

# best BITS

Everyone was shocked when Penny Smith became the first of the GMTV 'old guard' to get the chop in a reshuffle at the popular morning show. As newsreader for the best part of two decades, she'd reported on everything from the comings and goings of Prime Ministers to tragedies such as 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings. "The toughest stories to read are the ones where you think 'It could have been me,'" says Penny. "I use tubes and buses a lot, so reading of the aftermath of 7/7 was very difficult to cope with. But people at home don't want the newsreader to be in bits, so you have to be professional." As part of a double act with John Stapleton she's also presented GMTV's early-morning

news hour, injecting it with a healthy dose of quirky good humour while the rest of us are still half asleep. "I'm sure I'll be in tears on my last day," Penny admits. "I do hope not, because it's not a good look – my nose will go red, my make-up will run and I'll look a complete mess. But it's inevitable!" "I'm going to miss the old team. John Stapleton is a real gent and we've become so close. He's like a naughty young uncle who'd slip you a half glass of wine if you asked. "The messiest animal in the GMTV team has to be Kate Garraway. Even though we have separate dressing rooms, Lorraine Kelly and I are always cleaning up after her. She sometimes asks to borrow a pair of earrings, but I have to insist she puts them



Penny is going to miss clearing up after messy mate Kate

## best EXCLUSIVE

back in the box immediately otherwise I'll never see them again. I never thought I'd miss the chaos of her clutter, but I will. "And the GMTV backroom team are my second family. They know all my quirks. Like the fact that as soon as I'm off-air

I grab the make-up remover. Hence the picture of me with panda eyes working the Goth look! (above right). I might start a new trend, though I'm not sure it'll catch on!" We'll miss you, Penny!



Will there be another severe case of panda eyes on Penny's last day?



Facing the future without GMTV

# IT'S SURE TO END IN TEARS

Much-loved newsreader Penny Smith is leaving GMTV next week after 17 years. Here she takes us on a trip down memory lane with an exclusive look at her photo album...



Old pals' act – early mornings won't be the same without the John and Penny show

# MY FAMOUS SOFA MATES

**IT'S A TOUGH JOB...** There were so many fans outside GMTV when *Twilight* heart-throb Robert Pattinson came down to see us. Then I discovered he lives near a friend of mine, the presenter Anneka Rice. I told him he should go and say hello to her. He modestly said, 'Oh no I couldn't'. Good job, too, because when I mentioned him to Anneka she said, 'Who?' She'd never heard of him!



**17 YEARS AND STILL CUTTING IT** Even if you can't see it on camera, a degree of decorum is so important. When the actor Nathaniel Parker came in to talk about his appearance in *Lewis*, I noticed his trousers were a bit too long, so I offered to chop them down. People kept going past the make-up room saying, "I can't believe you're doing that – you're not even professional." But he didn't care. You can see from his face that he appears to be quite happy with my work. Well, if my writing career doesn't work out, I can always turn to tailoring.



**MEET MY FRIEND ELTON** Here I am at the fifth anniversary of *Billy Elliot The Musical*. Sir Elton and I have mutual friends, but I feel I AM Elton's friend! Usually you're seven steps removed from such people, but a mutual mate is a ticket to getting up close and personal.



**MY HOLLYWOOD INTERLOPER** Hollywood star Danny DeVito took me by surprise when he decided to come over and say hello to me at the desk where I read the news – luckily not while I was live on air! He just peered in and said, 'So, what do you do?' I said, 'I just do a little light news reading'. As luck would have it, someone had a camera in their pocket, so we got this priceless pic!



**TIME TO LET GO** This broadcast was for people afraid of heights. I love abseiling – jumping off and going 'whee!' That's my attitude to life. My third novel is due in by October, and to mark the start of my new life on 7 June, I'll have a lie-in, a leisurely breakfast, and then write the first line. Let's hope when I get to the end, I don't look back and think, what on earth was that all about?!