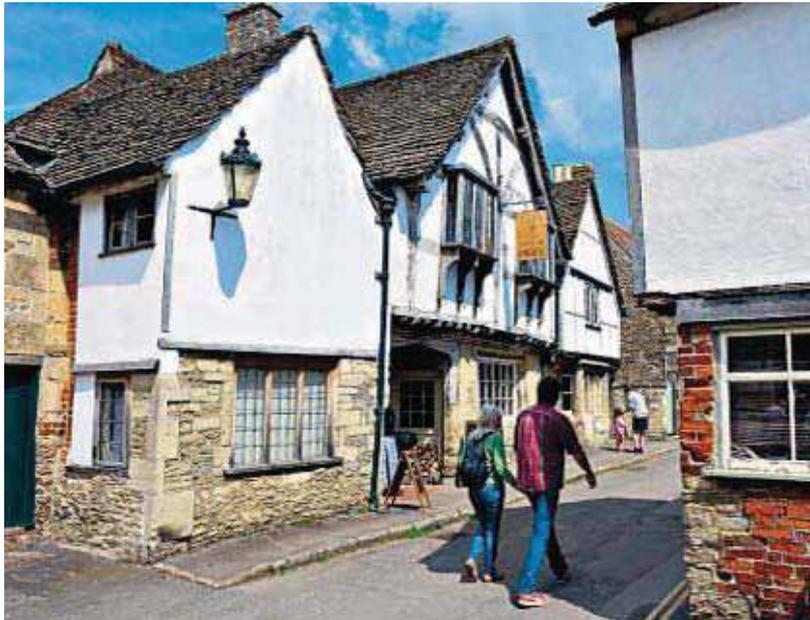


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30 perfect pubs for long, lazy weekends

*Good food, lovely surroundings – and even a room for the night... **Alastair Sawday** selects his favourite pubs for a leisurely get-together*



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PHOTOS: JOHN LAWRENCE, SAWDAYS



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FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: THE MERRY HARRIERS; THE SIGN OF THE ANGEL; THE TYTHERLEIGH ARMS; THE CARY ARMS; THE COW; THE SIGN OF THE ANGEL; THE GEORGE AND DRAGON; THE BARROW HOUSE

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My heart sang as I selected pubs and inns for this feature. I am partisan, of course, but am nevertheless amazed by the gales of creativity blowing across the UK. Pubs, we are told, are dying in their droves – and indeed they are. But others are born, and others resurrected, by brave people new to the rollercoaster world of the hostelry. The shackles of tradition have been cast off and new ideas on how a pub should look and operate are flooding in.

There is a price to be paid for all this new pub energy. Making up one's mind has never been harder: where to go, how much to spend, what to eat. One is faced with "moneybags" of seafood in lobster sauce, guinea fowl with truffle, or choux gnocchi. And if you want to make a weekend of it, simply book in for the night – most of these pubs and inns offer stylish rooms as well as excellent food.

Just as difficult is the choice of countryside: an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or a Site of Special Scientific Interest? Do you want to walk the hills or the coast? The only way around these painful choices is to do as much of it as you can. Ditch your plans for a long flight and the jostling crowds, gather a gang of your favourite people – and enjoy Britain's best spots for a weekend feast.

For more information on pubs featured go to sawdays.co.uk; the brand new edition of *Sawday's Special Places: Pubs & Inns of England & Wales* is on sale on June 1, 2018 (rrp £15.99).

SOUTH WEST

THE TYTHERLEIGH ARMS, AXMINSTER, DEVON

Chef Nick Topham creates menus from the freshest meat and fish: Tytherleigh bouillabaisse, rouille and homemade soda bread, British Blonde sirloin or rib-eye, some cracking puddings and cheeses. It has three real ales from Otter and Branscombe breweries and a good wine list. Mark and Rosie have transformed this run-down old village pub into a lovely place to eat, drink and stay. **Lunch from £12.50. Starters from £5.95. Mains from £17.50. Double rooms from £95 per night.** tytherleigharms.com

