Cast .................................................................................................................................................. 2
Crew .................................................................................................................................................. 3
Character background .......................................................................................................................... 4
An interview with Julian Fellowes ....................................................................................................... 13
An interview with Gareth Neame ......................................................................................................... 15
An interview with Liz Trubridge ........................................................................................................... 17
An interview with Hugh Bonneville .................................................................................................... 18
An interview with Zoe Boyle ............................................................................................................... 20
An interview with Jessica Brown Findlay ............................................................................................ 21
An interview with Laura Carmichael ................................................................................................... 23
An interview with Jim Carter ............................................................................................................... 25
An interview with Brendan Coyle ....................................................................................................... 26
An interview with Michelle Dockery .................................................................................................. 27
An interview with Siobhan Finneran .................................................................................................. 28
An interview with Joanne Froggatt ..................................................................................................... 29
An interview with Iain Glen ................................................................................................................ 30
An interview with Thomas Howes ....................................................................................................... 31
An interview with Rob James-Collier ................................................................................................ 35
An interview with Allen Leech ........................................................................................................... 36
An interview with Phyllis Logan ......................................................................................................... 38
An interview with Elizabeth McGovern .............................................................................................. 39
An interview with Sophie McShera .................................................................................................... 41
An interview with Lesley Nicol .......................................................................................................... 42
An interview with Amy Nuttall .......................................................................................................... 43
An interview with Maggie Smith ........................................................................................................ 44
An interview with Dan Stevens ......................................................................................................... 46
An interview with Penelope Wilton ................................................................................................... 48
Carnival Films .................................................................................................................................... 50
Harper Collins: The World Of Downton Abbey .................................................................................... 51
NBCUniversal Home Entertainment: DVD and Blu-ray ................................................................... 52
Decca CD: Downton Abbey - The Original Soundtrack ................................................................ 53
Press Pack

CAST (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Lady Rosamund Painswick.................................................................Samantha Bond
Earl of Grantham, Robert...............................................................Hugh Bonneville
Lavinia Swire....................................................................................Zoe Boyle
Lady Sybil Crawley........................................................................Jessica Brown Findlay
Lady Edith Crawley.........................................................................Laura Carmichael
Mr Carson.......................................................................................Jim Carter
John Bates......................................................................................Brendan Coyle
Lady Mary Crawley.........................................................................Michelle Dockery
Molesley..........................................................................................Kevin Doyle
Vera Bates.......................................................................................Maria Doyle Kennedy
Sarah O’Brien..................................................................................Siobhan Finneran
Anna Smith......................................................................................Joanne Froggatt
Sir Richard Carlisle........................................................................Iain Glen
William Mason................................................................................Thomas Howes
Thomas Barrow.............................................................................Rob James-Collier
Tom Branson...................................................................................Allen Leech
Mrs Hughes...................................................................................Phyllis Logan
Andrew Lang....................................................................................Cal Macaninich
Countess of Grantham, Cora............................................................Elizabeth McGovern
Daisy Robinson...............................................................................Sophie McShera
Mrs Patmore...................................................................................Lesley Nicol
Ethel Parks......................................................................................Amy Nuttall
Doctor Clarkson.............................................................................David Robb
Dowager Countess of Grantham, Violet............................................Maggie Smith
Matthew Crawley...........................................................................Dan Stevens
Isobel Crawley................................................................................Penelope Wilton
CREW

Written and created by ............................................................................ Julian Fellowes
Executive Producers .............................................................................. Gareth Neame, Julian Fellowes
Producer .................................................................................................. Liz Trubridge
Line Producer .......................................................................................... Charles Hubbard
Director (eps 1 & 2) .............................................................................. Ashley Pearce
Director (eps 3 & 6) .............................................................................. Andy Goddard
Director (eps 4 & 5) .............................................................................. Brian Kelly
Director (eps 7 & 8) .............................................................................. James Strong
Director (Christmas Special) ................................................................. Brian Percival
Director of Photography (eps 1,2,3,6,7,8) ........................................... Gavin Struthers
Director of Photography (eps 4&5) ....................................................... David Marsh
Director of Photography (Christmas Special) ...................................... Nigel Willoughby
Production Designer ............................................................................. Donal Woods
Location Manager ................................................................................... Jason Wheeler
Make-Up and Hair Designer .................................................................. Anne 'Nosh' Oldham
Costume Designers ............................................................................... Susannah Buxton and Rosalind Ebbutt
Casting Director ..................................................................................... Jill Trevellick
Historical Advisor .................................................................................. Alastair Bruce
Sound Recordist ..................................................................................... Chris Ashworth
Music ..................................................................................................... John Lunn
Editor (eps 1, 2, 3, 6, & Christmas Special) ......................................... John Wilson
Editor (eps 4 & 5) .................................................................................. Steve Singleton
Editor (eps 7 & 8) .................................................................................. Mike Jones
Picture Post Production .......................................................................... The Farm
Sound Post Production ........................................................................... Hackenbacker
Earl of Grantham, Robert. (Hugh Bonneville).
When Robert knew the war had started, the first thing he did was to offer his services to the army. But they didn't want him. Instead, he has been promoted to Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire, with all the responsibilities that involves. It is service of a kind, but not of the kind that Robert wants to give. Then he has to face the invasion of his house, the risks faced daily by his heir in France and the scandalously undutiful behaviour of his daughters and his valet. All in all, Lord Grantham is not having a good war.

Lady Rosamund Painswick. (Samantha Bond).
Lady Rosamund is still determined to have her say, when it comes to the choices of her only brother’s children. While happily married to the late, and wonderfully rich, Mr Marmaduke Painswick, she had no children which has left her both lonely and firmly inclined to poke around in the business of her nieces, sometimes with disastrous results, as Mary can testify.

Lavinia Swire. (Zoe Boyle).
Lavinia is the only daughter of a London solicitor, Reggie Swire, who has built up a practice and made himself a rich man. Her mother is long dead and so father and daughter have grown very close in their large and comfortable house in one of Nash’s terraces overlooking Regent’s Park. She is essentially a London girl but she loves Matthew fiercely and she would do whatever it takes to make him happy, if it is within her power.
Lady Sybil Crawley. *(Jessica Brown Findlay)*

It is not long before Sybil hears the call to arms and rises to the challenge of war. She is not content to be a lady-like do-gooder. She wants a real job, with real work, and she finds one in nursing. But the work proves more of a test than she expected, shaking all her values and beliefs and finally leading her to question her role as an aristocrat’s daughter. In the end, she will start to make choices that would have seemed impossible, even to her, before the universal conflict had thrown their whole world into turmoil.

Lady Edith Crawley. *(Laura Carmichael)*

Edith has always resented her sisters. Mary is so good looking and sought after, Sybil is so full of her own passionate ambition, that they both cast Edith into the shade. But war is a strange and unpredictable element in any life. No one can tell how they will be affected and, for Edith, the war brings a sense of possibility, a sense, for the first time, of really possessing a talent. Quite what she will do with this new belief in herself, and how she will cope when the war comes to an end, remains to be seen.

Mr Carson. *(Jim Carter)*

The butler. Carson is determined to show the Germans they will never win and the first way to do this is to demonstrate that standards have not slackened at Downton Abbey. Most of all, he wants to serve his beloved Lady Mary and smooth her way into her new life. But even here, he finds he has once again rather underestimated the difficulties of trying to wrong foot Sir Richard Carlisle.
**Press Pack**

**John Bates. (Brendan Coyle)**

The valet. John Bates’s life should have been sorted out for good but he has underestimated the energy of his wife, Vera, who makes a determined return to the front of the stage. It is hard for the valet to seek help, even harder to reveal his feelings, but his love for the housemaid, Anna, has changed him and brings him face to face with his life and what he must tackle.

**Lady Mary Crawley. (Michelle Dockery).**

Before the war, Mary had accepted her cousin, Matthew, as heir and ended by falling in love with him. They would have married, if her mother’s pregnancy had not raised the spectre of Matthew’s having nothing more to live on than his wage as a country solicitor. Her moment of hesitation cost her Matthew’s love and now she has to re-plan her future. At the moment, that future seems to have taken the shape of a rich and powerful newspaper proprietor, Sir Richard Carlisle. Mary thinks she can control this arriviste but it is not too long before she starts to realise he is stronger than she had thought and, worse, she is in his power.

**Molesley. (Kevin Doyle).**

Matthew’s butler and valet. Life is an uphill struggle for Molesley. He spent the last series trying to convince Matthew Crawley there was some value in his being a valet. Now, with Matthew fighting, he has nothing to do, which is worse. His romantic ambitions are not proving much more rewarding, either, so things are not looking good. Unless of course he can change jobs and secure the best position in the neighbourhood. Or is it a dream? It may be. But then, for all his diffidence, Molesley is more than capable of dreaming.
Vera Bates. *(Maria Doyle Kennedy).*
Vera Bates has an axe to grind. A childhood sweetheart of Bates from the Emerald isle, life and a bitterly mis-matched marriage have changed her. The change is not becoming. And if there is one thing above all that she finds she cannot tolerate, it is the thought of her husband being happy, and happy with someone else. This cannot and, as far as she is concerned, will not be allowed to happen.

Sarah O’Brien. *(Siobhan Finneran).*
The lady’s maid. O’Brien has changed towards her mistress and viewers of the last series may understand why. She has not softened in any other way but she is determined now to keep Cora safe from harm. In fact, the war brings qualities out of O’Brien that could not be called soft, but which make her understand more than many of Downton’s residents about what is going on at the front. All of which means that when Downton is volunteered for service, she is determined that her mistress shall not lose control.

Anna Smith. *(Joanne Froggatt).*
The head housemaid. Anna has made her choice of Mr Bates and nothing will alter that. But circumstances are only too much in evidence to prove to her that the path of true love never did run smooth. At first, she is almost made uncomfortable that she should be so happy in the face of the misery brought by the conflict. But things change, until it begins to seem that it is Anna who is most to be pitied.
Sir Richard Carlisle. *(Iain Glen).*
Richard Carlisle belongs to the new Society that was expanding from the end of the nineteenth century. He has made his money as a powerful and ruthless newspaper proprietor, and while it suits him to let Mary think she can control him, she is quite wrong. The aristocracy may still be powerful enough for Carlisle to ape their manners and their houses and their clothes, but he does not feel the need to defer to them and he is happy to crush them if the moment calls for it. The Crawleys are under the illusion they can patronise him but they are severely mistaken, as they learn to their cost.

William Mason. *(Thomas Howes).*
The second footman. Two years into the war and William is still standing by the sideboard, cleaning the silver, waiting at table. And he hates it. He hates himself, too, for not over-ruling his father and enlisting. Is it that he doesn’t want to say goodbye to his way of life and his love? Is he a coward, he wonders?

