

Changing rooms Downton style

ALWAYS dreamed of dressing like a Duchess and filling your home with silver salt cellars and monogrammed writing paper? Now you can.

The production team behind Downton Abbey has announced a range of merchandise inspired by the show.

In addition to the sort of floaty, beaded dresses worn by the Grantham sisters, the show's makers NBC Universal and Carnival Films promise that Downton-themed homewares, furniture, wallpaper, beauty products and stationery are also on their way. The Stately range is likely to be available towards the end of this year.

'Some of these things have been available since 2012 — we publish books and have made a music album — but the more complex products take time,' said executive producer Gareth Neame.

Prepare to give your bungalow a grand Edwardian makeover.

by Della Phillips

LAST night, I was describing the marquee that will soon be erected in our back garden for my daughter Abi's birthday when she suddenly melted into floods of tears. 'I don't want to turn 18,' she sobbed. 'I don't want to be older than her.'

I pulled Abi towards me and gulped back tears of my own. Deep down, I am dreading the party, too — caught between wanting Abi to feel able to celebrate and fearing the pain it will inevitably cause us all.

Nearly eight years ago, my elder daughter, Kelly, died three weeks before her 18th birthday. She was a passenger in a car driven by a friend — not licensed to drive — who hit a tree at 80mph, killing them both instantly.

A senseless waste of life like that is



Precious memory: Kelly, at 16 and dressed up for a school prom, with sister Abi

something you never get over. It colours everything that follows in ways that you could never imagine.

And it doesn't get any easier. There are still days when I feel so desperate I am unable to climb out of bed. And now that Abi, who was nine at the time, is reaching Kelly's age, it makes everything even more difficult. Not just for me and my husband Sean, 50, but for Abi, too.

She says she feels guilty 'overtaking' the older sister she'd idolised as a child. I also wonder how I will cope watching her pass the milestones that Kelly will never experience.

I, meanwhile, am dogged by the fear that history will repeat itself. How can I let Abi get into a car, go to parties or even, quite frankly, leave my sight?

All parents lecture their offspring about the dangers of drugs, drinking and driving. But imagine how much more vigilant you would be if you'd already lost a child.

I am utterly terrified every time Abi is a passenger in someone else's car. There are only three or four friends she trusts to drive her anywhere. She is sensible and thoughtful, remembering to text whenever she is setting off somewhere, and again upon arrival.

Naturally, she does get slightly irritable with me sometimes, repeating the mantra: 'Yes, Mum, I know!'

But mostly she is very understanding of my myriad paranoias. After all, she has lived the misery of Kelly's loss as well.

I'm not sure two sisters have ever been so close as they were. The fact that Kelly and the girls' brother, Matthew, now 26, were from my first marriage certainly didn't get in the way.

Sean, a civil servant, had taken them on as his children when they were three and four respectively. When Abi was born in May 1995, Kelly was eight and acted like a second mum, helping with changing and feeding.

Abi wanted to be just like her older sister. Kelly was incredibly beautiful, with long brown hair and delicate features, yet totally unaware of it. She was bubbly and clever, too. It was her

memory of what followed is patchy, but once the police had told me Kelly was dead, I ran upstairs into our bedroom where Sean was asleep.

I wish I could say I sat calmly on the side of the bed to break the news, but instead I shouted it at the top of my voice. He jolted awake in confusion.

I had woken poor Abi, who stumbled in bleary-eyed: 'What's wrong, Mum?'

But how do you ever tell your nine-year-old daughter that her beloved sister is dead? It was so traumatic I can't really remember what either of us said. I think I simply told her to go back to bed.

It was midday before the police family liaison officer took us to the scene. I remember seeing huddles of young people, and already there were piles of flowers and mementos.

It was like an out-of-body experience

The car hit the kerb and smashed into an oak tree

standing at the foot of the old oak tree, noticing the fragments of glass and skid marks. Without thinking, I bent down and picked up a shattered Fossil watch. It was Kelly's.

We were taken to the Royal Surrey Hospital in Guildford to see our daughter. The staff tried to dissuade me from going in, but I had to. They urged me not to hug her because her injuries were so severe.

Nothing can prepare you for such a sight. She was all covered up, except her face. I kissed her cheek. She was freezing — and that really shocked me. I wanted to get a blanket to keep her warm, but it was too late for that.

I can't remember exactly when I was told the details of that night. Kelly had stepped outside the disco with a 17-year-old boy with whom she'd been having an on-off romance. It is thought they went to sit in his friend's car to listen to music.