THE LITTON, NEAR WELLS, SOMERSET

This pretty village has fallen in love with its new inn – and it's easy to see why. The Litton is a gem, where owner Sally and her team work hard and happily to make you feel at home. Tuck yourself into a corner and order up a Welsh rarebit, or lounge outside next to the fire pits. The Whiskey Bar is a

temptation all of its own, as are splendid Sunday roasts. **Starters from £6. Mains from £12. Sunday lunch from £12.95. Double rooms from £120 per night.** thelitton.co.uk

THE REDAN INN, CHILCOMPTON, SOMERSET

The sleepy village of Chilcompton has had a culinary reawakening,

thanks to the arrival of this roadside inn. There are more than 30 gins behind the bar, and a good selection of local hand-pumped ales. Tuck into hearty fare from head chef Leon's seasonal menu – sausage rolls and Ploughman's with homemade bread at lunch, slow-braised brisket, caramelised onions and mash for dinner – or go all-out and choose something from the à la carte. Cracking roasts, too.

Bar snacks from £3. Lunch from £5. Dinner from £12.50. Rooms from £70 per night. theredaninn.co.uk

SIGN OF THE ANGEL, LACOCK, WILTSHIRE

The Sign of the Angel is a genuine period piece: all chalky whitewash and wonky beams, artful oak furniture and flagstoned passageways. The inn was taken over by energetic young brothers Tom and Jack and has been impeccably renovated to trumpet its age. The owners are from farming stock, and it shows in the menu – everything from the bread to the sorbets is locally sourced and homemade; warm mackerel rarebit, brioche and heritage tomato salad;

baked tenderloin in local bacon stuffed with pear and Bath cheese; Bramley crumble with toffee apple ice cream. **Lunch from £6. Dinner from £16. Sunday roast, two-three courses, £20-£23. Cream teas from £7.50. Rooms from £120 per night.** signoftheangel.co.uk

THE CARY ARMS AT BABBACOMBE BAY,

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TORQUAY, DEVON

The Cary Arms is a chic little inn that hovers above Babbacombe Bay, with views of sea and sky. You can eat fresh Devon seafood on terraces that drop downhill towards a small jetty where locals fish. The pub has six moorings in the bay, so you can charter a boat and explore the coast or hire kayaks for fun on the water. Inside, you find stone walls, wooden floors and a fire that burns every day. Stay over in one of the rooms – the new suites and beach huts are something to behold.

Lunch from £7.95. Dinner £25-£35. Rooms from £195 per night. caryarms.co.uk

THE HOLFORD ARMS, TETBURY, GLOS

At the side of the long road that takes you into Tetbury sits this unassuming country inn, with its shabby whitewashed exterior hiding more secrets than you can shake a stick at. Owners Pete and Tor have worked a special magic here. Whether it's building more stylish "shacks" in the big field at the back, or pressing their own apples, they have a way with food, drink and atmosphere. The bar winks with bottles, or try one of the local ales. Young chefs serve up tasty classics and treats; on Wednesdays you can tuck into a three-course Thai feast for a bargain price. Lunch from £10. Starters from £5. Mains from £15. Double rooms from £74 per night. theholfordarms.co.uk

LONDON

& THE SOUTH EAST

THE KINGS HEAD, WYE, KENT

A grand old pub run by "a couple of down-to-earth boys from the North" (their words). Mark and Scott have created an up-to-the-minute village pub where you're as welcome to drop by for coffee and croissants as order a glass of Sicilian wine. The lemon-baked chicken with sweet potato and red pepper mash is a highlight, and the pie of the day is not to be missed.

