



Americashire: A Field Guide to a Marriage

Jennifer Richardson

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When an American woman and her British husband decide to buy a two-hundred-year-old cottage in the heart of the Cotswolds, they're hoping for an escape from their London lives. Instead, their decision about whether or not to have a child plays out against a backdrop of village fetes, rural rambles, and a cast of eccentrics clad in corduroy and tweed.

Americashire: A Field Guide to a Marriage begins with the simultaneous purchase of a Cotswold cottage and Richardson's ill-advised decision to tell her grandchild-hungry parents that she is going to try to have a baby. As she transitions from urban to rural life, she is forced to confront both her ambivalence about the idea of motherhood and the reality of living with a spouse who sees the world as a glass half-full. Part memoir, part travelogue - and including field guides to narrative-related Cotswold walks - Americashire is a candid, compelling, and humorous tale of marriage, illness, and difficult life decisions.

Americashire: A Field Guide to a Marriage Details

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From Reader Review Americashire: A Field Guide to a Marriage for online ebook

Pamela DeWolf says

An amusing quick read about an American expat in England, it made me wish for a British husband so I, too could buy a country house. Full of amusing stories about the local social scene, typical english-countryside events, and the odd characters that made up their life in the Cotswolds.
Thanks to goodreads and the author for the book won in your giveaway.

Diane Teunessen says

Enjoyed this book immensely. It was an extremely fun read. Bravo Jennifer!!

Anglotopia says

I'm a sucker for a book about an American attempting to live in the UK. Several of my favorite books about Britain were written by Americans who moved to the UK. So, I was delighted to take a look at Americashire: A Field Guide to a Marriage by Jennifer Richardson.

Jennifer is an American who happened to marry a Brit and after a glamorous life in London, the couple decided to buy a Cotswold weekend cottage and attempt to live in the Great British Countryside.

To hilarious result.

Jennifer is not a bumbling American, clueless to how things work in Britain. Rather, she's a keen observer of British culture, mores and history. She tries to embed herself into the fabric of the Cotswolds community they chose and become a local.

But becoming a local is not easy in an area where a family who has lived there for two hundred years is still considered an incomer!

Americashire is a very personal book, we get a very intimate look at Jennifer's marriage. And anyone who's married can sympathize with all the problems the married couple faces. We're just given the backdrop of an iconic English village scene to witness it. That said, the personal nature of the story may perhaps not appeal to some. But I loved it.

The book is broken up over a series of key events in the social calendar as Jennifer tries to paint a picture of some of the interesting things that happen in this village throughout the year. She also provides handy walks, which are humorously guided by her marriage troubles.

One major topic of the book that is covered quite a bit is whether or not the couple should start to have kids. It's not an easy decision for them to make and it's interesting to watch it play out as an impartial observer. They also grapple with marital resentment as one half of the couple gets a job near the cottage and can live

there full time, while the other has to continue to suffer alone in London.

The book is a brisk read at just over 150 pages and there's certainly more story there dying to be told. Jennifer and her husband currently live in California so we don't get the story of why they left the Cotswolds or if they still have their cottage there (the author has assured me they do). I hope she writes a sequel.

Betsy Fasbinder says

I read--or rather devoured--Americashire on the plane from San Francisco to Dallas. When I landed at DFW, rather than feeling exhausted by the flight, it seemed as though I'd spent the entire ride listening to the story of a good girlfriend. Jennifer Richardson is a skilled and concise storyteller who paints a vivid and detailed picture of rural England. While her book is likely going to be promoted as a travel book (and it should, I'm dying to find the idyllic England she found) it is also an honest and revealing memoir about her personal journey as well as her travels. Akin to Cheryl Strayed's *WILD* (which I just finished right before this), *Americashire* is a candid and revealing memoir in which the author doesn't sugar-coat her flaws, but you end up loving her for being so real, so honest, and letting you have a glimpse into her life. She explores not just her experience as a traveler, but also as a woman in a wonderful but flawed marriage and struggling with her own decision about becoming a mother. This is brave territory and Richardson navigates it well.