He then decided to drive around the grounds of the college, despite the fact it wasn't his car and he hadn't yet passed his test. I still doubt that Kelly would have agreed to this. Another thing that confuses me is that she wasn't wearing her seatbelt — something she was so adamant about.

The boy then drove out into the road, accelerating faster and faster. By the time he met a tricky bend in the road, about half a mile from the college, he was doing 80mph in a 40mph zone.

The little Peugeot 106 didn't stand a chance. It hit the kerb and smashed into an oak tree. Such was the speed, the car travelled up the trunk before crashing into a ditch.

I am told Kelly died on impact. There were lacerations to her brain, her internal organs had detached and both her arms and legs were broken. I do not know the boy's injuries; nor do I want to know them.

The anger I feel towards him is as strong today as it was then. Yes, I know he didn't intend to kill himself or my daughter, but he did, so that doesn't lessen my fury.

It was his fault that instead of preparing for Kelly's 18th birthday party, we were planning her funeral.

We buried her ashes at St Mary's Church in Bramshott, Hampshire, a few weeks later. I carried her ashes in a box, and when it came to placing it in the ground I finally lost it. I just couldn't bring myself to let her go. The

'I'll never take risks, Mum,' Kelly had promised me

ambition to work with primates, so she was studying animal care at Merrist Wood College, Guildford.

I was a bit of a wild child, so I'd worry about Kelly following suit. But she was far more sensible. She'd tell me off if ever I got a bit tipsy at parties. 'You're so embarrassing, Mum,' she'd say.

When it came to driving, Sean and I gave Kelly lessons. She passed her test second time.

A month before she died, she'd attended a safe-driving road show that greatly affected her. When she came home, she sat on my knee and sobbed about a woman whose teenage son had been killed by a young disqualified driver.

'I'll never take risks, Mum,' she told me. 'I promise.'

On Sunday, May 15, 2005, Kelly drove to college for a disco. She planned to stay at a friend's house, so I didn't expect her home that night.

At the time, I had my own catering business, which meant I rose early. I was already in the kitchen when the doorbell rang at 5am.

The moment I spotted two figures through the glass, I just knew. The

Aldi.

Tasty prices for the Bank Holiday...

Which?
Best Supermarket

bank holiday
6TH MAY

<p>Greek Feta £1.29 200g</p>	<p>Parma Ham £1.99 90g</p>	<p>Creamy Coleslaw 69p 500g</p>	<p>Quiche £1.19 400g</p>
<p>Houmous 65p 200g</p>	<p>Red Pepper Houmous 69p 170g</p>	<p>Spanish Chorizo Slices 99p 100g</p>	<p>8 Choc Ices 99p 8 x 70ml</p>
<p>Soft White Baps 79p 12 pack</p>	<p>Crispy Mixed Leaf Salad 79p 200g</p>		

Spend a little Live a lot

Aldi, in store, accepts cash, Maestro, Delta, Solo and Electron cards only. Visa and MasterCard credit cards accepted in Scottish and selected Welsh stores only. No cheques accepted in store. All offers subject to availability. Prices correct at time of going to print. Excludes R.O.I. For details of your nearest store visit our website at www.aldi.co.uk or call our Aldi Store Location Line on 0844 406 8800. Check pack for warranty details. The warranty may be available via the distributor or the manufacturer. All products purchased in an Aldi store are covered by a 60 day refund policy. Goods returned to a store must be accompanied by proof of purchase/til receipt and in original packaging if not defective. The Aldi refund policy does not affect customer statutory rights. Greek Feta 200g, £6.45 per kg. Houmous 200g, 32.5p per 100g. Creamy Coleslaw 500g, 13.8p per 100g. Quiche 400g, 29.8p per 100g. Parma Ham 90g, £2.21 per 100g. Soft White Baps 12 pack, 6.6p each. Crispy Mixed Leaf Salad 200g, 39.5p per 100g. 8 Choc Ices 8 x 70ml, 17.7p per 100ml. Spanish Chorizo Slices 100g, 99p per 100g. Red Pepper Houmous 170g, 40.6p per 100g.

A daughter killed on the eve of turning 18. A sister who idolised her, about to hit the same birthday. And a mother torn between pride – and terror



Protective: Della with daughter Abi

Picture: JOHN LAWRENCE

myself to throw them away.) The first time she came down the stairs with Kelly's Spice Girls T-shirt on, I had to steady myself against the kitchen worktop.

But she takes comfort in it, and I have to respect that. Losing a sister is hard enough, but in a way Abi lost her parents, too, because we both changed so much. Above all, we became far more protective.