Thomas Barrow. *(Rob James-Collier).*
Thomas thought himself a clever fellow to join the medical corps before conscription forced him to the front… except that there has been no conscription by the end of 1916 and he has been in the thick of the fighting since it started. Now, he needs a plan to get him out of trouble and he comes up with an audacious one. And it’s a brave choice, too, in a way, even if most of his peers would despise him for it.
Press Pack

**Tom Branson. (Allen Leech).**
The Irish chauffeur has many points to prove. Political points and personal points, and none of them are easy. Raised in Dublin as a deeply convinced republican, on the one hand he nurtures a rabid hatred of the British Empire and he longs to destroy all the Establishment stands for. But, on the other, his passionate love for a young woman who might be thought an emblem of that Establishment, means there is a contradiction in his very heart. The truth is, he may fail at both his goals, but it won't be for want of trying.

**Mrs Hughes. (Phyllis Logan).**
The housekeeper. Mrs Hughes is less inclined than Carson to think that everything must go on as it did before. As far as she is concerned, the war is changing things and they might as well admit it. Although even she has her limits of understanding and when one of her charges finds herself in a very modern kind of trouble, Mrs Hughes is hard put to decide what to do for the best. Which will involve her in a good deal of awkwardness.

**Andrew Lang. (Cal Macaninch).**
Lang is a member of the walking wounded, of whom there were so many, a fact that was concealed from Carson and Robert Grantham when they employed him, only for it to become abundantly clear in a disturbingly public fashion. But if Lang’s condition is a disappointment, it provokes an unlikely character into becoming his champion.
Countess of Grantham, Cora. *(Elizabeth McGovern).*
It was difficult for a time, but Cora has accepted Matthew as her husband’s heir, even though it looks as if he will also inherit her money. In fact, she has grown fond of him, and while he was also engaged to Mary, she was reconciled to the situation. The problem came when the engagement was broken off. But even that pales into the background now she has to run her house for the benefit of hundreds of wounded strangers. And this might be easier, if Isobel Crawley didn’t always assume she knew better…

Daisy Robinson. *(Sophie McShera).*
The kitchenmaid. Life is not much easier for Daisy than it was four years before. She is still at the beck and call of Mrs Patmore, still the dogsbody, still at the bottom of this particular heap. But there is something surprising on the cards for Daisy. Because she is not so downtrodden that she can’t inspire love. The question is, what is she to do with it, once it’s been inspired?

Mrs Patmore. *(Lesley Nicol).*
The cook. Like many of the characters, Mrs Patmore is not untouched by the war. Which makes her all the more eager to persuade Daisy to make William’s dreams come true. But her ambition proves to be more complicated than she could have foreseen and she has cause to regret ever meddling in the first place.
Ethel Parks. *(Amy Nuttall).*
Ethel is more interested in the future than the past. She is not unhappy to be working at Downton – it’s a big step up on her last place – but, as far as she’s concerned, the story won’t end there. She has big plans and they stretch far beyond the life of an under housemaid from a northern village. She wants a life that takes her somewhere worth going. And why not? She’s bright. She’s pretty. Unfortunately, when you’re not looking, those same qualities can get you into trouble. And when Downton becomes a home for wounded officers, that trouble is suddenly a very real possibility.

Doctor Clarkson. *(David Robb).*
Richard Clarkson is a country doctor, occupying that slightly uncomfortable tier somewhere between the Crawley family and the village. This becomes even more delicate when the war sees him back in uniform as a major, in charge of the local hospital which has been requisitioned for wounded officers. When Downton Abbey is offered up for war work, it falls to Clarkson to make the decisions, which he does not always find easy.

Dowager Countess of Grantham, Violet. *(Maggie Smith).*
Violet is as selfish and as narrow-minded as she ever was, but she is not a coward and she does not believe the war can be won without sacrifice. Far from fighting Edith’s desire to work on the estate or Sybil’s to nurse, she believes that they must be allowed to do their bit. But this support does not bring with it a belief that there is the slightest need for Society to change when peace returns. And this is where her relationship with her own descendants is bound to hit a rough patch. Even so, there are some elements in all the girls’ lives that the war brings to the surface, where their grandmother’s judgement is much wiser than their own.
Press Pack

**Matthew Crawley. (Dan Stevens).**
By the summer of 1914, Matthew had grown into his role as heir to the Downton estate. He thought his life was settled until, first, he discovered his true love, Mary, was not prepared to take him without money, dashing all his belief in her to the ground, and, second, he was sent to the front as an enlisted officer. Now he has not only a new career but a new love, Lavinia Swire, a young woman from London and he means to transform Mary from lover to sister if he possibly can. He is a good soldier, moral and brave, determined as he ever was, to do his best for his country, but the reality of war and how he, personally, is tested by it, take him to the very limits of endurance.

**Isobel Crawley. (Penelope Wilton).**
As the wife and daughter of doctors, nobody could be better than Isobel when it comes to taking a prominent role in running Downton as a convalescent home. In Isobel’s opinion, at any rate. She finds it extremely unreasonable of Cora to object when she, Isobel, gives the orders and makes the decisions in Cora’s house. We don’t agree. But it is Isobel who sees more clearly than her son when Matthew’s rigorous sense of honour is forcing him into a decision that will bring only unhappiness in its wake. No one can say she does not do everything in her power to avert it.
AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN FELLOWES

Downton Abbey has become a worldwide phenomenon. It is now a hugely loved programme right around the globe.

The show’s immensely gifted creator, Julian Fellowes, attempts to understand why the series has struck such a global chord. He reflects that, “People say to me that viewers love period drama.” So why was this more than just another successful period drama? “I can’t remember one since Brideshead Revisited, Jewel in the Crown or Upstairs Downstairs that took the world by storm in quite the same way. There certainly hasn’t been one for a long time.”

“I think one of the reasons for the success of Downton Abbey is that although it is set in the past, it has a modern structure. It is very fast paced and has lots of different stories running simultaneously, and you have to keep alert. In the old days, it didn’t matter if a viewer went out in the middle of a show to make a cup of tea. But you can’t do that with Downton Abbey – you might miss the whole reason why Daisy bought a hat! The show has an energy that makes it very watchable.”

Julian’s vision of an Edwardian country house is also much fairer than some past dramatic portrayals. The writer, also responsible for his Oscar-winning movie Gosford Park, says that, “We’ve avoided the stereotypes of the 1950s, where all the servants would have been comic and the family noble, or of the 1990s where the servants would been heroic and the family vile.

“In Downton Abbey, there are good and bad people upstairs and downstairs – there is no class division between characteristics. We don’t have to view this world through rose-tinted spectacles or slam everything in it. Every period has its merits and demerits – heaven knows, that’s true now! We may change in the way we make toast, but the fundamental imperative is not very different in any era. Most people want to get on in life – whether they’re a miner or a duchess.”

Julian goes on to explain the First World War setting of the second series of Downton Abbey. “The heart of this series is how everyone from Daisy to Robert copes with the country being at war. Roberts says, ‘War is now reaching its long fingers into Downton, scattering our chicks.’ None of them is unaffected by the war. All of them change. And death does not entirely pass Downton Abbey by.

“At the end, people are nervously seeing how much of their previous lives can carry on – it’s like they’re pressing parts of their body to see where they have been bruised. This series is about getting through the war. Cora goes off to do charity work and says, ‘I’m different now.’ It is impossible to remain unaffected by the war – unless you’re Violet! When asked if she wants everything to return to the way it was before the war, she replies, ‘I certainly do and as quickly as possible!’"
Julian is quick to emphasise that the fighting on the front line is only a backdrop – the focus is still very much on Downton Abbey itself. “It is now very difficult to make an old-fashioned war film. For the moment, that has been very much done – there has been a tidal wave of films about Afghanistan. So I thought that for a modern audience what is interesting is what it was like for the people left at home during the war. We know what soldiers are doing, but what is it like for people carrying on their daily lives back home?

“Of course, you have to go to the front – it would be a cheat if you didn’t, and you have to be very much aware of what the soldiers are going through. But I wanted to focus on what was happening back home. I felt it was important to see how people in Britain became involved in the war effort.”

To that end, Julian continues, “we take the audience through the process that turns Downton Abbey into a convalescent home. I wanted the family to stay and live amongst the convalescents. We wanted that sense of the war being something you cannot in the end resist. It’s going on whether you wish it or not – you can’t avoid it.”

This series shows the women of Downton Abbey taking on jobs to help with the war effort. According to Julian, “none of those women could find a role for themselves pre-war, but the First World War created different opportunities for women. They had to work on farms and in factories. That is one of the many reasons why after the war women were not prepared to go back in their box. It only strengthened the suffragette movement.”

Finally, because the first series was such an enormous hit, there’s inevitably pressure on Julian’s shoulders to replicate that success. He smiles that such expectations come with the territory. He says that, “The only reason there isn’t pressure is if something has been a flop. Pressure is an unavoidable by-product of success, and I’d rather have success than failure!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH GARETH NEAME

Gareth Neame is the executive producer of Downton Abbey. He was crucially involved in the creation of the series, but even he was taken aback by the runaway success of the show.

He says, “It struck such a chord because we delivered a show which has all the production values you’d associate with the best classic dramas, but which also works as a modern piece of episodic story telling. There’s almost a soap element to it – it focuses on the social politicking of a group of people living in a pressure cooker environment. That very contemporary form of storytelling sucked everyone in.”

Gareth thinks that viewers were also fascinated by the hierarchy of Downton Abbey. “Human beings are very interested in other human beings, and how they order themselves. We enjoy seeing people living under a much stricter code than we live under. We love to see how people form themselves into clans and hierarchies.”

The executive producer, whose production company Carnival Films has been responsible for many TV hits such as this year’s BAFTA award winning Best Drama Serial Any Human Heart as well as popular shows such as Whitechapel, Hotel Babylon, Enid and Poirot, goes on to outline the reasons why Downton Abbey has chimed internationally. “In the last 20 years, there’s been very little period drama not adapted from a classic novel. Even modern novels like The Night Watch have been adapted for television. They obey a novel’s narrative rules rather than a TV show’s narrative rules.

“Costume drama has a very specific audience, and a lot of territories are not fussed about rules that have been prescribed by Victorian novelists. They are only interested in modern, soapy storytelling, not lavish attention to detail. Downton Abbey is closer to Mad Men than Pride and Prejudice.”

Gareth says that the very different setting of the second series is a positive advantage. “Obviously, the first series was such a hit that we have a lot to live up to. But we’re not trying to repeat the same trick. This time, the characters are in the middle of the First World War. That forces us to tell different stories. The characters are facing different stakes.

“When you portray a war, the men going to fight encounter great risk. This time round, everything is much more in extremis. A world that was unassailable in the first series is now very much under threat. That gives us lots of new material.”

Neame praises the invaluable contribution of the show’s creator, Julian Fellowes. “He has this amazing ability to intertwine 20 characters in the same episode – that is quite a skill! He’s able to mix high drama with social comedy and romance. That combination is quite brilliant. His dialogue is also delicious. All the characters are so well articulated. And, it should not be forgotten, Downton Abbey is also very funny.”
Press Pack

Gareth was extremely pleased to recruit the wonderful Maggie Smith to the cast. “We were absolutely delighted because she’s never been in a TV series before. We were elated because she’s acted almost as Julian’s muse. This is the third time he’s written for her, and she’s able to articulate his writing so beautifully.”

