

# PROPERTY NEWS



## FIND THE PERFECT PROPERTY

HOW TO BE IN THE BEST POSSIBLE POSITION TO FIND THE PERFECT HOME

### WEATHERPROOFING

GET YOUR HOME READY FOR THE UPCOMING SEASONS

### DECEMBER GARDENING

PREPARE YOUR GARDEN FOR AUTUMN AND WINTER

### CHRISTMAS PREP

CHRISTMAS FOOD PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY

### THE ASHES

CAN ENGLAND BRING THE ASHES HOME THIS MONTH

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How not to miss out on your perfect property

Finding 'The One' can feel like an elusive search, so when you do find that perfect property, the last thing you want is to miss out. Making sure you are in the best possible position to make an offer and secure the purchase is the key when you're trying to secure your dream home.

Property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla are great tools when house hunting and can showcase a plethora of homes within your search area, allowing you to quickly narrow down specifics including how many bedrooms, whether it has a garden etc. However, it can be unwise to rely solely on these portals when searching. The time taken between an estate agent receiving instructions to sell a house and loading it on to the internet can only be a few hours but can be several days/weeks. It is this period that many people looking to find a home miss out.

To avoid this delay and possibly miss out on your potential forever home, register with estate agents in the area and build a good working relationship with them. Visit their offices and meet them in person. This will give you an opportunity to outline your requirements as well as providing them with contact details. The estate agent will then contact you when a property that fits your specification comes in, often before it is uploaded to a property portal.

If you like the sound of it, book a viewing rather than asking for the details to make sure you are first through the door - after all, it could be 'The One'!

The key to being phoned about properties which fit your brief is to be specific. If you have non-negotiables, set them out from the off. Similarly, if there are things you would be willing to compromise on, let your estate agent know. Stay in contact with them and ensure you follow up on viewings. A good

## WELCOME TO THE NOVEMBER ISSUE!

Halloween has come and gone, and the clocks have changed, which must mean we're on the final stretch towards Christmas. With this in mind, we have a fantastic article full of advice about how to achieve a quick turnaround on a house sale if you need to sell to move. On pages 14&15, we're starting the prep for Christmas early with our handy guide.

If you're looking for some bargains, then on pages 8&9 we have our guide to some of the best Black Friday deals, which are always perfect for some easy, early Christmas gifts. And, on pages 4&5, we look at ways to weatherproof your home now the cooler, wetter weather has settled in.

With the cooler weather, it's no excuse to neglect your garden. On

pages 10&11 we have our monthly gardening guide. Moving back inside, we look at bathroom design hacks to keep your bathroom looking pristine and stylish, and on page 7 we look at World Kindness Week from the 13th to the 19th November.

Rounding off this month's edition, we preview the Ashes to check out what England's chances are of bringing the trophy home, and on page 13, after the success of No Time to Die, we look at the other delayed films that are soon to be released.

So sit back, grab a warm drink, and enjoy...

**Jonathan Wheatley**  
Editor

# YOU'VE FOUND THE ONE NOW DON'T LOSE HER?

idea is to email a response after the viewing, confirming your mortgage position, repeating your requirements, giving feedback on the property you've seen and stating whether or not the property is for you. By following up, you are helping the agent. They're not going to phone 100 people about a new listing if they know they can sell it in five calls. Feedback and professionalism are key.

Before you even begin your property hunt, have your finances in order and a solicitor on standby. To get the house you want, agents need to view you as a reliable buyer, so having your paperwork in order before you start will expedite the process as much as possible. Check your credit score and then get it in the best possible shape to secure your mortgage deal. Simple things such as closing unused bank accounts, making sure you are on the electoral role and cancelling out of date direct debits can have a big effect on your score.

Make sure your home is on the market if you are serious about moving (first-time buyers, you're in a great position as you are not part of a chain). Even better if you can have an offer accepted before you make one on your next home! Keep your home clean and tidy as viewings will be happening

regularly. Showcasing a blank canvas allows potential buyers to see the home as theirs. It might also be worth giving everywhere a fresh coat of paint. Opting for pale, neutral colours will reflect light and make your property appear larger as well as presenting that all important blank canvas.

Next, sort out your mortgage in principle. Having this in advance marks you as a serious buyer. When you've found a property you wish to make an offer for, be honest. Explain your situation and don't be afraid to say you love the home - many sellers want to know their home is going to someone who will appreciate it like they have. If they accept your offer, ask for them to take the property off the market. They don't have to do this but are more likely to if you've established a good rapport.

Preparation is key when finding and securing your perfect property. Be polite and kind to everyone involved in the conveyancing process - goodwill really does go a long way. Gazumping is seriously frowned upon, so once the property is off the market, you can start prepping, however, if your chain falls through, don't despair, with so many buyers at the moment you should be able to keep the purchase together.

register with estate agents in the area and build a good working relationship with them.

Showcasing a blank canvas allows potential buyers to see the home as theirs.



# WEATHERPROOF YOUR HOME

FOR THE AUTUMN AND WINTER MONTHS

The colder months are arriving, so get prepared for potentially freezing temperatures. Here are our top tips for how best to maintain warmth throughout your home until spring and beyond



## REPLACE OLD WINDOWS

Replacing your windows with new ones can be a life-saver throughout the colder months. Windows with energy-efficient uPVC window frames and French doors with double glazing are usually a great way to go. Older windows, such as those with wooden frames, can wear down with age to create gaps for cold air to get in. Drafts are one of the most common causes for disrupting the warmth of your home, so keeping your windows caulked can make all the difference during the colder months. Test your windows for drafts, and if there are any, install weatherproofing strips to seal them tightly.

## THE DOORS

Like windows, doors can allow in a surprising amount of cold air throughout autumn and winter. To guard against this, weather-stripping can go between the door and the door jam. There's a possibility this may make closing the door slightly harder, but consider this evidence that the heat transfer will be effectively reduced due to its tight seal. Draft stoppers, for underneath the doors, can also help prevent against cold air creeping into your home. Some will physically attach to the bottom of your door and they'll have either a brush or a piece of plastic hanging down that stops air from travelling outside to inside and vice versa.