Beautifully written, brave, and just right.

Marilou Johnson says

Life in England viewed through the eyes of an American . . . loved it. As an Anglophile, I found myself smiling and laughing at the little idiosyncrasies of the British lifestyle.

While the title kind of fooled me, this is less about marriage and more about fitting in and learning a new way to live life in a completely different environment.

Very enjoyable!

Shelley says

Cute entertaining quick read. I particularly related as it is an American "fish out of water" story and I am also an American living abroad.

And I totally related to the bit about Target. I had an anxiety attack my first time back.

Rebecca says

This was free on an Amazon daily deal, and it was worth the price. Since the book was advertised as the memoir of an American who settled in England with her husband and was on the brink of motherhood, it was rather startled to learn that she chose not to have children and moved back to Los Angeles shortly after the end of the book. I liked the style of the writing and the depiction of the beautiful English countryside, but did not ultimately find much about the author to love.

Nancy says

More good vacation reading. Makes me want to spend time in England, as I suppose any halfway decent travelogue should! The lives of the author and her husband held my attention and made me curious about how things would turn out for them. But in a year I'll have no memory of what this book was about.

Petrea Burchard says

I won this book in a blog contest. I really wanted it, too, because Ms. Richardson lived my fantasy: an American woman in a Cotswolds cottage. There's more, of course: the English husband, the wonderful characters, the wine bar, and the birth of lambs. There's even more than that: the things she and her husband must deal with give Richardson's story depth to go along with the delight. If you are an Anglophile like me, I highly recommend this book.

Laura says

I really enjoyed this book! I think the idea of the actual "field guides" i.e. rambles in and around the Cotswolds are a clever and fun idea. Unfortunately I have a very old Kindle which does not link well to the web- but I will try to access them another way.

Otherwise, the story is amusing when discussing the wonderful oddness of British country life- and very touching as Richardson shares the difficulties of making life decisions in the face of potentially debilitating illness.

Rebecca says

(2.5) A memoir by an American woman married to a Brit and adjusting to English village life was always going to appeal to me. Richardson and her husband, "D," had a tiny West London flat but bought a weekend cottage in the Cotswolds with his inheritance, eventually choosing to live there full time while he continued commuting to London.

If you approach this as a set of comic essays commenting on the habits of the English, it's enjoyable enough. The rich toffs she encounters in her new village have a cornucopia of annual rituals like summer fairs, auctions, horse racing, a hunt ball, a cattle market, lambing, and countryside walks. (A lot of this felt familiar from my in-laws' wealthy Hampshire village.) Richardson and hubby manage to insinuate themselves into most of these activities, and become regulars at the local church. They also lament the closure of the local Chinese restaurant, which is mentioned in two or three essays – overkill! As is the use of the show-offy word "sartorial," which she pens at least three times in reference to fashion decisions.

The writing about provincial pastimes is certainly amusing. It's when Richardson tries to be more serious, discussing D's depression, their uncertainty about having children, and her possible MS, that the book falters. You can tell her editors kept badgering her to give the book a hook and an arc, and decided the maybe-baby theme was the strongest. But I never sensed any real wrestling with the question. She assumes they'll have children; they tell her parents they're trying; when she finds out she might have MS, she realizes, nah, I don't want to have a kid. (Two of the blurbs on the back cover are by authors of childless-by-choice type books, so that gives it away right from the off.) I never got a real sense of D either – he struck me as a two-dimensional, childish lout.

She Writes releases have gotten a lot more professional in the five years since this came out, in terms of design, proofreading, and developmental editing. This is not a bad book, but I don't think there was ever a clear enough idea of what it was meant to be.

Nancy Kennedy says

I enjoyed the heck out of this book. A Florida woman, married to a Brit, decides to move to England. London was fine, but they decide to get a weekend cottage in the Cotswolds. What a journey! Her two-year journal, funny and inciteful, left me wanting more. Eat, Pray, Love in the English countryside, with a lot of wine thrown in!