Gareth laughs that he can see the show running for another 20 years. “I think the show has a lot of legs because we’re moving through history and Julian’s writing continues to grip. I think it can go on as long as the audience want it and as long as Julian wants to keep writing it.” Long may it continue!
AN INTERVIEW WITH LIZ TRUBRIDGE

Liz Trubridge, the acclaimed producer of Downton Abbey, says it is a great help that the second series takes place during the First World War. “That setting presents us with a massive chance,” she observes. “It’s a great gift for us because we have to move the characters on. They soon inevitably become touched by the war.

“Downton Abbey becomes a convalescent home for wounded officers, and the residents have to live cheek by jowl with recovering soldiers. It impacts on everyone. It is a very tough time, and people are losing their workers to the war. The war’s fingers creep everywhere, even into this sleepy Yorkshire village.”

The producer, who is also overseen such highly regarded dramas as A Short Stay in Switzerland, The Riff Raff Element and From Time To Time which was written and directed by Julian Fellowes, explains that the transformation of Downton Abbey is mirrored in the transformation of many of its inhabitants. “One of the exciting things about this series is to take characters who did nothing for themselves before the war – they didn’t even plump a cushion or dress themselves – and plunge them into an unfamiliar situation. It is great to watch people you know changing.”

Liz goes on to assess the incredible success of the first series. “Because we have such a huge cast, there are always people that viewers can identify with. There are characters that you love to love, and love to hate. All in all, the show is filled with love and romance and gossip and gorgeous clothes and this amazing house.” Many people refer to Downton Abbey (which is portrayed on screen by the splendid Highclere Castle) as one of the major characters in the drama.

But Liz is swift to point out that this is no mere chocolate box costume drama. “It is close enough in our history – many of our grandparents will have lived through this period – to make it accessible to us. We see that the characters are dealing with the same problems as we are.

She adds, “the show’s success must have something to do with timing. The first series went out when the country was in recession and at the end of the summer. It was something to get really involved in that provided a great escape.”

Liz weighs up the qualities of the show’s creator, Julian Fellowes. “Julian is an absolute master at delivering scenes with the most wonderful economy. He has a very complex way of writing. He packs an awful lot of stories into each episode. In most screenplays, you get nine scenes to deliver a storyline – Julian can deliver it in just three. At the same time, he manages to cram in so much information. I have never met anyone who could do it quite like him. It’s a fantastic skill.”

Liz ends by looking back in wonder at the success of the first series all over the world. “I’m absolutely delighted that it has appealed internationally. It covers universal themes – love, family, romance, relationships, people who have, and people who have not. It features a beautiful place and gorgeous costumes and characters of all ages. It’s like a really good book – you can’t help but get lost in it. Great stories are hard to beat!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH HUGH BONNEVILLE

Hugh Bonneville plays Robert, Earl of Grantham, the patriarch of Downton Abbey. In this second series, the effects of The Great War are felt in the very foundations of the great house. The war touches everyone who lives and works on the estate and Robert is no exception; once the war is over, nothing will be the same again.

Hugh explains how the well-ordered world of Downton Abbey is changed by the conflict in France, as the house is turned into a convalescent home for wounded servicemen.

“As the estate’s role begins to shift, to help the war effort, so Robert’s place within it begins to alter; all the certainties of Robert’s life, so clear cut before the war, are challenged” says the acclaimed actor, whose previous work includes Iris, Daniel Deronda and Notting Hill and, most recently, Twenty Twelve and Dr Who. “As the pride of the nation’s youth, once in full bloom now cruelly cut down by injury, come to convalesce in the house, Robert begins to question his view of the world and his place within it.”

“Meanwhile, the women of his family come to the fore, setting up and running the house as a convalescent hospital. Similarly, Carson’s domain and sense of order changes, as maids take on work normally done by footmen, who are now away at the front. This fundamentally undermines Carson’s world and he gets in a terrible state about it!”

The war affects Robert in other ways. “With his sense of certainty now out of kilter, and with the house no longer his natural domain, his concerns for his heir increase. Having grown to love Matthew as the son he never had, Robert is worried about what the war might affect him. Each time Matthew visits the house on leave Robert heaves a sigh of relief, not just because of his affection for him but also because Matthew represents the secure future of Downton Abbey itself.

The actor continues, “The conflict brings out more colours in Robert’s character. It makes him more anxious, less confident about his role in life. He starts to question himself. He has been bound for so long by a sense of duty and honour, but now the very thing that he has nurtured his whole life – the estate – is changing. He is at risk of losing his heir and the staff on whom he depends and dotes. Added to that, he still has his daughters to sort out…!”

“But while there’s change” says Hugh, “there’s also continuity. His beloved Pharaoh (the labrador) has died since the start of the war but his successor, Isis, even gets her own storyline in one episode!” Hugh finds it hard to assess why Downton Abbey has proved a global hit. “If we could bottle the reason why it’s been such a success, we’d all be millionaires!” he laughs. “I’m sure someone somewhere is writing a detailed analysis of why this show has clicked with audiences but, I don’t know the answer. For us as a production team, we’re just thrilled that Julian Fellowes has created characters people want to spend time with.”
According to Hugh, another of the show’s great assets is its wonderful cast. “I may be The Daddy of the house but it’s a truly ensemble show; the whole thing is a giant set of interlocking cogs, all equally vital in driving the engine of the house and therefore of the show. And if you don’t get on with one character, don’t worry, another one will be along in a minute! At Downton Abbey, I think there’s always a character you can connect with.”

The show’s enormous popularity has meant a lot of attention from aficionados. “I think it’s fair to say that some people have become obsessed with the show, which is a nice problem to have. The downside is certain fans who come up to say how much they like it then get quite cross that it isn’t on every single Sunday. I have to reassure them that we’ve been filming Series 2 as fast as we can! Clearly it’s gained a place of affection in lots of people’s hearts – and that’s great. It’s thrilling to be in something that seems to have brought large numbers of the viewing public together in shared enjoyment.”
AN INTERVIEW WITH ZOE BOYLE

Zoe Boyle plays Lavinia Swire, who becomes Matthew’s fiancée after he splits from Mary.

Zoe explains that the relationship between Lavinia and Matthew is very difficult because he is away fighting in the war. “It’s really hard – war intensifies everything. They see each other in short sharp bursts whenever he is on leave. She is constantly thinking, ‘I’m about to lose you.’

“There is no permanence to the relationship – they’re trying to grab onto anything permanent. That’s why they get engaged so quickly. She is tormented by the war just as much as he is. Family and friends are affected as much as the soldiers are. That anxiety permeates everything.”

The actress, who has also starred in Lewis, Poirot and Grey’s Anatomy, underlines the intensity of the relationship between Lavinia and Matthew. “They write each other letters all the time. Matthew is a very good letter writer – he is extremely eloquent. You can bare your soul in a letter. That brings them closer together and makes their relationship more special.”

Underlying everything in their relationship is Matthew’s history with Mary. Lavinia is intelligent enough to realise that she cannot simply ignore that. Zoe explains that, “Lavinia’s relationship with Mary is very complicated. She is aware of how close Matthew and Mary still are.

“That might pose a threat, but the war overshadows everything else. As the war comes to an end, that threat re-emerges. But it is not your typical rivalry because Lavinia and Mary quickly grow to like each other. That is typical of Julian’s writing – it’s so nuanced.”

Zoe believes that the First World War is a great setting for this series because it still has such a powerful hold on the popular consciousness. “It is so potent in our imagination. It affected such a huge section of the youth in this country. As a woman in my 20s, I cannot imagine my male friends going off to the front. It is too hard to grasp. It is unthinkable, and yet it happened to so many people and is still happening now.

“If I think about that and put myself in those shoes, it’s a horrible concept. It sounds corny, but when I was playing Lavinia, I thought about my relationships with family and friends and how I would feel if they were taken away. The boyfriend of a friend of mine is in the Army. She’s very nervous when he goes to Afghanistan. That shows this problem is still ongoing and bears a huge relation to what is happening today.”

Zoe reveals that her family and friends are delighted that she is joining the cast for this series of Downton Abbey. “My granny is thrilled. She loves Downton Abbey. She told me, ‘It’s about time you were in a period drama!’”

In complete contrast, Zoe has just finished filming an American TV series entitled Sons of Anarchy. “It was quite bloody, violent and sexual – very different from Downton Abbey! I played a woman in a gang affiliated to the IRA. In one scene I had to shoot a gun and it was pretty terrifying. I don’t know why people get so excited about guns. They are scary, powerful things. When that shooting scene was over, I thought, ‘I’m not made for guns get me to Downton now, please!’"
AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA BROWN FINDLAY

Jessica Brown Findlay plays Lady Sybil Crawley, the daughter of Lord and Lady Grantham.

The actress, who was also featured in Misfits and the forthcoming movie Albatross, emphasises that Sybil undergoes a seismic change in the second series of Downton Abbey. “We meet Sybil at a point where she has clearly been affected by the war. She’s known plenty of people who have gone away to fight, and she is now at breaking point. She’s frustrated because she feels useless and thinks it’s not right just to stand by. She’s angry about what’s happening to her generation and heartbroken that she has nothing to offer.

“It has always been preached to her that being an aristocrat gives her the ability to do anything she wants, but now she is sitting in this great house unable to do anything and can’t make a difference. She has reached a wall and been worn down by the war. So she goes about changing that.”

Jessica explains how Sybil becomes involved by training to be a nurse. “Suddenly she is able to pour all her energy into that. She makes it happen and is determined to do it. In the course of her job as a nurse, she sees things that any normal 21-year-old would be shocked about now, but she is even more horrified because she’s led such a sheltered life.

“Even though 90% of the population at that time lived in appalling conditions, Sybil had previously never been exposed to any hardship. Suddenly she sees men coming back from the war with horrendous injuries, and she realises that is why she has to do that job. It’s a great challenge, but she has to become involved.”

The experience of nursing and the horrors that she witnesses deeply affect Sybil. “It really changes her,” says Jessica. “She starts to feel what it is like to be tired at the end of the day for a good reason. She has the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile. She knows she can work and attend to these men, and that sense of liberation is so important for Sybil. It also puts the fear of God into her – she thinks, ‘If the war ends, what am I going to do?’”

The second series also expands on the nascent relationship between Sybil and the family chauffeur, Branson. According to the actress, “He has been thinking about it a lot more than she has. When he suggests advancing their relationship, she replies, ‘Are you serious? You’re doing this now? I’m training as a nurse!’

“Sybil is mostly led by her heart but she does have a sensible head on her. She knows they are living in a time where a relationship between a lady and her chauffeur cannot happen. If it did, she would never see her family again. She is very aware that despite her feelings, it is a very scary thing to consider an affair.”

