## Press Pack

**Cast**

**Crew**

**Character background**

**Press Release**

The Genesis of Downton Abbey

Interview with Hugh Bonneville

Interview with Jessica Brown Findlay

Interview with Laura Carmichael

Interview with Jim Carter

Interview with Brendan Coyle

Interview with Michelle Dockery

Interview with Siobhan Finneran

Interview with Joanne Froggatt

Interview with Thomas Howes

Interview with Rob James-Collier

Interview with Rose Leslie

Interview with Phyllis Logan

Interview with Elizabeth McGovern

Interview with Sophie McShera

Interview with Lesley Nicol

Interview with Maggie Smith

Interview with Dan Stevens

Interview with Penelope Wilton

**Episode One Synopsis**

**Episode Two Synopsis**

**Episode Three Synopsis**

**Episode Four Synopsis**

**Episode Five Synopsis**

**Episode Six Synopsis**

**Episode Seven Synopsis**

Carnival Film & Television
Press Pack

CAST

Robert, Earl of Grantham ................................................................. Hugh Bonneville
Lady Sybil Crawley ......................................................................... Jessica Brown Findlay
Lady Edith Crawley .......................................................................... Laura Carmichael
Mr Carson ............................................................................................ Jim Carter
John Bates .......................................................................................... Brendan Coyle
Lady Mary Crawley ........................................................................... Michelle Dockery
O’Brien ............................................................................................... Siobhan Finneran
Anna ..................................................................................................... Joanne Froggatt
William .............................................................................................. Thomas Howes
Thomas .............................................................................................. Rob James-Collier
Gwen ..................................................................................................... Rose Leslie
Mrs Hughes .......................................................................................... Phyllis Logan
Cora, Countess of Grantham .............................................................. Elizabeth McGovern
Daisy ...................................................................................................... Sophie McShera
Mrs Patmore ....................................................................................... Lesley Nicol
Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham .............................................. Maggie Smith
Matthew Crawley ............................................................................... Dan Stevens
Isobel Crawley ...................................................................................... Penelope Wilton

CREW

Written and created by ....................................................................... Julian Fellowes
Executive Producers .......................................................................... Gareth Neame, Julian Fellowes, Rebecca Eaton
Series Producer ..................................................................................... Liz Trubridge
Producer .............................................................................................. Nigel Marchant
Director (eps 1, 6 & 7) ........................................................................... Brian Percival
Director (eps 2 & 3) ............................................................................... Ben Bolt
Director (eps 4 & 5) ............................................................................... Brian Kelly
Production Designer ............................................................................. Donal Woods
Make-Up & Hair Designer .................................................................... Anne “Nosh” Oldham
Costume Designer ............................................................................... Susannah Buxton
Casting Director ..................................................................................... Jill Trevellick
Music ...................................................................................................... John Lunn
Episode 4 is co-written by ................................................................. Shelagh Stephenson
Episode 6 is co-written by ................................................................. Tina Pepler
Editor (eps 1, 6 & 7) ............................................................................. John Wilson
Editor (eps 2 & 3) .................................................................................. Nick McPhee
Editor (eps 4 & 5) .................................................................................. Alex Mackie
Above Stairs

Robert, Earl of Grantham. *(Hugh Bonneville)* Robert Grantham has lived an uncomplicated life until now. He married his wife, Cora, an American heiress, in 1889, largely for her money and although there is no denying her cash put the estate back on its feet, over time they have grown to love one another deeply. The marriage contract, as we know, stipulated that her fortune, once invested in the estate, was inseparable from it. Neither Robert nor his wife anticipated that this clause (demanded by his late father) would cause problems, since they both confidently expected to have a son and heir. The trouble is they didn’t. They had three daughters, Mary, Edith and Sybil. Until now, the heir was Robert’s cousin, James Crawley, and his son, Patrick. But the news has arrived of their deaths on board the Titanic.

Cora, Countess of Grantham. *(Elizabeth McGovern)* Cora is the beautiful daughter of Isidore Levinson, a dry goods multi millionaire from Cincinnati. She arrived in England, with her mother, in 1888, at the age of 20, and was engaged to Robert, Viscount Downton, as he then was, by the end of her first season. She accepted the clause, at the insistence of her father-in-law, assuming she would have a boy. Now that the cousin she did at least know is dead, and the new heir is a distant cousin, she does not believe he would have wished his grand daughters to be robbed of their mother’s money, which would instead be given to a complete stranger. She had anyway counted on a marriage between Patrick and Mary. She thinks Robert should overturn the settlement and the entail, to benefit their children.

Lady Mary Crawley. *(Michelle Dockery)* Clever, good looking, hard. Mary had (just about) accepted that she was not to be, as she had imagined, an heiress, like her mother, while her cousins lived. On the arrival of the news of their deaths, she assumes she will now inherit. The realisation that she will not enrages her. Particularly when she learns that her father refuses to fight for her rights. She was confident of her cousin, Patrick, and she was holding him in reserve if she couldn’t bring her favoured choice, the handsome, young Duke of Crowborough, up to the mark. In other words, in the first episode Mary Crawley goes from a win-win situation to a lose-lose one.
Lady Edith Crawley. (Laura Carmichael) Edith resents Mary. She is less good looking and less sought after, but no less ambitious. She doesn’t care that the settlement will not be overturned, since she would not have inherited either way. If anything, she is pleased that Mary will not be able to lord it over her. Their rivalry is fuelled by the fact that she genuinely loved the dead heir, Patrick, but no one took her feelings seriously. She is anyway in a half-permanent rage that the interests of her beautiful sister are always placed above hers in any family plan. Soon she will be curious about the new heir, and will eventually attempt to use him to be revenged on Mary.

Lady Sybil Crawley. (Jessica Brown Findlay) Sybil is the family rebel. She is fiercely political, devoted to the cause of votes for women, and generally angered by injustice everywhere. She exasperates both parents. She will go through the motions, when it comes to Society, but her goals all lie beyond what they consider the proper field. She is detached from most of the family quarrels about inheritance as she doesn’t care about it.

Matthew Crawley. (Dan Stevens) Matthew is a third cousin, once removed, of Lord Grantham. His father was a doctor, which is amazing to Lord Grantham and offensive to his wife. Matthew himself has qualified as a solicitor and is already practising in Manchester. Now, he finds himself heir to an earldom and a large estate and he is invited to move there and to become part of the local community. He eventually agrees but only if he can continue to work. Cora Grantham is partly infuriated by this interloper and partly determined that he will marry one of her daughters, so her attitude to him is completely schizophrenic. As for the girls, Mary sees him as a possible fall-back position, Edith as a possible instrument of revenge and Sybil as part of a dying system.
Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham. *(Dame Maggie Smith)* Robert’s mother. She is immensely proud, immensely loyal to her son and immensely insufferable to her American daughter-in-law, whom she regards as an interloper, a living compromise the family has had to make. She was born the daughter of a baronet, which Cora does not believe entitles Violet to carry on as if she were a Plantagenet, especially as she brought virtually no money with her. In other words, both women think themselves the superior of the other. Publicly, Violet supports the arrangements made by her late husband. But in reality, once Patrick is dead, she favours her grand daughter, Mary, over some distant stranger. This paves the way for an unholy alliance between the two Countesses, as they plot against Robert to overturn the arrangements. When the cross-breed heir arrives, with his middle class mama, she finds the situation intolerable, even if she, like Cora, sees one solution in Matthew’s marrying Mary.

Isobel Crawley. *(Penelope Wilton)* Isobel is Matthew’s widowed mother. She is the daughter of a doctor (her husband studied under her father) and she comes from the professional middle class. She embodies an entirely different set of values to those of the main family, being far better educated than either Violet or Cora, and before long she is at loggerheads with Violet. She is intensely proud of her son and not because he has turned out to be the heir to a great name. If anything, she thinks he is throwing away a brilliant career. She agrees to come and manage her son’s house on the estate, but she has mixed feelings about the whole set up.

Lady Rosamund Painswick. *(Samantha Bond)* Lady Rosamund is Robert’s only sibling. She did not marry a great aristocrat and has no country seat, but the late Marmaduke Painswick, a banker, was immensely rich, so she has a good deal of freedom of movement. She has two children, Lavinia, who is married to a landed colonel in the Grenadiers, and Cyril who does something slightly nefarious in the Far East. She is devoted to Robert, but she feels it her duty to speak her mind on every possible occasion. Her interference in her nieces’ decisions has a potentially disastrous result.
Below Stairs
The staff is divided into departments run by:

Mr Carson. *(Jim Carter)* The butler. Carson is in charge of the pantry, wine cellar and dining room, the male staff report to him. Butlers were usually expected to be bachelors without the distractions and temptations of a family of their own. Carson has worked at Downton since he was a boy. He is endlessly nostalgic for the way things were, and consequently, during the series, he more or less becomes an agent for the Dowager Countess and is potentially disloyal to her American successor. His instinct will be to support Lady Mary, whom he genuinely loves as a surrogate daughter, against her interloping cousin.

Mrs Hughes. *(Phyllis Logan)* The housekeeper. 50. Responsible for the house and its appearance, the Housekeeper is in charge of the female servants. There are three people in this household who all believe they are head of it, Mr Carson, Mrs Patmore and Mrs Hughes. Mrs Hughes is probably right. She is unsentimental but moral and decent. In fact, as we will see, she is a kind woman but she feels her strength is derived from the fear she inspires. She respects and, to a degree, protects Carson. But she is hard task-master.

Mrs Patmore. *(Lesley Nicol)* The cook. Mrs Patmore is in charge of the kitchen and kitchen staff. She does not accept that Mr Carson has jurisdiction over her, nor, most of all, Mrs Hughes, and religiously defends her rights and privileges, against all comers.
Other domestic staff working below stairs:

**John Bates. (Brendan Coyle)** The valet. The valet receives orders only from his master. He dresses him, he accompanies him on every journey. An ex-soldier, John Bates was Robert’s batman during the Boer War. He arrives at Downton in the first episode to take the position, but Bates was wounded in the war and it has left him lame, which makes him both defensive and fiercely loyal to Robert for giving him another chance. His natural ally within the house is Anna, and he is obviously attracted to her. But for some unknown reason he cannot declare himself.

**O’Brien. (Siobhan Finneran)** The lady's maid. O’Brien’s responsibilities are to her mistress. She can be called from doing her mistress's laundry at any moment of the day to help with her hair or her dress. O’Brien is a watchful, vengeful, malign spinster. She has sacrificed all thoughts of family and hearth to advance in her profession and now she is lady’s maid to a countess, in a great house, which should make her happy. But it does not, because nothing will. She may seem to flatter Lady Grantham or Lady Mary or any of them, but ultimately she will always follow her own interest.

**Anna. (Joanne Froggatt)** The head housemaid. The highest ranking of the lower female servants. Anna comes from a background of tenant farming and service. She feels she may have missed her chance at marriage. She is head housemaid but she also maids the daughters of the house. She is clever and resourceful, a thoroughly sympathetic character, which is generally appreciated, if not always by Mary or Edith.
Gwen. *(Rose Leslie)* The under housemaid. Gwen is essentially an ambitious girl. She works as a housemaid because it is the only profession open to the daughter of a farm worker, but she has big plans. She is the natural rebel of the female staff, albeit in a quiet way, and this makes her a natural ally of Sybil.

Thomas. *(Rob James-Collier)* The first footman. Thomas thinks he is a fine fellow and that most of his fellow workers are country bumpkins who know nothing. He is a liar and a petty thief and he is always on the look out for the main chance. This must mean he is looking to leave *Downton*, since he wants to be a valet and Mr Bates isn’t going anywhere. So he makes up to any rich visitor, to see if there’s a position going. He is also gay and knows one at least of the family’s visitors better than might be expected. His natural ally in the house is O’Brien. They are both entirely self-interested, but loyalty, even like to like, is probably beyond him.

William. *(Thomas Howes)* The second footman. William is a fool. There’s no harm in him but he’s a fool, and Thomas has no hesitation in using him to do half his own work. William is soft on Daisy but she isn’t interested in him as she is quite taken by Thomas. Fruitlessly. William is very loyal to his parents. He is their only child and his home was a happy one. But his talent is in caring for horses, not serving in a grand dining room.
Daisy. *(Sophie McShera)* The kitchenmaid. The dogsbody. At the bottom of the heap. Daisy’s mother was a true Victorian and Daisy is one of eleven children. The scullery maid had to clean, scour and scrub hundreds of knives, forks, pots and pans every day. She also had the smallest bedroom, and eats with the cook and the kitchenmaids, away from the other servants. She is constantly in the firing line with Mrs Patmore and develops feelings for Thomas not realising his true character.

Branson. *(Allen Leech)* Robert's new spirited, Irish chauffeur, whose political ideologies aspire to a more modern society. Driving Sybil to a political rally he discovers they have a meeting of minds, and with his encouragement Sybil puts her beliefs into practice. However, Sybil's newfound enthusiasm leads her into danger for which Branson later feels responsible - a sentiment with which Robert certainly agrees.
Hugh Bonneville and Maggie Smith
Lead the cast of Julian Fellowes' major new drama series,

DOWNTON ABBEY

“The sun is rising behind Downton Abbey, a great and splendid house in a great and splendid park. So secure does it appear, that it seems as if the way of life it represents will last for another thousand years. It won’t.”

ITV’s new costume drama series, Downton Abbey, written and created by Oscar-winning writer Julian Fellowes and made by Carnival Films for ITV stars Maggie Smith as Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham, Hugh Bonneville as Robert, Earl of Grantham and Elizabeth McGovern as Robert’s wife, Cora, Countess of Grantham.

They lead an all-star cast, which also includes Penelope Wilton, Dan Stevens, Michelle Dockery, Jim Carter, Phyllis Logan, Lesley Nicol, Siobhan Finneran, Rob James-Collier, Joanne Froggatt, as well as new and emerging actors, Rose Leslie, Sophie McShera, Laura Carmichael, Jessica Brown Findlay and Thomas Howes.

Guest artists include Robert Bathurst, Samantha Bond, Allen Leech, David Robb, Brendan Patrick and Theo James.

Set in an Edwardian country house in 1912, Downton Abbey portrays the lives of the Crawley family and the servants who work for them.

“In 1912, England was teetering on the brink. Apparently placid, still rooted in the traditions of many centuries, it would be less than ten years before the First World War and the Jazz Age had ripped every certainty to shreds. This is the moment when we enter the world of Downton Abbey, the great house of a great family, where the Granthams and their daughters preside over a household in the charge of Carson, the butler, and Mrs Hughes, the housekeeper. All these people must, in their different ways, deal with the changes that are coming. The cast, led by Maggie Smith as the Dowager, Hugh Bonneville and Elizabeth McGovern as the Earl and Countess of Grantham, Dan Stevens and Penelope Wilton as the unwanted heir and his mother, and a staff led by Jim Carter as Carson, and Phyllis Logan as Mrs Hughes, will bring the halls and passages of Downton to life, with splendour, discipline and passion.” Julian Fellowes

Laura Mackie, Director of Drama, ITV said: “We’re delighted with the stellar cast who have come together for Downton Abbey. It’s testament to the quality of Julian’s wonderful scripts and the calibre of the production team that some of the brightest and best of the UK’s leading actors are onboard.”

