruth with her rescue dog Maggie

**day – it must be a nightmare – and where do you get your wardrobe from?**

Your questions are longer than my answers, Lou! Are you sure you've done this before? Okay, so most of my dresses on This Morning are from well-known high street brands, like Phase Eight, M&Co and Next. We do have a stylist on This Morning, David O'Brien, who knows my sizes and what I like, so he calls a lot of the dresses in. And sometimes if I see something when I'm shopping and think it would look nice on This Morning, I'll buy it, so it's a bit of a joint effort.

**Does your audience often ask where you get your clothes from?**

Yes, they do, and it's lovely when people like what I'm wearing and ask where it's from, because everything I wear is affordable and it's nice to share my style.

**What's the cheapest and most expensive dress you've worn on TV?**

Last summer I bought a beautiful floral shift dress from Tesco and it was £18 – I love that dress and it's still in my wardrobe. The most expensive would be from L.K. Bennett – although at the top end of high street fashion, they are still affordable.

**Let's be honest here Ruth, when we were away on our girls' weekend a few weeks ago, you were complaining that you were a bit overweight – but it looks like you've shrunk. What have you done to look this trim?**

Nothing earth-shattering really – high

protein, low carb and laying off the wine. I've also decided to try and put in half an hour of exercise every day – even when I'm busy I should be able to manage that. So I've started running with our dog Maggie.

**Really, Ruth, running, really?**

Well, when I say running, it's more of a trot – as you well know, I'm not the most elegant of runners, so I have to wait until no one is around and then I let loose! Perhaps to a canter! I have been known to stop running and start walking when there's any sign of human life approaching. To be honest, I really think it's the combination of eating well and a bit more exercise that's working for me.

**I'm sorry, what were you saying about my questions being longer than your answers?**

Lou, you are interviewing me, remember!

**Does being in the public eye and on TV make you worry more about how you look?**

Yes, of course. It's true what they say – TV puts eight pounds on you, so if you're carrying extra weight, it shows. When I do put on weight I instantly lose my waistline, and I was starting to feel a bit uncomfortable in my fitted dresses. I have to wear two microphone packs around my waist on an elasticated belt, which makes me look a bit bigger anyway, so I decided I had to take myself in hand and lose a few pounds.

**You're in good shape for your age, Ruth, 54, which is a ripe old age – does that make it harder to stay in shape?**

*(While I left Ruth to ponder that question, I went and helped myself to her 'goodie cupboard', which I have to say was filled with delights. I promptly returned with a bag of Jack's Haribos).*

Less of the 'old' please Lou, but yes, definitely. I put on weight much quicker and it takes so much longer to get it off. However, I'm not prepared to give up the fight. I think I'm a few years away from slipping into elasticated trousers, but I am looking forward to that day.

**Do you still have time to see your personal trainer, Justin Buckthorpe?**

Absolutely. Justin puts me through my paces at Prime Health in Weybridge. He recently introduced me to kettle bells, which I love!

**You genuinely love working on This Morning, why?**

No two days are ever the same. To me it's like your favourite magazine, you know roughly what you are going to get, but there is always something that might surprise you. We cover a wide range of topics, from showbiz gossip to the most tragic of human interest stories, and you have to have your wits about you to deal with each of those in the right way. Eamonn and I are both very interested in people.

**Basically, you're both nosy aren't you?**

Let's say we have a natural curiosity in people which makes our job easier.

**Who are the most interesting guests?**

I love meeting all the celebrities and Hollywood film stars, but most of all I enjoy helping regular people to tell their story, which can often be very difficult for them.

**Do you ever want to break down and cry on TV?**

Yes, I do get teary-eyed and feel my bottom lip quivering at times. Recently we interviewed a mother and her 21-year-old son who has an incurable brain tumour, which just made me want to weep, but my job is to get them through telling their story – the last thing they need is me breaking down. We do get some amazing people on the show and sometimes I have to pinch myself to remind me that I am actually working.

**How do you and Eamonn know who is going to ask what in an interview?**

We were thrilled to interview former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. It was the first interview where we actually sat and talked about it the night before, as it was such a big deal for us. Usually we don't decide who asks what as we are in tune with each other.

**You were nervous about interviewing Hillary, weren't you?**

Yes, I was surprisingly nervous, which doesn't happen very often, but she was an absolute delight and very funny.

**Do you think it helps being married to each other and working together with regard to interviews?**



From left to right Eamonn Holmes, Hillary Clinton and Ruth

There are lots of duos on TV, but the difference with Eamonn and I is that we're married and we know each other inside out. We have total trust in each other and I know he's got my back and I know what he's interested in, and vice versa. Even if he wasn't my husband I'd still say he's the most brilliant broadcaster on TV.

