



REVVA

CASE STUDIES

Tina Brassington

1. INTRO

Cottage Farm, Alino is a small-holding run by husband and wife team – Kevin and Tina. Derelict house and barn refurbished, overgrown plot re-worked, at owners' expense, in 2013. Range of vegetables, fruit and livestock (pigs, goats, geese, ducks, chickens) raised. Production of preserves with different tastes and their own label, cheese, meat products, without the use of chemicals, and events held at the farm. All work, farming, production, marketing carried out by the two owners. Now they are real full-time farmers.

www.cottagefarm.bg

facebook – Cottage Farm Alino

2. PROMOTER PROFILE

- **Name:** Tina Brassington
- **Age:** 47
- **Gender:** Female
- **Education:**
BA (Hons), LLB (hons) DipM, PGCE
- **Marital status:** Married
- **Number of children and children age:** -



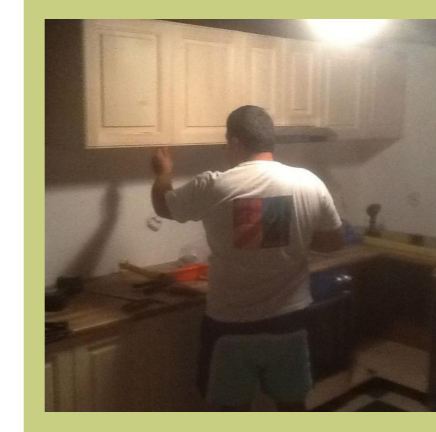
3. REUSED/VALORISED BUILDING

- **Address - to be used for the building location map:** Cottage Farm, Alino, 2019, Bulgaria.
- **Reused/Valorised building type:** House and barn.
- **Reuse/Valorisation purpose:** Home/business, barn – animal housing, gastronomy, pedagogical purposes.

Building description before reuse/valorisation

Derelict house – full of junk, damp, leaking roof, broken windows, no services, no foundations, no bathroom or kitchen. Derelict barn – leaking roof, broken walls, full of junk. House and plot had been empty for around 10 years before they bought it.

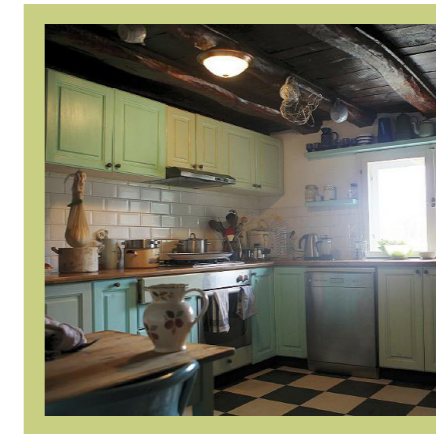
Building Pictures before reuse/valorisation



Building description after reuse/valorisation

House – new foundations, drainage, electrics, heating system with under floor heating, solar hot water panel, new windows, new roof, stairs and porch. New kitchen, bathroom and septic system, fully decorated, high speed internet. The farm house was restored in traditional style. Barn – new roof, repairs done using traditional methods – now houses 5 pigs and 8 goats, plus hay storage. The buildings are located on the farm and they are linked to farm activity.

Building Pictures after reuse/valorisation



4. FARM DESCRIPTION

- **Address:** Cottage Farm, Alino, 2019, Bulgaria.
- **Farm Area in ha:** 0.4.



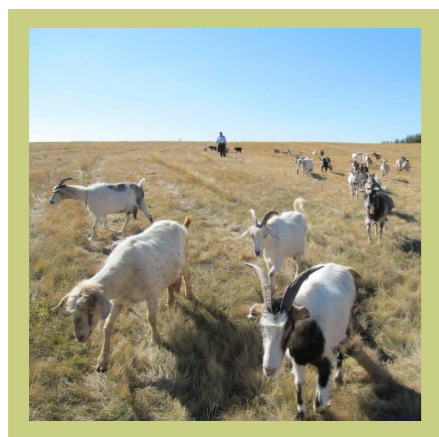
Farm description before reuse/valorisation

Overgrown plot – dead trees, scrub and weeds, poor drainage. Plot had been unused and neglected for around 10 years. Old pig house and outside toilet. Poor fencing.