Downton is the home of the Crawleys, who have been the Earls of Grantham since 1772. In the drawing rooms and library and beautiful bedrooms, with their tall windows looking across the park, lives the family, but below stairs are other residents, the servants, as fiercely possessive of their ranks as anyone above. Some of them are loyal to the family and are committed to Downton as a way of life, others are moving through, on the look out for new opportunities or love or just adventure. The difference being that they know so many of the secrets of the family, while the family knows so few of theirs.

Downton Abbey is a Carnival / Masterpiece co-production and executive produced by Carnival’s Managing Director, Gareth Neame, Julian Fellowes and Rebecca Eaton (WGBH). It transmits on ITV1 in autumn 2010. The series producer is Liz Trubridge (From Time to Time, A Short Stay in Switzerland), the producer is Nigel Marchant (Fanny Hill, The Philanthropist) and the directors are Brian Percival (Gracie, A Boy Called Dad), Ben Bolt (Doc Martin, Ashes to Ashes) and Brian Kelly (Lilies, Torchwood).
The Genesis of Downton Abbey

When Gareth Neame, (Managing Director, Carnival Films and Executive Producer, on Downton Abbey), began talking to Julian Fellowes about developing a new drama series, it was an adaptation of Julian’s acclaimed novel Snobs that he had in mind. Discussions quickly turned to a subject that Gareth had been mulling over for some time and, as luck would have it, Julian had been thinking along similar lines.

“It was while working on an adaptation of Julian’s novel Snobs that I thought we should really work on an episodic series set in an Edwardian country house,” says Neame. “Firstly, because it is a setting that is uniquely English and we haven’t had an original programme like this in many years and secondly, Julian and I both thought it was a good territory to revisit.”

“I couldn’t think of anyone in the world better to write it than Julian and obviously there was a very big nod towards Gosford Park, which had made such a huge impact on defining the English country house genre,” he explains.

“I thought, if you could just take that period and put it into a prime-time series, you could have something really special,” he continues.

For Gareth there are a few television genres that are uniquely American and some that are uniquely British of which Downton Abbey is one.

“When I read Julian’s initial treatment it had such a confident command of this period and grasp of this world, the family, the servants and the entire setting that it was clear this was something he had wanted to write for a long time.”

For Julian Gosford Park, struck a chord with audiences everywhere and it was a period he was keen to return to.

“I had never written a television series before and I found that you have such tremendous freedom to develop the characters. The way of life of these fully staffed houses had always interested me, long before I wrote Gosford Park. There is something intriguing about a group of people living in such close proximity and yet with such different expectations.”

In these country houses Julian talks of families living within “a curious universe, alongside their servants who are, on the whole, living a different life but are just as strongly graded as their masters so that, within their world, the butler is King and the housekeeper is Queen, with all their own hopes and dreams.”

“It always intrigues me, how did people deal with it, did they retain a sense of self? I hope in Downton we have a very balanced set up as both Gareth and I wanted it to be something recognisable and feel identifiable to audiences.”

The Edwardian period is not often portrayed in television drama, with dramatists and writers favouring the Regency period of Jane Austen instead.

“This is a time that perhaps our parents, but more likely our grandparents, would have lived in, so it’s not a completely foreign country, explains Gareth. “The modern era began at the end of the 19th Century and this was something Julian and I discussed a lot. By the late 19th Century, electricity came in and then gradually motor-cars, telephones, people commuting to work on the London Underground or on a bus and then came mortgages and pensions and these are all things that modern audiences recognise and identify with.”
Press Pack

“My father was born in 1912,” adds Julian, “not my great grandfather but my father, so 1912 is a period that many people alive today have heard about from their parents or grandparents.”

Crucial to the look and feel of the show for Gareth was to bring modernity to the design without compromising the period.

“We wanted the show to have a contemporary feel to it without losing any of the glorious elements that made that era unique. I think this is helped by it being an original script allowing the audience to enjoy all the trappings associated with period drama.”

Julian was also keen to portray what it was like to live and work in service during this time and for women, particularly young women, service was the only option.

“When the economic system changed, people, and most particularly women, began to be offered jobs where they could have a free evening instead of being on duty until they went to bed. It was clearly a better option. Remember during this time we saw the rise of women’s rights, the organisation of labour, the changing status of the worker, the massive increase of productivity in the Midlands, so the modern world was pushing through and in fact the First World War would release all of that energy,” explains Julian.

The ambition of Downton Abbey was realised, not only in the script, but in the design, the location, the production values and ultimately the casting. For Gareth, the excitement of being a producer is to watch these elements come together.

“I enjoy the whole process of filming from beginning to end,’ he says. “It’s a process that’s made up of a lot of different talents and skills and seeing each of them come together is hugely rewarding; I mean the whole operation, including working very closely with the broadcaster about development and at that point it’s very much about the script; then at a certain point it becomes about the casting, locations, costumes, make-up and hair, and then editing and suddenly the most important thing you’re working on is music and finally the publicity. I do really enjoy all of those aspects of production,” he explains.

“Ultimately for me as an executive producer it’s seeing the finished project coming together, that’s either a moment of despair or satisfaction. You create something of value that has a purpose and will entertain.”

Before any of these elements can come together, getting the right producer on board is vital to the success of any production.

“I asked Liz (Trubridge) to be the series producer, not least because of her track record, but mainly because of her relationship with Julian and I knew that would work very well for us. She’s been a great blessing for me and run such a tight ship. Nigel Marchant is an excellent producer, who I have enjoyed working with in the past. It really makes my life a thousand times easier having such a great team on the ground.”

For Gareth, casting was also crucial for Downton Abbey but what can often be a difficult and arduous process was in fact very straightforward.

“It was a joy to cast this drama purely because it wasn’t hard to find actors that you would want to play these parts and we were blessed that pretty much everyone we went to came on-board.”

One of Julian’s many considerable achievements with the scripts is to create 18 characters, introduce them all in the first episode and give them all storylines.
“It’s like keeping plates spinning all the way through the story. I think one of the reasons the cast enjoyed making this so much, is that they’ve actually all got a meaningful story throughout the seven episodes,” observes Gareth.

“Julian has got a great command of every single one of those characters and the journeys they go on and that really gives the actors something they can get their teeth into.”

“The modern audiences’ viewing habits are much more sophisticated now and viewers are able to handle lots of information simultaneously, most likely as a result of the increasing pace of television dramas such as Chicago Hope and The West Wing,” says Julian.

One of the most important characters in the script was the house itself and despite visiting Highclere Castle first, Gareth, Julian and the production team spent six months visiting many different houses eventually returning to Highclere Castle. With its 1000 acres of grounds, landscaped by Capability Brown, the Castle provided the perfect backdrop for Downton Abbey.

“Finding the hero location was a funny journey because from day one Julian said, the house he had in mind was Highclere. When the show was greenlit I came down to have a look around,” recalls Gareth.

“Initially, it seemed wrong to just tick the box without exploring other options because it was such a key factor in the show and probably the singular most important character,” he adds. “One of the reasons we came back to Highclere was that our production designer (Donal Woods), made a point that the show was set in Edwardian England and many period dramas over the last few years have tended to be set in Georgian houses.”

“Highclere’s gothic look felt so different to other period dramas and we were keen to make a fresh statement so the show could stand out.”

Julian’s passion for great houses is well documented and for him the choice of Highclere Castle as the setting for Downton Abbey was an easy one. However, with a cast of 35 actors, supporting artists and a crew of over 100 it was important from a logistical point of view that the house was accessible.

“I love Highclere and wanted Gosford to be at Highclere. But Bob Altman very much wanted people to be able to sleep in their beds and so we had to move nearer to London to Wrotham, (another wonderful house). To me, Highclere is a unique architectural statement and tells us much more about the confidence of the late Victorians and the confidence of high Empire,” observes Julian.

Highclere Castle is home to the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon and their family and is undoubtedly one of England’s most beautiful Castles set amidst spectacular Parkland. The Carnarvons’ ancestors have lived at Highclere since 1679.

“The Castle has some wonderful interiors especially the library which is an absolutely marvellous room. It’s a very quintessential English Library and the Great Hall is wonderful.”

It was always the plan to film the state rooms and public rooms on location, however, over the years the kitchens and bedrooms of large country houses have changed dramatically therefore it was necessary to build the servants quarters, kitchen and bedrooms in a studio.

“The thing about filming in these great houses is that if you were to start from scratch, you simply couldn’t build this and if you did you would have used up all your budget in one room,” adds Julian.
Hugh Bonneville is Robert Earl of Grantham

After the four-month shoot for Downton Abbey, Hugh Bonneville went on to film Twenty Twelve, a series about organising the Olympic Games, for BBC Four. He recently starred alongside Douglas Henshall, Genevieve Barr and Gina McKee in the BBC One thriller, The Silence, and appears in John Landis’s black comedy Burke & Hare, which goes on general release in October 2010.

He will also be seen in Julian Fellowes’s film, From Time To Time, based on Lucy M. Boston’s, The Chimneys of Green Knowe. The film also stars Maggie Smith and is due for release in September 2010. It was during the shooting of From Time To Time, which Julian Fellowes also directed, that Hugh first became aware of Downton Abbey – then in its early stages.

“While we were filming - this is a couple of years ago now - Julian was talking about a number of projects he had on the go, of which Downton Abbey was one. Its setting, a world on the brink of change, captured my imagination and then in the Summer or Autumn last year I read the first episode and loved it,” explains Hugh.

“As the months went by and I heard the calibre of people who were coming on board I realised, as ever, it’s the quality of the script to which people respond; the depth of Julian’s writing is just fantastic.” Despite having previously worked with Maggie Smith in From Time To Time, the two actors did not share any scenes together so to find himself playing her son in another Julian Fellowes drama was a welcome surprise.

“There’s that overused tennis analogy, isn’t there, about how working with the best makes you raise your game. It’s entirely appropriate with Maggie: she has a devilishly witty first serve, a razor-sharp backhand but woe betide you if you’re on the receiving end of her drop shot.”

As well as having worked with Maggie Smith before, Hugh has also shared screen time with Penelope Wilton who plays Isobel Crawley, mother of the new heir to Downton and American born actress Elizabeth McGovern.

“It’s the third time Elizabeth and I have played husband and wife. I love being married to her. And her husband doesn’t seem to mind either. Anyway, it makes for a thoroughly enjoyable short-hand; we even know which side of the bed each other insists on sleeping, so that saves a lot of faffing about in rehearsals.”

For Hugh what makes Julian’s scripts so compelling is that he writes from a default of people inherently trying to do good in the world.

“He’s the most humane of writers, I think. Lesser authors judge their characters, Julian doesn’t. Sure there are some nasty pieces of work in the world of Downton, but they are all three dimensional – they aren’t goodies, or baddies; they are like all of us – flawed. So I think it’s the humanity of the writing that appeals. I don’t mean it’s soft or soppy,” he explains.” Julian’s characters are recognisably human, with all their faults.

“And the structure is so good – you may leave one storyline for ten minutes of screen time but when you return to it, you know exactly where you left it, so vivid is the narrative. And I think it is cast incredibly well; everyone is very distinct and feels part of this world.”
Bonneville plays Lord Grantham whose key role throughout the series, is to maintain the family estate and hand it on to the next generation. There is just one crucial detail preventing him from completing his custodial duties - he doesn’t have a son and heir.

“We have aligned our eldest daughter, Lady Mary, to marry her cousin and my heir Patrick, so the house and the title will stay within the immediate family. So the shock of Patrick’s death as the story opens, plus the discovery that the next in line is a third cousin whom none of us knows adds complication to tragedy.” The Crawleys are about to enter a time of great change and Lady Mary is faced with the prospect of seeing her inheritance pass to a stranger.

“Robert has an overwhelming sense of duty and responsibility to Downton Abbey but on the other hand, because his wife brought loads of money into the estate, millions of pounds in fact - she was an American heiress and our marriage was first and foremost a business deal - it seems unfair that her money is now going to go to someone we have never met. So it’s a big dilemma for Robert,” explains Hugh.

Matthew Crawley, played by Dan Stevens, represents the next generation: a bit before his time and as such has very different views to his cousins. “He is a man who has a ‘job’, imagine! While no-one of my background has ever worked. My responsibility is to maintain the legacy of Downton, so a whole new dynamic comes into play with Matthew’s arrival as the Earl-in-waiting. I have got to try and embrace his new ideas while preserving the way of life I have inherited,” he explains.

When Matthew Crawley and his mother Isobel arrive at Downton Abbey we see the two matriarchs of the Grantham family, the Dowager Countess (played by Maggie Smith) and Lady Grantham (Elizabeth McGovern), two women normally at loggerheads, unite to try and persuade Lord Grantham to fight for Lady Mary’s inheritance.

“Once Robert gets over his initial surprise at Matthew having a job, which of course my mother (Maggie Smith) finds an absolutely bizarre concept, he comes to realise that Matthew does in fact have good ideas about how to revitalise the estate. Robert realises Matthew is a man he can trust and he becomes a surrogate son to Robert – which of course rankles with my daughter, Lady Mary.”

During filming on Downton Abbey Bonneville shared quite a bit of screen time with a golden labrador called Roly who was playing the part of the Grantham family dog ‘Pharaoh’.

“Roly is a single-minded labrador, it has to be said. That focus of purpose is to find where the next piece of frankfurter is hiding,” he laughs. “During filming I kept finding bits of manky sausage in my pockets, reminders of various days when I’d tried to lure Roly into pretending to be my constant, devoted companion. He’s a good-natured dog, but boy does he have a one-track mind!” he laughs.

Regular visitors to Newbury might stop off at Highclere Castle which has a wonderful history and sits proudly on the top of an impressive estate designed by Capability Brown. Filming took place there for ten days every month from March to June.

“We had a wonderful time filming at Highclere and the staff and family were very accommodating. It must have been a nightmare having 100 strangers tramping round your house on and off for four months,’ says Hugh.

“The house is a significant character in the story. What I love about Highclere is, while it’s big, grand and imposing, it’s not so huge and cavernous that you get lost in its vastness. It’s a family home, a working one at that, so it has a familial warmth... as well as frightening running costs, which of course is a recurring theme of the show!”
Jessica Brown Findlay is Lady Sybil Crawley, the youngest daughter

When Jessica Brown Findlay was a little girl she dreamt of being a famous ballerina and for a time her dreams looked like they were going to come true. From the moment she saw her nursery classmate in a leotard and ballet pumps she was desperate to be part of that world and ever determined, at the tender age of eight, she sat her parents down and told them she would be a professional ballerina one day.