Lunch from £6. Dinner from £9. Sunday lunch from £12. Double rooms from £95 per night. kingsheadwye.com

THE GREYHOUND INN, WANTAGE, OXFORDSHIRE

Close to the white chalk horse at Uffington is a beautiful red-brick pub on the quiet road that winds through Letcombe Regis. Whether you go for guinea fowl with truffle, choux gnocchi and consommé, or battered haddock and chips and salad, this is cooking of a high order. If the pub is Georgian on the outside, it's country-trendy within: you can pop in for a latte, a well-kept pint, or a hedonistic feast. Starters from £5.50. Lunch from £7. Dinner from £11. Double rooms from £90 per night. thegreyhoundletcombe.co.uk

THE QUEENS ARMS, EAST GARSTON, BERKSHIRE

Families descend for roasts on Sundays; Hennessy cocktails clink with champagne glasses during Gold Cup week. The food is hearty, and on Fridays the fish lands straight from Looe. There's beef and Guinness pie, mussels with cream and chorizo, crab gratin with parmesan and game in season. It is

steeped in warmth and character, with a low-beamed bar, an intimate restaurant, a canopied terrace facing west and paddocks all around. Starters from £6. Lunch from £12. Dinner from £12. Double rooms from £110 per night. queensarmseastgarston.co.uk

THE MERRY HARRIERS, HAMBLEDON, SURREY

Head chef Sam Page turns out pub favourites sourced from no further than 15 miles away, is growing his own veg and herbs and does a bit of foraging to spice things up – nettles, wild garlic and blackberries. Meat is from Wakelings Butchers, ale is local, wine comes from Surrey vineyards and cider is home-pressed from Hambledon apples. In summer, the fun spills out onto the terrace. Starters from £6.50. Lunch from £5.95. Mains from £13. Double rooms from £95 per night. merryharriers.com

THE BARROW HOUSE, EGERTON, KENT

A 14th-century inn, 17th-century timber frames, and 21st-century comfort and design. There's a smart terrace for lunch in the sun, then a couple of open fires inside to keep things cosy. They serve their own ale, craft beers and well-priced wines, but you can pop in

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for an espresso, too. As for the food, most is sourced within 20 miles. Find soups and sharing plates, burgers and fish and chips, or a three-course feast (perhaps smoked salmon, slow-cooked beef, Bakewell tart).
Lunch, 2-3 courses, £12-15.
Dinner, 3 courses, about £25.
Rooms from £80 per night.
thebarrowhouse.co.uk

**THE GEORGE INN,
ROBERTSBRIDGE,
SUSSEX**

Look to the chalkboards for the day's dishes: locally landed lemon sole, Rye Bay scallops, slow-roasted pork belly, chargrilled lamb rump. Or opt for a chargrilled rib-eye steak, cut to size and order. Leave room for puddings, especially the chocolatey ones. Perfect as a base for visiting nearby Battle, Bodiam Castle, Pashley Manor Gardens and more.
Lunch from £5. Bar meals from £9.75. Dinner from £10. Sunday roast £10.75. Double rooms from £95 per night.
thegeorgerobertsbridge.co.uk

**THE DUKE OF
CUMBERLAND ARMS,
HASLEMERE, SUSSEX**

Latch doors lead to two tiny bars that creak with character. Simon Goodman is the chef-landlord and the light, modern dining room is a show-stopper (as are the views from the garden). Daily menus rely on fresh local produce, including Goodwood organic rib-eye steak, estate venison and South Downs lamb; Sunday roasts are brought as a joint to the table, and the fresh Irish oyster platter is a real treasure.
Lunch £7.95-£28.95.
Dinner £16.95-£28.95.

Dessert £7-£9.50.
dukeofcumberland.com

**THE
TOMMYFIELD,
KENNINGTON,
LONDON**

This is a cool little find – a lively pub for a good pint, with a restaurant serving tasty food and it has rooms, too. It sits between Vauxhall and Kennington, with two tube lines to whizz you into town, and three buses passing outside. Inside, you find wooden floors and high ceilings. Leather banquettes run along big windows, an open kitchen is on display, and a couple of booths are nicely private. A varied menu sees fish and chips, pies, steaks and burgers alongside pumpkin ravioli, Chateaubriand and banoffee pie.
Lunch and dinner from £12.50.
Sunday lunch from £13.50.
Food half-price for residents.
Rooms from £109 per night.
thetommyfield.com

THE MIDLANDS & WALES

**THE FELIN FACH
GRIFFIN, BRECON,
POWYS, WALES**

Battered sofas in the bar, books in the library and stock pots bubbling in the Aga room give this inn a relaxed informality and colourful style. The food is excellent, perhaps Portland crab, boeuf bourguignon, chocolate mousse with mascarpone; much of what you eat comes from a

