

The French connection : retired migrants seek bygone¹ lifestyle

From Adam Sage in Paris

1 Britons who buy a home in France are more likely to be retired local government officers from northern England than wealthy advertising executives from the South East. The typical couple are aged over 50, on a moderate income and are in search of a land they believe resembles Britain 50 years ago.

5 The wealthy upper-class Britons who first settled in the Dordogne three decades ago have given way to the middle classes. French village mayors complain that many spend all their money on their new home and then live off generous French social security. In the Dordogne, for example, the council ordered a crackdown on British welfare beneficiaries this year. A study was carried out by Marie-Martine Gervais-Aguer, a lecturer in economics at Bordeaux
10 university, southwest France, who submitted detailed questionnaires to a total of 1,316 people connected via the internet. All want to cross the Channel - 81.9 per cent are looking for a principal residence, the rest a holiday home. Just under a third said that they would work in France. An overwhelming majority wanted to live in the French countryside, which they define as similar to their vision of 1950s Britain. They hoped to find small, traditional
15 communities where everyone knew each other, where human relations were pleasant, where the pace of life was relaxed and where there was a baker, a café and a church. Tony Priestly, 42, a former forklift truck driver, from Carlisle, Cumbria, is typical. He moved to the hamlet of Lalouque in the Pyrenees, where he bought a ruin for € 50,000 (£ 34,000). He works in vineyards when he is not doing up his house. "I don't have much money but it does not
20 matter," he said. "Life is more relaxed and more agreeable. Attitudes are more old-fashioned than in Britain and I like that."

However, reality can destroy the nostalgic, almost idyllic, vision of the French countryside held by some Britons. Many French villagers are struggling to retain small shops and cafés, and relations between villagers are often strained. Britons already settled in France cautioned²
25 that the cost of living was higher than settlers tended to believe. Thea Downie, 60, a retired social worker who moved from Newcastle upon Tyne to the village of Gerderest, in southern France, said that many were surprised to find that they did not enjoy a better standard of living. Although she was happy with her new life in France, she said many northerners were not. "A lot of people miss the culture of the North East - the clubs and all that" she said. "I know a lot
30 who go back home." She made the move with her husband, Bruce, because "the North East can be a hard environment. It can be a bit depressing and rough."

The Times, Monday, July 24, 2006

¹ bygone : *révolu*.

² caution: *mettre en garde*

I - GENERAL COMPREHENSION

A- This text is about:

- 1- French people who look for a job in Great Britain.
- 2- Europeans who come to France for a holiday.
- 3- British people who decide to settle in France.

B- These migrants mainly come from:

- 1- the North of England.
- 2- southern England.
- 3- the Pyrenees.

C- Among the following, find the three places they want to live in.

- 1- The Dordogne
- 2- Bordeaux
- 3- The countryside
- 4- The South
- 5- The North East

II - DETAILED COMPREHENSION

A- Pick out elements from the text to draw the portrait of the typical migrant:

- 1- Age-group (*1 element*)
- 2- Social status (*1 element*)
- 3- What attracts them (*4 elements*)

B- Write down expressions from the text showing that:

- 1- these migrants are looking for a lifestyle of the past. (*2 elements*)
- 2- the locals do not always approve of these newcomers. (*1 element*)
- 3- a small percentage of them are interested in getting a job there. (*1 element*)

C- Right or Wrong? Justify all your answers by quoting from the text.

- 1- Some of these migrants realise they had a false perception of life in France.
- 2- All of them can afford a more comfortable life than in Britain.
- 3- Many find it difficult to adjust to a new environment.
- 4- Thea Downie regrets her choice.

D- Which of the following statements best corresponds to the title (*The French connection: retired migrants seek bygone lifestyle*) ?

- British people moving over to France :

- 1) mainly intend to find out some cheap property.
- 2) mainly intend to live the way their ancestors lived.
- 3) mainly intend to get a better life as things are not so expensive.
- 4) mainly want to find a new job.

III- EXPRESSION:

Write BOTH essays.

a) Would you rather live in the countryside or do you prefer city life? Justify your choice.(about 100 words)

b) You are Thea Downie (line 25) and live in southern France. One of your friends from Newcastle would like to settle in your area and asks you for information. Write a letter, telling him / her about your experience. (about 150 words)