After years of training with the National Youth Ballet and the Associates of the Royal Ballet, she was asked at the age of 15 to dance with the Kirov at the Royal Opera House in London for a summer season.

“Dancing with the Kirov was incredible and at the end of year 11, I was accepted to a couple of ballet schools but chose to go to the Arts Education School because it did A-levels and you were well looked after. It was like Hogwarts for ballet! So I trained there for two years but in my final year I had three operations on my ankles and the last one went wrong. When I woke up I was told that I couldn’t dance anymore. It was heartbreaking, because I had done all that training and my body was saying no I’m not going to let you.”

Jessica’s determination and spirit could not be dampened for long though and she was soon looking around for new challenges to embrace.

“I was quite angry for a long while after that but my art teacher thought I was talented and encouraged me to apply to do Fine Art at St Martin’s which I did,” she explains.

Once there, Jessica happened upon acting and then began attending classes herself.

What happened after that surprises Jessica more than anyone. Having been seen by a couple of casting agents she landed the lead role as Emelia in the soon to be released film Albatross directed by Niall MacCormick opposite Hollywood actress Julia Ormond.

Her first television role is playing Lady Sybil Crawley, youngest daughter of Lord Grantham played by Hugh Bonneville and grand-daughter of Violet, Dowager Countess played by Maggie Smith. Not only that but she has been tipped in Screen International as ‘the new Keira Knightley’ and named in Vanity Fair as “a new talent to watch”.

“The casting process was ridiculously short for me,” she explains. “I read it and called my agent right away and said, ‘please can I read for this, I absolutely adore it. I came out of the reading really happy, which is a good sign and I got a phone call about a week later offering me the part.”

The read-through for any show can be a daunting process as it is often the first time the cast meet each other and get a real sense of the script. But when you are sharing a table with Maggie Smith, Elizabeth McGovern, Jim Carter and Hugh Bonneville, for a young actress, that process is even more daunting. “It was fun in the end but I had the most incredible butterflies. It took a while to relax into it but it was great to meet everyone before we got to set.”

Downton Abbey is set in 1912-1914 and women aren’t yet allowed to have the vote. The gender differences were obvious and women were expected to take a back seat when it came to politics and voicing their opinions.
Lady Sybil, Jessica explains is “very forward thinking, she’s at that age where she’s learning who she is and consequently she’s discovering this at a time when women were becoming more vocal and less subservient”.

The Downton Abbey estate is at the heart of the community where the Crawley family preside over their world and the servants are there to make sure everything runs smoothly. Lady Sybil sees a kindred spirit in housemaid Gwen, (played by Rose Leslie), and realising that Gwen wants to break free of a life in service Sybil makes it her business to help her find a job outside of the estate. This leads to all sorts of trouble and danger for Sybil with more on the way when a new socialist chauffeur joins the staff in episode four.

“She hears through the grapevine that Gwen has aspirations to better herself and break out of service,” says Jessica. “Sybil jumps through hoops to make sure Gwen gets to her job interviews - there’s a real closeness between these two characters and when Branson the chauffeur joins the staff later on in the series, we see even more class barriers begin to break down.”

With a core cast of 18 actors it is inevitable that there would be a lot of laughter on set and seemingly often at the heart of that laughter is Maggie Smith.

“Maggie’s sense of humour is so dry and quick - she’ll just pass by you and out pops a quip that makes you cry with laughter – she is so much fun. If I’ve learnt one thing on this job it is to laugh and not take myself too seriously.”
Laura Carmichael is Lady Edith Crawley, the second daughter

Having Hugh Bonneville playing her father, Elizabeth McGovern as her mother and Maggie Smith as her grandmother, Laura Carmichael could be forgiven for thinking she had won the lottery when she landed her first television role as Lady Edith, the second daughter of Lord and Lady Grantham.

“I was working as a receptionist in a doctor’s surgery but I was a useless secretary and was about to go on tour to Dubai playing Viola in Twelfth Night when I got a call to read for the part of Lady Edith,” she says. “I was down to the last two for the part and I had to make a decision to pull out of Twelfth Night before I’d even been offered it because the director needed the weekend to think about it,” she says, “which could have been a mistake but one I was prepared to make if it meant I was in with even the smallest chance of landing this role.”

“I couldn’t believe it when I got the part and my parents were even more surprised,” she adds, “because I hadn’t said anything they still thought I was going on tour with Twelfth Night and didn’t know until they saw that my name had been taken off the tour website. It’s fair to say I had some explaining to do,” she laughs.

Laura plays Lady Edith Crawley, the second of three daughters and the less sought after but no less ambitious. Since she never stood to inherit the estate it is of no consequence to her that the will cannot be overturned and her anger at her older sister is palpable. She resents that she always comes second to Mary and that her father and mother barely notice her. Her sole ambition is to marry well and leave the shadow of her older, more beautiful sister.

“The relationship between Edith and Mary is very difficult and strained following the death of cousin Patrick whom Edith harboured feelings for and she goes out of her way to ruin her sister’s reputation.”

Lady Mary however is more than a match for Edith and there is much heartache in store for both young ladies as the series progresses.

Despite the on-screen animosity between them Laura, Jessica Brown Findlay (Lady Sybil) and Michelle Dockery (Lady Mary) became very close during filming. “Michelle, Jessica and I became pretty inseparable on set and as most of our scenes were together we ended up spending our spare time watching DVDs in someone’s trailer,” says Laura.

One of three sisters Laura finds it hard to imagine treating either of her sisters the way her character does. “I’m very close to my sisters…we all look different and are different but there is a bond between us that is sacred so it was interesting to play a sister whose life’s purpose is to ruin her older sister.”

With cousin Patrick out of the picture all eyes in the household turn to Matthew Crawley as the new heir and Edith is no exception. When it appears that Mary has no interest in Matthew romantically Edith sets her sights on him and begins to pursue him in the hope that finally she might find love.

“I think naturally I tried to play Edith with a certain amount of empathy because she isn’t inherently a bad person – just ignored,” explains Laura. “I immediately felt sorry for her and I think Julian sets that up in the first episode with the death of Patrick and how Edith deals with it. It’s not that she’s unhappy that she’s not the prettiest,” she continues, “she thinks she loved somebody that was taken from her and nobody in the family noticed. I want to show how she got to be so awful, because I don’t think anyone is just born bad and it’s written in a way which shows they are never just mean.”
“I couldn't have asked for a better first job in any way! I think Edith's so bullied and there's an element of her that's quite comic, she's sort of pathetic in a way but I love that; not that I think people would necessarily laugh at Edith, but her vulnerability is really fun and the fact that she's bitchy with it is hilarious.”

Laura will be watching the first episode with her sisters and friends although her mum will be on her honeymoon when the first episode is transmitted. “Mum's wedding is the day before transmission and she is absolutely gutted she'll be away when it goes out so I'll have to get her a DVD.”
Press Pack

Jim Carter is Mr Carson, The Butler

Jim Carter plays Mr Carson who is the butler of Downton Abbey and has worked there for a long time. He has seen Mary and her sisters grow into young ladies and like the Dowager Countess cannot bear the thought of the family estate passing to a stranger, even if he does hold the Crawley name. However, his loyalty to Downton Abbey is unquestionable. He loves the place and despite forfeiting marriage and children for this way of life he knows he will be rewarded with a home for the remainder of his days when the time comes for him to retire.

“Carson is very dignified and takes his job most seriously,’ says Jim, “he is very proud of the family and very proud of his position. He has a strong authoritarian control over the servants, but in a parental way,” he explains.

Carson hasn’t always been a butler and during the course of the series Julian Fellowes reveals a few interesting tales much to the amusement of Lord Grantham and much to the discomfort of Carson.

“He’s had episodes in his life which will be revealed later, which I am not going to say a word about, but from now, his life is utterly dependent on the family. When they get past the age to work, they hope they will be put in the cottage and looked after by the family. So he is totally devoted and totally dependent on them”

Carson is the head of the staff and as such runs a tight ship in the servant’s quarters. He sits at the head of the table and always has his lunch and dinner served before anyone else. He and Mrs Hughes, the Housekeeper, treat each other as equals but there is as rigid a hierarchy among the servants as exists above stairs.

“It’s a mirror image in a way but that’s how it works; it’s a big operation to service this family and it’s run on very strict lines, from the kitchen maids, right through to the hall boys, the housemaids and the valets. There will be about 200 people keeping this family and the grounds going.”

Carson’s domain includes the main floor, the dining rooms and drawing rooms whereas Mrs Hughes and the maids look after the bedrooms. “The staff take a lot of pride in their work and they all have a certain status. They’re part of a working partnership and although there are ground rules as to how far the relationships could go, there is a deep mutual affection there.”

There is a particular bond between Carson and Lady Mary. He understands her frustration at losing her inheritance to a distant cousin. “Mary was my favourite when she was a little girl and there was a fondness even though she can be a strident and unsympathetic girl to some but Carson has a soft spot and will always defend her and look out for her best interests.”

Carson is horrified when it comes to his attention that Lady Mary is the subject of much gossip around the great houses of the gentry. With servants listening in to every conversation it is inevitable that rumours spread like wildfire.

“Carson is fiercely loyal to Lord Grantham and will not tolerate any disrespect or jokes below stairs. You hear servants talking about the Dowager Countess as ‘the old lady’ and he stamps on any signs of disrespect. It’s about pride and dignity. Pride in yourself and pride in your work. You reflect the pride and the dignity of the family at all times and he’s very keen that that should be upheld so when these rumours begin circulating about Mary he is quick to react.”
Carson’s natural ally in the house is Mrs Hughes and they have a nightly ritual of catching up with each other on the day’s events before going to bed, but Jim is adamant there is no romance brewing between them.

“There is an affection there and they’re always the last two to go to bed. So to make sure they’ve got things done they just have a little catch-up on the day at the end of each day, which is sweet. You do see them let their defences down a little bit in these moments, but they always call each other by their surname - it’s Mr Carson, Mrs Hughes and Mrs Patmore. There is a gentle understanding of people growing old together.”

Jim had worked with a few of the cast before but was particularly fond of the younger members of the cast.

“I’d worked on a couple of plays with Maggie before and it’s great to see her sitting at the dinner table joking away with Laura and Jessica. She is very, very funny and witty. I’ve known Phyllis Logan for ages and Penelope (Wilton) and I worked on a film years ago in Venice called Blame It On The Bell Boy, which wasn’t a great film, but it was four weeks in Venice in a five star hotel and I had about three lines to say.”

A huge cricket fan, Jim is involved with the Hampstead Cricket club and his plans for the summer include spending time with his family and enjoying the cricket season.

“I used to play a lot of cricket, but then I thought, why am I travelling for two hours, away from my family to play cricket badly, when I could be at the bottom of my garden with my family watching a great game of cricket, so I stopped about five or six years ago, so my weekend and my summer is on the local cricket pitch.”
Brendan Coyle is Mr Bates, Lord Grantham's Valet

Brendan Coyle plays John Bates, the new valet to Lord Grantham. His character had been injured in the Boer War whilst serving as a batman to Lord Grantham so Brendan used a walking stick and acted with a limp to complete his character traits.

“A batman is a fighting man, who serves as a butler and tends to the needs of his commanding officer – so they would have fought alongside each other and Bates would have been Lord Grantham’s right hand man, looking out for him and protecting him,” explains Brendan.

Being a batman would have meant Bates and his master would have lived in close proximity to one and another and Bates would probably have been one of the closest men to his commanding officer.

“Bates would have been commonly referred to as a cripple in those times and there wasn’t much sympathy for people who suffered with any kind of disability no matter how it was sustained,’ he says. “So, when he is appointed by Lord Grantham as his valet without Carson's knowledge it comes as a surprise to all the staff that this man, in such a superior position, is ‘afflicted’.”

Bates experiences a lot of bitterness and resentment from the other staff because he can’t carry out his duties properly and they find themselves carrying some of his workload.

“He is given a lot of room to be able to perform what duties he can but there are others who have to compensate for his inability to perform the duties that a valet normally would. He has to deal with a young footman’s ambitions to be valet and Lady Grantham’s maid who, for some reason resents him, so he has to deal with a great deal of prejudice.”

Not only does Bates fail to complete most of his duties, those he does manage to complete, tend to be carried out pretty poorly. There’s a number of incidences where Bates drops things, he falls, or rather, is tripped up at the very grand arrival of a Duke, which is embarrassing for everybody in the line-up but mostly for Bates.

“I was trying to make that scene as realistic as possible so I did let myself fall as naturally as I could,’ explains Brendan. “If you become a dead weight and are padded well enough, then you can take the impact. I’ve done a lot of stage fighting, so I wasn’t afraid of that. It did take about 20 takes and I was sore for a few days afterwards. It’s worth it just to get that one shot. I was very keen for that to look as painful and as humiliating as possible for Bates and in turn for Lord Grantham.”

Despite his many secrets Bates is essentially an honourable man who believes in loyalty and honesty which in later episodes works against him.

“He doesn’t know specifically what he has done to upset his colleagues but he is older and wiser and there is a sense that he is carrying a heavy burden around with him that he won’t divulge,” says Brendan.

He quickly discovers an ally below stairs in the form of housemaid Anna played by Joanne Froggatt but before this has a chance to grow into something more, the devious O’Brien lays the groundwork with an unsuspecting Lady Grantham to have Bates fired.

“When it becomes apparent that his trial period is over Lord Grantham finds himself under a lot of pressure to do the right thing by his staff and let Bates go,’ says Brendan. “There’s a powerful scene where Lord Grantham has to dismiss Bates and it’s an extremely difficult thing for him to do, because Grantham knows the extent of Bates’ loyalty to him, his injury is testament to that.”
Just when it looks like Bates is all washed up with no hope of another job, Lord Grantham has a last minute change of heart and tells him to go back inside the house. “Lord Grantham is a man of honour and he decides that he can’t do it because, as he says it’s ‘simply just not right’.”

As the tension builds between Bates and first footman, Thomas, the stakes between the two servants get higher as Bates’s honesty comes into question.

“The resentment from Thomas and O’Brien never goes away and it bruises and bruises until violence erupts between the two men but it only cements Bates’s resolve to stay put and fight his corner...literally.”

Like the rest of the cast, Brendan benefited from the experience and knowledge of the show’s Historical Advisor, Alastair Bruce.

“He has been absolutely invaluable and his presence was appreciated by everybody,” says Brendan. “He gave a very clear insight to the running of the house, the status, positions and functions of all the different staff, which was fantastic. We even had etiquette lessons,” he laughs.

For Brendan, Julian Fellowes is one of the country’s most gifted writers and there was no hesitation when he was offered the part.