So all in all Jessica observes, “She has gone from having nothing to think about to suddenly being burdened with the responsibility for her own heart, someone else’s heart and the lives of all these wounded soldiers. The combination is baffling for her. The series feels very contemporary. A young girl struggling with war, career, love, and family – the parallels with today are incredibly close.”
The actress says that before the first series of Downton Abbey went out, none of the cast had any idea the show would be such a hit. "It took me completely by surprise. It felt great when we were making it. But these days nobody expects a period drama to have such huge impact. You do a job because you love the material, and when you’re making it, you almost forget that anyone will watch it. Then suddenly 13 million people tune in and you think, that’s insane!"

"People adore watching these lives that are so intertwined. There are moments where the audience are let in on a story that the characters don’t know about. That’s fun. It’s a great pleasure to watch this tight world slowly unravel in some places and knot up in others.

"It is terrific for an audience to have the time to watch the stories unfold and be able to indulge in this sumptuous world. When we watched the first series, we thought, ‘Oh my goodness, it looks so pretty!’ I loved watching it, even though I was in it!"
AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURA CARMICHAEL

Laura Carmichael plays Lady Edith Crawley, the daughter of Robert and Cora, who is always feuding with her sister Mary. In the second series, Edith throws itself into the war effort by helping out on a local farm and at Downton Abbey when it is turned into a convalescent home.

Laura starts by sharing an anecdote from the scene she has just completed - driving a vintage car through the village of Bampton. So how was it? “I think my heart rate is starting to go back to normal,” she laughs. “Allen Leech kept saying, ‘That’s only half a million pounds worth of car there, Laura, just one of a few left in the world.’ No pressure, then!”

She proceeds to observe that this series shows the sense of liberation that many women feel during the First World War. “People are suddenly aware of jobs becoming available and men’s roles becoming vacant. For example, Edith thinks she can help out with the car.

“Beforehand they just accepted the boredom in their lives; but now no-one is stopping them from doing anything. They can seize those opportunities. Edith feels liberated now. I think it happens to a lot of them, to Sybil and the girls downstairs as well to a certain extent.”

Laura explains how the war also helps everyone keep things in proportion. “I think the characters have to soften because of what they are living through. Friends and family coming back, or news that they’ve been blown to pieces on the front – it puts everything in perspective, you know.”

The actress reveals that she embarked on her own research into the jobs women did during the First World War. “My Nan was in the Land Army in the Second World War, and I didn’t realise how long the Land Army had been going. I also went to the Imperial War Museum and had a look through all the things there.

“I found out I’d be doing some farming, so I was interested in that. I found this amazing website on Pathé Films, old vintage films of these women laughing and hoeing fields, saddling the horses. It’s unbelievable; there’s something so moving about watching films with no sound, and they’re still giggling!”

One element which viewers really enjoyed in the first series of Downton Abbey was the constant bitching between Edith and her sister Mary. Laura, who is also appearing in the forthcoming movie, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, reveals, “It’s still very much there. It is still very painful between them.

“But Julian has exposed another side of the relationship, which I do think this hatred is tied to: an absolute bond of love that is so much more intense. I think you see that when things start to go very badly for the family. There’s a moment of sisterly love – it does show itself.”
One of the chief pleasures of this job for Laura has been working with the great Maggie Smith. She says, “It’s such fun working with Maggie, she’s incredible to watch. I destroyed a rehearsal the other day by laughing the whole way through it because I couldn’t look at her - she was being too brilliant.

“She also has a great sense of humour and enjoys telling stories. So if there’s a moment at the dining table where we’re waiting for stuff to happen or we’re outside having a cup of tea, it’s a joy to get her talking and telling stories. It’s mad, I do pinch myself.”

Laura, for whom this was her first professional job, cannot conceal her delight at being back on the set of Downton Abbey. “It is just a great thing to be a part of, to be honest. I was so excited to be able to hang out with the same people again.

“It’s just a joy to work on, we’re laughing all day long. The storylines are great and really exciting. I was turning every page, really excited to find out what was going to happen next.”
AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM CARTER

Jim Carter plays Carson, Lord Grantham’s wonderfully loyal butler. He is rather perturbed by all the alterations at Downton Abbey which are wrought by the First World War.

Jim, one of the most widely respected actors of his generation, explains why Carson is so unsettled in the second season. “His nose is put out of joint by all the changes that are taking place at Downton Abbey. Several footmen off to the front so Carson is struggling to cope with a skeleton staff.

“Carson is a man who is an unbending traditionalist. He does not like the idea of maids serving in the dining room. To him, that is a cardinal sin, which is causing him quite a bit of stress.”

The eternally faithful butler is even more unhappy when Downton Abbey is converted to a convalescent home for wounded officers. “Things become even worse for Carson when the house becomes a convalescent home,” says Jim. “It’s more chaos, it messes with his routine, and the demarcation between jobs becomes blurred, which brings on more anxiety. It’s a nightmare for the poor man!”

That is not to say that Carson is in the least bit changed by the war. Jim smiles that, “In the face of almighty odds, he remains exactly the same – he doesn’t bend a lot. When the war is over, he says the war can no longer be used as an excuse for laxity. Of course, the world will never be the same again, but Carson wants it to go back to the way it was because that’s his security.”

Even though he’s a stick in the mud, people feel great warmth towards the butler in Downton Abbey. Jim, who has starred in everything from Cranford, Red Riding, and The Singing Detective, to The Madness of King George, Brassed Off, and Shakespeare in Love, comments that, “People have great affection for Carson. It’s odd that the butler occupies such an iconic status in our culture. He is almost part of English folklore – what the butler saw or the butler did it. The name butler does a lot of the work for you!”

Jim takes a moment to weigh up the reasons why the show has proved such a hit. “When you’re making it, you have no idea whether it will be watched by two men and a dog. But part of its appeal lies in the fact that it harks back to a time when life had certainty.

“Above all, though, it is lots of good stories very cleverly intertwined. There are love stories upstairs, there are love stories downstairs, and there are love stories between the two. It rattles along at a cracking pace. People love stories – that’s the basic reason why it’s done so well.”

Next up, Jim is embarking on a bike ride in Ghana in aid of the charity Friends of Tafo. “There are 25 of us doing it. We will raise enough money to provide an ongoing clean water service for the town of Tafo. So I am quite happy to dedicate myself to getting fit over the next few weeks.

“It’s quite a contrast to Downton Abbey. I love that variety in my job. I could never be a butler in real life. Too much routine!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH BRENDAN COYLE

Brendan Coyle plays Bates, Lord Grantham’s steadfast valet. In the last series, a scandal erupted that threatened his position and his burgeoning love affair with the head housemaid Anna (played by Joanne Froggatt).

At the start of this second series, life seems a lot more promising for Bates. Brendan explains, “On the face of it, things couldn’t be rosier for him. From his mother, Bates has inherited a house and a sum of money, which is quite unusual for a man of his background.

“His relationship with Anna is also in full bloom, and they are planning to get married. He’s back to be valet to Lord Grantham. The path seems very smooth. What could possibly go wrong?”

But, adds Brendan, “Very quickly Bates’s world is turned upside down by the arrival of his wife Vera (brilliantly played by Maria Doyle Kennedy.) Suddenly, all obstacles are in his way.

“The arrival of his wife is catastrophic. Bates is prepared to do everything and anything to throw off the chains of a very unhappy marriage. He spends all his inheritance in trying to free himself, but still she will not let him go.”

Brendan, who has starred in such hit dramas as Lark Rise to Candleford, Conspiracy, and True Dare Kiss, outlines the very tricky relationship between Bates and his wife. “Vera is not a pantomime villain, but she has this tremendous power and a stranglehold over him and who does not want to see him happy.”

“Of course, the marriage breakdown is not all her fault – it takes two people to cause an unhappy marriage. It is a very interesting, very layered relationship. It makes for a really powerful storyline.”

Fans of the first series latched onto the relationship between Bates and Anna. Brendan reckons that is because, “It really took time to develop. Because of the social mores of the time, it had to build very slowly. Viewers took great pleasure in watching that. They liked waiting for the satisfaction rather than rushing it as people do nowadays.

It was Brendan who goes on to detail the impact of Vera's return on the beleaguered Anna. “Poor Anna! She reacts with her characteristic dignity and grace. She has terrific grace. That is a very hard quality to convey, but Joanne brings that to the part beautifully. Anna has a steely determination and is absolutely determined not to let go of Bates.
Michelle Dockery plays Lady Mary Crawley, the very independent minded daughter of Robert and Cora, the Earl and Countess of Grantham. At the end of the last series, she was left bereft when her fiancé Matthew, unsure about her motivation, broke off their engagement.

So where is Mary at the beginning of the second season, which begins in 1916? Michelle, acclaimed as one of our finest young actresses, says, “Mary has matured. She’s a little less snobbish and seems to have more sincerity in this series. The war brings on these changes and the sisters all become much more practical. It’s obvious from the start that Mary still has strong feelings for Matthew, there is a huge sense of regret when she sees him again for the first time when he returns from the war on leave.

She is forced to move on romantically which is when the audience will meet Sir Richard Carlisle. A brilliant new character played by Iain Glen.

Michelle, who has also starred in Cranford and Red Riding, continues, “Lady Mary’s predicament in the second series of Downton Abbey is complicated” in that the self-made businessman, Sir Richard Carlisle is interested in making Mary his wife. Michelle explains, “It’s not really about love. It’s a convenient partnership. But she also wants the type of marriage that love brings. She’s not quite sure of Sir Richard’s intentions.

In the first series, Mary conducted an increasingly bitter rivalry with her sister Edith. However, Michelle believes, “There’s still the rivalry with Edith, but it’s not as vicious as it was in the first series - they don’t bicker quite as much. The war has given everyone at Downton Abbey a renewed sense of responsibility, and their priorities have changed, so Edith and Mary look out for each other a little more. But there is still enough to keep the viewers entertained!”

The beautifully rendered costumes have always played a key part in the popularity of Downton Abbey. “In this series the women are approaching a period of so much change. The fashions became a little looser. There was a purpose to their lives that wasn’t there before and fashion changed in accordance. When Downton becomes a convalescent home, we all have to get our aprons on!”

After the first series of Downton Abbey Michelle was overwhelmed by the reaction. She recalls, “I think it finally hit me when I was in New York having lunch in a place called ‘The Tea Set’ in Greenwich Village. I overheard the couple sitting next to me talking about Downton and anticipating what was going to happen in the last episode. I just sat there, quietly beaming. I sent a text to Dan (Stevens, who plays Matthew) saying, “I’m in a random Tea shop in Greenwich Village and there’s a couple next to me talking about Downton”
AN INTERVIEW WITH SIOBHAN FINNERAN

Siobhan Finneran plays O’Brien, the wily lady’s maid to Lady Grantham. After mistakenly believing that she was about to be fired, her scheming and vindictive behaviour during the last series helped precipitate her mistress’ miscarriage.

O’Brien was left devastated that her conduct had caused such heartbreak. So has the leopard changed her spots? Is she different this year? Siobhan, who stars in one of ITV’s other major hits, Benidorm, reckons that she has altered. "Yes, she has changed.