**Why do you say that, I mean obviously it's true, but why?**

No one on TV at the moment can do both light and shade so brilliantly. Eamonn has already done three hours of live broadcasting on Sky News' Sunrise before he even gets to the ITV studios, and people often forget that. Despite the early starts, after 30 years in the business he still has an incredible passion for what he does and I think that is what sets him above the rest.

**So Ruth, can you read an autocue without your specs? Tell me about the surgery you had to make your eyes Lear Jet fighter pilot standard!**

Yes, I can read everything now. I was struggling badly with my eyesight, particularly at work – my long distance wasn't bad, but I couldn't read my text messages or the time on my watch and it was very debilitating. Then I heard about Clarivu lens replacement surgery.

**Lens replacement surgery – sounds terrifying!**

It really isn't – it's a very simple, fifteen minute procedure in Optegra's clinic in Guildford. It's similar to a cataract operation. Your natural lens, which over time hardens and affects your vision, is replaced with a man-made lens. I suppose it's like having a permanent contact lens fitted. It's amazing and now I don't have to faff around with reading glasses, contact lenses or prescription sunglasses – in fact, I have

almost forgotten I had glasses altogether. It has genuinely changed my life and I would recommend it to anybody.

**I know you sadly lost your father to Alzheimer's. Are you still actively involved as an ambassador with the Alzheimer's Society?**

The Alzheimer's Society were so helpful to my family when Dad had dementia and, after he died, I felt even more strongly that I wanted to stay involved and help other families going through similar heartache. I take my role as ambassador very seriously and try to give them as much time as I can.

At the beginning of September I will be taking part in the annual Memory Walk at Painshill Park in Cobham. It's a really lovely event where everyone walks in memory of Alzheimer's sufferers. It's not at all gloomy – it's a celebration of their lives and a great way to get together with people who have been in similar situations and raise money at the same time. Even our dog Maggie gets involved.

**Loose Women is a completely different style of show to This Morning. Can you, me, Lucy (Alexander) and Sam (Balshaw) do a show one day?**

Thing is, it's only an hour long and you'd take up the first 45 minutes with your first answer! So, no!

**How different is it hosting Loose Women to presenting This Morning?**

It's a completely different format: Loose Women is like sitting down with three of your girlfriends around your kitchen table, talking about the news that day or how your husband is so annoying because he didn't put the butter in the fridge. It really is a woman's take on what is going on in the world. We all have our opinions and we all have our stories to tell. It resonates with the viewers at home.

# On set

**We decided I should visit the studios at ITV to give readers a glimpse of Ruth 'behind the scenes' on This Morning. I took along my daughter Lexie and her lovely friend Francesca Peyton.**

As the show opened with the camera on Ruth and Eamonn, we were given headsets so that we could hear what the control room were instructing while they were presenting. This consisted of constant timekeeping and counting down to commercial breaks, and I have no idea how they are not distracted by this stream of noise.

I managed to access the control room, where I was greeted by Martin, the programme director, who told me he really enjoys working with Ruth and Eamonn as they are both true professionals in their field, even when they tend to go off-script. In fact, the production team love the way they work, which makes it more fun and engaging.

It was amazing to watch Ruth and Eamonn in this controlled but frantic environment. They were absolute ringmasters – always appearing calm and welcoming guests like they'd known them for years.

Ruth ran (trotted!) elegantly from studio to studio, over to the Hub, where the lovely Jeff Brazier is situated. Then outside, then to the 'garden', which was 'tiny'. The garden looks out on to the Southbank, where fans were gathered to get a glimpse of the duo. Ruth and Eamonn made time to speak to many of them, who were busy snapping away for social media purposes. Then a bit of showbiz news, with a live link to LA, and back to the sofas.

Although it's a lot calmer watching them on TV, it just went to show: they are true professionals in their field and proved they are exactly the same in real life as they are on screen. What you see really is what you get. I have no doubt we will be seeing the duo on TV for years to come.

It is very different to This Morning because my role on there is to encourage other people to give their opinions and personal stories. With Loose Women I can say what I like, but that's sometimes dangerous...

**Why is it dangerous?**

Because it's so easy to get carried away, and you can often reveal a bit more about your personal life than you intended.

**What, Ruth, like saying Eamonn is a great kisser?**

Yes, he has never lived that down! It could have been worse, though, I could have said he was rubbish.