

WORK/LIFE

A ONE-DAY DIARY
FROM MORNING LATTE
TO LIGHTS OUT

Andrea Banfi, 34, is head of adjudications for Guinness World Records. She lives in south east London with her husband, musician Rob Dimery

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I'm quite health conscious, so I'll wake up at 7am and tuck straight into a bowl of cereal with blueberries and yoghurt. My husband was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago so we take great care to make sure most of what we eat is organic. Thankfully, he's fully recovered now, but we're still almost religious when it comes to our diets.

As head of the record management team at Guinness World Records, I'm in charge of deciding what constitutes a legitimate world record and who holds those records. I also manage a team of adjudicators; a big part of which is making sure that the people we send across the world to oversee record attempts are safe. So, I'll spend breakfast checking my BlackBerry for any security alerts (airport closures, strikes or terrorism threats) and catching up on international news.

If I'm adjudicating, I'll put on my uniform but if I'm heading into the office I'll opt for a pair of smart Topshop jeans and a Banana Republic blouse. I'm quite tall at 5ft 10, so I've always shied away from heels but since turning 34 I've grown in confidence, so I'll finish my outfit off with a pair of Kurt Geiger shoes. The higher the better!

My journey into the office in London's Warren Street takes about an hour by train and Tube, and I use the time to catch up on Google Alerts on my phone. I arrive at about 9.30am and head straight into a video meeting with our overseas offices in Beijing and Tokyo. The time difference can be a tricky thing to manage, but I try and reply to all emails from Asia in the mornings, so they don't have to stay up all night to get my response.

The office is decorated with memorabilia from past record



ANDREA'S JOB IS TO MAKE SURE ALL THE GUINNESS RECORDS MEASURE UP

ANDREA BANFI HEAD OF ADJUDICATIONS, GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

attempts, so there's everything from life-size photos of the world's tallest horse (6ft 10.75in), to a cut-out of Svetlana Pankratova, the woman with the world's longest legs (4ft 4in). Often we have record-holders coming in, so my mornings will be spent looking after them. Recently, Jyoti Amge, the world's smallest woman (2ft 7in), came over from India to see

us. We took her out for a traditional 'London' curry.

I've travelled all over the world for my job, from tiny villages in rural China (to moderate the record for the world's largest dinosaur fossil museum) to Qatar to see a man scale a 300m building without ropes or harnesses. The worst thing by far is having to give people bad news.

About 80% of record attempts are successful but sometimes they're not. I make sure I don't get too close to the person making the attempt until I've adjudicated. That little bit of distance makes telling them, 'no', ever so slightly easier.

If I'm in the office I'm constantly being pitched ideas for new world records – recently we had a request from Japan for the world's sweetest

“I'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE FROM RURAL CHINA TO QATAR WITH MY JOB”

peach, and one from China for the world's smallest printer. We liaise with experts in each field to ascertain whether or not a process can be designed to judge the record attempt, and to go over any factors that would give some people an advantage over others. It can get quite scientific!

Normally at lunchtime I'll go with my colleagues to the local greasy spoon, Speedys, which is actually underneath the apartment that the BBC use as the exterior of Holmes and Watson's apartment in *Sherlock*! It's nice to have a catch up and get away from the office for a bit.

In the afternoon I'll work on any enquiries from America. Because we do world records, it's important to ensure each office around the globe follows the same guidelines and procedures. Records shouldn't get approved in Texas that wouldn't get approved in London, for example.

On a good day I leave the office at about 6pm. My work is so fast-paced that to relax I either cook (I've picked up many cookbooks from around the world while working), or my husband and I will go out to indulge our new hobby, watching silent films set to live orchestral scores, at the Barbican and BFI. Eventually, I'll climb into bed, exhausted, at about 11pm.

The Guinness World Records 2013 book is on sale now (Guinness, £20)

PLAN B: MARINE BIOLOGIST

When I was growing up in Hungary, we used to take amazing holidays to the Black Sea coast. So I always thought the key to being happy as a grown up would be to do something involving the ocean. I either wanted to be a marine biologist or a dolphin trainer, so I could spend my days snorkelling or messing about in the water but if I had grown up in the UK that would never have happened in the North Sea. In my head the ocean meant somewhere nice and hot with crystal-clear water and amazingly coloured fish. Actually, it still sounds very appealing to this day.