“Two years have gone by since we last saw her. She was very guilt ridden as she felt that she’d caused the accident with Cora and it was unjustifiable, as Cora wasn’t in fact trying to get rid of her. Two years down the line, O’Brien is far more protective of Cora – presumably those are guilt-ridden feelings. The war has made all of them change how they think and feel about everybody.”

Despite O’Brien’s Machiavellian ways, Siobhan feels she always has the good of the household at heart. She asserts, “She’s got the best intentions for Downton Abbey. I still maintain that – otherwise she would have been sacked, as she’s not pleasant and the rest of the staff would have complained about her.”

The bottom line is, Siobhan argues, “She is absolutely brilliant at her job, otherwise Cora wouldn’t look the way she looks. The fact that Cora is dressed so well is down to O’Brien – her job is to make sure Lady Grantham is turned out absolutely immaculately all of the time.

“But also for the good of the whole house, none of the staff would ever want to see anything that would bring the house down, as then their livelihoods would be affected. So it does make O’Brien a fantastic tangled ball of wool that we can’t really get to unravel at all. She creates these conflicts all of the time. It’s a permanent battle going on between what she’s doing for the sake of the house and what she’s doing for the sake of herself and what she’s doing to help someone out.”

The other characteristic that distinguishes O’Brien is that she knows absolutely everything that is going on at Downton Abbey. Siobhan, who starred in Clocking off, Bob and Rose, Heartbeat and The Amazing Mrs Prichard, says, “Because O’Brien is great at her job and she sees and hears everything all of the time, she never, ever misses a trick.

“I think people who are good at doing that are survivors because they’ve learnt from a very early age to be absolutely aware of everyone around them and what they are. They can suss people out within five minutes of being in a room with them.”

Like all the best actresses, Siobhan is fiercely defensive of her character. “I think she’s great. I really love playing her, and I love all her little scheming bits and all her little funny bits. I think her snidey comments are hilarious. I love all of that about her.”

And the greatest relief about returning to the character of O’Brien? “I don’t have any sideburns this year!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH JOANNE FROGGATT

Joanne Froggatt plays Anna, the sweet natured and stoical head housemaid, who conducts a profound yet troubled relationship with Bates, Lord Grantham's valet.

In the first series, Anna proved a hugely popular character with audiences. Joanne, who has recently starred in her first lead role in a feature, In Our Name, for which she won a British Independent Film Award and previously See No Evil: the Moors Murders, and Joanne Lees: Murder in the Outback explains why her character resonated with audiences.

“She’s just so lovely!” exclaims the actress. “She’s a genuine, kind, moralistic person, she is beautiful on the inside. She is also strong-minded. She doesn’t suffer fools gladly – she is no walkover. She has fun, but she also knows what’s morally right and wrong. She’s the kind of person I’d want as a friend.”

The other aspect that viewers of the first series related to was Anna’s turbulent relationship with Mr Bates. “People really like that relationship,” muses Joanne. “It is not plain sailing. There are lots of ups and downs for Anna and Mr Bates.”

She adds, “I think people have engaged with it because it’s unusual to have so much screen time to develop a relationship slowly. It was built on friendship and mutual respect and turned into something more than that. Their relationship is about emotions and supporting each other rather than the physical side straightaway.

“I think that’s more romantic because you have to find out all about a person before you jump into a relationship. It’s very touching to watch the way it grows between Anna and Mr Bates. They’re meant to be together, and viewers are willing them on.”

The moral certainty of that era may be one of the principal attractions of Downton Abbey. “Certainly, there is a whole range of morals and social behaviour now,” Joanne carries on. “Downton Abbey is set in a time where there was no sex before marriage – even being previously engaged was frowned upon.

“The rules are very different now. Our world is very fast – we’re trying to cram as many experiences in as possible. Back then people didn’t have that opportunity. There is something very nice about going back to basics.”

Joanne proceeds to sum up the reasons for the show’s success. “The first time I read the script, I couldn’t put it down. Within a quarter of an episode, it had grabbed my attention. I had to go somewhere else, but I couldn’t wait to get back to finish it.”
"There are 18 principal characters and there's a character for everyone to follow. Some people are more interested in the family upstairs, and some in the servants. It's a great mix. It's like a cross-section of life. All walks of life exist in this house. It's great drama, and it's shown that the public do want to watch great drama. I like The X Factor, but I also like Downton Abbey, and so does most of the population. It exceeded all expectations and has given drama back its confidence."

Joanne would be very pleased if the show were commissioned for a third year. She beams, "We are all up for a third series. It would be lovely. After the First World War, there was a huge period of change. I'd love to see them in the Roaring Twenties and to observe the house and the relationships change.

"It would be lovely if Anna and Mr Bates could retire and have a family, but things never run smoothly for them. You can rest assured, there is still a lot of drama in store for them!"
Iain Glen plays Sir Richard Carlisle, a wealthy newspaper tycoon who courts Mary after her split from Matthew.

A wonderfully versatile actor who has previously starred in such diverse dramas as Game of Thrones, Spooks, Doctor Who and The Diary of Anne Frank, Iain starts by describing his character: “He is an inordinately wealthy newspaper proprietor with the power to make or break reputations. He finds himself in the enviable position of being the latest suitor to Mary. Mary's family are initially wary of his new money. But he is determined to belong there and do what he needs to become part of that family. She represents a world that he feels he should be part of.”

So does he really love Mary, one of the most popular characters from the first series? “Yes,” replies Iain. “He nurses a genuine love for Mary. In her, he sees an independent woman with great spark and intelligence, rucking up against the expectations of women from her class. He is willing to give Mary her head.”

“The third person” in the relationship between Richard and Mary is, of course, her ex, Matthew. He represents a potential spanner in the works for Richard. Iain says that, “It’s complicated, because Mary harbours an unfulfilled passion for Matthew which will never go away. Richard gets to know about that and feels threatened and wants to exorcise it from her. That is one of the threads of this series, and it comes between them.”

Iain continues that in many ways Richard and Mary are very well suited. “At this point, we don’t know whether they will get together, but any future marriage would have genuine passion. Richard cannot be dismissed. They’re both independent, forceful, tough people. Their relationship is hot, not sexless. They are suited to each other, but also fiery. There would be many an argument along the way. It could go either way!”

The actor has relished working with Michelle Dockery who plays Mary. “She’s a wonderful person. She’s great fun. We have a real laugh together – were both great gigglers. It sounds like a paradox, but when the writing is very good, you become really dependent on the other actors to realise a scene.

“Michelle and I talked a lot about our screen relationship – I really value her opinion. She’s a marvellous actress. You might think that she is tailor-made for the role of Mary, but she isn’t. She’s just made it seem that way.”

The actor believes that viewers have been so drawn to Downton Abbey because of its marvellous subtlety. “The first series struck such a chord because we live in a world where so much of public life is revealed. Everything in modern life is so stated, not hidden.
Press Pack

“We now live in a much more morally compromised world with far fewer absolutes. Period drama such as Downton Abbey investigates a subtler world where people's moral dilemmas seem so much more nuanced than now. In that world people wrestled with quieter issues. We look back on it and think that it was a better, often kinder place to be.”

He adds, “In those days, characters struggled with whether they could express their love for someone. Nowadays we live in a world where you don’t think twice before jumping into bed with someone. We’re bombarded with images and everything is on display. So we like to go back to a world where things were not shown. Period drama is about what is not said and what is under the surface. Viewers have to work harder but they like that responsibility. Period drama like Downton Abbey really satisfies audiences.”
AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS HOWES

Thomas Howes plays William, the second footman at Downton Abbey who is called up in this series to fight in the First World War.

In this series, William also continues to carry a torch for the scullery maid Daisy. Before he is sent off to war, he declares his love to her. But, the course of true love never runs true, and their relationship follows a tortuous path.

Thomas believes that this difficulty makes the relationship more dramatically intriguing. “William and Daisy could just fall in love straight away, and there would be a resolution – I know that’s what people want. But I think what happens is more interesting. It makes them more like real people who do have those trials and tribulations and those changes of heart and mind.

“I’d like to think deep down that Daisy is in love with William. But at the time where this series is set, she’s not in that place. It makes for a more dramatic series of events that they are not quite on the same page.”

The other fascinating strand of the story for Thomas is that William is sent off to fight in the war. The actor, who recently appeared as the Manchester United captain Mark Jones in the drama United, says that William departs, “Filled with hope and patriotism and very much ‘king and country’ and believing ‘it will all be over by Christmas’ and thinking it will just be a great adventure.

“Because at that time they were so used to just taking orders from their masters, they didn’t question it – the orders came from above and they were followed. For example, Matthew is William’s captain. So it’s still the same – you still take the orders from above. They felt it was an honour to go out and fight. One of the interesting things about the show is that in the first series, that is how it is and it is unquestioned.”

Everything is turned upside down, however, by the war. Thomas states, “In the first series when Violet says “What is a weekend?” it’s true, there were no weekends. It was exactly the same day in and day out - and with no thought that it would ever change.

“And then what’s interesting is in series two, the First World War throws everything up in the air. It shakes people’s perspectives. It shows the worth of human life, so people begin to think, ‘Well actually, why should we work for these people?’ It starts people questioning things. It brings about all these changes to the balance of power.”

Thomas filmed several scenes in trenches near Ipswich, which he found fascinating. “I like all that stuff. I’ve always got into stunts; even at drama school, I was falling down trap doors, and swinging in on ropes. I really love a challenge, but in Downton it was really hard going because there’s no CGI - what you see is what you get. These were real explosions right in front of our faces, and you just had to make sure that you cleared out of the way.
“There was one scene that I adored where I had to run and dive under a cart, which then exploded over my head. So I had to have earplugs in and crouch down really low very quickly because the whole thing went off over me. Then I had to reach straight out and fire a rifle for real, and they’ve got quite a kick, those things.”

Thomas concludes, “I hope it will look amazing because we really are going through those amazing extremes. To film it was quite tricky. But it was worth it because I think we got some really good footage. It was a really great experience to film. The fact that we get a war drama out of it, as well as a period drama is such a privilege.”
AN INTERVIEW WITH ROB JAMES-COLLIER

Rob James-Collier plays Thomas, the scheming first footman whose machinations caused many problems on both sides of the green baize door in the first series of Downton Abbey.

Rob, who made his name as Liam in Coronation Street, says Thomas faces rather different challenges in the second season. “Thomas has always been cunning and savvy, and at the end of the last series he made sure he resigned before he was pushed from his job as first footman. He went into the medical corps thinking it would be a cushty way out of the war.

“But we find that things have not gone according to plan for Thomas. He has spent two years in the trenches. Now he is slap bang in the middle of the Battle of the Somme, the worst battle in British military history with 60,000 casualties on the first day alone. It’s really getting to him. To be in the middle of that inevitably takes its toll. Soldiers in that situation have to develop coping mechanisms – if they don’t, they are a mess. So Thomas devises a plan to get out of it …”

Thomas ends up back at Downton Abbey something of a changed man. Rob, who was also featured in Shameless, Down to Earth and New Street Law, says, “He has been through a lot. He has suffered a great deal and faced real horror. Thomas’s experiences certainly put things into perspective for him.

