

# In the closet with



# Laura Carmichael

She dresses like a lady in *Downton*, but off-screen her look is pure drama

Words and styling by Tricia Welch

Laura, 24, plays Lady Edith, the middle daughter of the Crawley family in ITV1's *Downton Abbey*. She is single and lives in north London.

**How do you describe your style?**

Contrasting. I alternate between masculine tailoring and feminine, floaty shifts, but I like dressing up.

**What colours, shapes and styles suit you best?**

Again, I veer between structured shapes – a well-cut jacket and high-waisted trousers – and short shift dresses. I like jewel and autumnal tones, plus neutrals.

**Who is your style icon?** Diane Keaton in her kooky *Annie Hall*/ *Manhattan* phase. She really took

ownership of masculine tailoring, giving it a feminine touch without diminishing its strength.

**Do you have a beauty secret?**

A high SPF moisturiser. For *Downton* we have to maintain that aristocratic pale porcelain look. While filming in the summer I'd long to eat my lunch out of doors in the sunshine but couldn't run the risk of getting a tan and upsetting the make-up artists.

**How do you dress on "fat" days?**

Baggy boyfriend jeans and a T-shirt.

**Is there anything about your body that you dislike?** I'm quite busty but I don't like to emphasise it. That's one of the reasons why I like masculine

tailoring, because it doesn't accentuate the curves.

**How long does it take you to get ready in the morning?**

I often have a 4.45am alarm call to get me to the *Downton* set at Highclere Castle. So I've managed to get my routine down to 20 minutes – just moisturiser, a flick of mascara and a touch of lip balm.

**Do you have a stylist?** One of my best friends from school, Shaunie Brett, now works as a stylist, and she's my fashion buddy.

**What is your favourite outfit?**

A rust tailored jacket from Topshop, which I team with a shirt or T-shirt plus skinny jeans.

**Is there an "old favourite" that you turn to in a wardrobe crisis?** A short black Cos shift dress that I wear with a little denim jacket and heels.

**What is the oldest item in your wardrobe?**

Courtesy of my grandmother, a lovely Art Nouveau pendant and a 1960s floor-length brocade dress coat with an enormous velvet collar. It's insane but I love it.

**What is the one item of clothing you couldn't live without?** Skinny jeans from Whistles and Gap. Both do longer legs, which are a good fit for me.

**Do you clear out your wardrobe each season?** I do try but I'm not always successful at letting go.



Facing page, clockwise from bottom left: Laura's favourite outfit – a rust Topshop jacket over a cream Cos shirt and brown belt from a charity shop

Laura bought this Wham! bag when she was a drama student and she now uses it as a clutch. It's seen here with a Cos T-shirt and brooch from the V&A museum

The actress wears a burgundy chiffon dress by Twenty8Twelve

Laura bought this watch for herself, but gave identical ones to her *Downton* sisters. The cigarette case is from a junk shop, while the trinket box and pendant were presents from her grandmother. The "Laura" pebble was a gift from her cousin.

The lace-ups are by Kurt Geiger for French Connection, the brogues are from Topshop, the flats were an eBay bargain and the plum heels are from Aldo

This page, left: Laura wears her best catsuit from Whistles

Below: Laura as Lady Edith



**What is the most crushing remark anyone has made about your clothes?**

It was unintentional but embarrassing. The executive producer on *Downton* commented that I wore the same dress, a short black shift from Topshop, to two consecutive *Downton* events and I felt silly.

**What is your most successful party outfit?**

A long-sleeve jersey Jonathan Saunders maxi dress from a Liberty sale. I feel really comfortable in it.

**Do you own more day wear than evening wear?**

Yes. For evening I like dressing up a pair of skinny jeans with heels, a great jacket or a little dress. But my evening wear is expanding as I'm going to more parties.

**How much of your wardrobe is black?**

About 20 per cent. Basics mostly – jeans, shirts, jackets and some LBDs.

**Do you have a favourite LBD?**

A short, fitted lacy style by The Kooples. It's really cute.

**Have you ever had anything made to measure?**

Yes, a lot of my *Downton* wardrobe, although some of it is

original from the era. Wearing such beautiful clothes, which fit you perfectly, is one of the pleasures of being in a period drama.