“Julian understands drama and crucially, he understands actors and acting, so there’s never a dull moment. The script was a real page-turner and you have this whole range of lives, classes, status and storylines - he’s a clever boy!”
**Michelle Dockery is Lady Mary Crawley, the eldest daughter**

When Michelle Dockery turned up at the readthrough for *Downton Abbey* she was running late because the Central Line was closed. Her one thought was ‘I am going to be late - Maggie is going to think I am a rubbish actress,” she laughs.

“Maggie is one of the greatest actresses that we have and I sat next to her at the readthrough and I remember she turned to me and said, ‘Oh hello darling’ and gave me a big kiss. So I sat down and at the end of it all she said ‘well done’, and I felt my shoulders drop and I knew we were going to get on well,’ she recalls.

Maggie Smith is renowned for her sense of humour, “In the beginning, when we were on set, we were quiet around Maggie but when she started making us laugh off camera, (she is very funny), we allowed ourselves to be a bit naughty with her. In front of an actress of her calibre you do your best to be professional but the moment we realised we could be naughty and misbehave with her it was just delightful and I think we all really bonded with her,” she adds.

Lady Mary Crawley is the oldest of Lord and Lady Grantham’s three daughters and potentially, the heir to *Downton Abbey* if she marries appropriately. Her main objective in the family is to find the right husband, as it was for most young ladies of that time.

“There’s a great line Julian has written about the female characters in *Downton* and that is they’re in a waiting room until they marry, which I think kind of tells it how it is. In some way, she’s the boy that Lord and Lady Grantham never had and I think Mary feels that her father really wanted a son’, she says.

“That would have made everything a lot smoother for the family inheritance if they’d had a boy. So in that respect Mary is really tough and incredibly stubborn - whichever man is pushed in her direction by her mother or whomever, she’s actually quite reluctant to consider as a potential husband.”

When episode one opens it quickly becomes clear that the sibling rivalry that exists between Mary and Edith runs a lot deeper than the usual sisterly jibes that exist in most families.

“She is very feisty and quite cruel at times, particularly to her sister Edith. Because the age-gap between Edith and Mary is so small Edith resents that Mary feels she is entitled to so much more than her. She doesn’t get the same attention from her parents that Mary does and as a result feels invisible,” explains Michelle. “Mary feels it is her absolute birthright to inherit the estate and Edith greatly resents her position within the family. There are some incredibly bitchy moments between the two of them.”

Despite being on the verge of a dramatic change in the world, with the outbreak of the Great War just a few years away, Mary’s feelings, fall, in between acknowledging her duty and responsibility to *Downton*, yet she is also pulled in the direction of independence and modernity.

“If she fell in love with the right person Mary would be happy to stay at *Downton* and fulfil her duties as the next lady of the house but at the same time she adores her Aunt Rosamund who is outspoken and thoroughly modern,” she says, “and she is definitely her grandmother’s granddaughter she knows deep down her responsibility is to continue the legacy of *Downton Abbey*.”

Mary endures some grave emotional losses throughout the course of *Downton Abbey* including the death of her future husband in the opening episode. “Mary would have married Patrick had he not disappeared when the Titanic sank but I don’t think she would have been happy – it was more a union of convenience with which she would have got everything she wanted.”
“There’s a great line where she says, ‘I was only going to marry him if nothing better turned up’, which is incredibly cruel but I think it’s true. There was no-one around at the time so I think she would have probably gone through with it. As a result of that happening it actually gives Mary more independence and more choice.”

It is at this point Mary realises that she can make her own mind up about the man she marries and Mary’s character begins to change - we see a new more vulnerable young woman begin to emerge.

“At the start we meet a very feisty young girl and she doesn’t lose any of that feistiness, but something traumatic happens in a later episode that damages her - it forces Mary to grow up and start looking after people,” she hints.

Mary has a spiky relationship with her mother, Lady Grantham, played by Elizabeth McGovern. On one hand, Mary knows her mother is lobbying hard for the will to be overthrown which causes arguments between her parents, but on the other she resents her mother pushing various eligible young men her way in the hope she will marry and be secure. Her relationship with her mother changes dramatically when Mary is forced to turn to Lady Grantham and housemaid Anna (Joanne Froggatt) for help.

“Initially Mary feels that she’s let her mother down terribly, but at the same time it brings them closer together because they share this terrible secret, and that is essentially the essence of Downton Abbey...the secrets that exist between the two worlds of the family and servants and sometimes when those two worlds collide you see one element relying on the discretion of the other in the most serious of circumstances.”

Away from the cameras Michelle discovered that she and Elizabeth McGovern shared a passion for music which has since resulted in them recording some tracks and performing at the Americana Festival in London’s Leadenhall Market. Michelle’s passion for singing and guitar resulted in her singing last year at the famous Ronnie Scott’s Club in London at the request of the club’s owner Sally Greene.

“I knew Sally through the Old Vic and she’d heard through a mutual friend that I could sing and approached me about singing at the club. I went for an audition with the musical director of the club and before I knew it I’d been invited to sing on stage in a line up that included Will Young, Andrea Corr, Monica Mancini and Mick Hucknall among many others,” she laughs. “I was so nervous I wanted to run away but the only place I could run to was through the curtains onto the stage so I just had to get on with it but it was a great night and something I’d love to do more of in the future.”

As well as being on ITV1 for seven weeks in Downton Abbey this autumn, Michelle can also be seen at the Crucible in Sheffield where she is playing Ophelia opposite John Simm’s Hamlet. Having begun her career at the National Theatre in His Dark Materials, and having met her great friends and mentors Lesley Manville and Una Stubbs in theatre Michelle doesn’t like to spend too much time away from the boards.

“I am really looking forward to doing a play again. In fact, I wanted to pick Maggie’s brains about the role but out of all the theatre she’s done it’s one of the only roles she hasn’t played. It’s only been a year or so, but to me that really feels like a long time to be away from it. When I started acting I was doing theatre all the time and I feel like when I don’t do it I get a little bit scared again,” she says.
Siobhan Finneran is Miss O'Brien, Lady's Maid

In a complete turnaround from the roles for which Siobhan Finneran is best known and loved, the character of O'Brien is a vengeful, watchful, often spiteful woman who appears to have the welfare of the Countess and family as her utmost priority, but in the servants quarters we see a very different side to her unfold.

“I play Lady Cora’s maid, O’Brien, who is a proper, rotten, nasty piece of work,” laughs Siobhan. “O’Brien thinks that she is really in charge, but unfortunately Mrs Hughes and Mr Carson get in her way. She does pay attention to what they say, but she will quite happily go ahead and do things without their permission.”

One of the deciding factors for Siobhan in accepting the role of O’Brien followed a crucial first meeting with lead director Brian Percival.

“Brian Percival and Julian’s brilliant script made me want to do it,’ she explains. “I met with Brian and within ten minutes I remember thinking, ‘I hope I get this job because I really want to work with him’ – afterwards I met up with some friends for tea and I asked them all to pray that I got this job – I wanted it that badly.”

Three days later she was offered the part and accepted immediately however, that was before she’d met with the costume and make up-designers!

“Let’s see, a corset that makes you wear your breasts as tonsils, a long black frock and a ridiculous hair-do were exactly what I’d hoped for when they’d asked if I’d take the part,’ she laughs. ‘I really wanted to have sideburns and I got them, and as for not plucking my eyebrows for four months, that was fun – the dialogue obviously comes later, but this is what I was really happy about – NOT!”

As Lady’s Maid, O’Brien is expected to do everything for the Countess; from laying out her clothes in the morning to choosing her breakfast; deciding how she wears her hair and what she wears for dinner.

“When I’m not actually tending to her daily needs I am doing her washing or mending or ironing and I wouldn’t ever get to go to bed before she does because I have to dress her for bed and then do her hair. In fact, Alastair Bruce, whom we call the ‘Oracle’ or ‘God of Downton’, told me that I should always take the Countess’s hair brush with me at night because I would clean the hair from it before the morning...how on earth does he know that?” she asks.

When Bates, the new valet, arrives at Downton Abbey O’Brien and Thomas quickly close ranks. They see him as a threat to their plans to fill the top two servant positions below the housekeeper and butler.

“She is furious when Bates arrives, but quite rightly so because Bates can’t do his job properly because of his war-wounds. Everybody else thinks she’s wrong but she’s not because Bates is going to make a lot more work for everybody else, especially Thomas, and it’s unfair on the rest of the staff,” she explains.

“O’Brien is probably much cleverer than anybody else on the staff because she knows how to manipulate people. If she gets any information whatsoever, she uses it to her advantage, and to the advantage of Thomas, or she stores the information away so that she can use it later on. She’s not nice, but I like her, I really like her, she’s just misunderstood,” Siobhan says wryly.

“The thing is, there has got to be a reason for her to be this dreadful and the exciting thing is we don’t know what that is yet - I don’t believe anybody’s born to be that bad.”
During the course of a day a Lady’s Maid would have to run up and down the stairs endlessly, carrying trays of food and jars to the Countess to ensure her every need was serviced. However, things didn’t always run so smoothly in rehearsal.

“Hugh and Elizabeth had a bedroom scene together and I had to come in with the breakfast tray, listen to what’s being said then go straight downstairs and report back to everyone. So, we rehearsed this scene three or four times and I had my trainers on underneath my petticoat, you can picture the scene. Then finally it came to the crew rehearsal with everybody in the room so they could watch the scene and I caught the tray of china on the corner of the bed and the whole lot just hit the floor…I was absolutely horrified. Hugh Bonneville roared with laughter. I felt really sick about it because some of the china had broken and I’d just spent four hours telling everyone how beautiful this china was, then I go and chuck it on the floor,” she says.

“The art department were very nice to me at the time but I’m sure they thought I was a proper idiot.”

Enjoying her job is hugely important to Siobhan and as with the cast of Benidorm – fun and laughter are high on her agenda of must-haves.

“I don’t come to work if I am not going to have any fun,” she says, ‘I can’t see the point in that. What I love about this job and particularly the gang below stairs, is that there is a great buzz between us all. It’s like any family; you can be bickering one minute then making them a sandwich the next.

‘When we were all together as a big group, it was chaos and I’m sure we drove the crew mad, because we’d never shut up. We had really good craic making this and hopefully that warmth comes across in the show.”
Joanne Froggatt has played a diverse range of characters since she first began acting. From the scheming, obsessive Zoe in *Coronation Street* to her moving portrayal of Joanne Lees in *Murder in the Outback*, plus a host of other roles in some of the most acclaimed dramas produced in the UK, of which *Spooks, Rebus, The Street* and *Life on Mars* are only a few, Joanne has the ability to make each role she takes exceptional and individual - the part of Anna is no exception.

"I love playing her; she’s a really great character to work with - genuine, honest and soft hearted, but she sticks up for herself too. Obviously she’s got a blossoming friendship with Mr Bates, which is lovely because it’s a very slow build-up of a relationship and it’s really sweet, though Brendan does muck about all the time," she laughs.

"It’s been such a great job because of the people really; they’re all great fun and a really nice group. That doesn’t always happen and it can make some jobs quite difficult. But on this job everyone’s got on really well and we’ve had a good giggle. It’s been a nice shoot for the actors, because there’s been a split between filming the family scenes and the servants scenes and despite being a sixteen week shoot we’ve all had great chunks of time off in between which is marvellous for getting boring things done like domestic chores… that’s unheard of in this job."

Most of Joanne’s scenes are filmed at the purpose built set at Ealing Studios, but she recalls her first visit to Highclere.

“When you come up that long drive and the castle is revealed for the first time there is a really big ‘wow’ factor…it is very impressive. And like everyone else I was quite taken aback when I saw it for the first time but the family and staff at Highclere made us feel really welcome.”

With a cast and crew as large as *Downton Abbey* there are many different elements that need to come together to make the show work, from direction, production, design and acting, but for Joanne there was one crucial element that bound the whole lot together.

“On any film set everybody has their part to play and if one part of the system isn’t working, it has a knock-on effect, but everyone worked to such a high standard on this show that it made life very easy. You get to come to this amazing set and it helps you get into your character. But the most important thing is the script and if you haven’t got a good script, it doesn’t matter how good everybody is at their job. If you haven’t got a good script you’re fighting a losing battle.”

“With Julian’s script I started reading it before my audition and for some reason I had to leave it half-way through…I could not wait to get back to it. It was brilliant, a real-page turner and you could see each character’s outline very early on which, with that many characters to establish, is real genius at work”.

Anna has an important role to play both above and below stairs. She is integral to the storylines of the young ladies of the house and Lady Grantham to an extent, yet also plays a huge role among the staff, often as an older sister figure to the likes of Gwen and Daisy.
“I think Anna's the go-between for some people,' she explains, ‘so although she kind of keeps O'Brien at bay, they have a good working relationship though not a social one. Anna is not afraid of O'Brien and that means she can protect the younger staff members from her if needs be. The younger ones look up to her and ask her advice and she gets on with everybody,” she adds.

Anna's mettle is tested when she is drawn into a terrible desperate secret above stairs.

“Anna has a special relationship with the young ladies of Downton and in particular with Lady Mary. She has grown up with them and although they are servant and master there is a bond that exists between throughout the series. When things go wrong for Mary, Anna, who is always loyal and respectful, yet sees behind the front she puts up which pulls them closer together.”
Thomas Howes is William, Second Footman

In the space of a few short months, Doncaster born actor, Thomas Howes has gone from playing one half of the CBBC hit show duo *Chuckle Vision* to one of the most anticipated drama series in the autumn drama calendar.

He now finds himself sharing the screen with some of the UK’s most respected film and television actors including Jim Carter, Hugh Bonneville, Maggie Smith, Penelope Wilton and Siobhan Finneran to name but a few.

Playing William, *Downton Abbey*’s second footman, meant that like his co-stars Jim Carter and Rob James-Collier, Thomas spent a lot of time hanging around in the back of dinner-party shots.

“My role is sort of twofold in this, because of all the menial tasks a footman must undertake, which are mostly to do with presentation; I spend half my time down in the kitchens buffing candlesticks and cutlery, ironing newspapers and laying out tablecloths,” he explains.

“The other half of my job is kind of customer service. Rob the other footman and Jim the butler are in the same position of being in the background of the family scenes taking their coats and serving at dinner. A great country house was apparently rated on the look of their footmen and for some reason the taller the footmen were, the finer your staff were perceived to be, so we get very nice costumes for all our front of house service.”

William is a thoroughly decent and well-mannered young man, who was brought up on a farm, has a gift of handling horses and is very close to his mother.

‘William doesn’t have much or come from much so it is a real coup for him to land the job of second footman. His family are thrilled that he has prospects, could one day be first footman and eventually work his way up to Butler,” he says. “He’s a blank canvas at the start much because he was brought up in a family with a lot of love, he has no experience of romance or violence and these two emotions he encounters at *Downton*.”

