



(U) Stress Doesn't Live Here

FROM: [REDACTED]
NSA integrees at GCHQ
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*NSA'ers working as integrees at the UK's Government
Communications Headquarters find the lifestyle "jolly good" (U)*

(U) Did you know that jobs advertised in Cheltenham, England have more applicants per position than any other PCS location? It's not hard to understand why. You live and work in the Cotswolds -- an officially designated "area of outstanding natural beauty" -- in a country steeped in history and tradition and with whom we share a common language (well, mostly) and set of values.

(U) Many Americans choose to live in "town" for any number of reasons. The "townies" benefit from the convenience of being close to work as well as living in a vibrant city with theater, arts, festivals and shops. Despite its modernity, making your way around Cheltenham can also have the feel of stepping back in time as you pass stately old homes and the not-uncommon lady cyclist in her skirt and loafers pedalling an old-style bike with a basket on front.

(U) But we longed for a different experience. We wanted to live in a small village in the countryside. Our village of Temple Guiting is only 17 miles from Cheltenham and the "townies", but a world away in other respects. It is nearly impossible to hold on to any feelings of stress as we drive to and from work each day along winding country lanes. Vistas spanning miles of green fields and rolling hills dotted with sheep open before us. Rabbits and pheasants play in among the hedgerows, and we travel through other villages where the houses and quaint cottages are made of the warm, honey-colored Cotswold stone that is the trademark of this area.

(U) Village life is full of simple pleasures. We can "ramble" around on any number of pre-mapped-out walks through the countryside, perhaps go along to watch a fox hunt meeting up nearby, or attend "movie night" in the village hall where they show first-run movies at half the cinema price and you can bring your own popcorn and wine. On Sundays, we might walk down to the village store and pick up a newspaper and some fresh pastries. And our landlord's father, who raises a few chickens in his retirement, knocks on our kitchen window every Saturday with a half-dozen fresh eggs and sometimes a warm raspberry crumble.



(U) If we're looking for something to do on one of our ten-plus long holiday weekends during the year (thanks to the addition of British bank holidays), it is easy to plan a short break to the mountains of northern Wales, the lakes of the Lake District, the beaches and coastlines of Cornwall, or the numerous historic castles and cathedrals.

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(U) So, whether you choose to be a Cheltenham "townie" or country squires like us, you'll find that stress just doesn't live here.

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