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half-acre kitchen garden, with meat and game from the hills around you. The pub's reputation has spread far and wide, earning it Wales's first Michelin Bib Gourmand.
Lunch from £12. Dinner, three courses, from £25. Sunday lunch from £12.50. Rooms from £135 per night.
eatdrinksleep.ltd.uk

**STACKPOLE INN,
PEMBROKE,
PEMBROKESHIRE**

This lovely inn sits in a pretty village that's marooned in beautiful country. It's a few miles back from the sea, with Barafundle Bay – one of the finest beaches in Britain – a short walk away. It's a great little base – stylish and welcoming with tasty rustic food, perhaps deep-fried whitebait, rib of local beef, almond and hazelnut tart. Outside, the

pub is drenched in honeysuckle and there's a small garden to the front for a drop of Welsh ale in summer.
Lunch from £5. Dinner, three courses, £25-£30. Sunday lunch, three courses, £18.95. Double rooms from £90 per night.
stackpoleinn.co.uk

**THE COW, ASHBOURNE,
DERBYSHIRE**

Perch on an upcycled milk churn to down a pint of local ale and choose from the imaginative menu. Perhaps homemade pork scratchings with spiced apple

compote scrumped from the garden, followed by roast chicken with mustard cream.

Puddings are reassuringly robust: a baked blackberry filled braeburn, or Bakewell trifle. You're in Derbyshire's "golden

triangle" so take your time to admire the villages and vast views.
Starters £5.50. Lunch & dinner £11. Double rooms from £120 per night.
cowdalbury.com

**THE GEORGE
TOWNHOUSE,
SHIPSTON-ON-SOUR,
WARWICKSHIRE**

Slap-bang in the centre of town, the new-look George is a treat of a place to eat, drink and be merry. Tuck into menus that make the most of local suppliers (pork and beef from the award-winning Todenham Manor Farm; artisan bread).

The Welsh rarebit with roasted tomato is excellent, topped up with a hearty mug of potato and leek soup, but you might fancy wild mushroom and tarragon risotto with spring onions and truffled crispy egg, or the locals' favourite, fish cakes.

Starters from £5. Lunch and dinner from £9. Double rooms from £100 per night.
thegeorgeshipston.co.uk

**THE BULL & SWAN AT
BURGHLEY, STAMFORD,
LINCOLNSHIRE**

A magical renovation, an ancient inn that stands a short walk from the middle of glorious Stamford, part of the Burghley estate. Step inside to discover varnished wood floors, golden stone

walls, fires smouldering, and newspapers hanging on poles. At the bar, venison scotch eggs are impossible to resist, as are a raft of local ales. Regal oils adorn the walls, leather-backed settles take the strain, and you eat wherever you want, perhaps stilton on toast, Burghley game pie, apple and blueberry crumble.
Lunch from £5.50. Dinner from £12.95. Sunday lunch from £13.95. Rooms from £100 per night.
hillbrookehotels.co.uk/the-bull-and-swan

EAST

**THE CHEQUERS INN,
THORNHAM, NORFOLK**

Cheerful Chequers, beloved by locals and visitors alike, is thriving, with some of the best seafood you'll find in this lovely part of the world. The tempura of Brancaster mussels with tartar espuma and chilli vinegar is bursting with delicate flavours, but you might try slow-cooked crispy belly of pork with cider potato fondant, black cabbage, black pudding bonbon and grain mustard velouté. Pizzas are a treat too (crispy duck caught our eye) and there's private dining available. There are pavilions outside.
Tapas from £3.95. Lunch from £8.95. Mains from £13.95. Double rooms from £120 per night.
chequersinnthornham.com

**THE GUNTON ARMS,
THORPE MARKET,**

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NORFOLK

The beautifully restored Gunton Arms overlooks 1,000 acres of lush and stunning parkland. Quaff pints of Wherry alongside gamekeepers and gentry; tuck into rib of beef cooked over the fire in the vaulted dining room. Chef Stuart Tattersall (ex-Mark Hix) champions locally sourced ingredients, so

enjoy mixed grill of estate fallow deer served with crab apple jelly; Brancaster mussels and chilli tossed in linguine; Cromer crab in summer.