“Petty things like getting one up on Bates no longer mean anything to Thomas. In fact, normal life doesn’t mean anything to him because of what he’s been through. When he deals with the wounded soldiers at Downton Abbey, we see Thomas let the shutters down, let someone in, and genuinely care for someone for the first time.”

Rob adds that Thomas’s experiences “Highlight the effect the First World War had on so many people. Soldiers never came back as the same person. It changed you – how could it not?“

Rob says that he was helped a great deal in his research by the historical adviser on the series, Alastair Bruce. “Alastair told us about his own military experience. I won’t reveal what he told us – I don’t want to breach his privacy. But I’m forever grateful. It gave me the inspiration to try and do something with this story. Of course you can never portray the events of war exactly as they were because you’ve never been there, thank God. You can only try your best to play it as realistically as you can.”

Rob finishes by underlining how delighted he was to be offered the role of Thomas. “It was a no-brainer! You had an Oscar-winning writer, Julian Fellowes, a BAFTA- winning director, Brian Percival, and a cast featuring two-time Oscar-winner Dame Maggie Smith and a wonderful ensemble led by Hugh Bonneville, Elizabeth McGovern, Siobhan Finneran, Penelope Wilton, Jim Carter, Phyllis Logan and Brendan Coyle. All these fantastic actors blended with the next generation.

“How could that not work? There was far too much talent for it to fail. It would have been a monumental mess up if it had! Everyone is a leader in their field. The best of British talent has been drawn together for Downton Abbey. It’s such a privilege to be involved! ”
AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLEN LEECH

Allen Leech plays Branson, chauffeur at Downton Abbey, who falls for Lady Sybil. It would be the sort of cross-class relationship that at the time was strictly taboo. To make matters worse, Branson is politically motivated, and his views frequently bring him into conflict with his employers.

Allen explains where his character is at the start of the second series. “At the end of the first series, we saw that Branson was clearly infatuated with Sybil. The war is now starting, but he is in an upbeat mood, as it seems as if things might be progressing with her.

“Last year, there was a slight gesture where they held hands, and that was huge for Branson. At that time, physical contact was not allowed between the people upstairs and the staff. In fact, Mrs Hughes warned him, ‘You’ll be left with no job and a broken heart.’ But Branson is so headstrong, that’s not much of an issue for him.”

The Irish actor, who has also appeared in Rome and The Tudors, goes on to outline what attracts Branson to Sybil. “There is a fire and a spirit in Sybil which appeals to him. She also has a real interest in politics, and he stokes that. He sees it in her and gives her pamphlets and tries to educate her about the suffragette movement. He is quite well educated. He is always reading the papers and lecturing the staff about what’s happening in the world. Then eventually, he falls in love with her.”

The onset of the First World War, ironically enough, offers Branson a glimmer of hope that this romance might, against all odds, actually work. According to Allen, “Once the war starts, the class system changes. Everyone is in it together. They are all aiming for the same thing and trying to win the war. Everyone has to muck in. Sybil becomes a nurse. At the time very few women of her class were doing that but it was accepted because everyone wanted to do their bit.”

In the middle of the Great War Downton Abbey is requisitioned by the military authorities as a convalescent home. “Branson sees that as a signal that by the end of the war things will be different,” comments Allen. “The way people view the aristocracy and the working classes begins to change. That gives Branson hope,’ he says, ‘Things won’t be the same after the war.”

Allen proceeds to speculate about where the burgeoning relationship between Branson and Sybil might go. “He is as crazy about her as ever. In the first episode, he decides he has his one chance before she goes to train to be a nurse, and so he takes the opportunity to tell her exactly how he feels. She says, ‘Maybe it could happen in the future, but not now.’

“He gets slightly knocked back by that, but being Branson he doesn’t give up. Throughout the series we see him constantly questioning her but Sybil is full of hesitation.”
Allen continues, “He thinks she wants to be with him, but she knows her family would cut her off. But Branson is persistent, saying, ‘Why would they? And if they do, in the end they’d come round because things are changing so much with the war.’ Although he can be passionate and headstrong, he can always see the bigger picture.”

So can we expect more fireworks between Branson and Sybil in this series of Downton Abbey? Allen smiles and replies, “Absolutely!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH PHYLLIS LOGAN

Phyllis Logan plays Mrs Hughes, the redoubtable housekeeper at Downton Abbey. She encounters new pressures in the second series, as she has to run the house on a skeleton staff. Many of her staff has been called up to fight in the First World War or make other contributions to the war effort. When Downton Abbey is requisitioned as a convalescent home, it is all hands to the pump.

Phyllis, who for many years played Lady Jane in Lovejoy, begins by saying, “In some ways my character is a bit of a hard nut, but she’s always fair. She can be quite opinionated, but she is just. She’s got a kind heart, but she doesn’t like to show it!”

She welcomes Downton Abbey’s conversion to a convalescent home in the second series. “It’s Downton Abbey, but not as you have seen it before. The huge hallway contains canteen tables and tea urns, and the library is turned into a recreation room. The family are shoved into a small area.

“The look of the place is very different – it has become something functional. That causes a bit of tension with people who would rather it weren’t like that. It does create extra work for Mrs Hughes, but she approves. She thinks that if everyone is having to make sacrifices during the war, then so should they. So thumbs up for Mrs Hughes!”

Phyllis feels a very personal link with the setting of this series. “It’s so poignant for me. My grandfather fought in the First World War and died three days before the Armistice. He left behind eight children – my father was just 17 months old and he never knew his own father. There is a real potency about the First World War because we still know people who had a direct connection with it.”

In the first series, many viewers loved the warm, respectful relationship between Mrs Hughes and Carson, the splendidly upright butler at Downton Abbey. “There is a lovely relationship between Mrs Hughes and Carson,” Phyllis affirms. “They’re both old schoolers. While the young whippersnappers are floundering, they know exactly how it should be done.”

Phyllis loves working opposite Jim Carter, who plays Carson. “I love my scenes with Jim. We do them all in a block at Ealing Studios. There’s real depth to them. It’s not just a question of ‘I’ll see to that right away, milady.’ I hope viewers can see the chemistry between Jim and me.”

That’s not to say that Mrs Hughes always unquestioningly concurs with Carson. “There is an old socialist blazing away in Mrs Hughes’s heart! She does not agree with Carson’s idea that you simply blend into the background and that the Lord and Lady always have the final say. She knows the times where you have to keep your mouth shut, but she’s not entirely subservient.” Mrs Hughes is no fool and within a nanosecond you know exactly who each character is.

The actress, who has also starred in A Touch of Frost and Secrets and Lies, has had a ball at Downton Abbey. “When I watch the cast, I think, ‘God, this is going to be good!’ It looks so wonderful and sumptuous. They have spent the money in the right way meticulously recreating the era. They have done a marvellous job.
AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH McGOVERN

Elizabeth McGovern plays Cora Crawley, the Countess of Grantham. In the second series, the formerly stable world of Downton Abbey, over which she presided with such calm elegance, is rocked by the onset of the First World War.

The acclaimed American actress, who received a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination for Ragtime in 1981, begins by underlining the extent to which Cora’s world is disrupted by the declaration of war. She is still recovering from the devastation of miscarrying a baby boy in the last series. But almost at once, she has to come to terms with the fact that her beloved Downton Abbey is converted into a convalescent home for the military.

According to the actress, “The show gets off to a rollicking start because the war has hit. Initially Cora is slow to rise to the challenge of this new era, because she can’t figure out what her role is in it all. She suffers from the loss of life as she knew it because the house is almost immediately taken over by Isobel and Dr Clarkson who want to use it as a recovery house for patients who are leaving hospital.

“Even though the better part of Cora’s nature knows that it’s the right thing to do, she takes a while to get on board because she just has no background that prepares her for the huge impact of the war. There’s no clear-cut role for her either. In the first couple of episodes of the new series, Cora’s modus operandi is actually just being completely lost and trying to be a good sport, but finding it very difficult.”

Added to that, Cora has to face up to the fact that her children are growing up and that she is inevitably ageing. Elizabeth, who has starred in such lauded Hollywood movies as Once Upon a Time in America, Ordinary People, Johnny Handsome and The Handmaid’s Tale, observes that, “Cora is going through the very usual ritual that people her age go through when their kids grow up.

“She has to see them changing, leaving home and starting new lives that are not necessarily lives that she understands, or has any familiarity with. So that’s the other rite of passage she’s faced with.”

Elizabeth carries on, “In some way her story, at the beginning of the series, is similar to Robert’s. Robert also finds himself a bit at sea because even though he is reinstated as Colonel of his regiment they don’t send him to the front. He doesn’t quite know how he fits in or how he’s supposed to serve or what he’s supposed to do and it makes him feel a little helpless and powerless, and Cora goes through a version of that herself.”

Soon enough, however, Cora does the right thing. Elizabeth says, “As time goes on, Cora rises to the challenge – it just takes her a while. She finally gets her mojo back, and a lot of that has to do with the power struggle that occurs between her and Isobel over who runs this new house that Downton has become."
Press Pack

“What I like about it is there are these scenes of real war that are very much the meat of the new series, but at home there are these mini domestic wars going on. They are in some ways quite trivial, but at the same time very true to life. I love the fact that Julian has written the contrast between the very real, very gritty war with soldiers dying and suffering, and this petty domestic war at home. That is the way life is. We all create our own little mini wars.”

Elizabeth goes on to reflect on why the series has chimed with viewers to such a degree. “Why did it strike a chord? I think there’s an emotional truth to it that you don’t find in a lot of television. A lot of shows are wonderful to look at, but in this instance, people could really latch onto these characters because they are so real.

“What’s also refreshing about Downton Abbey is that it is an original story. It’s both truthful and compelling.”

Proving both that she is incredibly versatile and that there is life beyond Downton Abbey, Elizabeth also fronts a band called Sadie and the Hotheads. Earlier this summer, they played the Maverick Festival in Suffolk. What exactly is that? Elizabeth explains that it’s an, “American Music Festival in a big field amongst lots of cows!”

Truly, this is a woman of many talents!
AN INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIE McSHERA

Sophie McShera plays Daisy, the scullery maid at Downton Abbey. In the second season, she remains at the bottom of the food chain.

Sophie comments, “At the beginning of this series, she is in the same position as before. She’s still the lowest of the low!” However, there are big developments in the rest of her life. The actress continues, “Against her will, she immediately becomes entwined in a romance with William. Because of the First World War, everything is accelerated. It’s not like a normal courtship, because he has been called up to serve in the army. So he wants to move very quickly and marry her right away.”

That pressure does not make life easy for Daisy. According to Sophie, “It’s sad and difficult for her. She loves William as a friend and wants to do the right thing. Mrs Patmore and others have advised her to be kind and see him off to the war with happy thoughts and her photograph. All the soldiers took pictures of their sweetheart to the front. She doesn’t want to let him down, but does she love him?”

This time round, the world of Downton Abbey is transformed because of the First World War. Sophie explains, “The war changes everything. The staff downstairs are desperately trying to keep everything together but Mr Carson finds it particularly difficult as he is really trying not to allow women to serve at the dinner table!”