## ENSURE THE ROOF IS SECURE

Apart from windows and doors, one of the most obvious ways cold and moisture can get into your home uninvited is through the roof, so check the roofs (including those of any garages, greenhouses and tool sheds) for any loose shingles, structural damage or any weak spots where an accumulation could cause a collapse.

## REPLACING THE GUTTERING

Your guttering is important to your home, particularly in retaining its warmth. Merely cleaning your guttering might not suffice, so a full-on replacement might be required. High-quality aluminium, cast iron, or steel guttering can improve your home aesthetically, but more vitally it will provide adequate drainage for rainwater which will stop it from penetrating into your home. This can reduce the structural damage caused by wet conditions and reduce the likelihood of mould setting into your home too.

## INSULATE DUCTS AND PIPES

Insulating ducts and pipes can be cost-effective and energy-conserving if done correctly. Leaving your pipes and ducts uninsulated can mean heating parts of your home you rarely or never intend to use. When insulating, it's important to keep in mind that you should never place



the insulation within three feet of the heating system, exhaust flues, or any other high-temperature areas.

### INSULATE YOUR PLUMBING

One of the biggest potential victims to cold weather in your home is undoubtedly your plumbing system. The water could freeze or – worse – the piping could crack and break. To prevent this happening insulate protect your hot and cold pipes throughout as much of the home as you possibly can. One of the easiest ways to do this is to install tubular-sleeve insulation.

Drafts are one of the most common cause for disrupting the warmth of your home

### KEEP CRAWL SPACES WELL-CONDITIONED

The likes of mould, fungus and bacteria can all be formed as a result of crawl spaces being unsealed

and without a regular airflow. When your crawl space is properly conditioned and encapsulated, your home will become cleaner, drier and more energy efficient, enabling the property to easily pass any inspection as well as potentially adding value to your property.

### EXPANDING FOAM TO FILL ANY OTHER GAPS

Expanding foam is a brilliant way to fill in, or seal, any other holes or gaps in your home to block out the outside air and temperature. Foam you buy can have different levels of expansion so be

sure to select the right kind for your needs. The product description of the expanding foam product will say what size gaps it is intended for so ensure you read the small print first before buying.



# PUTTING FUN INTO FUNCTIONAL

**T**he bathroom is often the most overlooked room in the house. It's just functional, isn't it? Bath, separate shower or one over the tub, loo, basin and a decent extractor fan to shift the steam and that's basically all you need.

Nine times out of 10 it's a small, featureless room where romanticists try to soak away their cares surrounded by scented candles and pragmatists get in and out before the first dribbles of condensation have hit the skirting boards.

However, it doesn't have to be like that. There are some simple ways to make time spent in the bathroom more tolerable, and the first is an injection of colour to bring some vibrancy to an often stark, white landscape.

If you've got a weekend to spare, update your splashbacks with coloured or patterned tiles or alternatively contrast white tiles with one of the many stylish shades of

paint which are making their way on to colour charts.

However, if you haven't got the stomach for a full makeover, embrace nature. House plants not only bring a wealth of texture and colour but also purify the air. Plants that work best in an area of high humidity, warm temperatures and low lighting include dracaena and peace lilies, while aloe vera is almost indestructible and bamboo, orchids and spider plants bring a touch of the exotic.

Changing basic fixtures, such as swapping tired taps for sparkling new waterfall-style fittings or adding a rainfall shower system can help make an impact, as can something simple like three strategically-placed rails on a crisp white door, draped in brightly-coloured towels.

If all else fails, perhaps it may be time to introduce new units or a free-standing bath, but whatever you do, it needs to be kept spotless

and that's where old-school cleaning hacks come into their own. Such as removing a limescale-encrusted shower head, popping it into a freezer bag and soaking it in a solution of distilled vinegar and bicarbonate of soda, or rubbing dulled taps with half a lemon to restore their sparkle (although bicarb and an old toothbrush can get rid of the stubborn stains and also works well on grouting).

You can buff up a grimy bath by sprinkling salt onto a cut grapefruit as well as the bottom of the wet tub, and giving it a good scrub, while a slow-draining sink could be unblocked by a combination of distilled vinegar and four effervescent indigestion tablets, followed 10 minutes later by a kettle of boiling water.

And don't forget to give the extractor fan the once over – it is easily blocked by the combination of condensation and dust, so use the can of air spray you use to clean your computer keyboard to unblock the ducts.



House plants not only bring a wealth of texture and colour but also purify the air.

# IT'S KIND OF A **BIG** WEEK

Time to bring out the good in the nation

**N**ovember 13th marks International Kindness Day. But that's not all, as World Kindness Week will also be celebrated right up until the 19th.

## WHAT IS IT?

Well, it's exactly what it says on the tin. It's a day, and week, where the objective is clear: 'Be kind'. It is seen as a day throughout the world as an opportunity to focus on the good deeds of the human race. Nowadays, the leading independent, not-for-profit organisation in this country, which focuses on this issue, is Kindness UK. Their aim is simple: "Kindness UK believes that every day should be filled with kindness and our goal and sole aim is to promote, share and unite on this basis."

## HOW DID IT START?

World Kindness Day was first celebrated in 1998 by the World Kindness Movement - a group of a number of nations' non-governmental organisations. The UK's first Kindness Day occurred in 2010, but has now expanded to fill a week. It is not just the UK who celebrates this occasion though, as European nations such as Italy recognise its significance, along with countries further afield, such as Australia, Singapore, and India.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Perhaps the greatest thing about World Kindness Day and Week, is how easy it is for everyone to make a contribution. Big or small, any act of kindness goes a long way to ensuring that the aims of the celebration are achieved.

But if you're lacking inspiration, then here are just a few good deeds that you can get involved with, fundraising for example. What can be better than to set yourself a goal to achieve, and all the while, know that any proceeds will go to a good cause? Perhaps you can look to embrace local produce for the week. Rather than journey to the supermarkets for items such as eggs, fruit and vegetables, take a look at what offerings local farmers are serving up, and help keep small businesses running.