As second footman, William is subjected to a campaign of sustained teasing and in some instances blatant bullying from Thomas (Rob James-Collier), which he endures with dignity - but at some points even William can only take so much.

“I asked our producer if she would ask Julian whether I could lamp Thomas, (not Rob because I love him to bits) and Julian was kind enough to include it in the script but before I knew it - the punch had turned into a proper fist-fight with a big roll off the table. It was so exciting to come into work and see my small suggestion turn into a full day’s work with stuntmen and mattresses and loads of rehearsal. It was an epic day,” he recalls. “We were bruised for a few days afterwards but it was worth it and I hope it looks convincing on screen.”

A keen pianist, Thomas also talked Julian into allowing him to provide background music in a number of scenes where the staff are finished their duties for the night and relaxing in the servants’ hall.

“I just started playing the piano one day on set and thought ‘wouldn’t it be fun if I could actually play in a scene’, so Julian, the director and our producer thought it was a great idea to have William play background music in a scene where Thomas picks up Daisy and whirls her round the room.”
As well as being the victim of below stairs bullying at the hands of Thomas, William also loses out in love to him as well.

“William is sweet on Daisy but Daisy, it turns out, is sweet on Thomas and ever cruel and spiteful, Thomas wants to stick the knife into William – he obviously has no intention of courting Daisy but he'll do anything to stop William from having any chance with her.”

Thomas, a huge fan of the theatre, still lives in Doncaster and is a big supporter of amateur dramatics and directs local amateur dramatic societies when he is home. During the shoot and after a heavy week of filming Monday to Saturday, Thomas would head back to Doncaster to direct on a Sunday.

“I am a real theatre animal and still have a great commitment to Doncaster, where I am from, and in particular the Am-Dram groups up there,” he says. “There are loads of actors who leave home and turn their backs on where they’re from and I think it’s ludicrous. These places put you where you are and I’m living proof to any young actor from a small town that you can come from anywhere in the world and end up on telly if that is where you want to be – it is possible.”

For Thomas there were two key factors that made Downton Abbey such a rewarding and exciting job to work on.

“It was a real honour to play a character that Julian Fellowes had created and then be given the opportunity to make that character my own was just so special. I will always remember Jim Carter saying that if the writing is really good – and Julian’s is – then an actor can concentrate purely on the job and not on lifting the writing,” he explains.
Press Pack

Rob James-Collier is Thomas, First Footman

Having completed a degree in Business and a Masters in Marketing, few, including Rob James-Collier, would have pictured him sitting opposite Maggie Smith at a readthrough for one of television’s most anticipated dramas, written by Academy award-winner Julian Fellowes. But that is exactly where Rob found himself earlier this year.

“I was really excited the day of the readthrough, but it was a double-edged sword,” says Rob. “I was fortunate and unfortunate enough to be sitting opposite Dame Maggie Smith, which is brilliant because you’re like ‘wow, it’s Maggie Smith over there’. But then it began to sink in how amazing and when it came to my turn to say my lines I have to admit it was like going through puberty again. You know that moment when you open your mouth and it comes out really deep,” he laughs. “It always used to happen when I was in German classes! I was so nervous,” he recalls.

When Rob James-Collier left ITV’s flagship soap, *Coronation Street*, he decided to take his time before returning to television, opting instead to wait for the right script to come along.

‘*Coronation Street* was an amazing experience and an opportunity I’m really grateful for, but it was the right time for me to leave the show and I wanted to try other roles,’ he says. “I was offered a number of jobs but none of them really felt right and I knew I wanted to wait for something big – I just hadn’t found the part yet.”

When the audience meet Thomas, he has been acting up as Lord Grantham’s valet. Ambitious and driven Thomas is self-serving and always on the look out for a promotion. When Mr Bates turns up out of nowhere Thomas’ resolve to get out of *Downton Abbey* hardens and he will stop at nothing to realise his goals.

“Thomas, being the arrogant character that he is, assumes he is going to get given the job of valet, but the rug is pulled out from under his feet when a mysterious man known as Bates turns up. Not only that, but he has a disability, which makes it especially hard for Thomas because it means Bates can’t fulfil all the duties of a valet.”

Unlike a lady’s maid, being a valet in a large country house didn’t automatically mean you were exempt from other duties such as: serving at dinner when guests are invited or helping with luggage when required. When Bates turns up at *Downton Abbey* with an old war wound it creates mystery and intrigue among the staff but for Thomas, Bates presents a bigger problem.

“Thomas plans Bates’ downfall with his partner in crime O’Brien but their efforts keep failing and Bates keeps surviving so they up the ante and we see their efforts to get rid of Bates become more sinister as the series progresses.”

Playing an unsavoury character was new to Rob but he found that, like all of the characters in *Downton Abbey*, Julian had written Thomas in such a three-dimensional way that there were a lot of characteristics and emotions to work with.

“The fantastic thing about the scope Julian has given me is that yes, while O’Brien and Thomas are nasty pieces of work, he writes in funny lines for him as well, so you’ve got a little bit of comedy as well as those other sides to the characters,” he explains.
“I had this idea in my head of how I would like to play Thomas but when I turned up on the first day Siobhan Finneran, whose CV speaks for itself, said less is more and let the lines speak for you, which was great advice and what could have been a pantomime villain is now hopefully quite understated but still hits the mark.”

Thomas has a secret, or at least he thinks he has but there are certain members of the staff who have worked him out.

“Thomas’ secret comes out towards the end of the first episode. He is a gay man and in those times, not only was it considered a sin against God, it was also illegal and frowned upon within society. I think many of the staff are aware that Thomas likes men and they kind of brush it under the carpet,” he says.

“When we discover he has been having a tempestuous love affair with the Duke of Crowborough (Charlie Cox), we see a vulnerability and naivety to Thomas that we rarely see again. He is hurt and angry that this man who he thought would take him away from Downton Abbey and make him a butler, is more devious than himself and as a result Thomas lets his guard down,” he continues.

Rob had never performed a gay scene before, but with rehearsal and under the direction of Brian Percival it was surprisingly easy and natural.

‘We spent quite a bit of time with Brian Percival rehearsing the scene and talking it through. Originally there wasn’t a kiss written into the script but it felt there was a point where Thomas would naturally kiss the Duke and the thing with Charlie Cox was that he was open to anything, he was fantastic! When I mentioned it to him I said, ‘don’t take this the wrong way, I’m not coming onto you…but’, he was like, ‘no don’t worry about it, I think it would be good’ and it did add an extra dynamic to the scene.”

“The thing I loved about this aspect of Thomas is that he is not a gay character but a character who is incidentally gay, which is how it should be.”

Having never played a love scene with another man before, Rob found it easier kissing a man on screen than a woman.

“When you’re kissing a woman, and you want it to look realistic, you’re thinking ‘am I taking advantage of her? Is her boyfriend going to think I am over-stepping the mark?’ Whereas when you are kissing a man those thoughts don’t cross your mind. I’m more scared of it looking false so I went for it fully to make it look real and hopefully I’ve achieved that. You just have to, otherwise if you feel uncomfortable you will look uncomfortable and then it won’t be believable.”

“I think Julian, being clever, didn’t write it in, but had a sixth sense that we might arrive at that point ourselves, which we did,” he adds.

If it wasn’t for a Salford University student failing to turn up at a film shoot one rainy Sunday Rob might still be working in marketing.

“By chance a friend was doing a Performing Arts degree at Salford University and they were making a film for the end of term. One of the actors dropped out and my pal thought, ‘Rob’s game for a laugh, he’ll give it a go’,” he says. “I hadn’t any acting experience, apart from the donkey in the school play with a cardboard box on my head - (which scarred me for life) - and it was a rainy Sunday afternoon but I loved every minute of it!”
Press Pack

After that Rob found an acting coach in the Yellow Pages and began going to classes one night a week after work. Three months later, he had an agent and an audition for the BBC's *Down To Earth* with Ricky Tomlinson, which gave him his first acting role.

"I made loads of mistakes on screen, but what an opportunity to have for your first TV appearance and I was really lucky to learn on the job. That's why I appreciate everything I get, because I know how hard it is and there are loads of actors out there better than me, so I am just grateful to be in work."
Rose Leslie is Gwen, Housemaid

Throughout September and October, actress Rose Leslie will be appearing on stage at the Globe Theatre in Nell Leyshon’s new play *Bedlam* about the notorious London lunatic asylum. At the same time she will be on screen playing housemaid Gwen in Julian Fellowes’ Edwardian drama for ITV1.

Like the rest of the staff at *Downton Abbey*, Gwen is a country-born girl who comes from a modest Northern background. Despite being born and brought up in Aberdeen and speaking with a well-rounded English accent, Rose had the advantage of spending almost a year playing a character from the North in repertory theatre. This helped enormously when she was preparing for the role of Gwen.

“I was in a theatre production where I had to speak with a northern accent which lasted about 6 months. It was an ‘Out Of Joint production’ and we toured the country with it last year. So together with rehearsals, I’ve been speaking with a northern accent for nearly a year, it’s been really easy to just flip in and out of it because I am so used to speaking with it now.”

The accent and dialogue in 1912, however, would have been vastly different from the dialect used in modern Britain and Rose did have to spend time with the *Downton* dialect coach to perfect Gwen’s speech and tone.

“I did some accent training with Penny Dyer who said that all accents now have become quite sloppy! In 1912, it was more acute and there were no long bits at the end of the word, where the mouth drops open. I was in fact speaking with more of a Manchester accent, than a Yorkshire one and Penny had to really teach me to bring it back to the 1900’s,” explains Rose.

“Because most of the actors playing the staff do have northern accents, it was very useful to listen to them and hear how they speak. There was one word that I just couldn’t get,’ she recalls, ‘and I can’t remember what it was now, but I was going round to Siobhan, Rob, Jim, Tom and Sophie, asking them how they thought it was said. So they were all really helpful when I didn’t quite get it right,” she recalls.

Gwen has grown up on a farm, but she harbours a dream to break free from her life in service. She feels there is more to do in the world than making beds and dressing young ladies for breakfast, lunch and dinner and whatever she does it would give her more independence and improve her fortunes. She forms an unlikely alliance with the Crawley’s youngest daughter, Lady Sybil, who is going through similar feelings of desire for independence and change.

“Gwen’s real dream is to become a secretary, she wants to come out of service and make a better life for herself. She’s breaking every rule - women didn’t want to have a profession and work in an office so she is part of the new wave of female independence coming through at that time.”

“She is helped by Lady Sybil, who does all sorts of things that Lord Grantham would be appalled by to help Gwen get interviews and write letters. Sybil really compromises her position but they are a similar age and growing up in a time of great political change which has affected them both.”

Gwen’s determination to leave *Downton* is not just a whim. She has saved her wages in order to buy a typewriter, which she keeps hidden above her wardrobe.

“Gwen has a great ally in Anna and when Anna discovers the typewriter hidden on top of a cupboard, she can’t get her head around why Gwen wants to be a secretary. But Gwen knows Anna will keep her secret.”
Press Pack

However, the same can’t be said for O’Brien, who upon finding the machine immediately brings it to the attention of Mrs Hughes, and then it’s only a matter of time before it’s being discussed at dinner by the family.”

“I think the desire to work in an office is very new and exciting to her and something that her friends back home probably haven’t even thought of doing yet. I like to think that she has magazines and newspaper articles stuffed down the back of her bed,” she laughs.

“It isn’t all plain sailing for Gwen though and Lady Sybil comes a cropper at times as well…but you will have to tune in to find out how,” she hints.
Phyllis Logan is Mrs Hughes, Housekeeper

Phyllis Logan comes from a small town outside Paisley in Scotland but now lives in London with her husband, actor Kevin McNally, and young family. Upon finishing filming on Downton Abbey Phyllis wasn’t rushing home to update her personal admin or do the gardening...instead she was packing a bag and heading off to Hawaii where husband Kevin was in the middle of filming the latest Pirates of the Caribbean film.

“He’s done the first, second, and third so he thought he may as well do the fourth one as well,” she laughs. “I’m looking forward to seeing Kevin and getting off to Hawaii, but I can’t complain because I’ve had plenty of days off on this job...we all have, which isn’t the norm.”

When filming began at Highclere Castle every month, the artists playing the servants would get up to a week - sometimes two weeks off at a time. And the same was true for the actors playing the family when the film unit moved to Ealing Studios.

“It’s been an amazing job to work on,’ she says, ‘and we’ve all loved coming to work because as soon as Ealing becomes claustrophobic we up sticks and move to Highclere and just when the travelling begins to wear you down, you are back at Ealing or have a few days off – I’m having a whale of a time.”

As housekeeper of Downton Abbey, Mrs Hughes is responsible for the smooth running of the house and its appearance. She is also in charge of all the female servants and regularly rubs Mrs Patmore the Cook, up the wrong way. Some might see her as cold and commanding, but she has a kind heart and a great deal of compassion that comes through in later episodes.

“She can appear austere and firm but she has a bit of a heart,’ she hints, ‘she’s not a complete old bag!”

“I suppose the pecking order within the staff would be Mr Carson, at the top, then Mrs Hughes. She’s the keeper of the keys; she’s allowed to go anywhere around the house although she has no reason to go in the dining room when they are having their meals. She’s never in an apron or a cap, she’s quite smartly dressed, so she’s quite high in the pecking order downstairs,” she observes.

“Mrs Hughes and Mr Carson have a regular evening routine and none of the servants can go to bed until they say their duties are complete. They tend to check in with one another at the end of the day – to see that they’ve done everything they should and remind each other of things for the next day,” she explains.

Like Mr Carson, Mrs Hughes has been at Downton Abbey for years, and may even have come up through the ranks from a lady’s maid to housekeeper. She has a huge staff to look after, up to 25 maids and numerous kitchen staff - not to mention organise rooms for guests, who appeared to drop in quite often and stay for days on end.

“Unlike Carson who watched the Crawley girls grow from babies to young ladies, Mrs Hughes has a past which unfolds later on...not fully, but a little at a time,” she hints. “Because she only arrived at Downton ten years ago she doesn’t have the same attachment to the family that Carson does and when Carson says ‘they’re all the family I’ve got,’ Mrs Hughes is quite astounded at that admission.”
If a woman wasn’t married and in service, after a certain amount of time they would automatically become ‘Mrs’ by reference.

“It was sort of the norm in those days apparently, that everybody over a certain age got called Mrs, whether they were or not. But Mrs Hughes was very nearly married, as we discover in a later episode. It kind of makes her more sympathetic,” says Phyllis. ‘When her old love interest turns up out of the blue Mrs Hughes is faced with a dilemma that could see her move away from Downton Abbey but I’m not telling you what happens,’ she laughs. ‘You’ll have to watch it for yourself.”

For Phyllis, one of the joys on working on Downton Abbey is to see so many young artists coming through and getting a chance to work with established actors like Maggie Smith, Penelope Wilton and Jim Carter.