It started almost immediately. Before, Abi had always been given a lift to school by our neighbour but I could no longer let her travel in someone else's car. I had to drive her everywhere.

I was also horrified when Abi said she wanted to walk to school with her friends at the age of ten. Images flashed into my mind of a car mounting the pavement, but I had to let her go.

And then there were the school trips I wanted to keep her from for fear of the coach journey. I'd spend the whole day worrying whether she had put on her seatbelt.

Of course, the older your child gets, the more varied experiences they will have. But instead of accepting that, your paranoia builds and builds.

Abi was 15 the first time she went into Guildford with her friends. I made her text me a running itinerary: from when she was walking in – and out – of Topshop, to where they went for lunch and when they entered the cinema.

Everything she does is magnified by the fear of: 'What if...'

I am now resigned to the fact that I must let her out of my sight, but I feel I have to be told her whereabouts every second of the day. This is a heavy burden for her, but at least she understands.

As for driving, a year ago Abi was very keen to take a test.

I dread the day that Abi leaves for a new life

She reasoned that it was being a passenger that scared her: by learning to drive, she would be taking charge of her own destiny.

Sean and I reluctantly bought her a VW Polo and I gave her lessons. That was until she had a panic attack on the road last June.

'I can't do this,' she sobbed. She hasn't been able to take the wheel since. I certainly won't be rushing her into it.

It is yet another way her sister's death has taken its toll.

She wants to be an actress and is due to study performing arts at Winchester University in September. Yet she feels guilty that this is something else that Kelly missed out on. She even chose this university because of its location – only 40 minutes down the road. She needed to know, both for her sake and for ours, that she could pop home at any time.

It goes without saying that I dread the day she leaves for her new life.

She's very independent and I want her to exercise her desire for freedom, but at the same time it sends me into a panic. How will I spend my days without daily parenting? How will I know she's safe?

But we must face a higher hurdle before that: Abi's 18th birthday party in three weeks.

I know she fears a party celebrating being an age her sister never reached, but she also wants to mark the occasion like other teenagers. It is a jagged dilemma.

If we do go ahead, I will plough all my energies into giving her the best night possible. On will go the plastic smile and I'll do my best to make everyone feel at ease.

Afterwards, though, I'll collapse into bed and burst into tears.

You see, I'll always crave the memories Kelly never got to make. And, sadly, Abi's progress will always feel bittersweet as a result.

■ **FOR more information, visit www.safedrivesurrey.org and www.driveiq.co.uk**

following weeks and months remain a blur.

Matthew was living with his biological father at the time. Sean, Abi and I had endless therapy sessions. I was prescribed anti-

depressants, too, but that didn't stop the suicidal thoughts. Not that I could ever have done that to my family. I found by far the best therapy was speaking to parents who had been through the same

thing at Safe Drive Surrey, the roadshow that had so moved Kelly.

With time, I started to campaign myself. It felt like the only way of ensuring that my daughter hadn't died for nothing.

I am now also involved with Drive IQ, a piece of state-of-the-art free online software which anyone can use to become more aware of the dangers of driving.

One of the reasons I found myself drawn to other parents who had lost children in road accidents was that many of my own friends let me down. Some would cross the road or blank me in the supermarket rather than confront the issue – and they still do.

Others would say: 'Well, at least you've still got two children' as though that made it all better.

The sad thing is that there are times you feel so low you resent the

fact you have other children to stay strong for. And it is exceptionally difficult when a surviving child begins to resemble the one you've lost. Kelly and Abi had different fathers, so facially they don't look that similar – but there are certain expressions and mannerisms they share.

Abi laughs like her sister, with a peal of infectious giggles – though one of the saddest things is that she herself doesn't recall how Kelly's laugh sounded. There's a certain way she looks at me, too, that reminds me of her older sister.

To be honest, it's a double-edged sword: a comforting remembrance laced with the agony of loss.

For the past year or so, Abi has taken the same size as Kelly, which means she has been wearing some of her clothes. (I couldn't bring

Tinker Bell with a sting

DO YOU believe in fairies? It seems scientists do, having discovered a 'Tinkerbell fairyfly'. At just a quarter of a millimetre long, it is one of the smallest insects and is barely visible to the naked eye.

The tiny wasp has been named Tinkerbella nana after Tinker Bell, the fairy in Peter Pan, and Nana,

the Darling family's dog in the book. The creature was caught in the forests of Costa Rica. Scientists gently drag a super-fine mesh net through the vegetation then carefully search the debris.

The world's smallest insect is a species of mymaridae fairyfly, which is just 0.005 inches long.