Renee Roberson says

As I was reading Americashire: A Field Guide to Marriage, my first thought was that the book would appeal to readers who enjoy memoirs and travelogues such as Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert, particularly because of the rich descriptions of Richardson's adventures with the various festivals, foods and drinks. During the time that Gilbert was writing Eat, Pray, Love, she had many personal issues she was grappling with, and in Americashire, Richardson is also searching for answers, particularly those pertaining to her relationship with her husband and ambivalence toward motherhood. She is torn because she and her husband made a promise to her parents that they would start trying to conceive within a year, and throughout the book, the proverbial clock is ticking.

Richardson has a dry but witty writing style that really appealed to me. I enjoyed reading about the couple's many adventures to the festivals and auctions steeped in traditions that would make any outsider feel a little out of place, and her description of the memorable cast of characters in such chapters as "The Cotswold Cult" was hilarious. I found myself laughing out loud at many of her musings, particularly one chapter where her husband fretted over not having the proper attire for an afternoon hike through the countryside and what he eventually chose to wear: "an orange, sweat-wicking tank top, black running shorts, hiking boots, mud-protecting gaiters, and a backpack." I had a similar reaction to the chapter "Checkpoint Charlie with Palm Trees," where she describes a visit back to the U.S. to visit her parents in Florida:

Like a toddler who prefers the bubble wrap to the fancy toy that came in it, expatriates find Taco Bell and Target to be two of the chief pleasures of returning to the States.

Richardson also tackles the subject of her husband's ongoing battle with depression by describing it as a "mistress" in their marriage that often interferes with their plans and decision making, something I could personally relate to (with roles reversed, actually) and am sure many other readers will, too.

One aspect I wish Richardson would have addressed more thoroughly was the question of motherhood theme in the book. The author is thirty-six-years-old at the beginning of the book, and she alludes to having to make a decision in the prologue, "Pink Foil Strips." From there, the book dives into the couple's decision to purchase a cottage in the Cotswolds and the frequent and colorful charity events and festivals they attend, as well as evenings spent socializing in the local wine bar. She does make a brief mention in one of the earlier chapters about how she's unsure they should have a child together when they are having a hard time getting along, but the majority of the first half of the book is devoted to describing their many (albeit humorous) adventures exploring their new surroundings. The couple is forced to make a decision regarding parenthood when Richardson is confronted with a diagnosis of a chronic illness in the second half of the book, and she does spend more time discussing the topic there.

I found Richardson's honesty in this memoir refreshing and when she starts exhibiting worrisome health symptoms, readers will find themselves unable to put the book down until the final diagnosis is determined, an event that finally helps Richardson put those questions of motherhood to rest once and for all.

Hilary says

Americashire details the ways in which Jennifer and her husband buy a house in the country. Even though they are initially somewhat shocked by housing sizes, they soon settle in and, desperate not to be seen as weekenders, throw themselves into village life. (On the weekends, of course.) This leads to phrases like "The autumnal social calendar included a bingo fund-raiser for the cricket club in the village hall", which any Brit - particularly the English - will recognize. She goes on to explore the wonders of seventies concrete, Sunday lunch, and bacon butties, and develops an addiction to *The Archers*.

The author vividly and completely captures the tone, as well as some very astute observations. You'd never guess she was an American from her writing. The chatty style is entertaining. Fans of Bill Bryson's observations may enjoy this, especially as she stays on topic throughout the book, with the slightly humorous exceptions of her favorite walks detailed at the beginning of each chapter. Her list of Things [she] Learned in Country Pubs is quite outstanding, and does indeed cover fairly much everything she'd need to know...

If you've had an international marriage, emigrated, or even made a city-to-village transition you may find a kindred spirit here. Life in the countryside won't magically transform you, but it will give you opportunities to make the most of who you are.

Julia says

Rather like the Cotswold rambles in its Field Guides, this is a beautifully written memoir of the ups and downs of modern womanhood described with humour and honesty. Read it.