And if you're a teacher, then ensure that this day is made aware to all the little ones in your class! You can even allow them to participate in group activities throughout the week, designed to encourage friendship.

Or if you're tight for time, and cannot make any grand gestures, then don't worry, as there are still plenty of things you can do. Why not leave positive reviews to any business you have encountered, such as a pub or restaurant? And speaking of hospitality, make a concerted effort to be an attentive customer, and help brighten someone else's day.



# ARE YOU READY FOR BLACK FRIDAY?

Get prepped for the shopping event of the year



Are you on the market for some new home tech? Hold fire, because Black Friday is fast approaching so you could be in line for some deals.

If you've somehow managed to avoid the frenzy of previous years, Black Friday is a shopping event which used to be confined to one day but has since spread to fill a whole weekend – which is great news for shoppers after a bargain.

This year Black Friday falls on November 26th and will continue across the weekend, morphing into Cyber Monday on the 29th when online retailers release any packages they may have held back.

It is worth planning in advance for Black Friday to stop yourself being lured into deals you neither want nor need. Research the products you want to buy, so you know their standard retail price and can decide whether the Black Friday price is worth it for you. Some less trusty retailers even inflate the prices of items in the weeks leading to the big weekend so they can appear to dramatically slash prices. Search around to check the RRP from multiple sources before deciding to click pay.



#### HOME TECH TO LOOK OUT FOR

It can be confusing to know what to be looking out for so here are some home tech trends of 2021 that could come up in Black Friday sales.

**U by Moen** – a wall mounted smart shower controller that works with Amazon Alexa, apple HomeKit and Google Assist. You can turn on the water and set the temperature with your voice.

**GE Profile Smart Built-In Convection Double Wall Oven** – this clever oven features Wi-Fi and has a built-in camera so you can control the temperature and watch a live stream of your food cooking from your phone or tablet.

**Sony HT-A9** – this new speaker system can give you home cinema style surround sound without the need for draping wires around your living room. Essentially a set of 4 wireless speakers that talk to a control box plugged into your TV.

**KODAK Luma 150 Pocket Projector** – ideal for producing a presentation for work or watching a film. This portable projector expands a screen up to 150 inches, has built-in surround sound and a headphone jack for private viewing. Battery life is 2.5 hours and is rechargeable via mini-USB.

**Le Feu bioethanol fireplace** – this biofuel burner hits all the style points with its oval design and tri-pod stand. Burning bioethanol rather than wood or coal, this burner provides enough heat to warm a room of 20 square metres. Another benefit is that this burner can be moved from room to room.

#### TOP TIPS:

1. Make sure you are logged into the websites you plan to buy from. Remembering your password or having to create a new account can waste valuable time – this could be an issue as some deals are for a limited quantity only.

2. If you're making a large purchase, check your bank or credit card limit per purchase to prevent your card being temporarily blocked by your provider.

3. If you plan to shop Amazon, you need to be a Prime member. Amazon Prime members get an exclusive 20-minute early access to all Lightning Deals. Basically, if you want a lightning deal, you need Prime. Amazon Prime has a 30-day free trial so if you don't have a membership, sign up in advance of Black Friday to secure the best deals. If you're a student, you can access Prime free for six months.

4. Shopping a year behind the market could help you out. Black Friday sales are one way retailers shift last year's model, so if you don't mind having tech which is the previous model you could get a great deal.

5. Focus on the price rather than the saving because as well as artificially hiking up the price, retailers often benchmark the deal against the product's original RRP, not its current retail price. This can make the saving look far greater than it actually is.

So, shop savvy and make the most of the deals by deciding what you want and how much you want to pay in advance. Happy shopping!



# FREEZE FACTOR

Help the garden combat wintry blasts

**N**ovember in the garden is as much about preparing for winter's onslaught as it is about planning for the spring, which seems light years away as the hours of daylight shorten and the cold, dank weather does its best to erase the memories of scent-laden blooms and vibrant borders.

Leaf clearing is almost a full-time job in itself, but there are still a few flowerbed jobs to be done, particularly if you have made a late decision to get some tulips into your garden. These distinctive favourites are generally the last bulbs to go in as it helps prevent the fungal disease, tulip fire.

With many varieties on the market, the vivid flowers are at their best in the garden or in containers from March to May but need to be planted in fertile soil, at a depth of two or three times the bulb's height and twice the width of the bulb apart.

Other border favourites, such as dahlias and begonias, need your attention after the first frost. That first sub-zero night means it's a good time to lift the tubers, clean them off and store them in dry compost in a cool, frost-free place until its time for re-planting next year.

Other than that, you will need to protect roses by pruning them to half their height to prevent windrock, where the stems sway in strong winds and loosen the roots. And you might want to cut a few stems of holly – particularly if you were planning to make your own Christmas decorations - to prevent the

birds feasting on all the berries. The stems will keep if they stand in a bucket of water in a sheltered spot.

It's also a good time to give your outdoor containers the once over, checking for chips and cracks that might worsen once the frosts set in. After cleaning, they can be wrapped in hessian or bubble-wrap and raised off the ground on bricks or 'pot feet' to prevent waterlogging.

Don't forget to aerate your lawn – if you use a garden fork, you can lean it back slightly to create slightly larger holes to let the air in – and remove all the fallen leaves to prevent fungal spores growing. If you shred them,

you will need to protect roses by pruning them to half their height to prevent windrock, where the stems sway in strong winds and loosen the roots.

ideally with a rotary mower as you do your final cuts of the year, they will rot down faster and create a good leaf mould which is a great soil conditioner.

It is also a good idea to edge your lawn now your borders are clear; it will keep them neat through the winter months.

Over in the vegetable patch, you can lift parsnips after the first frost which will sweeten their flavour – brussels too will have their taste intensified as the mercury plummets – while manure can be spread across the beds to rot down over the winter and give you a good start in the spring. And, if you want to remove

the back-breaking aspect of gardening, you might want to take advantage of this dormant period by building raised beds.