“It’s wonderful to see so many first-time and young actors getting a chance to perform in a show like this; Laura, Thomas, Rose, Sophie and Jessica. It is a rare thing in television to get a script and a broadcaster that can afford to give so many chances to so many new actors. I think it’s great because they are all brilliant...it’s really wonderful.”
Elizabeth McGovern is Cora Countess of Grantham

Illinois-born actress and singer-songwriter, Elizabeth McGovern, has just recorded her second album with the band she formed and fronts, Sadie and the Hotheads, and has already played a number of gigs around the more select festival circuit this summer, including the No Mud Americano Festival.

“I have to admit that I’m a much better songwriter than I am musician but I find playing the guitar is the ultimate relaxation. I love it and it’s also such a great way of bonding with people and bringing people together. Michelle Dockery and I would hang out on set and practice and sing together. It was a lot of fun,” she recalls.

Downton Abbey is the second time the Academy nominated actress has played Hugh Bonneville’s wife though admittedly in very different shows.

“My husband, Simon (Curtis) produced and directed Hugh, Tom Hollander and I in Freezing, which was a clever little three-part comedy series on BBC Two written by James Wood, who also wrote Rev. It was a lot of fun.”

While studying at The Juilliard School in New York City in 1980, Elizabeth was offered a part in her first movie, Ordinary People opposite Timothy Hutton and directed by Robert Redford. She went on to earn her Academy award nomination for her portrayal of Evelyn Nesbit in Ragtime. In 1984, she starred with Robert De Niro and James Woods in Sergio Leone’s cult gangster movie Once Upon A Time In America, and later opposite Mickey Rourke in Johnny Handsome.

Since moving to England and raising a family, Elizabeth continues to work in theatre and television. In Downton Abbey she plays Lady Cora, mother of Mary, Edith and Sybil and wife to Lord Grantham, played by Hugh Bonneville.

“Cora is the mistress of Downton, having taken on the reins from her mother-in-law, the Dowager, when she married Robert Crawley. She’s partly distinguished by the fact that she’s American and has married into the aristocracy,” explains Elizabeth.

“She’s an heiress who came to England looking for an aristocratic husband and has found a very happy marriage, raising three daughters in the process. She runs a massive household and copes remarkably well with everything, including the huge cultural shock of being thrown into a very singular world.”

Without Cora’s American fortune, Downton Abbey would undoubtedly have fallen apart, but with it comes all the problems to come at Downton.

“She finds herself in a position where, because of English law, her fortune is completely out of her control and won’t be inherited by any of her children because they’re all girls. You can imagine how that must make her feel in a society where she has very little power. It’s amazing to think that not so long ago, a woman could have so little control over her own destiny.”

As Lord Grantham continues to dig his heels in over the issue of the future of Downton Abbey, Lady Cora finds an unlikely ally in Violet, Dowager Countess.

“It’s been a lot of fun playing those confrontational scenes with Maggie – her character is quite bossy and domineering, but they have an uneasy alliance at the same time because of the fact that they are both very interested in looking after the inheritance for the children and neither of them like the idea of Downton going to such a distant relative. We are partners in our own little way.”
Press Pack

In a small way Elizabeth’s character Cora, echoes her own journey - albeit almost a century earlier.

“It’s great to play a role that in some way mirrors my life, because I am an American who has spent nearly 2 decades raising English children and making the cultural adjustments, so in that way I can definitely relate to the part and have respect for what I know that entails, from the experience I have had myself.”

As with all the characters Julian has written, Lady Cora has a number of key storylines that pack an emotional punch as the story gathers pace.

“Like all the actors, I jumped at that chance to be in a programme written by Julian Fellowes. He has such a fantastic eye for writing a good story and I really haven’t read anything like it before,’ she says. ‘He’s continued to maintain the quality in the scripts right through to the seventh one. Perhaps it’s the time he put in as an actor, but he’s written so many characters, so economically, so emotionally and with so many dimensions. If you’re an actor who wants to play characters it doesn’t take too much brain power at all because the writing is just gold dust.”
Sophie McShera is Daisy, Scullery Maid

Sophie McShera is best known to fans of *Waterloo Road* as school-girl Ros McCain, whose crush on a female teacher has landed her in hot water. But the Leeds-born actress has been treading the boards since she was 12, when by chance her youth club sent five girls to London for an audition to play a part in the *The Goodbye Girl*. A fan of the American TV show, *Saved By The Bell*, it had helped Sophie pull off an American accent for her audition, and before she knew it she was on stage at The Palladium.

“I had to move to London for a three-week rehearsal which was the worst bit, because I was homesick - but then I had my Grandma and my Nan stay with me which helped,” she recalls.

“And what was weird on tour was that I would be on stage for a week, then back at school for a week and no-one would know or care what I was doing when I wasn’t there. That was until I got the part of Annie in the West End and I had to explain my ginger bowl hair cut to everyone.”

In *Downton Abbey*’s kitchen Sophie plays the naïve and endearing scullery maid Daisy, who is forever at the receiving end of Mrs Patmore’s tongue-lashing and bad humour. Daisy is the first up every morning and her duties include waking all the female staff, lighting all the fires below stairs and then sneaking into the family’s bedrooms to set and light their fires, so that it’s warm when they wake up.

“Setting and lighting the fires is the noisiest job you can do and I have to do it all silently, for fear of waking anyone. So once that's done and I’ve woken all the servants, I help out in the kitchen and basically get bossed around all day long,” she laughs.

There are scenes that show Sophie walking through *Downton’s* rooms with heavy baskets of logs for fires – a job that would have been very hard and laboured for a young scullery maid.

“The props master asked if I wanted to carry a basket with pretend logs but I wanted to make it as realistic as possible so I am actually carrying heavy props around - but it's okay as it's only for a few minutes at a time,” says Sophie.

Sophie and Lesley Nicol, who plays Mrs Patmore, became very close on set and quite a double-act among the rest of the cast.

“I love the relationship between Mrs Patmore and Daisy, even out of character Lesley and I became great friends,” says Sophie.

When Mrs Patmore is sent to London for an operation to help her failing eyesight, she asks Daisy to make sure the stand-in cook doesn’t impress too much upon the family and usurp her position as head cook.

“Even though she is horrid to me she does love Daisy deep down and she’s very maternal towards her - sometimes being cruel to be kind and Daisy’s really loyal to Mrs Patmore which you see come out in the script when Daisy almost poisons the family and their guests at dinner.”

It is Mrs Patmore who tries to warn Daisy off her misguided affections for Thomas, by hinting that his preferences lie elsewhere than with the ladies.

“One of my favourite scenes is when Mrs Patmore is trying to explain to Daisy that Thomas isn’t everything Daisy thinks he is and that she should turn her attentions to William instead but Daisy just doesn’t get it and is blissfully ignorant. She’s just completely in love with him.”
Press Pack

The ever devious Thomas takes advantage of Daisy’s feelings for him and persuades her to lie to Carson which results in Mr Bates being accused of theft.

“Daisy stupidly tells Thomas that she would do anything for him and somehow she ends up telling a huge lie for him that could have catastrophic implications for her and Mr Bates and leads to her realisation that he isn’t the great hero she thought he was.”

Unlike the ladies of the house, Daisy and the other housemaids have only one or two costumes; hence the actors playing the female servants inevitably had costume envy of the young Crawley girls.

“I only have one other costume change’, explains Sophie, ’when I go on my date with Thomas to the fairground, so I had a little dress but still had to wear my scruffy boots.”

“Like all the female actors I had a very tight corset to wear that made my bosoms actually become earrings and it is funny when you take it off, because instead of staying nice and slim, your whole body just goes bloop – which is really depressing!”
Lesley Nicol is Mrs Patmore, the Cook

Lesley Nicol has graced UK drama and comedy with a diverse array of warm, eccentric and natural characters for the last thirty years. From *Blackadder* to *Shameless*, she brings a very natural realism to her work. As well as playing *Downton Abbey*’s highly-strung cook Mrs Patmore, Lesley will be reprising her role as Auntie Annie in *West Is West*, the follow up to the successful UK feature film *East Is East*.

Living in West London meant that getting to work was unusually easy for Lesley, particularly when the unit was based at Ealing Studios.

‘Mrs Patmore is rarely seen out of the kitchen and thus I had very few scenes at Highclere Castle, so I really enjoyed going there when I did - it’s a real treat because it’s such a beautiful building. But when we were in the Studio, getting to work was a doddle!’ she laughs

“It was a dream job for me,’ she continues. “Julian’s given Mrs Patmore some funny lines and also some lines that show her vulnerability like the issue with her sight. That’s fantastic for an actor to be given because it’s just like real life.”

Mrs Patmore rules the kitchen with an iron rod and only Mrs Hughes remains a thorn in her side, insisting on placing all the orders for the kitchen herself and thus withholding the last bit of power that would complete Mrs Patmore’s domain.

“She appears to be a very irritable, bossy person. That’s what I thought when I first read the script, but of course nobody is just one thing in life, so you have to find out what’s underneath it and she’s particularly bossy with Daisy the scullery maid, who is at the bottom of the pile. And as time goes on, you start to find out a little bit more about why she is like that,” she hints.

“Both Julian Fellowes and Alastair Bruce said that for the staff below stairs, every day was like a show, and you want this to be the best show in town - which was very helpful advice. If anyone came to *Downton* they were generally very important; Dukes and visiting dignitaries etc. so she can’t afford to make any mistakes with the food. And given that they ate about five times a day the kitchen was the heart of the house.”

Authenticity in the detail of the design and layout of the servants’ areas were just as crucial to get right as the family living areas. Mrs Patmore’s stove has two real hotplates, meaning the audience can see steam and pots bubbling away all day, which is how it would have been in 1912.

“A lot of Mrs Patmore’s irritability is because she is bent over a hot stove from dawn to dusk. She first of all has to feed the servants and then feed the family and this goes on all day long with armies of people to feed.”

As part of her research Lesley read a book about country living and cookery in 1912, which suggested that cooks were extremely stressed, mainly because of the heat of the kitchens.

“The cook was baking hot and so busy because everything was down to getting that food on the table, getting it hot and getting it spot on, there was nothing more important than that. Even our own meals revolved around serving the family and guests and the Crawley family just never stopped eating!’ she laughs.
"It was breakfast, then luncheon, then tea, dinner and then tea and biscuits in the evening! The dinner or luncheon would be bigger if there were guests there. We were thinking about this the other day, how the heck could you eat all that food? They must have been small portions; they didn’t seem to do much exercise."

Mrs Patmore thinks her position within the house is under threat when it comes to Lord Grantham’s attention that her eyesight is failing. However when he sends her to London to see a specialist, instead of seeing this as an endorsement of her value, ever the pessimist Mrs Patmore sees her temporary replacement, Mrs Bird, as the enemy.

"Unfortunately, poor Mrs Patmore can only see her future under threat for if she loses her job and her eyesight what will she do...she’s too old to go anywhere else and as far as we know she only has a sister somewhere but no other relatives, so for her Mrs Bird’s arrival is an absolute catastrophe! So I understand why she encourages Daisy to sabotage the food."

Acting runs in the family, and Lesley’s American niece, Brittania Nicol, is a film actress. “We both have films coming out this year; Brittania is in The Wicker Tree which is Robin Hardy’s sequel to his 1973 film, The Wicker Man and stars Christopher Lee, and I’m in West Is West which will be out this autumn as well; so we are keeping it in the family, so to speak.”
**Maggie Smith is Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham**

Maggie Smith, more than any other actor of her generation, has mastered the range of acting, from high drama to high comedy. Now in her seventies she continues to deliver exceptional performances with the most exquisite comic timing; is there any stopping her you might ask?

“I am just surprised to be doing anything at my age actually. When you think of where I am now and where I’ve come from, I am very pleased and very grateful to be standing up and delivering Julian’s great lines.”

She herself says of acting that it is more than a job, “I love it; it never crossed my mind to be anything else...I’m privileged to do it and I don’t know where I’d be without it.”

Born in Ilford, Essex, Maggie moved to Oxford when she was four. There was no history of acting in the family; her father was a pathologist, her mother a secretary and her twin brothers were both successful architects. So it was a surprise to her family when she enrolled at drama school at the age of 16.

Following performances at the Edinburgh Fringe, student revues and in *Cabaret*. Maggie then began a career in mainstream theatre at the Old Vic with Laurence Olivier - leading eventually to The National. What followed was a distinguished career in theatre and film leading to her impeccable Oscar-winning performance in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* followed by a second Academy Award for *California Suite*.

As well as playing the formidable Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham in Julian Fellowes’ *Downton Abbey*, she can also be seen this autumn playing the grandmother of a boy uncovering a ghost story in Fellowes’ feature film, *From Time To Time* based on Lucy M. Boston’s series of books *The Chimneys of Green Knowe*, set just after the end of the Second World War.

“It is very satisfying to play a character such as Violet, and I have a lot of fun with her – Julian is good at those sorts of ladies. This is the third old lady I've played for him, so I am getting the hang of it now,” she laughs.

From the outset of *Downton Abbey*, Violet is clearly trying to hang onto her position as matriarch of the Crawley family – opinionated, immensely proud, passionately loyal to her son Robert and insufferable to her daughter-in-law, whom she has always regarded as a living compromise the family has had to make. When the entail in her late husband's Will threatens to deprive her grand-daughter Mary, of her rightful inheritance and Cora’s American money, Violet finds herself joining forces with her daughter-in-law. When asked if they are to be friends, Violet replies:

“We are allies, my dear. Which can be a great deal more effective.”

When new heir, Matthew Crawley (Dan Stevens), and his mother, Isobel (Penelope Wilton), arrive in the village of Downton, the Dowager Countess puts up a veneer of tolerance whilst secretly thinking up ways to persuade her son he must overthrow the Will and extract Cora’s money from the estate.

“When we meet Violet she is very bristly and quite horrid but eventually comes round to being much nicer than she was at the beginning. She mellows a bit by the end of episode seven,” explains Maggie.

When the Dowager Countess and Isobel Crawley meet at the beginning of episode two, an unexpected battle of wills ensues between the two women. During the course of the series, both characters find themselves humiliated by the other with personal battles lost and won along the way.
Press Pack

“I am very cross with Mrs Crawley and her son, because I feel they are kind of going to get away with the Estate and with lots and lots of money - it’s all happened because some family members have gone down in the Titanic and I consider these Crawleys to be common upstarts.”

Off set, the relationship between Maggie and Penelope Wilton (who plays Isobel Crawley) couldn’t be in greater contrast.

“Mercifully, it’s not the same in real life. We get on very well and often take strolls together around the grounds of Highclere.”

In fact Penelope Wilton says that apart from having a great script to work with, one of the key reasons for taking the part was to work with Maggie Smith.

