



Flying the flag: Katrina

Pretty in pink: In her bunny girl costume

Crowning glory: In regal headgear

By Louise Eccles

Meet Kate's cousin, the Queen of Burlesque

WITH the patriotic tones of Rule Britannia ringing out and a fur-trimmed crown atop the young lady's head, you might think a princess has entered the room. Think again.

For the centre of attention in this scene is not Prince William's bride-to-be Kate Middleton, but her cousin Katrina Darling.

And things take a somewhat less-than-regal turn as the 20-year-old blonde begins seductively to shed her Union Flag dress.

Miss Darling is a burlesque dancer and her signature act, aptly titled God Save The Queen, ends with her attired in nothing more than red nipple tassels and a barely-there thong.

It is the Royal Family's closest brush with 'soft porn' since Prince Andrew's love interest Koo Stark appeared naked in an erotic film.

Her role in the risqué movie, Emily, famously ended the 18-month relationship after the Palace deemed her unsuitable.

So one wonders what 'the firm' would make of Miss Darling's act which, although arguably patriotic, is unlikely to secure an invitation to the royal wedding.

The dancer had no idea she was related to Miss Middleton when she created her regal striptease last year.

But it has since emerged from her family tree that the pair are second cousins, once removed, with her grandmother Jane Darling being sister to Miss Middleton's great-grandfather Thomas Harrison.

And while her soon-to-be-royal cousin attended the elite Marlborough College and courted a prince, Miss Darling has been working the cabaret scene in Sunderland for the past two years.

As Miss Middleton ponders which palace to make her home with Prince William, Miss Darling lives with her parents Eric, 65, and Maureen Darling, 54, in a semi-detached house.

She decided she wanted to be a burlesque dancer when she was 17.

'I sneaked in to watch a burlesque show and knew that was what I wanted to do,' she said.

'Two weeks after my 18th birthday I did my first performance with the Sunderland dance troupe Coquette Collective.

'After a few shows I realised I wanted to do it as a career and got

some more acts together. I don't get nervous at all because I'm used to being on stage. I don't need a stage name or alter-ego. I perform as myself.'

Dubbed the 'North-East's original Cheesecake Sex Pistol' on posters for her performance, she is the latest of the Middleton family to raise eyebrows with her behaviour.

Gary Goldsmith, Kate's 45-year-old uncle, brought shame on the family when a Sunday newspaper

'It started as a hobby'

showed him supplying undercover journalists with drugs and introducing them to a pimp in July 2009.

In one of Miss Darling's acts, she covers herself in balloons and then pops them one-by-one to reveal a sexy outfit beneath.

Other props include fire jets and an eight-foot python.

Her mother told the Mail: 'Katrina has been doing burlesque dancing for the past couple of years.

'It started as a hobby but now she

does it part-time while she's in between jobs. She likes the comedy side of burlesque.

'I suppose Kate Middleton might be quite surprised to hear what Katrina does.'

Miss Darling also has a half-sister Rachel, 28, a teacher, younger sister Emma, 18, a student, and brother Daniel, 17.

Her father was a dispenser at an optician's until he was made redundant in 2002 and now distributes mail-order catalogues.

Miss Darling, who recently dyed her hair from bleached blonde to bright orange, has toured the country with her Dita Von Teese-style show.

It is even possible members of her new extended family may have seen the petite performer in action, as several younger members of the Royal Family have sampled the burlesque scene in recent months.

Prince Harry, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie and Zara Phillips have all been photographed emerging from The Box, in Soho, which features semi-naked dancers and fetish performers.

leccles@dailyemail.co.uk



Darling of the royals? Kate Middleton's cousin Katrina

The man trusted to create the hairstyle of the year



Attention: Kate

IT IS a hairstyle that will be scrutinised by billions across the world, not least by the Royal Family themselves.

So the prospect of creating Kate Middleton's wedding day style on April 29 must be as daunting as it is exciting for up-and-coming hairdresser James Pryce.

The Daily Mail can reveal that the bride's famed chestnut locks will be styled by Mr Pryce, who works at the Richard Ward salon in Chelsea - and not by Mr Ward himself, as previously thought.

Celebrity favourite Mr Ward, 43, will tend to Miss Middleton's mother Carole, 56, as well as her sister Pippa, 27, who will be her maid of honour. But the future Princess's

By Sara Nathan

mane will be attended to by 33-year-old Mr Pryce, who lives in Willesden, north-west London.

At the moment, Mr Pryce charges £50 for styling and £88 for a cut and blow dry, but a source said: 'After the wedding, I expect it will be extremely difficult to get an appointment with James - and that his prices will go up.'

It was in fact Mr Pryce who was responsible for Miss Middleton's luxuriant locks as she posed for pictures to celebrate her engagement to Prince William.

The stylist, who has 15 years' experience

in the industry, will be helped by a team of 'dressers' on the wedding day as Miss Middleton gets ready at the Goring Hotel in Belgravia, close to Buckingham Palace.

They are currently trialling several looks on the bride, but it is thought she will opt for a half-up, half-down style.

As the Mail revealed, Miss Middleton is keen to wear flowers in her hair, instead of one of the Royal Family's stunning - but old-fashioned - tiaras.

Brides magazine beauty editor Alice du Parcq said it was not just a case of pinning her hair up, adding: 'Too high and she'll look like a Disney Princess, too low and she'll look old-fashioned.'



A cut above: Mr Pryce