The fruit garden also needs a bit of attention. Plant your currant bushes and raspberry canes, and divide mature clumps of rhubarb, while the runners and dead leaves can be removed from strawberry plants. Pear and apple trees can be pruned between now and February although now is the time to apply grease bands to the trunks of all fruit trees to prevent wingless female winter moths climbing the trunks and laying their eggs in the branches.

Into the greenhouse, which is due for a good clean. Wash down all the glass, staging and floors with horticultural disinfectant to polish off any overwintering pests and diseases and replace any damaged panes or seals. Sheets of bubble wrap, attached to the frame, will reduce heat loss and protect plants – although remember to ventilate, particularly after watering, little and often – while solar lights will allow you to work late into the darker afternoons.

And if you have water butts, give them a good clean and let the autumn rains refill them.

Other than that, get your feet up in front of the fire and start perusing those catalogues. It's never too early to get your seed orders in!

And if you have water butts, give them a good clean and let the autumn rains refill them



# TESTING TIMES

England's cricketers face tough Ashes series

The winter months may be associated with a reduction of sport in the UK, but thankfully, as colder, wetter times draw in for England, better weather is due in Australia. So, it's time to resume hostilities with the old enemy Down Under.

## WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The title of the rivalry may sound mysterious, but the origins are actually rather simple. Following a match between England and Australia back in 1882, which Australia won on English soil, a British newspaper proclaimed that English cricket had died, and gravely intoned "the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia". Since then, every Test series between the nations has been a hard-fought affair to see who can win back 'The Ashes'.

## WHAT'S THE SCHEDULE?

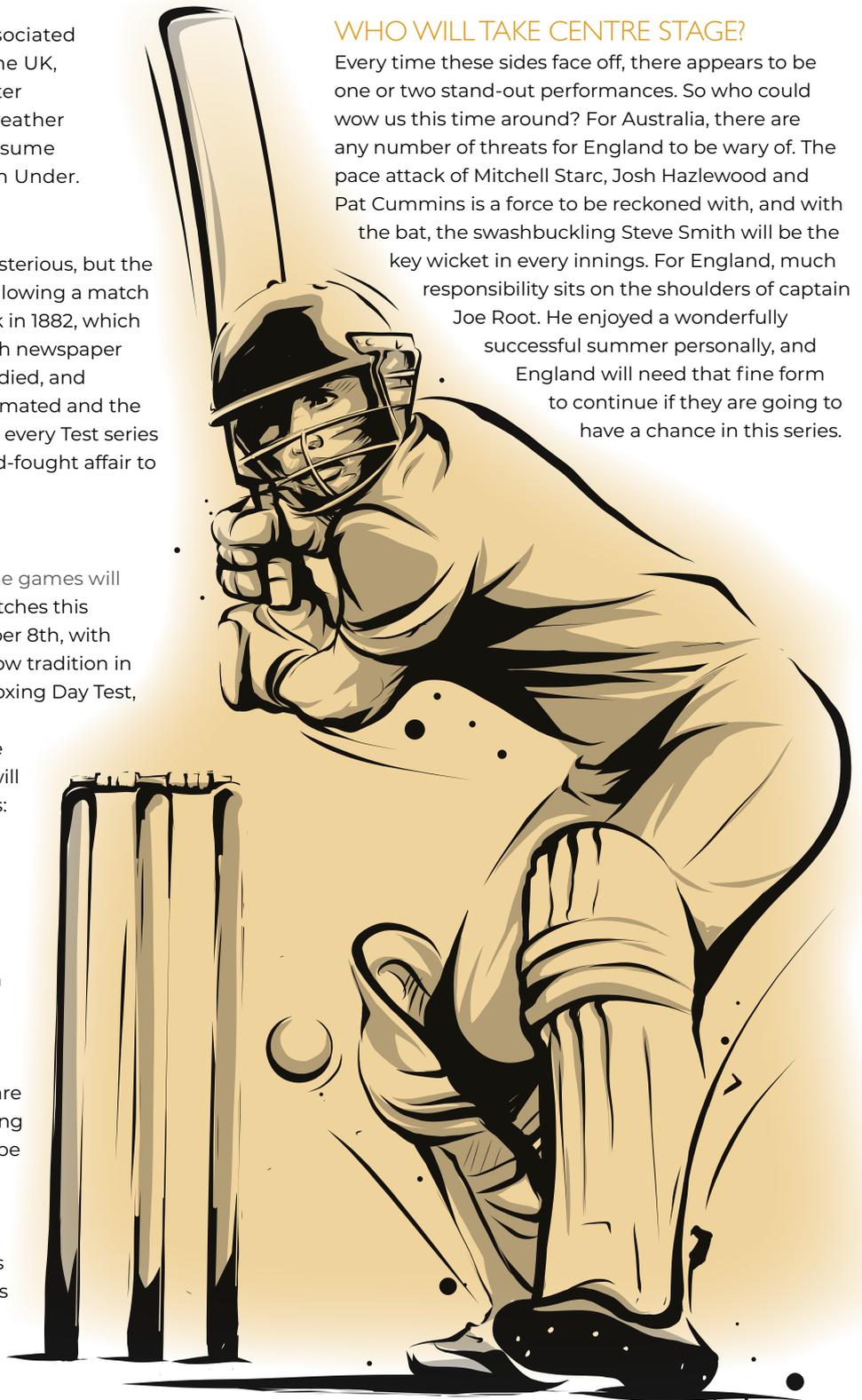
As is always the case in The Ashes, the games will be fought over five, five-day Test matches this winter. The first will start on December 8th, with the last on January 14th. And, as is now tradition in Australia, the third Test will be the Boxing Day Test, with the match commencing in the late hours of Christmas Day for those watching in England. The matches will also be played at five iconic locations: Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth.