Violet is the third character Maggie has played in a Julian Fellowes drama. She plays Mrs Oldknow in Julian’s film From Time To Time, and Lady Trentham in Gosford Park, a character inspired by Julian’s great aunt.

“What I think is brilliant is that this is Julian’s original script and not an adaptation of anything and to have these wonderful ideas to work with, that you know are original, is quite simply stunning.”

For Fellowes the choice of Maggie to play the Dowager Countess was an easy one. “Maggie Smith has a unique sense of comedy, based on a somewhat ironic view of real life, making it both funnier and more sad. But perhaps her greatest ability, or at least the one that most intrigues me, is how she can convey deep and powerful emotion without a trace of sentimentality,” explains Fellowes.
Dan Stevens is Matthew Crawley

Since making his West End stage debut in *Hay Fever* (2006) with Judi Dench and Peter Bowles and directed by his theatre mentor Sir Peter Hall, Dan Stevens’ career has gone from strength to strength. A starring role in the acclaimed BBC TWO drama, *The Line Of Beauty* led to more West End roles and film auditions. In stark contrast to the character of Matthew Crawley, Dan went straight from the set of *Downton Abbey* to Detroit to play Joey van Helsing in *Vamps*, alongside Alicia Silverstone and Krysten Ritter directed by Amy Heckerling (*Clueless).*

“I’m going to be filming in America when *Downton* goes out in the UK and I’ll be back in the UK when it airs in America so I’ll have to get hold of a DVD in order to watch it,” says Dan.

In the last few years Dan has stopped work only to become a husband and father. “My wife and 6 month old visited set, which was fun. Everyone loves a baby on set except for the sound department,” he laughs.

Matthew Crawley is the third cousin of Lord Grantham. His father was a doctor, a fact that amazes Lord Grantham and offends the Dowager Countess. Matthew too has a profession. He works as a lawyer in Manchester and insists on continuing to work in *Downton* and run the estate at weekends.

“Matthew is not aristocracy; he’s a lawyer and out of the blue he gets this letter from Lord Grantham, telling him that he’s going to inherit this great estate and I have a line where Matthew tells his mother that Lord Grantham ‘wants to change our lives’, which is exactly what happens,” explains Matthew.

For Matthew and his mother Isobel (played by Penelope Wilton), moving to *Downton* and meeting their distant relatives is a daunting experience and at first Matthew tries hard to resist the trappings of aristocratic life.

“It’s quite intimidating and very strange for him to be thrust into this position not to mention the resentment he encounters at the hands of relatives like Mary, who in any other circumstances would be set to inherit. So there’s resentment for being the heir apparent coming at him from all quarters both above and below stairs,’ explains Dan, ‘but running alongside this Julian has written a thread of romance into Matthew’s storyline, which bubbles away. This could be with Mary, Edith or even Sybil which makes it all very interesting.”

*Downton* represents the old guard for Matthew and Isobel Crawley. Theirs are far more liberal views than those shared by their cousins and Isobel in particular is matter of fact and prepared to roll her sleeves up and get on with things.

“Penelope has been terrific fun to work with and it’s a sweet relationship we’ve developed between the two characters because they both cling to each other as they enter this strange world,’ observes Dan. “She’s very keen that he behaves properly but she also feels anxiety at the hands of Violet who behaves abominably towards her. So, they help each other along, they bicker a bit, but there is a sweet mother/son thing going on.”

Part of the package of becoming heir to *Downton* means that Matthew must also embrace the trappings of being an Earl in the making including, being waited on hand and foot and having a valet/butler to dress him and tend to his every need. Being used to serving his own tea and dressing himself, Matthew resists.
“There’s this very sweet story with Molesley (played by Kevin Doyle), who is tasked with being my valet and butler but bless him, Matthew wants nothing to do with this element of aristocracy and is very resistant to having him around,” he says.

“Matthew doesn’t treat him very well and is a bit embarrassed by him in the beginning. Eventually, with some help from his mother, he realises that for Molesley, this job is a question of pride and position and without it Molesley has no place in Downton. It’s all rather poignant.”

As for romance it becomes apparent that Matthew is being lined up by Lady Grantham, as husband material for her eldest daughter Mary, a fact that doesn’t pass Matthew by in episode two.

“When Mary drops by to invite Isobel and Matthew to dinner she overhears a stubborn Matthew suggest that Lord and Lady Grantham will no doubt try and force one of their daughters on him. This completely riles Mary and she doesn’t try and hide the fact she’s heard him, which heralds the beginning of a tempestuous relationship between them.”

Hot on the heels of her sister and not to be left out of any opportunity to find a husband, and rub her sister’s nose in it in the process, Edith does her best to win over Matthew by offering to show him the local churches of Downton.

“Edith suggests a trip round the local churches but Matthew has an inkling that she would rather get to know more about him, so desperately tries not to get into any personal discussion with her.”

Dan and Michelle Dockery, (Lady Mary), are old friends and having played opposite each other in the Henry James ghost story, Turn of the Screw, both actors were looking forward to renewing their on-screen partnership.

“It was brilliant to see Michelle again,’ says Dan. “We’ve worked together before so it’s really nice to be doing some proper scenes with her. In Turn of the Screw, she looked a bit mad all the time, while I just did doctor type things like pacing around the room. So at least we have some really great scenes in this. We keep the audience guessing with a case of ‘does she love him, does he love her’, but I’m not telling you what happens,” laughs Dan.
Penelope Wilton is Isobel Crawley

Penelope Wilton makes no bones about the reasons why she wanted to work on Downton Abbey. As if the lure of a great script wasn’t enough, the possibility of working with Maggie Smith, an actress she had greatly admired was the icing on a very large cake.

“One of the reasons I did this was to work with Maggie Smith’, says Penelope. ‘As a younger actress, (only slightly younger than Maggie) the person I admired more than anyone else on stage and in film, was Maggie Smith and I saw her in everything she did at The National Theatre,” she adds.

“I wished I could be like her and now it’s like working with a heroine and one doesn’t have many of those when you grow older,” she laughs.

Penelope, like many of her Downton co-stars, is much in demand and is currently filming the BBC’s South Riding, with David Morrissey, Anna Maxwell Martin and Douglas Henshall, in Leeds where she is taking full advantage of the countryside.

“When it’s not raining I try and get out walking as much as possible and have managed quite a few long treks around Bridlington and along the beaches,” she says.

As mother of the future heir to Downton, Isobel finds herself in the unenviable position of having to uproot herself and her son and leave behind her life, home and friends.

“Although I am a widow, we live in Manchester and have a happy life, but we come into the story because my son is next in line to inherit Downton Abbey. We are brought to live in a house on the Downton estate so Matthew can learn the ropes,” she explains.

“Isobel is not terribly happy about having to move. She had a close group of friends and a life of her own in Manchester. She trained as a nurse during the Boer War and her husband and brother were both doctors and so had a very full life. We discover that her husband specialised in children’s diseases and out of his notes Isobel published a book of his work,’ she explains. “I’ve got a very fulfilled life and this comes as a great interruption to their lives, but there’s nothing they can do about it. And she isn’t about to send him off to Downton alone.”

It is when Isobel and Matthew are introduced to the Grantham household that Isobel realises the enormity of the obstacles ahead and never one to shy away from a battle she steadies herself to face the Dowager Countess.

“Isobel comes up against the Dowager, who has ruled the roost at Downton for many years. And although she pretends not to care that her position has been usurped by Lady Grantham, it is obvious that she would actually like to be more involved than she is now and she certainly doesn’t like this new woman coming in.”

To make herself useful Isobel offers her services to the local hospital which was set up by Violet’s late husband for the local people on the estate.

“Maggie’s character and mine clash terribly over the hospital as Isobel wants to get involved and put her skills and experience as a nurse to good use. She has lived in the real world and knows a bit about medicine and basically thinks the hospital is stuck in the dark ages. Matthew and Isobel are part of the middle classes, the educated, the lawyers and doctors and as such, even the servants are snooty towards
Press Pack

them. They represent change and I suppose present a new threat to their way of life...it's born out of ignorance really,” explains Penelope.

What ensues is a struggle for power between the two women that sees Isobel win small battle after small battle while Violet wins the war of words.

“Julian has written the most wonderful dialogue for both Maggie and I and we were in fits of laughter delivering these snippy lines to each other,” she admits.

One of the downsides of filming this period in history is that the ladies wore no make-up and spent their time in corsets. Isobel Crawley was no exception.

“When you are older you need a bit of make-up but they didn’t wear it in those days so we only had the very barest of make-up bases but I do wear a wig because they had a lot of hair then, which took quite a while to put on. And of course the corsets meant we didn’t eat much lunch on set,’ she laughs. ‘It’s no surprise they had to have maids in those days it must have taken ages to get ready.”
SYNOPSIS

EPISODE ONE by JULIAN FELLOWES

As Daisy the kitchenmaid opens up the house a telegram is delivered. It is 16th April 1912 and the Titanic has gone down, taking with it Lord Grantham’s heir, James Crawley, and his son, Patrick. So who is the new heir? Not just to the earldom but to Downton Abbey, itself, which is entailed to the title. Violet, the Dowager Countess, assumes Robert, the present Earl, will break the entail and make an heiress of his eldest daughter, Mary, but Robert is not so sure. To make matters worse, his wife, Cora, has her own money tied up in the estate, and there is no way to extract it without crippling Downton. Even if Robert could break the entail, or take Cora’s money out of it, would he want to?

Below stairs, a new valet, John Bates, arrives. Bates was Robert’s batman during the Boer War and Robert welcomes him. However, he looks as shocked as the rest of the servants when he sees Bates’s limp. Will this hamper his duties? Cora’s maid, O’Brien, and first footman, Thomas, who wanted Bates’s job, deliberately try to sabotage his first days at work.

Mary was supposed to marry the heir, the late Patrick Crawley, but his death has freed her to move on. She believes her own prospects have changed for the better, and now she angles to catch the young Duke of Crowborough. Her sister, Edith, was in love with Patrick and seethes with resentment towards Mary. The Duke arrives at Downton, ostensibly to present his condolences, but after dinner he requests an interview with Robert, presumably to ask for Mary’s hand. But when he learns that Robert is not intending to challenge the entail he withdraws his offer, without ever in fact making it.

It was Thomas who bought the Duke to Downton, luring him with the prospect of the Grantham money. He and Thomas shared a summer dalliance and Thomas intends to use this to further his own career, blackmailing the Duke with his own letters if he has to. However, the Duke is one step ahead of Thomas who can only watch as the incriminating pages go up in flames.

Meanwhile, Robert informs Bates that his disability is interfering with his work and he will have to go. Bates seems to take the news well, but the Head Housemaid, Anna, hears him crying in his room. However, as Crowborough leaves Robert finds himself unable to let Bates down in this way, and to the amazement of Cora and the servants he asks the valet to stay.

Mary’s fury is matched by Cora’s surprise when they realise Robert has made up his mind and will not challenge the entail. He has discovered the identity of his new heir, a distant cousin, and intends to write to the young man and invite him to Downton.
EPISODE TWO by JULIAN FELLOWES

The heir presumptive, Matthew Crawley, and his mother, Isobel, arrive in Downton where they have been allotted a house. As a doctor's widow, Isobel asks about the village hospital. Violet assures her it does not need help from Isobel or anyone. It is clear these two will be at daggers drawn from the start.

Cora’s maid, O’Brien, is openly contemptuous of the newcomers. She and Thomas encourage the servants to snub them as much as they dare. However, she has misjudged Cora and finds herself being reprimanded in front of the staff. Cora has further offended by taking on a local man, Alfred Molsley, as butler/valet for Matthew. Thomas is furious he has not been offered this post. Matthew finds it hard having a valet and in the process offends Moseley. It is Robert who makes Matthew aware of his new responsibilities. Even so, he cannot dissuade Matthew from taking a job with a local law firm. Violet finds this tradesman-like thinking absurd.

Meanwhile, the butler, Carson, a stickler for standards and dignity, is mortified when he is confronted with his own past. Charles Grigg, has been blackmailing him, revealing that before working at Downton, Carson was his stage partner, one half of the ‘Cheerful Charlies’. Together, Robert and Bates defend Carson, and Bates gains respect from Carson as a result.

One of the housemaids, Gwen, seems to have a secret correspondent. She has received several packages and is seen hurrying into the village to post a letter. Second Footman, William, develops a crush on Daisy, but she is far too taken by Thomas to notice.

Defying Violet’s strictures, Isobel visits the hospital and sees a villager, John Drake, who is suffering from dropsy. She is determined he should benefit from the latest cure, but Dr Clarkson would prefer to treat him in a more traditional way. At last he is persuaded, and a distraught Violet witnesses a seemingly barbaric procedure only to have to accept Isobel’s victory following Drake’s impressive recovery.

Despite her dislike of him, Violet can’t help promoting a match between Matthew and Mary. Even Isobel can see the benefits. So does Cora who is coming to like the new heir, even if she doesn’t want to. But Matthew is unconvinced and Mary is insulted by the very notion. The idea is consequently dead in the water, meaning that Violet and Cora have to resume their fight to get the entail overturned. Later, whilst talking to her sisters, Mary reveals she has a viscount’s heir in play, The Hon. Evelyn Napier.

Dr Clarkson is nervous after Violet’s protests, but Robert supports him, proposing that Isobel will be brought on to the hospital board. The offer is made to Isobel and accepted. Isobel and Violet are consequently, if anything, even more at war than ever.
Like so many in this house, Gwen has her own secret and Anna discovers it. It seems Gwen is taking a correspondence course. She wants to work as a secretary. O’Brien discovers the typewriter and alerts Carson. Why does she think she is better than they are? Gwen is thoroughly humiliated.

Mary learns that Evelyn Napier is riding out with the local hunt and the meet will be at Downton. Cora presses him to stay, but he explains that he will be accompanied by a friend, Kemal Pamuk, an attaché at the Turkish Embassy, who is in London to discuss the independence of Albania. Cora is unfazed. If the price of Napier is the presence of this Mr Pamuk, then she will invite them both. To get some mileage out of Napier’s brief stay, Mary will join the hunt. To her surprise, Mary is instantly attracted to Pamuk, and the feeling is reciprocated. When Thomas makes an ill-judged pass at Pamuk, the Turk forces him to take him to Mary’s room later that night.

Bates has purchased what looks like an instrument of torture in an effort to cure his limp. The pain it causes makes him cry out but he dismisses any concerns, until Mrs Hughes threatens to take the matter to Carson if Bates is not honest with her. Reluctantly, he shows her the straightening boot. In a solemn ceremony, they throw it into the lake and together watch it sink.

Edith has decided that if Mary is not interested in Matthew, she would like to try for him, herself. Learning about his interest in local churches Edith volunteers to act as his guide but he proves infuriatingly immune to her efforts.

