

In the closet with Lesley Nicol

With flattering jackets and glittering shoes, the *Downton* cook has the best possible taste Words and styling by Tricia Welch



“My wardrobe is expanding. I’m getting a lot more party invitations since *Downton Abbey*”

Lesley, 58, plays Mrs Patmore the cook in *Downton Abbey*. She has also starred in TV’s *Blackadder*, *Dinnerladies* and *Shameless*, as well as the films *East is East* and *West is West*. She lives in Chiswick with her husband Da’aboth, and their dogs Freddie and Bertie.

How do you describe your style? Guided by other people.

What colours, shapes and styles suit you best? I’m not tall and I’m a bit overweight, so long-line jackets work well with trousers or a long skirt. Because of my colouring, I’d never wear pink – neutrals and jewel colours, especially turquoise, are the most flattering on me.

Who is your style icon? There have been several but I learned the hard way not to copy someone’s style. I loved Julie Andrews’ gamine cut in *The Sound of Music* and had my hair cropped short. It was a disaster. With my face shape and curly hair, I looked like Charlie Drake.

Which celebrity’s wardrobe would you most like to own? Judi Dench’s.

How do you dress on “fat” days? A baggy shirt over drawstring trousers hides a multitude of sins.

How long does it take you to get ready in the morning? Minutes – my priority is to take our two dogs for a walk before work.

What is your favourite outfit? I’ve got two: a soft baby blue twinset from Paulie with white cotton jeans, and a long leopard-skin jacket by Caroline Charles, which I wear over well-cut black trousers.

What is the one item of clothing you couldn’t live without? My Rigby & Peller bras. Once you’ve been measured by their fitters, life is never the same.

Do you clear out your wardrobe each season? No. I do have an occasional

weed out and give to charity, but I have lots of clothes I can’t bear to part with.

What is the most crushing remark anyone has made about your clothes? It was about my whole appearance. After performing on stage in Poole once, I went out for a meal with one of the other actresses. A diner, probably drunk, shouted at us as we walked in, “My God, she’s even worse looking off-stage than she is on.” My friend and I looked at each other then burst out laughing – we still wonder which one of us he meant.

What is your most successful party outfit? One of my Beatrice von Tresckow outfits. I’ve got some beautiful long beaded jackets and velvet coats that are very glamorous.

Do you own more day wear than evening wear? Yes, although my evening wardrobe is expanding. I’m getting a lot more party invitations since appearing in *Downton Abbey*.

Have you ever had anything made to measure? I had a fab silver Lycra catsuit and platform boots made for me when I did *Mamma Mia!* on stage.

What is your favourite designer and high-street shop? Beatrice von Tresckow, Caroline Charles, Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla. I’m not a big fan of the high street.

What is your best fashion bargain? My three pairs of Ugg boots bought in Toronto. They are much cheaper there.

What make of sunglasses do you wear? I recently bought some Jackie Onassis-style Prada sunglasses in LA – the first posh pair I’ve ever bought.

Do you have a fashion address book secret? Paulie in Marylebone. I’ve now bought about 10 things from there.

What article of clothing would you save from a burning house? Nothing, just my wedding ring. **S**

Downton Abbey returns to ITV1 this autumn. The World of *Downton Abbey* by Jessica Fellowes is published by Collins, price £20, on September 15. See Bookshop, page 82.



Facing page: Lesley likes to team this silk leopard-print jacket by Caroline Charles with a camisole top and tailored black trousers. "I'm not tall, so long-line jackets work well with trousers or a long skirt," she says

This page, clockwise from top left: Lesley bought this Rigby & Peller corset to wear at her wedding five years ago. "Once you've been measured by their fitters, life is never the same," she says. For her sexiest outfit, the actress likes to team her corset with a flowing coat. The sparkly heels by Kate Kuba were also bought for her wedding day

A couple of Lesley's favourite evening coats. The leopard-

print fake fur was bought in Los Angeles, while the brown velvet is by British designer Caroline Charles

Lesley wears her favourite everyday outfit – white cotton jeans from Marks & Spencer with a cornflower blue twinset, which she bought at her fashion address book secret, Paulie in London's Marylebone. Her silver trainers are by Converse

Some of Lesley's favourite shoes – two pairs of sparkly, strappy evening heels from Russell & Bromley along with her glittering Converse trainers

Lesley uses this smart Mulberry bag most days. It is seen here

with her black leather biker jacket by Label Lab

Lesley doesn't have a large jewellery collection but her most precious pieces have been passed down. "Most I've inherited or received as gifts and I like them for sentimental reasons," she says. The emerald and diamond ring belonged to her mother

Lesley calls her sequined Union Jack evening bag her "favourite fun bag". It was a present from her dresser when she starred in the stage production of the musical *Mamma Mia!* She bought the pale pink clasp bag at House of Fraser