## WHAT ARE ENGLAND'S CHANCES?

In recent history, Test series between the two sides have proved extremely competitive. However, England's performances this year have been patchy at best, and therefore, there are concerns that with the tourists' batting frailties, the Australian bowlers may be licking their lips. Added to this is the ominous statistic that England have not won a Test in Australia since the 2010-11 tour, meaning that many fans may experience some nervous nights watching behind the sofa.

## WHO WILL TAKE CENTRE STAGE?

Every time these sides face off, there appears to be one or two stand-out performances. So who could wow us this time around? For Australia, there are any number of threats for England to be wary of. The pace attack of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins is a force to be reckoned with, and with the bat, the swashbuckling Steve Smith will be the key wicket in every innings. For England, much responsibility sits on the shoulders of captain Joe Root. He enjoyed a wonderfully successful summer personally, and England will need that fine form to continue if they are going to have a chance in this series.





# THERE'S NO TIME TO WAIT FOR THESE UPCOMING BELATED BLOCKBUSTERS

**W**ho you gonna call? The cinema, of course, to book those tickets! Here are three films certain to leave us shaken and shirred! We all know only too well that much has been delayed, or outright cancelled, due to the COVID—19 pandemic, and although films might not initially seem like one of the most tragic victims of the crisis, they can very much prove to be a saving grace for our mental health, a much-welcomed distraction from the reality we currently still inhabit. Here are our three top picks of movies finally getting projected onto the silver screen after months upon months of waiting.

## NO TIME TO DIE

The new James Bond film has finally arrived, and if you haven't seen it yet, you're missing out! James Bond is one of the most successful and longest-running film franchises today, still going strong. No Time to Die is the 25th Bond film, and is also the longest at two hours and 43 minutes. Originally planned for release in November of 2019, the film is finally here after delays. It is Daniel Craig's fifth and final outing as 007.

Bond is assigned a mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist, and once his adventure begins he soon finds himself hot on the trail of a mysterious villain, whose new and dangerous technology has the capability to threaten the entire human race.

## THE FRENCH DISPATCH

With many of the same cast and crew members, including director Wes Anderson, *The French Dispatch* has been a highly anticipated American comedy-drama film, now set for release theatrically on 22nd October. Following a delay, *The French Dispatch* had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival on 12th July this year, and was originally set for release during last year's summer.

*The French Dispatch* is effectively a love letter of sorts to journalists set within an outpost of an American newspaper set in a fictional 20th century French city, illuminating a collection of stories published in "The French Dispatch."



# LET THEM EAT CAKE

'Stir-up Sunday' can spark a stress-free countdown to Christmas

"Before you know, Christmas will be here". There you have it, the most feared sentence in the English language, seven words to make the population break into a cold sweat.

Of course, it needn't be that way: a little bit of forward planning and prep work can mean the difference between a stress-free cruise into the festive season and a frantic scramble to get everything done in time.

Obvious things - such as buying and writing cards, and buying your presents - will not only give you a head start but will also help to spread the cost.

Creating your own advent calendar can be a fun thing to get the kids involved with, while designing and constructing a bespoke Christmas wreath for your front door is a genteel way to spend a wet November Sunday afternoon.

However, nothing sparks the anticipation of the forthcoming festivities quite like the scent of your own fruit-packed Christmas cake, filling the home with that pungent, freshly-baked aroma which wafts from the kitchen tantalising both the tastebuds and nostrils.

Traditionally, they and Christmas puddings are baked on Stir-Up Sunday - the last Sunday before Advent which this year falls on November 21st - to give them time to

be fed and mature. That's 'fed' as in given a generous glug of brandy (preferably), whisky, or rum once a week ... or perhaps twice, just to be on the safe side.

That five weeks or so gives the cake time to soak up the decadent, fruity flavours and develop a rich, moist texture. Of course, for an even deeper taste sensation there's nothing to stop you donning your apron a couple of weeks earlier, because as long as they are wrapped in greaseproof paper and placed in an airtight container in a cool place out of sunlight, they will only improve with age.

As for the ideal recipe, look no further than the twin goddesses of baking, Mary Berry and Delia Smith - to stray elsewhere would, quite frankly, be heresy unless, of course, you are the proud keeper of a tried and tested formula which has been handed down through generations.

Delia suggests starting her mix the night before baking, mainly to allow the copious quantities of fruit to absorb the initial slurp of brandy (sorry, it has to be brandy) and, for a really luxurious, dark cake, use black treacle and muscovado sugar. Once cooked - and that can take more than four hours - it can be fed again when cool and then stored.

Christmas puds have a slightly different recipe, and as they are smaller, have a shorter cooking time. However, denser puddings



As for the ideal recipe, look no further than the twin goddesses of baking, Mary Berry and Delia Smith





will have a longer steaming time on the big day so that's something to bear in mind, while a generous flavouring of Cointreau or Grand Marnier provides a tasty alternative to normal brandy.

Mince pies can also be made up to a month in advance, frozen and then popped in the oven when they are needed while a mouth-watering cranberry and chestnut stuffing - combining classic sage and onion with apples, chestnuts and the sharp tang of cranberries - can also find a place in the freezer up to four weeks.

So, let's move from the kitchen to the front door and that statement decoration, the Christmas wreath. This tradition goes back to the Romans, who would gift evergreen branches to family and friends to wish them good luck and good health for the new year. Twisted and shaped, it is believed they ultimately adorned doors to symbolise joy and victory, although Christians favour a circle as it represents eternity or life never ending.

Getting that circular shape can be quite difficult unless using wire, Styrofoam or the foam oasis favoured by flower arranger as a foundation. Then it is quite straightforward to create a base with holly branches - again, deeply symbolic - conifer



or spruce cuttings, before adding ornaments such as silk flowers or ribbons.

In recent years, there has been a move away from plastic and plant-based wreaths for more sustainable ones which can be re-used, such as rings wrapped in hessian, and emblazoned with ribbons and gold or silver baubles.

However, nothing says home-made more than a simple wire ring, entwined with evergreen clippings from your own garden. If you have a holly bush, so much the better although it's best to get in quick before the birds snaffle the berries for a final feed before the winter.