In the first series, Daisy was a widely loved character. Sophie assesses why people identified with her. “She is a very popular character. I think it’s because she’s a good all round person. You feel sorry for her and you’re rooting for her because she’s an underdog.”

Last year, viewers were enthralled as they followed Daisy on her first day working at Downton Abbey. “Everyone can relate to that first day at work – always saying and doing the wrong thing and constantly being shouted at. But Daisy is also aspirational, she wants to learn and to be better.”

Sophie, who has previously appeared in Emmerdale, Waterloo Road and Survivors, adores Daisy just as much as the audience does. “I love her! She is so open and honest and naive. She is also really funny, I like the fact that people can relate to her character and her relationships with people both upstairs and downstairs. She has a great relationship with Mrs Patmore. Even though she’s her boss, it’s like a mother-daughter relationship.”

The actress reckons Downton Abbey has chimed with audiences because, “it is about a different time, but the issues are the same as the ones we confront today. The relationships between people are always going to be the same – it’s just the circumstances that are different.”

Sophie has been overwhelmed by the warmth of the fans’ reaction to the show. “Everyone always has a nostalgia for what once was. People love period dramas. Men keep coming up to me in the street and saying, ‘I don’t usually watch these dramas. My wife made me watch Downton Abbey, but now I absolutely love it!’”
Lesley Nicol plays Mrs Patmore, the cook at Downton Abbey whose failing eyesight provided one of the most touching storylines in the last series.

Mrs Patmore had a quick temper in the first series, and Lesley reveals that has not necessarily improved. “Last year, her eyesight got more and more frustrating and frightening for her because she could barely see and was making mistakes. But her bad temper comes from pressure of the job, and that has not gone away.

“It’s different now, but she’s got to keep the standards up and keep her staff in line. They work long hours, and it’s still very hot in there, so those things haven’t changed. It’s just a slightly different order of things in the house.”

The First World War casts a shadow over everything that happens in Downton Abbey this series. The character of Mrs Patmore is not immune from that. The actress, who has also starred in Blackadder, East is East, West is West, Marple, Shameless, Hancock and Joan, Hotel Babylon, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and The Silver Chair, reveals that the cook has a very personal connection with the conflict.

“Her sister has a son called Archie, and Mrs. Patmore has a soft spot for him. He’s gone off to war and has gone missing in Northern France. Her sister writes to say she’s received a letter saying he’s missing presumed dead, so it’s that nagging feeling that you don’t know. Anna suggests Mrs Patmore asks Lord Grantham as he has friends at the War Office and they can do a bit of digging.

“Mrs. Patmore is very much in awe of Lord Grantham and doesn’t want to bother him, what with everything else that’s going on, but Anna encourages her. So she plucks up the courage and asks for his help. When he comes to the kitchen with the results of what he’s found out it is devastating news for her.”

Lesley thoroughly researched the First World War for this series by discussing it in depth with the show’s historical adviser, Alastair Bruce. According to the actress, these discussions were extremely helpful. “Mrs Patmore is very matter of fact and would sort a brawl or a kitchen quarrel out in an instant,” she claims.

“That’s her logic, simple and naïve maybe, but that’s her way of sorting these men out. She’s not on the front line, but all she knows is that some people are coming home in a terrible state or not at all and as a fixer she instinctively knows what to do.”

Lesley claims that she had no inkling that the series would be so successful. “As an actor, you know when the scripts are this good and the people you are working with are of the quality of this cast that you are working on something special and it is so gratifying when the audience react to it in the way they have. It really is a unique moment in the job when that happens.”

“Beyond that, there’s no more you can do, but I daren’t have predicted it – I’ve seen the best things go pear-shaped. It’s just great to be part of something this good. I go dog walking a lot. People I’ve never spoken to before come up to me and give me a hug. Other people say, ‘Hello, Mrs. Patmore’ and ask after my eyesight! It makes me laugh.”
AN INTERVIEW WITH AMY NUTTALL

Amy Nuttall plays Ethel, the new housemaid who has joined Downton Abbey for series two. The actress begins by describing her character. “We meet Ethel on her first day of work at Downton Abbey, and she acts like she knows what she’s doing and she’s done all this before – when in actual fact she’s just been in a household of only two maids before. She has only ever worked at the opposite end of the scale from Downton Abbey so she’s a little bit immature – well, very immature!”

Amy carries on that Ethel is a little bit too relaxed for the formality of Downton Abbey. “She just wants to take it all in her stride and doesn’t realise what an amazing position she’s in. She doesn’t grasp what a privilege it is for a girl like her to be offered such a prestigious job. All the other servants are very thrilled with their positions and appreciate their jobs, and she seems to be seeing this as a stepping-stone to bigger and better things.

“She just lives in her own little dream world. Whenever you see her, she’s not a particularly hard worker. She’s often daydreaming, reading a magazine or filing her nails – much to the annoyance of the other servants down below.”

In this series, Downton Abbey itself is in the middle of a great change. Amy believes that Ethel reflects that, coming in with a different perspective, like a new woman with the sort of ambition that hasn’t been seen there before. According to her “Ethel is very aware that the war is going to bring change to everyone and narrow the gap between upstairs and downstairs. And so I think deep down she definitely believes it’s going to open more opportunities for women like her and she’s not going to have to stay stuck as a servant.

“One day at the dinner table in front of all the other servants, Ethel says, ‘Things are changing for them lot and us, and I’m going to make the most of it’ - which leaves everyone else aghast. Even if she’s thinking it, she shouldn’t say it out loud!”

Amy left Emmerdale six years ago, but she’s grateful for the terrific kickstart it gave to her acting career. “At the time I was only 18 when I joined the soap, so I just saw it as a job - ‘Oh, great someone wants me’ - and my first TV job at that. So I never saw it, in any way, as a great launch pad.

“I wasn’t mapping out my career,’ she says “I was only meant to be there for 6 episodes and I ended up being there for four years. But I learnt an awful lot on that job. I can’t say it’s not helped me because it has. I’ve had the opportunity to play some great roles, and without the help of Emmerdale, I might not have been lucky enough to get all those roles.”

Amy, who has also starred in Hotel Babylon, adds that Downton Abbey has been a wonderful job to work on, “Especially coming in to it, knowing it’s already a massive hit. People are so excited about the next one, as obviously they wouldn’t have known that when it began last year. No one could have foretold it would have been as big as it was.

“This has been the best job I have worked on. I still have to pinch myself. I am just completely in awe of the people I work with. My very first scene was with Maggie Smith, it doesn’t get better than that,” she laughs.
AN INTERVIEW WITH MAGGIE SMITH

Maggie Smith plays Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham, widely hailed as one of the finest actresses of her generation. Her wonderfully tart observations about the way modern life is intruding on Downton Abbey have become one of the show's best loved aspects.

The actress, who won Oscars for her memorable performances in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and California Suite, and has been Emmy nominated for Outstanding Supporting Actress in Downton Abbey, begins by revealing that she missed the enormous acclaim that greeted the first series of Downton Abbey because she and Penelope Wilton were making a film in India called The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel with long time friends Dame Judi Dench and Bill Nighy.

Maggie recollects, “We were in Jaipur, and it felt very remote. But it was wonderful to come back and hear that Downton Abbey had been this huge success. I think it took everybody by surprise. Yes, I may have been in lots of successes, but I actually do very little television, so I’ve never been in anything that’s been this big before.”

The actress, who has also given marvellous performances in films as varied as Gosford Park (also written by Julian Fellowes), A Room with a View, Othello and Travels with My Aunt, goes on to assess why Downton Abbey resonates with audiences to such a degree.

According to Maggie, “Julian has written an incredible piece of television. There are so many stories there with so many characters involved that it is a truly ensemble piece. It’s not as though there are any individuals really - it’s a whole company piece. And I think that’s interesting. I think the viewers love to know what’s happening in Carson’s life as much as what’s happening in Daisy’s and Mary’s.

“There are so many different storylines that keep the plot rolling, and that is why I think audiences love it. People get completely involved in all these different stories, and I think the way Julian’s managed to weave them all together is amazing.”

The actress reveals the cast find Downton Abbey just as addictive as the audience do. She says, “You become absolutely obsessed and riveted by it. We don’t get all the scripts together in one batch because Julian is still writing them clearly. But I will be reading the script, then be desperate for the next one, desperate to know what’s going to happen next!”

The imperious character of Violet has really struck a chord with audiences. Maggie explains why her alter ego has proved so popular. “She’s always been imperious from the age of two, and I think she’s just about got the hang of it now. I also like to think that she’s got this sort of façade and underneath she’s got a heart of pure custard. That’s my theory anyway.
“She’s a lot of fun to play because Julian has written some wonderful lines for me to say, so it’s all thanks to him really. She bosses people about and speaks her mind. She just comes right out with it. I have a great desire to do the same thing as Violet and I really have to curb that!”

The actress goes on to assess how Violet reacts to the war. “Even when that war started, I don’t think anyone had any perception that it was going to go on for as long or be as hard as it was. Everybody thought it would be over quickly, done and dusted within no time at all.

“I think Violet was fearful of what was going to happen, but I don’t think they were prepared at Downton Abbey; they couldn’t have been prepared for the horror of that. It’s inconceivable; the four years of total hell that it was, and the loss of the golden youth. But Violet is older and wiser than the rest of them and I think she had been there, done that and got the T-shirt. Eventually, the war did change things and forced people to change. The huge losses made them change.”

Every young actor on Downton Abbey says that the highlight of working on the show is the opportunity to collaborate with Maggie. The actress is very flattered by the compliments. “Oh come on! Well I am very, very touched; I think that’s amazing. I think that’s lovely. I think they are sensational, and those three girls just take my breath away all the time.

“I mean all of them are fantastic actors but I am involved with the family more, and I very rarely go downstairs. I am never in the kitchen, but I think they are stunning. Also it’s a very pressured job on Downton Abbey. They do work hard, they really do.”

During the last series, viewers really latched onto Violet’s quips. So does Maggie have the opportunity to improvise a little bit as Violet? “Don’t let Julian hear you say that word!” She exclaims. “You wouldn’t dare. Every word is a pearl. No, we wouldn’t dare do that.”

Audiences also adored Violet’s rapier tongue. But, Maggie reminds us, “It’s Julian’s tongue, it’s not mine. I’m a pussycat!”
Dan Stevens plays Matthew Crawley. Devastated by his decision not to marry Mary in the last series, he signs up for the Army and becomes an officer fighting on the front line in the First World War.

The actor, who has also starred in The Line of Beauty, Dracula, Maxwell and Sense and Sensibility, recounts the traumatic journey Matthew has been on since the conclusion of the first series. “At the end of series one, everybody was looking lovely. I was in a linen suit on the lawn and Lord Grantham announced that England was at war with Germany.

“At the beginning of series two, I am covered in mud in a big crater in the middle of France. So it’s very different indeed. We begin in 1916 at the top of the series, at quite an advanced stage in the Battle of the Somme, and things aren’t going well for the British. It’s pretty hellish.”

