

Downton stars big fans of Bampton butcher's bangers



Lesley Nicol who
plays Mrs Patmore

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Reporter covering Witney and West Oxfordshire. Call me on 01865 425483

PRIZE-WINNING bangers made by a village butchers have taken on a whole new level of fame after being endorsed by *Downton Abbey* stars. The Bampton

Royal pork sausages, produced on site at Patrick Strainge Butchers, were feasted on by the cast of the ITV period drama when it was filmed in the village earlier this year.

Actor Rob James-Collier, who plays villain Thomas Barrow in the series, has been reported saying he couldn't get enough of them.

Alison Weaver, who runs the business with her partner George Gascoigne and 20-year-old son Oliver Weaver, said: "It's brilliant that he likes the sausages and we're always pleased when they come into the shop. The cast come in and buy all sorts."

Staff also produced a Mrs Patmore pie, made with lamb, red wine and rosemary, named after the Downton Abbey cook. Actress Lesley Nicol, who plays Mrs Patmore in the series, came in to sample them and got behind the counter joking that she wanted to serve customers.

Ms Weaver said: "She was excellent and good fun."

She said staff presented Ms Nicol with one of the pies and made dozens more, which the cast swiftly demolished. She added: "It's lovely to get this recognition from small backwaters in Bampton. It's a tiny shop and our staff deserve it because they work so hard.

"They got their pictures taken with the cast and had a lot of fun."

Ms Weaver, whose family took over the butchers two years ago, said the Bampton Royal sausages – which cost £7.49 per kilo – won an award at the British Pig Executive South of England show earlier this year.

She said: "They are wonderful sausages – they are made from locally-sourced pork from pigs that live a happy life along the Thames." Ms Weaver said

Downton Abbey, which films outdoor scenes in Bampton and at Witney's Cogges Manor Farm museum, was a boost to tourism.

She said: "People come around and have a look around the streets to see where it's filmed. It all helps the local economy."

The fifth series of the costume drama, due to air on ITV from September 21, takes the saga to 1924. Locations that have been used in Bampton include Churchgate House and St Mary's Church, renamed St Michael and All Angels, which has hosted a series of dramatic *Downton* events – including weddings, funerals, christenings and a jilting at the altar.