Mince pies can also be made up to a month in advance



Castle Acre Road, Swaffham

£675,000



CHAIN FREE! Fantastic, recently fully refurbished to a high standard throughout, substantial detached four bedroom house. The property has much to offer including gated access, three reception rooms, en suite shower room, gym/garden office/studio, two garages, sizable gardens and much much more...

01760 721389

info@longsons.co.uk

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE NO OBLIGATION VALUATION

## Litcham Road, Great Dunham

£230,000



CHAIN FREE! Very well presented, recently modernised semi-detached cottage situated in the popular Norfolk village of Great Dunham. Oozing character and charm the property benefits from modern bathroom and kitchen with original features a plenty, en-suite, separate garden and garage.

## Chantry Court, Necton

£230,000



CHAIN FREE! Modern well presented, two bedroom detached bungalow situated in the heart of the well serviced, popular Norfolk village of Necton. Built in 2007, the property boasts underfloor heating, wet room with shower & bath, modern kitchen, off road parking and garage.

Sydney Dye Court, Sporle

£219,995



Well presented, modern detached bungalow situated in the popular Norfolk village of Sporle. Built in approximately 2004 the property offers recently fitted luxury bathroom suite, parking, gardens and UPVC double glazing. Viewing is highly recommended.

Kendle Road, Swaffham

£249,995



Modern, well presented three bedroom end terraced house situated on a popular development on the outskirts of Swaffham. The property boasts garden, allocated parking, en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended!

01760 721389

info@longsons.co.uk

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## Orchard Close, Ashill

OIEO £300,000



A very well presented, recently refurbished detached bungalow backing onto open farmland, situated in the popular Norfolk village of Ashill. The property offers garage, parking, gardens, open plan kitchen/dining/lounge, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing is highly recommended.

## Phantom Close, Swaffham

OIEO £225,000



Recently built, very well presented semi-detached three bedroom house situated on a new development on the edge of the Norfolk market town of Swaffham. This superb property boasts an en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, gardens, parking, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

## Newfields, Sporle

**£240,000**



CHAIN FREE! Very well presented detached two bedroom bungalow situated in the popular Norfolk village of Sporle. Located towards the end of a cul-de-sac with open countryside views to the rear, the property offers parking, car port, gardens and UPVC double glazing.

## Giffords, Newton By Castle Acre

**OIEO £500,000**



Very well presented, detached four bedroom bungalow situated in a riverside location with the River Nar flowing across the bottom of the garden in Newton near Castle Acre. The property offers an en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, double garage and parking for several vehicles.

01760 721389

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## Jubilee Way, Necton



## Offers Over £300,000



A very well presented detached three bedroom house situated in the sought after and well serviced village of Necton. This superb property offers a garage, parking, gardens, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing is highly recommended.

## Chequers Road, Grimston



## Offers Over £545,000



STUNNING! Recently built, desirable, barn style detached three bedroom property in the beautiful Norfolk village of Grimston approximately 20 minutes from the North Norfolk coast. This superb, spacious property has been finished to a high specification throughout and viewing is highly recommended.



# MEET OUR TEAM...



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# Present your house for sale by de-cluttering...

Maximise your home's potential and create spacious rooms enticing potential buyers – simply by de-cluttering!

“ De-cluttering allows you to... maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important ”

If you are looking to sell your house, or have had your home on the market for a while now, then you probably want to get the maximum sale price in the quickest time. There are a few things you can't control – but the one thing that is in your control, is the look and feel of the interior and exterior.

While it's worth spending time fixing and cleaning your house before potential buyers come and view, it's also important to de-clutter. This creates spacious rooms and also allows you to decrease and organise your personal items before you move yourself. Of course it's understandable that you don't to want spend money, time and energy on a home you are about to leave, however, a lot of people are looking for a house in which they can move straight into. Maintaining your

property might even save you thousands of pounds; it could even reduce added expenses of living in your home whilst waiting for a sale. And it might even help avoid possible reductions in the asking price.

The main reason in which people move house tends to be because they lack space in their current home. They want a home that is spacious and in which they can grow into. If a potential viewer comes to your home and sees that there is lack of space, then this will turn them away.

De-cluttering allows you to remove any unnecessary items in an untidy or overcrowded place. It will help maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important.



So where should you start?

You need to create a great first impression and focus on the rooms themselves. You will notice that the first things you see in each room are personal items. Where possible you want to create the look of a

them into things you want to keep and things you want to get rid of. You may even find that you have collected a cupboard full of paper work. Get yourself organised! Don't just throw it all away, but file it and go through it thoroughly. This will also make it easier when you move.

De-personalising can also be a great way to de-clutter. Too many personal effects can be distracting to buyers. They want to see a house in which they can make their own memories rather than seeing yours. Again, personal items can be stored away. Remember

“ Where possible you want to create the look of a lifestyle that the potential buyers want ”

lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a 'show home' feel, rather than a 'lived in' feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

So, what do we mean by clutter? There are two types: genuine clutter, and items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property.

Genuine Clutter:

You need to go through the space and sort out each item, categorising

You also want to focus on little things like DVDs, books and trinkets. These items may have some small value so sell them or donate them to charity. Get rid of any old shoes and coats that are lying about in your porch or hallway. You might want to hide away the coats and shoes you do currently wear. Store them in your wardrobe, while you have viewings.

Items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property:

You may want to consider putting some items in storage while you sell your home. Sometimes items are too large or even too small for some spaces and can make the room look odd. If you want to keep these particular items, then store them until you move into your new home.

that this is only a temporary way of living and hopefully it won't be for long! If you find you are keeping more things than you are throwing out, then think about whether or not it's in the right room or do you even need it now?

As previously mentioned, you can attempt to sell some of the things you have acquired over the years. Use sites like eBay, Gumtree and social networking sites to try and sell items. You may want to even hold a house sale for the remaining items that you can't sell. Failing that, why not donate to charity.

The end goal is still the same and it's important to help potential buyers envision your house as theirs. So remember, de-cluttering will make your home more spacious and entice potential buyers!

