



Feeling left out: Tom today with (left to right) Emma, Kate and Victoria



And baby makes four: Victoria, Kate and Emma (left to right) with baby Tom, top, inset: The girls (in the same order) aged three

# Having triplet sisters left me feeling like ain't no only child

were all very good at long-distance running. In fact, in the Southend borough championships they consistently took the first three places in birth order, on one occasion exciting a local radio broadcaster to near hysterics.

In first place it's Emma Mitchellson, hotly followed by her sister Kate and closely behind is Victoria Mitchellson. That's one, two, three to the Mitchellson girls!

The order was no psychological quirk, 'Emma was just a bit faster,' says Kate. 'And Victoria was a tiny bit slower than me. We'd all try to win it, but that's the way it came out every time.'

Did Kate mind always coming second? 'No, not at all. As long as one of us won, we didn't mind,' she says. 'I was happy as long as we beat everyone else.'

I've never detected the slightest crack in this impenetrable bond. It's got to the point where I hardly make an effort with them. After so many years it's become the status quo.

When she was 20, Emma left to take a job in Surrey. The others begged her not to go, but she did.

It was a short-lived adventure and a few months later, she returned home. Emma admits she'd like to live somewhere else now but is clear that if the others don't want to come, she's not going.

To this day, that closeness remains. They live within two miles of each other in Southend and see each other at least four days a week. If they go on holiday, they do it together.

Despite living so close to the capital, they have not been to London since they were children. They'd go together, they say, but not individually. They'd worry about getting on the wrong train, but if they went together they'd be

confident one of them would notice. Emma and Victoria have long-term boyfriends, but none of them has children. They say they've never been in a position where it's felt right for them.

Emma freely admits to not having any real friends other than her sisters.

'I'm happy as I am. Most people have two best friends. I've got mine. If something bad happens they're the ones I go to. We know each other 100 per cent. No one could be closer, she says. That doesn't mean she buys into any telepathic theories relating to multiple births.

We know how each other will react

to things and often what the others are thinking but that's because we've spent our entire lives together.'

Emma once gave Victoria a CD and told her not to listen to it while she was driving, but to wait until she got home.

'One song had made me cry and I knew it would make her cry, too. I didn't want it to cause a car accident. When she got back, Victoria put it on and was in tears.'

Victoria says: 'We'll often buy each other the exact same birthday card or present. In fact, it happens about 90 per cent of the time. It's clear how close they are, but how did the threesome feel when

they heard at the age of seven that Mum was expecting me?'

'We were so excited. We all did cartwheels in the garden. We wanted her to have triplet boys so we could have one each,' said Emma.

But, she added, by the age of five, I had started to annoy them.

Why? 'Because you were more of your own person by then.'

Would we be closer now if you weren't triplets? The answer is 'Yes' without hesitation from all three.

Though I don't think they feel they've lost out on anything and I'm not sure things will ever change, they seem to like the idea,

**I've missed them more than they have missed me**

would have helped us. We're more confident in a pack, but individually weaker than an average person.'

I guess that we don't quite feel whole without the other two, added Emma.

On my way home from last week's two-day visit to see them in Essex, I felt I'd gained a greater understanding of how intrinsically bound and self-sufficient they are. It made me feel a little less cross at how they withdrew from the family relationship.

It's always been a bit of a difficult subject between us and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to address it.

I'm surprised by their innocence and lack of malice and how frank they were with me.

It's not that they weren't into me as a person, it's just that they were so into each other it left very little space. Strangely, understanding that makes me feel a bit closer to them.

And perhaps they know now that I've missed them more than they've missed me.