The producers recreated the horror of the front line during the First World War in a network of astonishingly realistic trenches dug near Ipswich. Dan says shooting there was a memorably authentic experience which helped all the actors get into character. He declares, “It was an amazing set-up. Our wonderful military advisor has dug a series of British and German trenches to quite authentic specifications in this field in Suffolk.

“I suppose the Suffolk landscape is not that dissimilar to some French landscapes, in the north anyway, very flat agricultural land. And he’s dug fire trenches, support trenches, relief trenches. We were in there, and it was very real and muddy.”

In one of his most striking scenes, Matthew has to carry a man across a field. The actor recollects, “He was a very large, heavy enormous man – no not really,’ he laughs, ‘they found the smallest stunt guy they could find who was of legal age to be blown up!”

“It’s true, he was very well built, but he was about 5’4”, I think. Anyway, he was still heavy. I have a really knackered back, so that was quite a tough day. It’s a great part of this story that Matthew is maybe not the most obvious action hero, but he plays a very instrumental part in the battle, and he’s a very honourable, duty bound guy who gets stuck in and is a bit of a hero I suppose.”

Dan adds, “The stunt team were very good and I pretty much did everything myself because I wanted those scenes to be authentic except there is one shot where I am flying through the air backwards onto a wheel, landing on my back, which I didn’t do. However everything else was me.”

Later in the series, Matthew returns to Downton Abbey. However, he is not alone – he is accompanied by his new love interest, Lavinia Swire played by Zoe Boyle. Dan explains that romantically Matthew has moved on from Mary. “I think he had to really. Yes, I think there’ll always be some feelings for her, but she was a bit of a tricky customer in the first series. Also, the pressure of the war very often speeded up things emotionally and young people were keen to marry or get engaged before they went back to the front.
“So he’s come home at some stage on leave before our series starts, has met this girl, Lavinia Swire, and fallen in love. I think they genuinely are in love, but things have happened at quite a pace and I don’t get the impression they know each other that well. There’s just a nice bond. I think there was something during the war where you, not that you settled for second best, but you settled on something quicker, and you didn’t beat about the bush. Matthew has an eye on the end of the war and hopefully getting back to some sort of normal life, away from the war and away from Downton.”

Dan emphasises that Downton Abbey has brought some very pleasant changes to his life. He says, “You spend a lot of your time, especially as a young actor, saying, ‘I’ve been in this and that’, and nobody’s ever seen those shows and you feel a bit deflated. Whereas, with this, suddenly it’s something that pretty much everybody has seen. And if somebody hasn’t seen it, they’re almost apologetic that they haven’t seen it, ‘Oh yes, I haven’t managed to catch that yet…’ ’must get the box-set’ kind of thing…, which is hilarious!

“So that’s really wonderful – it just gives it a bit of currency in conversation when you’re talking about your job. It doesn’t make it seem quite so abstract and alien. You’ve been in a lot of people’s homes on a Sunday night, and that’s a really nice feeling!”
AN INTERVIEW WITH PENEOLE WILTON

Penelope Wilton plays Mrs Isobel Crawley. She comes to live with her relatives at Downton Abbey, but frequently clashes with her more traditionalist cousins, Cora and Violet.

Penelope, universally acknowledged as one of the best actresses of her generation, talks us through Isobel’s situation in the second series. She says, “Isobel has rather come into her own in the war, having been married to a doctor and also having trained as a nurse. We’re now in 1916, in the throes of war, so she’s busy running and setting up hospitals and convalescent homes and trying to deal with the enormous number of soldiers coming home with terrible wounds.

“It’s not just physical injury, there’s a lot of trauma that goes with the physical injury. So she’s very busy with the hospital and also now with Downton Abbey, which has been turned in to a convalescent home. So she’s busy raising money for that, arranging concerts, organising timetables for nurses and patients – she’s completely embroiled in that.”

The running of the convalescent home causes tension between Isobel and Cora. Penelope says, “Isobel sees herself as the person who has the expertise and training to run the convalescent home much to Cora’s chagrin as it’s her home. Cora doesn’t like to have rules and regulations or her way of life altered without being in charge, so there is a certain amount of conflict erupting between these two rather strong women.

“Isobel doesn’t really have a leg to stand on - except that she does have the knowledge about how to manage a proper convalescent home, which, of course, Cora doesn’t, having never had a professional job in her life. Cora lives in this very privileged life, while lesser mortals like Isobel know what’s really going on in the world. Cora is brought up rather short when Isobel takes on the responsibilities with enormous aplomb - which is also rather annoying for Cora!”

Isobel has other, profound and personal anxieties to cope with during the war. According to Penelope, “Her son Matthew has gone off to war and is serving on the frontline. So she’s also dealing with the worry of that which is constant, as it was with all mothers whose sons went off to fight in the war.”

The other major issue that Isobel has to cope with in the second series is the breakup of the relationship between Matthew and Mary. Penelope says, “Isobel came to terms with that at the end of the last series. She thinks it’s a pity, but now this nice girl Lavinia has come into Matthew’s life, she thinks the family should simply get on with things and accept her.

“I think Isobel is living off her nerves. Like the rest of the population, all those people left at home, she’s a very worried person, because of her son at the Front. These days we see a lot of television footage from the frontline in contemporary wars. But then there was a whole world left behind that had to just wait and see if their husband, brother, son or father was going to come back. So many of them didn’t, so it kept them very much on their toes.”
Following series one, many of the exchanges between Isobel and Violet were repeated in the press. Penelope is delighted that people embraced that battle of the battleaxes. “I very much hope they will repeat that, as those sorts of scenes are so much fun to play. There’s more energy going on, it’s more interesting.

“Also Julian has plotted it so there’s build up of irritations and clashes of wills between Violet and Isobel. These are very strong women, who are used to being in charge of their own properties and their own homes. It’s very difficult for Isobel because she’s not in charge like she used to be before she had to move because of her son.”

Penelope, who also starred in Doctor Who, Ever Decreasing Circles, and The Borrowers, adds, “Isobel has no real wish to be here. She’s making the best of it, but it’s not something she would really choose. She’s not somebody who would like to have the life that these people have at all. She thinks they’re of another century and that they have to move on. In that way, she’s very much a new woman and believes in women’s suffrage – not to the extent of throwing herself in front of horses, but she’s very much a believer in women having the vote and having more independence from paternalistic society which is probably why she and Lady Sybil share such a kindred spirit.”

Downton Abbey has been sold to more than 140 countries. This means that wherever they go in the world the cast are recognised. For Penelope, however, that is not a problem. She jokes, “I go around in deep disguise pretty much all the time, I wear a wig and these hats, and nobody ever recognises me!”
CARNIVAL FILMS

Carnival is one of the UK’s leading production companies. In addition to Downton Abbey, the producer picked up the BAFTA Award for Best Drama Serial for its recent production of William Boyd’s Any Human Heart for C4 and production is currently underway on the latest series of Whitechapel, the popular and original crime drama, also on ITV1. Carnival has also been a producer on David Hare’s forthcoming return to the screen Page Eight for the BBC and is also in production with Neal Street on Sam Mendes’ production of a cycle of four Shakespeare history plays, again for the BBC.

Originally founded over thirty years ago, the company has brought hundreds of hours of popular television and film to audiences worldwide, from popular series such as Poirot, Jeeves & Wooster, Hotel Babylon, As If and Rosemary & Thyme to powerful international mini-series such as Traffik, The Philanthropist and The Grid to classics such as Shadowlands and Porterhouse Blue. The company has attracted over a hundred national and international awards, most recently picking up 15 Primetime Emmy nominations for Downton Abbey and Any Human Heart.

Carnival is run by producer Gareth Neame who in 2008 sold the company to NBCUniversal as the cornerstone of its new international TV business. In 2007, Sally Woodward Gentle joined the company as Creative Director. NBCU International Television, headed by Michael Edelstein, has also recently acquired entertainment production house Monkey Kingdom, whose recent hits include Made in Chelsea.
THE WORLD OF DOWNTON ABBEY  
Jessica Fellowes  
Foreword by Julian Fellowes

‘My dear fellow. We all have chapters we would rather keep unpublished’ Lord Grantham

Get behind doors, that have until now, remained closed. Get under the skin of the characters and actors uncover the full story behind the intrigues and secrets, discover The World of Downton Abbey.

The first series of this acclaimed drama captured the imagination of the nation. With 12 million viewers at its peak, it has become the benchmark for quality television and a commentary on all things British.

The official accompanying book, The World of Downton Abbey, goes through the doors of the great house and into the lives of the Crawley family and those who serve them. With the onset of the First World War we witness a house, its occupants and a society on the brink of dramatic change. Author Jessica Fellowes takes us beyond what we witness on screen – documenting not only the realities and secrets of life both upstairs and down, as a Lady and as a Lady’s maid, but the story behind the camera and the lengths its creators have gone to in order to bring to life such a lavish large scale production.

Fully illustrated with stunning, exclusive photographs, the text is interwoven with cast interviews, behind the scenes secrets, and profiles of all the main characters – old and new – from the Dowager Countess to Daisy. From the pressures of wartime England to the meticulous detail of the costumes, sets and props, Jessica brings the richness, drama, romance and style of Downton to the page.

Jessica Fellowes is an author and freelance journalist. Formerly the Deputy Editor of Country Life, she also writes for The Telegraph, Psychologies and The Lady. She lives in London with her family.

The World of Downton Abbey is published by Collins on Thursday 15th September, priced £20. For further information please contact Katherine Patrick at HarperCollins on 0208 307 4802. katherine.patrick@harpercollins.co.uk
DOWNTON ABBEY DVD AND BLU-RAY

Fans won’t have to wait long to relive all the drama on DVD and Blu-ray, which will be released the Monday following the transmission of the last episode.

The DVD & Blu-ray will contain exclusive ‘Making of’ and behind the scenes featurettes including ‘House to Hospital’, ‘Fashion and Uniforms’ and ‘Romance in a Time Of War’ plus interviews with cast and key members of production including its creator Julian Fellowes. A Downton Abbey Series 1 & 2 box set will also be released on the same day on DVD & Blu-ray. A Premium Limited Edition Gift set will also be available for those wanting to indulge themselves or someone they love this Christmas.

Downton Abbey Series 1 is currently available on DVD & Blu-ray from all major retailers. For further information please contact Mike Hird at RDP on 0207 148 3758 mike@romleydavies.com
DOWNTON ABBEY - THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

Released in September, the Decca album of the Downton Abbey soundtrack includes original music by renowned British composer John Lunn, as well as a newly-commissioned song to lyrics by Oscar-winner Don Black - based on the main “Downton Abbey” theme, and performed by highly-acclaimed vocalist, Mary-Jess Leaverland. Also featuring are two specially-recorded songs from the period in which the second series is set, sung by Britain’s favourite tenor, Alfie Boe.

For more information please contact:
Jude Dexter Smith: jude.dexter-smith@umusic.com / 07947 621547
Downton Abbey