The family discuss Gwen and her ambitions. Violet, particularly, is shocked at this sign of rebellion. The only ones to defend her are Sybil and Matthew. Mary is more interested in flirting with Pamuk.

Anna is asleep. A hand comes down over her mouth. It is Mary. Pamuk has had a heart attack, in Mary’s bed. He’s dead. Anna is stunned. If Mary is not to be completely ruined they must get Pamuk back to his own bed. The only person they can call on for help is Cora. They do not know that Daisy witnesses Mary carrying Pamuk along the corridor.

Napier, in complete ignorance, undertakes all the arrangements following Pamuk’s death. But not before Mary’s tear-streaked eyes have told him that she is not in the least attracted to him. He graciously bows out of the running for her affections.

Thomas informs O’Brien that he took Mr Pamuk to Mary’s bedroom on the night he died, and that he saw him go through the door. O’Brien saves this vital information in her squirrel store of mischief.
The fair has come to Downton Village. Bates encourages William to ask Daisy to go with him but before he gets a chance, Thomas jumps in and a delighted Daisy accepts his offer. It is left to Mrs Patmore who tries and fails to explain to Daisy why Thomas is not right for her. Thomas’s bullying increases towards William. Bates notices and tempers flare. But Thomas takes it all in his stride.

Sybil has awoken politically. She instantly connects with the new Irish chauffeur, Branson, who shares her affinity for politics. Robert is, at first, amused by his new chauffeur’s radicalism but he comes to regret his choice. Mrs Hughes suspects that Branson has a soft spot for Sybil. Meanwhile, Sybil is determined to help Gwen get a new job and despite Gwen’s first interview falling through, Sybil assures her there will be a next time.

Anxious to get the entail broken and to advance Mary as heiress, Violet shocks Matthew by visiting his office to see if he will look into the matter. Later, an awkward Matthew visits Robert to discuss Violet’s request. The two have grown close and Matthew takes his role as heir very seriously. He also runs into Mary. We see that he is falling for her. Mary for her part is still mourning Pamuk.

Matthew informs a delighted Robert that he does see Downton as his future. But Mary feels that in Matthew, Robert has found his ‘son’ and will no longer bother trying to fight the entail.

Robert makes it clear to Violet that he is not moveable on his position regarding the entail. A later conversation with Cora reaffirms his decision. Cora does not fight him because, although she still loves Mary, she realises that following the incident with Pamuk, Mary is damaged goods and that ironically, Matthew is the more suitable heir.

Violet is also in conflict with Isobel over a medical ailment affecting Molesley. However, this time Isobel’s treatment fails to work and Violet’s does.

The servants gossip about Mrs Hughes who takes a very rare evening off to meet a former suitor, Joe Burns. The evening makes Mrs Hughes question her position at Downton and it is left to William to reassure her that she made the right decision all those years ago.

Elsewhere, Carson has a problem, the wine book suggests they are missing at least two dozen of a special vintage. Anna, in bed with a cold, is touched by Bates’s attempts to make her comfortable. It’s clear these two have feelings for one another, however, at the moment, they are unable to realise them.
EPISODE FIVE by JULIAN FELLOWES

Sybil informs Gwen that she has applied for a position on Gwen’s behalf. Gwen is thrilled to discover she has an interview and she fakes a headache in order to make it. Sybil takes the governess cart and together with Gwen speeds off towards the town. Although the interview goes well the pair run into problems on their return journey and with the family worrying about Sybil’s whereabouts, they arrive at Downton late, wet and miserable.

Daisy is unable to get over what she witnessed on the night of Pamuk’s death and O’Brien and Thomas suspect that the girl knows something. O’Brien deliberately hints to Edith that Daisy is hiding what she knows and that it may be harmful to Mary. Bearing out Cora’s worries about the rivalry between her daughters, Edith at once summons Daisy to her. This is too frightening for Daisy to withstand and she tells Edith everything.

In the village hall, they are preparing for the summer flower show. Isobel learns that Violet always wins the Grantham Cup for Best Bloom, despite Molesley’s father, Bill, growing the best roses. Violet denies that any outside influence is ever brought to bear. Isobel isn’t convinced.

Cora informs Robert of a rumour going round London questioning Mary’s virtue. Who could be spreading it? Surely not Evelyn Napier. Cora wants Mary married. She suggests a local landowner, Sir Anthony Strallan. Robert is unconvinced. Strallan is too old and stuffy. Mary rejects the plan. She tells Cora to concentrate on Edith’s marital prospects, she needs all the help she can get. Edith is listening.

Mrs Patmore seems fretful. Nothing is right, and Mrs Hughes notes to Carson that Daisy is bearing the brunt. Cora has the recipe for a pudding that she’d like to give to Sir Anthony. Mrs Patmore will have none of it and shouts at Daisy when she suggests she could read the new recipe to her. However, later, as pudding is served, Sir Anthony splutters in disgust. The whole thing is covered with salt instead of sugar. Mrs Patmore is quick to blame Daisy but when she is alone with Carson, she confesses she thinks she’s going blind. Carson reveals this to Mrs Hughes and although she sympathises, she makes it known that this behaviour cannot continue.

Thomas is almost caught stealing wine by Bates and when Thomas’s bullying of William continues, the boy has an ally in Bates who foolishly hints to Thomas that he might reveal the latter’s stealing of the wine to Mr Carson. He never would, but Thomas looks to O’Brien for help and they embroil a naive Daisy into their plan.

One of Robert’s snuff boxes has gone missing and Carson rounds up the servants. Anna realises that Thomas and O’Brien are involved. She warns Bates and sure enough he finds the missing box has been planted in his room. But, although he enjoys watching O’Brien and Thomas fret when Carson demands a room search, in the end he replaces it without giving them away. Anna tells Bates how she feels about him, but he cannot allow himself to respond. Something in his past is preventing him.

Matthew makes it clear to Isobel that he has no interest in Edith, and responds to Mary’s attention. But a misjudged act of sisterly rivalry, designed to make a fool of Edith in front of Sir Anthony, sees Matthew make an early exit. Mary’s anxiety at his departure demonstrates her growing attraction to the heir. Which does not go unnoticed by Robert.

At the flower show, Violet announces the winner of The Grantham Cup…Mr. Molesley…The village is too surprised to clap. A weeping Molesley is pushed onto the stage to receive the cup. Violet is at first rather annoyed and then finally pleased by her new status as village benefactor. That night, in her bedroom, Edith has written a letter. She addresses the envelope, “His Excellency the Turkish Ambassador, 43 Belgrave Square, London, SW.” She licks the flap and seals it with relish.
Bates lets it slip to Robert that Sybil went to a political rally, with Branson. The news that she wants to offer her support is met with bewilderment from her father and disgust from her grandmother. Cora’s position is less clear.

Gwen is despondent regarding her luck with her attempts to become a secretary. Sybil urges Gwen not to give up her dreams. As far as Sybil’s dreams are concerned, she is frustrated when Robert forbids her to attend the High Sherriff’s reading of the election results as she realises she is a natural Suffragette. However, she is determined and she ensnares an unsuspecting and love struck Branson into her plan of how to get there.

Mary’s horse is lame and William offers to look at it. He and Mary discuss his strong family bond and how proud his mother is, to see him a footman at Downton. Mary finds she likes the young man and when Isobel informs her that William’s mother is gravely ill, but that she does not want William to know or to visit her, Mary makes up her mind to overturn this, despite Isobel’s and Cora’s protests that this would go against his mother wishes.

Sir Anthony Strallan calls to see if Mary would like to try out his new automobile. She’s busy but Edith would be delighted. This is a slight disappointment but he soon discovers that Edith is far more suited to him than Mary would have been. He really enjoys her company and returns to invite Edith to accompany him to a concert – much to her delight.

Daisy has lied to Mr Carson, in order to help Thomas, but now she realises this was not honourable and informs Carson. Bates is cleared of any wrong doing, but he will not inform on Thomas and instead hands in his notice, informing Carson, Anna and Mrs Hughes that they have been misled by him. He has been a drunkard and in the past has been imprisoned as a thief.

Carson has had a letter informing him of the rumours harming Mary. He feels it his duty to report them to Cora, who, although shocked, knows a lot more than Carson when it comes to the truth.

Sybil and Branson attend the High Sherriff’s reading of the election results. Matthew is there and he can see that trouble is brewing. He tries to usher Sybil away. But, before he can, he is embroiled in a fight and Sybil is knocked unconscious. Matthew alerts Mary and takes Sybil to Isobel for treatment. Matthew’s tenderness towards Sybil affects the sisters. Which does not go unnoticed by Isobel.

Robert also witnesses the new turn in Mary and Matthew’s relationship, which develops into a kiss and a marriage proposal. An amazed Mary tells Cora the news. However, Mary feels honour bound to reveal the truth about Pamuk, knowing this could destroy everything.

Robert is incensed when he learns that Sybil went to hear the results against his wishes and informs her that Branson will be fired. But he relents when she, Mary and Matthew attempt to defend him.

Violet has also received a letter repeating the story about Mary. Learning of the proposal, Violet immediately writes back to quash the rumours. Together she and Cora devise a plan to reassess Mary’s marital status later in the year, should she turn Matthew down.
EPISODE SEVEN by JULIAN FELLOWES (1914)

Cora discovers she is pregnant. The family is astonished and, in London, Mary wonders how to answer Matthew’s proposal, since his situation would change completely if the baby is a boy. Her aunt, Lady Rosamund Painswick, questions whether Mary would be happy as the wife of a solicitor. Evelyn Napier tells Mary that the story going round about Mary and Pamuk was started by Edith.

In Downton, family and servants prepare for a garden party in aid of the local hospital. Everyone is delighted at the prospect of a new baby. Robert, however, is anxious to do the right thing by Matthew, who is already bitterly disappointed that Mary will not give him an answer until after the birth. Isobel discovers that, for a change, she and Violet are agreed on this matter. They both wish Mary would say yes. Mary accuses Edith of spreading the story that threatens to ruin her. Edith shrugs. Mary had it coming.

At Mrs Hughes’s prompting, Robert informs Mrs Patmore that he has arranged for her to see an eye-specialist in London. Anna will accompany her. Mrs Crawley’s cook, Mrs Bird, will look after them. Mrs Patmore asks Daisy to ensure Mrs Bird’s cooking does not surpass her own. Daisy takes her task very seriously.

O’Brien has received a letter. Thomas is thrilled with its contents and they show it to Carson who passes it on to Robert. It contains unfortunate news that O’Brien has dug up about Bates, and Bates’s future at Downton still hangs in the balance following his revelations in the previous episode. Robert informs Cora. He would prefer to get rid of O’Brien, rather than Bates, and he says it just as she walks into the room. O’Brien is angry at the thought of being replaced and the news motivates Thomas to enquire with Clarkson about finding work in the army medical corps. When Thomas tells O’Brien that Cora is advertising for a new maid, O’Brien’s rage makes her arrange an accident for Cora resulting in the miscarriage of her baby boy. But O’Brien is mortified when she discovers the truth. It was Violet, not Cora, who was looking for a lady’s maid.

Mr Bromidge is charged with fitting Downton’s telephone. The servants all wonder how it works. Bromidge is talking to Sybil about his trying to find a secretary. She immediately thinks of Gwen. Sybil enlists Branson’s help and ensures the job interview goes ahead without a hitch in the library.

The news of the death of Cora’s unborn son spreads quickly and Thomas’s callous comments bring a punch from William. The moment bonds William and Daisy. But when Mary tries to accept Matthew, she finds her delay in giving her answer before the miscarriage has cost her a husband.

In London, Anna delves into Bates’s history. She visits his former Barracks and gets an address for his mother who tells her the truth of her son’s past. Anna informs Robert who assures Bates that his job is secure. Despite this, Bates is still hesitant to reveal his true feelings towards Anna, but when Molesley makes an enquiry into Anna’s availability, Bates assures him she has a serious admirer.

Molesley sees Thomas attempting to steal a wallet from Carson’s coat pocket. Carson informs Robert and they agree to dismiss Thomas after the garden party.

On the day of the party, Mrs Bird and Mrs Patmore, having initially hated each other, find common ground in fighting Mrs Hughes. Before Carson gets a chance to sack him, Thomas hears from Dr Clarkson that he has a place on a training course at Richmond Camp. Instantly, he hands in his notice.
Sir Anthony Strallan has promised to propose to Edith at the party, but a bitter Mary corners him first and destroys Edith's chances. Mary has had her revenge for Edith's treachery.

The telephone rings. Branson answers and learns that Gwen has got the job. He runs to tell her and Sybil, hugging each other and dancing, until Mrs Hughes's sharp words put a halt to the celebrations. Mrs Hughes warns Branson that he stands to get his heart broken and lose his job.

There is a noise. Robert comes out. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he says, loud enough to be heard by all the company, “I regret to inform you that we are at war with Germany.”
CARNIVAL FILM AND TELEVISION

For over thirty years Carnival has been one of the UK’s leading independent producers, behind many of the most popular TV shows such as Poirot, Traffic, Jeeves and Wooster, As If and more recently shows such as Whitechapel (ITV1) – the highest rating new UK drama in 2009, 4 seasons of Hotel Babylon (BBC ONE) and Rosemary and Thyme (ITV1). Other recent programmes include Enid (one of BBC FOUR’s highest rating programmes), Midnight Man (ITV1), Sea of Souls and Material Girl (ITV1), Harley Street and Whistleblowers (ITV1).

Carnival is run by Gareth Neame, who took over the business in 2005 having previously worked as the BBC’s Head of Drama Commissioning.

Founded by Brian Eastman in 1978, originally as Picture Partnership Productions Ltd, the company has produced over 500 hours of popular drama for television, cinema and theatre, both in the UK and US and has attracted more than 70 national and international awards and nominations, including Oscars, Emmys, BAFTAs, British Broadcasting Press Guild, Royal Television Society, Oliviers and TONY awards. Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s Carnival spearheaded independent drama production in the UK. Under Neame’s management the company has gone through a dynamic period of change with the solid bedrock of drama productions complementing some exciting new quality drama commissions with popular and international appeal.

In March 2007 Sally Woodward Gentle joined the company as Creative Director, and in September 2008 Carnival was acquired by NBC Universal as part of its strategy to expand its international division, producing The Philanthropist for its new parent.

The acquisition of Carnival marked NBCU’s first UK acquisition and includes Carnival’s back catalogue.

Carnival has been commissioned by all the major UK broadcasters including the BBC, ITV Network, Channel 4 and Sky as well as US broadcasters such as NBC, HBO, TNT and the A&E Network and continues to develop strong relationships with them all. Carnival is always exploring new ideas with key drama commissioners and this is reflected in the delivery and success of its output.

In addition to Downton Abbey, in 2010 Carnival is producing William Boyd’s Any Human Heart for Channel 4 as well as a sequel to Whitechapel.