# Top Tips!



If you are throwing away paperwork, shred anything that is confidential



De-clutter before agents come and take photos of your property. This will help attract more potential viewers online and get that first good impression



Don't spend too long on certain items and don't get distracted. Keep yourself motivated and race against the clock!



Make it fun! Play some music or watch TV while you de-clutter





## Your step-by-step guide to the conveyancing process

Once a sale has been agreed and is in the hands of your solicitor, it will go through the following stages. Sometimes additional work will be needed – for example, if the property is leasehold or is yet to be registered with the Land Registry. It is also important for buyers to discuss the availability of their deposit with their solicitor early in the transaction, and we strongly recommend that you contact your solicitor regularly so that they can keep you fully up-to-date with the progress and the latest timescales.

### Seller's solicitor's steps

- Obtain a copy of the Title Deeds (or office copies if the title is registered)
- Obtain a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) (if applicable)
- The seller(s) will return a completed Property Information Form and a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form to the solicitors
- Copies of the above documents, plus a draft contract – this is known as an 'Information Pack' – will be sent to the buyer's solicitor
- Answer the buyer's solicitor's additional enquiries (for example, specific questions about fixtures and fittings) and obtain copies of any planning consent documents
- Agree the contract and arrange for the sellers to sign it in readiness of the exchange (below)
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

### Between exchange and completion

- Obtain redemption figures from the mortgage lender and reply to requisitions on title
- Approve the transfer and arrange for the seller(s) and buyer(s) to sign
- Receive the agent's fee account and seek the seller's consent to settle this out of completion funds

### Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

### Upon completion

- Receive completion funds and (only when this has been completed) instruct your estate agent to release the keys to buyers. Redeem mortgage and forward the financial statement. Forward any surplus funds (unless these are being used to fund an onward purchase). Ensure all outstanding bills are paid
- Forward transfer documents and deeds to the buyer's solicitors
- Forward evidence of 'discharge of mortgage' to the buyer's solicitors

## Buyer's solicitor's steps

- Obtain the Information Pack, including a copy of the EPC (if applicable) from the sellers' solicitor and raise any additional queries
- Initiate any specialist searches (for example: a coal search). Submit local, environmental and water searches and a chancel check. This takes about 10 working days in total, and enquiries are then usually raised from the results
- Approve the contract when all enquiries are satisfactory and complete. (At this stage, a mortgage transfer deed will need to be signed and witnessed)
- Receive a mortgage offer and instructions from the lender and deal with any conditions set out by them. Make sure that life cover and buildings insurance is being arranged
- Request the deposit, report back to the buyer, and arrange for the contract to be signed. Place buildings insurance and life cover in force
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

## Between exchange and completion

- Raise 'requisitions on title' and prepare the draft transfer deed
- Report on title to mortgage lender and obtain funds for completion, including Stamp Duty (if appropriate)
- Prepare accounts, obtain signature to mortgage deed and undertake final Land Registry and Land Charges searches

## Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

## Upon Completion

- Forward to the seller's solicitors the balance of funds - it is only then that they can authorise the release of the keys. Receive from the seller's solicitors, the transfer document deeds
- Stamp the Transfer Deed, register the buyer's ownership with the Land Registry and forward the deeds to the lender or client (where appropriate)

**Contract** - The agreement that sets out the main terms that have been agreed - for example: price, address, names, etc. Two copies are drawn up, and each party signs one in readiness for the exchange of contracts.

**Deposit** - The part of the purchase price (usually 10%) which the buyer pays on exchange of contracts.

**Exchange of contracts** - The swapping of signed contracts by the solicitors (together with the buyer's deposit). After this, the contract is binding.

**Energy Performance Certificate** - This contains information on energy use, energy performance, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel bills.

**Land Registry** - The Government department that records who owns what land, and under what conditions.

**Local Authority Search** - A list of questions that are specific to the property and intended, for example, to discover if there have been any planning applications on the property, if the road to the house is maintained by the council, etc.

**Mortgage Redemption Figure** - The amount required to repay the outstanding capital/ interest of a mortgage.

**Property information form/fixtures, fittings and contents form** - Standard forms about the property that the seller answers for their solicitor (for example: what will be left behind, details of guarantees, etc.)

**Title Deeds** - Legal documents that prove ownership of land/buildings, and the terms on which they are owned.

**Transfer of Title** - The document that passes the ownership from the seller to the buyer.

**Stamp Duty for buy to let investors and second home owners** - An additional tax, paid by the buyer purchasing an additional property that is not their main residence. It includes buy to let landlords and those buying second homes and holiday homes. The higher rates will be 3 percentage points above the current rates of duty shown below.

**Requisition on title** - An enquiry relating to the completion arrangements.

**Seller's Pack** - This comprises a Property Information Form, a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form, a copy of the title deeds and the draft contract.

**Stamp Duty** - A tax paid by the buyer purchasing their main residence.

The current Stamp Duty Holiday runs until the 30th June and as such you won't pay stamp duty on purchases up to £500,000.

After this date the nil-rate band will be set at £250k until the end of September.



# Moving house?

From meter readings to removal companies, there's so much to remember when moving house. Here's our checklist of what to do and when

**F**irst of all, congratulations on your new home! The excitement has probably now kicked in but moving home can also be one of the most stressful and emotionally draining things you can do. However, careful organisation and planning can help decrease the stress and anxiety of moving. This comprehensive and essential checklist will help you do just that.

## Eight weeks - Research

Ideally, you want to start packing away any non-essential items as early as possible. This includes any items stored away in the loft, garage and shed. If you are not using it, pack it. Looking into your new area is also important, try to do this around eight weeks before you move. You might need to think about transferring your children to different schools and ordering new uniforms too. At this point, ensure you are also documenting all your important information away: that includes contact details, dates, contracts and information regarding your solicitor.

## Six weeks - Removal companies or do it yourself?

Now would be the perfect time to decide on a local removal company. Or if you don't have too much to move, you may want to do it yourself. You could even look into different van hire companies. At this point you've probably started packing away some bits, but if there is anything you decide not to take, then look into selling these items or donating them to charity. This will also give you an idea on the volume of items you have to move.