Lunch and dinner from £10.50. Bar meals £1.50-£5.50. Double rooms from £95 per night. theguntonarms.co.uk

THE KING'S HEAD, BAMBURGH, NORFOLK

Over the ancient humpback bridge is the village green and this large pub; built by a miller in 1602, it's been licensed since 1800. Inside is comfortable and full of character: a vast inglenook fireplace divides restaurant from main bar. The garden is perfect for families and the food is fresh and tasty, from sausage rolls and prawn and crayfish sandwiches to sea bass with rösti, generous Sunday roasts and good-looking desserts. Wines are numerous and

ales include Adnams and Woodfordes. As for the bedrooms, they're spanking new. Lunch from £6. Dinner from £11. Sunday lunch, three courses, £20. Rooms from £90 per night. kingsheadbawburgh.co.uk

THE DABBLING DUCK,

GREAT MASSINGHAM, NORFOLK

Revived by a group of locals, the Dabbling Duck perches prettily by the green. Food is the draw, and beers from the barrel. As for the mood, it is warmly endearing. The bar has been cut from a single slice of ancient Norfolk oak, there are high-backed settles by a log fire, rug-strewn floors, and shelves lined with books and board games. Views are to the village. Try the local Brancaster mussels, fish and chips or homemade pies. There's often game from the owner's farm on the menu too. All this, 20 minutes from the beach

and the bird-rich salt marshes. Lunch from £5.75. Bar meals from £5. Dinner from £10. Rooms from £75 per night. thedabblingduck.co.uk

THE THREE HILLS,

BARTLOW, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The only remaining pub in this tiny village of just over 100 souls doubles up as the village hall, the library and all-round buzzing hub. Food is taken seriously: classic British with a twist and sourced locally as much as possible – touchingly, there is also a discount for the villagers. There's a warm buzz inside with muddy-booted walkers, Lycra-clad cyclists, and families with children who can spill outside to the garden on warm days – a pizza oven and barbecues are planned. Starters from £6. Lunch, two courses, £17. Mains from £15. Rooms from £100 per night.

thethreehills.co.uk

NORTH

THE ROSE & CROWN, ROMALDKIRK, CO DURHAM

Romaldkirk is one of those villages where little has changed in 200 years. The Rose & Crown dates to 1733 and stands on the green next to a Saxon church. Roses ramble across walls at the front, so grab a pint of ale, sit in the sun and watch life pass by. There's a peaceful sitting room for afternoon tea, then a panelled restaurant for excellent food, perhaps honey-glazed goat's cheese with apple and hazelnut, or shoulder of pork wrapped in parma ham. Lunch from £10.50. Dinner, three courses from £27. Double rooms from £115 per night. rose-and-crown.co.uk

THE ANGEL INN, SKIPTON, YORKSHIRE

This old drovers' inn remains reassuringly traditional – but offers wines that have come, over the years, to rival the Yorkshire ales. Menus include dishes ranging from filo “moneybags” of seafood in lobster sauce – the fish comes fresh from Fleetwood – to their own Yorkshire twist on tapas (“Yapas”!). Vegetarians are looked after and the sticky toffee pudding is legendary. The glorious up-hill-and-down-dale drive to get here is part of the charm. Lunch from £7.50. Bar meals from £15.95. Dinner, three courses, £35-£55. Sunday lunch £24.50. Double rooms from £150 per night. angelhetton.co.uk

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THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON, NEWTON, NORTHUMBERLAND

The village inn has been transformed. Now, at the back, is a generous space for diners where French windows open to a south-facing terrace with views across the valley. But it's still very much a pub at the front. Expect traditional British comfort food, including slow-cooked pork shoulder with boulangère potatoes; or, for the more refined, roast cod fillet with smoked haddock brandade; crispy parma ham and leek velouté. Families can tuck into roast

