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CENTRAL

Crown and Anchor, Wiltshire hotel review

This pub provided inspiration for *The Archers* and is still a cosy backdrop for barside gossip and hearty suppers



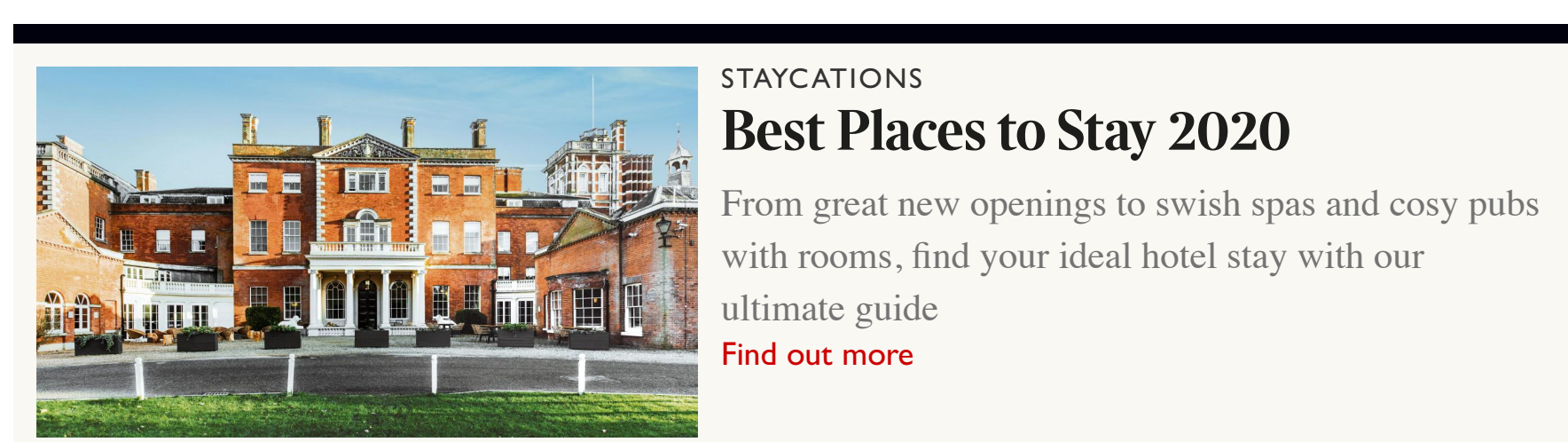
Liz Edwards | Friday October 09 2020, 5.00pm, The Sunday Times

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As country-pub pedigrees go, influencing storylines for the radio soap *The Archers* has to rank pretty highly. Geoffrey Webb, one of the show's writers when it started in the early Fifties, lived in the rural Wiltshire village of Ham, and would take his cue from conversations he'd hear among local farmworkers and gamekeepers at the Crown and Anchor's bar. Now the pub's a different place — it was renovated, resurrected and reopened last autumn by two village families after three years' closure — but those countryside conversations are still going on. The pub remains a village hub, if a slightly fancier one!

The bar is a cosy scene of flagstone floors, faded rugs, chesterfields and old black-and-white snaps of the village. A wood-burner sits in the brick fireplace and there's a garden terrace for warmer days. In the restaurant area, settles, banquettes and botanical pictures are the simple backdrop for excellent food: a small plate of crispy pig's cheeks, perhaps, or a spiced lamb faggot main course. With plenty of hunts around here, game is big.



Three of the eight rooms are in a cottage down the lane; the five in the main pub building are well soundproofed, even above the bar. Named after local farms, they're a good size and attractive, with soft herringbone blankets on the beds, geometric tiles and 100 Acres smellies in the bathrooms. Wansdyke is the largest; its exposed oak beams are from the nearby Savernake Forest. This is weekender territory, so it's hangers and hooks rather than wardrobes.

Within easy distance are the antiques shops in Hungerford, Wilton Windmill and plenty of walking; the QR codes on the giant OS map on the terrace wall will show you the way.

Doubles from £90, B&B; mains from £14; crownandanchorham.co.uk

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ABOUT THIS HOTEL

- Ham, Marlborough SN8 3RB
- **Restaurant** Yes
- **Dogs allowed** Yes
- **Accessible** No

For the latest on Covid-related measures and restrictions, please check directly with the hotel

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