Farm description after the reuse/valorisation process:

The land was replanted. Now completely cleared, worked and fertilized with natural fertilizers. A range of vegetables and fruit grown with no use of chemicals, no machinery. Throughout the year the two farmers work in the garden and greenhouse to produce salads, herbs, beans, carrots, sweet corn, squashes, cucumbers, kale, cauliflower, strawberries, cherries and plums. Pond dug to improve drainage and for use by their ducks & geese. Old pig house used as dog kennel, old toilet used as chicken house. Some fencing replaced/repared. Now the main activities are quality, biological and traditional production and tourism, recreation and education (including product testing and restoration), as well as on-farm sales too.

Farm Pictures



5. REUSE/VALORISATION PROCESS

Tina & Kevin refurbished the entire small-holding – house, barn, land - themselves and at their own expense. The total surface of the buildings is 5 X 10 m² and 7 X 7 m², 2 stores. No aid, grants or loans were received. The costs of refurbishment/repairs were around 90,000 leva (excluding the cost of the house/land). Work on the house took around 6 months, using builders and tradesmen. The farmers worked the land themselves, they have no farm machinery. They bought their livestock and control their own breeding program as well as taking part in the village goat herding cooperative. Kevin & Tina set up and paid for their website and social media. The two owners have looked into possible EU funding, but it is too expensive and inaccessible to very small farms like their. The legal/bureaucracy problems have been the main problems that they faced during the process. Their buildings have been reused/valor-

ized as for their use and also for business purposes. The owners bought unused house and land, and they keep the farm activity after reuse/valorization process. Despite the difficulties and obstacles on their opinion it is profitable investment and they can describe it like very, very successful.

Threats/Challenges

Their challenges now in terms of moving forward are financial. They spent their money on this project so far and it is very difficult to raise funds in Bulgaria or to receive any grants/aid or support. Tina & Kevin wish to develop another of their small buildings into a training centre and plan to teach courses on animal husbandry, gardening, cookery etc. and to be used as a community space for village events, but until they raise more funds, this will not be possible. In the absence of any support or funding, it is likely that they will again fund these themselves on the sale of their other property.

Cultural resistance to the idea of village life and the lack of money in rural areas of Bulgaria remain a barrier.

Business administration for small farms is prohibitively difficult in Bulgaria.

Main Training/Skills/Competences

Kevin & Tina have renovated houses in the UK and have qualifications in building finishing and interior design.

Their neighbors have helped them with farming issues. They also use books and the internet to know everything from “how to make the fence” to “how to raise a pig to utilize it fully.” Their growing experience over the years has helped.

Professional marketing and teaching qualifications have been helpful.

Promoter advice

Bringing new life to village farms is extremely satisfying. It builds a sense of community and is a rewarding lifestyle. It requires hard work, tenacity and enthusiasm. The owners have only been able to do this as they funded it with their own money. They all need to do more to promote this lifestyle and encourage government to be more supportive in making administration easier and in providing funding support/grants. Without this, the rural village way of life will continue to decline.



6. CONSIDERATIONS, SKILLS/COMPETENCES INVOLVED IN THE REUSE/VALORISATION PROCESS AND QUERIES/QUESTIONS

General considerations

As mentioned before, financial concerns and difficulties with administration are the main hurdles.

Skills/Competences especially relevant for the reuse/valorisation process

- Business and marketing skills are relevant and necessary, as well as good communication and cooperation.
- Innovation and creativity is required to get over cultural barriers to rural living and to try to make the way of life sustainable financially for those undertaking it.

Queries/Questions

- In considering the reuse of abandoned old buildings in rural areas must be carefully planned series of actions and activities, related to achieving the ultimate goal - a new, promising use of the buildings. In this sense, what should be the steps that the entrepreneur must take? Where to begin? How to assess the building - in terms of some of its ideas for developing a specific business or to assess the building for what could be used and then posts the goal - what activities will be done in it?
- Which are the tools for assessing the value of the building in terms of its full use? On what questions and criteria should pay attention to, when evaluating the old building, not only as a material value, but also as a factor of development and adding value to the local characteristics and the local produce.

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