COMFORT FOOD

The Duke of Wellington has a south-facing terrace

sirloin of Northumbrian beef on Sundays. Lunch and dinner from £9.95. Sunday lunch £11.95. Rooms from £95 per night. thedukeofwellingtoninn.co.uk

THE GEORGE & DRAGON, CLIFTON, CUMBRIA

A cool little inn with lots of style, friendly staff, an airy bar for a pint of Hawkshead, and an attractive restaurant for

some very good food. Berries and mushrooms are foraged and vegetables are home-grown. The owner rears slow-grown breeds of beef, pork and lamb on the Lowther estate nearby, so come for local food that punches above its weight, prepared by award-winning head chef Gareth Webster. Lunch and dinner from £12. Sunday lunch from £12.95.

askhamhall.co.uk/
george-and-dragon

THE EAGLE & CHILD, RAMSBOTTOM, LANCASHIRE

A clear vision – to create a community pub with top-quality food – has been key to the Eagle's soaring success. Menus focus on Lancashire's food heritage; hearty and affordable dishes include black pudding scotch egg, or braised



beef shin and oxtail suet pudding. Disadvantaged young local people are trained in the kitchen, and alongside community group Incredible Edible Ramsbottom, owner Glen has transformed waste ground into a beer garden. Starters from £6.95. Lunch from £6.95. Mains from £13.95. Rooms from £75 per night. eagle-and-child.com

THE DURHAM OX, WESTWAY, CRAYKE, YORKSHIRE

A picturesque spot at the top of the Grand Old Duke of York's hill with a flagstoned bar, rose walls, carved panelling and big fires. Follow a roast with a local cheese board or classic desserts like strawberry millefeuille (left), baked Alaska or sticky toffee pudding. The views across the valley are stunning. Peace, just 20 minutes outside York. Lunch and dinner £8.95-£26.95. Bar meals from £6.95. Sunday lunch from £14.95. thedurhamox.com



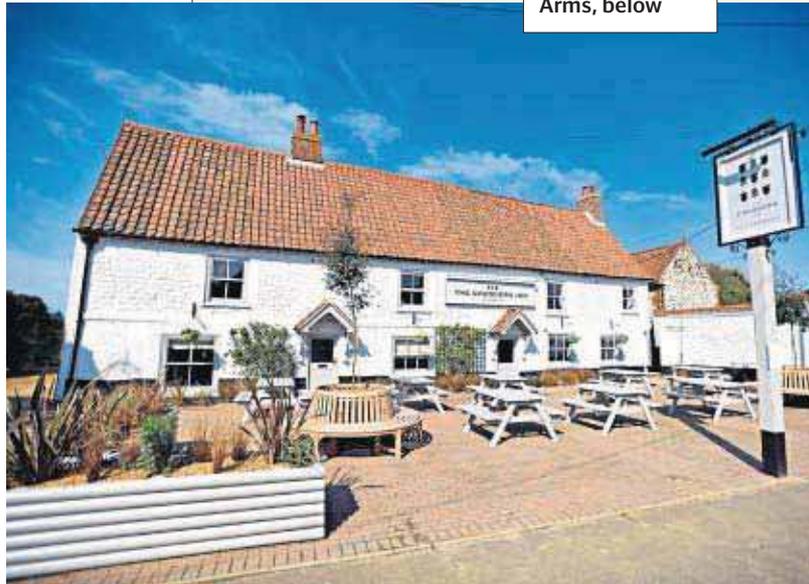
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ON DRAUGHT

The Chequers
Inn; wildlife at
The Gunton
Arms, below



**RELAXED,
INFORMAL**

The Felin Fach
Griffin, right,
and The Bull &
Swan, below



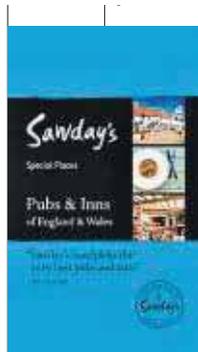
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**LOCAL
TOUCH**

The Tytherleigh Arms, right, and The Redan Inn, below right



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CHRISTOPHER JONES; JOHN LAWRENCE; JAY WILLIAMS FOR THE TELEGRAPH