## Four weeks - Notify utility companies

This would be a good time for you to notify utility companies and inform them about your move to switch over. This includes gas and electricity, council tax, internet, phone rental and TV. You should also consider changing any car insurance, tax, memberships, phone contracts and inform your bank about the move. Now's the time to also arrange a date to have your new house cleaned before you move



“ It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! ”

in, and start ordering any new furnishings for your new property. Start packing away more items, that being, out of season clothes, books, dvd's and even bulky items, like TV's that aren't used often.

#### Two weeks - Confirm all details

Confirm your move with your removal company or van hire, estate agents and schools. If possible, try to organise someone to look after your pets and children for the day of your move, as this can also be a stressful time for them too. If your removal company doesn't disassemble any furniture or sort out the un-plumbing for the washing machine, then now would be the ideal time to organise these. Remember to also cancel any local services you receive: this could be window cleaners, gardeners and newspaper deliveries. You should now also think about re-registering to vote and getting your post re-directed after your moving date. Continue packing away more furnishings, kitchen appliances and crockery that you won't be using for the next couple of weeks.

#### 24 hours - Final check and walk round

You now have only 24 hours before you move, so double check that everything is packed away and ready for transit. It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! You may want to create an inventory of your boxes and

furniture to help you keep track of what you have and to help you ensure it doesn't go missing.

#### Moving day

Today is the day! You need to be ready for when your removal company comes. Ensure that you let them know if there are any fragile boxes that need extra care when handling. If you're moving yourself, then pack up your car or van and work out how many trips it may take. Before you leave, also take note of your final meter readings and send these off to your provider. Don't forget to leave your keys for the new owners!

#### You have arrived at your new home!

Give your removal company instructions of which boxes go in which rooms and make sure you are happy with everything that has arrived. Ensure you check for any damage before the movers leave. Read your new utility meters and send your readings of to your supplier. Taking photos of them will also ensure you have the correct reading if you need them again in the future. Unpack your essentials such as bed linen and clean towels. Don't worry about the rest, it isn't going anywhere! Order a takeaway, have a cup of tea and enjoy your first night with your family.

Right, so now you're all moved in, it's time to settle down, unpack and enjoy your new place. Remember, planning is essential to ensure your move runs stress free.

## Checklist

### Eight weeks

- Pack non-essential items
- Research your new area (transfer schools and order new uniform)
- Keep all important documents

### Six weeks

- Decide on a local removal company
- Clear out any unwanted items
- Keep packing

### Four weeks

- Notify utility companies
- Start preparation for your new house
- Keep packing

### Two weeks

- Finalise all details
- Organise pet and child care
- Cancel local services
- Keep packing

### 24 hours

- Check every room and ensure everything is packed
- Pack a night bag so everything is to hand
- Collect your new keys
- Make sure your phone is fully charged so you can get in touch with the estate agents or removal company

### Moving in

- Prepare for the arrival of the removal company and give them directions/your contact details
- Ensure everything is ready to move
- Record meter readings

### On arrival

- Give removal company instructions of what goes where
- Check for any damage before they leave
- Read your new utility meters and send them off to your supplier
- Check if the previous owners have left anything behind
- Unpack essentials
- Order a takeaway and sit back and relax!



Want to treat yourself to a proper removal company for your next move or are you prepared to do it yourself

# Removal company or brave it yourself?

**Y**ou're excited about your new home and location but the process of packing, organising and actually moving all of your items is something no-one really ever looks forward to. Not only that but you also have to contact utility companies, maintain a job, keep your children happy and clean your entire house. You do have super powers, right?

## Removal companies

Unless you live in a small property or flat, it could be worth hiring a professional removal company to help relieve some of the stress on the day. They have many skills and experience and some of the services they can provide include packing and

unpacking, dismantling and assembling furniture, loading your belongings quickly and securely, including those fragile and specialist items. They can even supply you with packing materials.

Hiring a removal company will also allow you the time to collect the keys to your new home. You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth. Some services are great if you don't have much time to plan and get these done yourself; however these do often come at a premium and may not be suitable for those on a budget. When choosing a removal company

You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth



its key to look at those which have good recommendations and reviews, as you need a company you can rely on. You can use comparison sites, such as [comparemymove.com](http://comparemymove.com) and [reallymoving.com](http://reallymoving.com), to help find you the best deals.

### Getting quotes

You should aim to get at least three quotes from removal companies, preferably from firms which will come out to your property rather than those who just estimate the cost over the phone, as you don't want any nasty charges later on. Plus it will give the company an accurate idea of any restricted areas in your home, if they can park a van or lorry, and how many

items you have. You should also ask for the price to be broken down so you can see just how much you are paying for when it comes to certain aspects like insurance, packing, an hourly rate, mileage and any storage costs.

Once you have found a removal company, it can be useful to send them a briefing sheet that includes information about any items which need to be specially packed, any difficult or large items, plus any carpets and curtains which need moving. Finally, it can also be helpful to send them a floor plan of the new property so they can unload efficiently.

## Top tips for packing

When packing, ensure you don't overload your boxes with heavy items, as these will be difficult to lift and could cause a back injury.

Fill any empty gaps using old newspaper, clothing, socks or even tea towels. This will help secure any items when they are being moved.

Create an inventory and label all your boxes and write the contents on each box with a marker. That way you will know which room each box is to go in. And if you are super organised, you could even colour code each room!

Pack heavier boxes on the bottom. This might seem like common sense but it will ensure that any of your fragile items won't break.

Pack a survival box. These are the things that you will need first and should include paper towels, bin bags, cutlery, the kettle, some mugs, tea, coffee, milk, sugar and finally, some toilet paper!

HERE FOR YOU  
NO MATTER THE  
**WEATHER**

Whatever the weather, here at **Longsons**, our friendly and experienced team will be on hand with expert local knowledge and innovative marketing techniques.

Contact us today, for a **FREE** no obligation valuation today.

