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Strathclyde's Scarlet lady

AS LEADER of the House of Lords, Baron Strathclyde has been at the heart of the passage of the controversial Welfare Reform Bill, which has been bouncing back and forth in Parliament.

Strathclyde, of course, has more than a passing knowledge of benefits and council house provision, not least because it was on a sofa in a housing association flat that he partook of a bottle of chilled white wine followed by a romp

with penniless single mother Birgit Cunningham.

Now, artist Twinkle Troughton has immortalised married father-of-three Strathclyde's seduction of Birgit, 49, in a striking painting, *The Scarlet Lady*.

'Twinkle approached me after she heard me interviewed on the radio,' says Birgit, who has a son, Jack, nine, by twice-married baronet Sir Harry Nuttall, who abandoned her when she was eight months pregnant and has not

provided any financial support since 2007.

Explains Birgit, who once shared a Los Angeles flat with Elizabeth Hurley and dated Hollywood star Kevin Costner: 'Twinkle interviewed me, took a photo in my council flat and then painted over it, adding various details which relate to my life.'

'She has put Strathclyde in, peering out of a fictional painting on my wall, and dressed in his Lords ermine. Oh yes, and the bottle of wine is there, too!'

□ AT LAST, news which may soothe the fevered brow of Argentine president Cristina Kirchner, who suffers a seizure every time Britain so much as whispers the word 'Falklands'.

Kirchner and her cronies have been apoplectic that Prince William is doing a six-week, search-and-rescue stint on the islands and Britain is dispatching a warship to the region (a routine move). They are even in a tizzy because Science Minister David Willetts dropped in en route to Antarctica. It's

all Argentinian bluster, of course, ahead of this year's 30th anniversary of the war which claimed 258 British and 655 Argentine lives. But perhaps Kirchner and co should calm down.

For who has been chosen as the Queen's official emissary to the island to mark her Diamond Jubilee? It's not Prince William, nor his father. It's not even Falklands veteran Prince Andrew.

Let's see how Kirchner manages to take offence at, wait for it, the Duke of Kent — 28th in line to the throne.

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