**Do you own anything vintage?**

Just jewellery and some clothes from my grandmother, but I have borrowed some amazing vintage evening wear from Lucy in Disguise, the shop run by Lily Allen and her sister. I borrowed a gorgeous 60s Ossie Clark dress for a film premiere.

**What are your favourite designer and high-street shops?**

My favourite designers are Alexander McQueen, Giles Deacon for Emmanuel Ungaro and See by Chloé. My favourite high-street shops are Topshop, Whistles and Cos.

**What is the most expensive item in your wardrobe?**

A short navy blue velvet shift dress from See by Chloé

“Wearing beautiful clothes, which fit you perfectly, is one of the pleasures of being in a period drama”

that I bought last winter for the first screening of *Downton* at the BFI. It was a treat to myself.

**What is your best fashion bargain?**

It has to be my Wham! bag, which I bought for the princely sum of 10p in Scarborough. I use it like a clutch and team it for nights out with a little shift dress and edgy heels. It gives the kooky effect I like.

**How many handbags do you own?**

Not many, mainly because I can't pack light so I need a big bag. For every day I use a large Zara brown leather tote, but I also use a big overnight Liberty canvas bag a lot. It has splashes of yellow, tan and black and goes with just about everything in my wardrobe.

**Do you have more shoes than clothes?**

No, but I do have a fair amount. My go-to shoes of the moment are Kurt Geiger for French

Connection lace-up platform heels – they give a masculine edge to my girlier outfits. But I also like Topshop brogues and loafers.

**Do you wear silver or gold jewellery?**

Both. I have some lovely pieces from my grandmother.

**How much have you spent on clothes this month?**

I've no idea. I don't think it's that much but I'd rather not count it up.

**What is the last thing you bought from Marks & Spencer?**

Percy Pigs. I take them to work and share them. It makes me very popular with the cast.

**What is your fashion must-have for this season?**

My new brown strappy Kurt Geiger for French Connection heels plus a navy-blue Whistles catsuit. It's my latest favourite outfit.

**Do you have a fashion address book secret?**

People Tree. I like its clothes and ethical stance.

**What article of clothing would you save from a burning house?**

It wouldn't be clothes – I'd just grab my jewellery box. 

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEMMA DAY / HAIR AND MAKE-UP: RACHEL JONES AT ARTISTIC LICENCE

# VOLT. AVEO. CRUZE. CAMARO. CORVETTE.

BECAUSE LIFE IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES.



**CHEVROLET RANGE FROM £6,995**

[www.chevrolet.co.uk](http://www.chevrolet.co.uk)

Price of £6,995 applies to Spark 1.0 and is available on retail orders only and vehicles ordered and registered between 3rd October 2011 and 30th November 2011. Models shown are not all UK specification and therefore not currently available in the UK. Vehicles currently Official Government Environment Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km). Chevrolet range: Urban: 28.2 (10.0) - 42.8 (6.6), Extra Urban:



This page, clockwise from far left: "It has see-through panels, without being too revealing," Laura says of her favourite LBD

Short smock-style shift dresses are one of Laura's staples. The white one is a Liberty print for Kate Moss at Topshop and the black velvet frock with a lace collar is from Liberty



Laura loves large bags, and this weekend canvas tote from Liberty is a current favourite that complements most outfits in her wardrobe. The vintage-style sunglasses are from Super Future and Topshop, while the strappy brown wedges are by Kurt Geiger for French Connection

Shot at The Athenaeum five-star hotel and apartments, 116 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London W1. Call 020 7499 3464 or see [www.athenaeumhotel.com](http://www.athenaeumhotel.com)

# CAPTIVA. ORLANDO. SPARK.



 **CHEVROLET**  
MAKE IT HAPPEN

available in the UK are Spark, Cruze, Orlando, Captiva and Corvette. For more information visit [www.chevrolet.co.uk](http://www.chevrolet.co.uk).  
44.1 (6.4) - 67.3 (4.2), Combined: 36.6 (7.7) - 55.4 (5.1). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 203 - 119g /km.