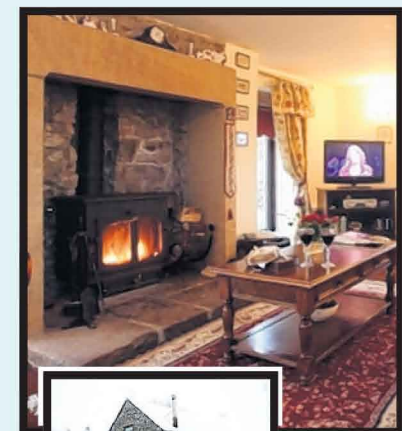



 Compiled by
 Trisha Harbord & Kay Cox

Home is where the hearth is


 Cracker...
 Christmas
 Cottage in
 the Peaks

THE BEST OF BRITISH

PREMIER Cottages are always adding new properties to the collection, which covers the whole of Britain.

Book a festive break at the evocatively named Christmas Cottage, and chances are you'll land in a winter wonderland. The cottage is in the Peak District, which makes it a good bet for a white Christmas.

And as the big freeze goes on outside, you can keep warm inside beside the gritstone fireplace with its inset log burning stove. Three-night short breaks start from £355.

Treworkey Cottages in Cornwall is a collection ranging from snug boltholes for two to some big enough for eight. All the properties have inglenook fireplaces, flagstone or wood floors and four-poster beds.

Weekly rental starts from £364 and short breaks are available on request. See premiercottages.com


 Cornish dream...
 Treworkey des res

 Cosy... Knightsfield,
 top, and, left and
 below, lovely Lletty

 Grate expectations... snug
 Knightsfield living room

 Snug... Lydia, top
 Drumore, right,
 and Crovie, below


WINTER is on its way and as Jack Frost starts nipping at your nose just remember... when the weather outside is frightful, a fire is so delightful.

There are scores of holiday hideaways where you can toast marshmallows on an open fire, safe and snug as you listen to the howling gales outside.

All of Sheepskin's self-catering accommodation offer the chance to enjoy a roaring log fire and the properties are something special — from the romantic to the remarkable and quirky.

Sheepskin tailor-make each break to let guests make the most of precious time away. Tell them what you like to do and they'll do the research then detail all you need to know in a personalised guide

Escape the winter chill...curl up in a cosy country cottage

By **KAY COX**

sent to you before you leave home. You can get a mighty blaze roaring in the fireplace of Knightsfield, a lovingly restored remote farmhouse in the Welsh Brecon Beacons national park. The fire will throw out enough heat to keep the slate-floored living area and dining area cosy.

The open-plan kitchen has a beautiful Aga cooker — but has a modern oven too — and state-of-the-art telly and DVD players are hidden in traditional furniture so you can choose to ignore them.

There's also a TV room tucked away upstairs be-

side the three bedrooms of the farmhouse near Hay on Wye in the Black Mountains.

And you can immerse yourself in luxury at the farmhouse, because there's a claw-foot bath in the stunning bathroom and a hot tub outside if you want to enjoy the views all fresco.

Knightsfield sleeps six and costs from £800 for a three-night stay until December 19.

You can also rent the barn, which sleeps another four and has space for all ten guests to eat together while they are admiring the stunning views through the glass doors.

Lovely Lletty is real hideaway, sitting alone in a forest clearing at the end of a two-mile dirt track — a

truly rural spot east of Llandeilo in Walew. The three bedrooms have great views of the Black Mountains while there is an open-plan kitchen/dining room where you can cook a feast while a quirky log fire spits and crackles in the background.

CRACKERS

In the garden there's a pizza oven and fire pit — so you can have that fire experience even in summer.

It's £720 for three nights but there's 20 per cent off for stays that are finished by December 19. See sheepskinlife.com or call 01865 764087.

The National Trust for Scotland specialises in renovated traditional properties and has some crack-

ers where you can curl up by the fire. Lydia Cottage in Cromarty used to be a fire station but now the detached cottage is a romantic bolthole for two in the heart of the town's conservation area. Short breaks are from £200.

The sitting room of Crovie Cottage in Banff looks out to the pier and bay, where storm-lashed seas batter against magnificent Banffshire cliffs.

It's an impressive view, especially when you are toasty at the hearth of the newly restored fishing cottage. It sleeps four and is from £400 for a week. See nts.org.uk/holidays or call 0844 493 2100.

VisitScotland also have some brilliant winter hideaways.

Drumore Cottage and Drumore House are 10 miles from Campbeltown, but the nearest pub is just five minutes' walk away in Bellochantuy. There's a wood-burner in each of the living rooms with views of the sea. Short breaks are from £250 in the main house. See sykescottages.co.uk or call 01244 500577.

The Old Church in Skye is a snug bolthole for two with a cosy fire in the living room and a little conservatory where you can enjoy the view of the garden with a stone bridge across the stream.

The nearest shop is 10 miles away, and the pub a two-mile hike... so it might be wise to stock up on wine and logs and enjoy a cosy night in.

See scotland.org.uk or call 08700 112201.

And see visitscotland.com/whiteinvite for more cottages and winter fun.

So there you go — everything you need to banish those winter blues.