



## Report on the Study Tour of South West Gotland

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### **1. The character of the area**

This is a flat, agricultural area, quite arid, full of sheep. The people are warm, open-minded and talkative, though the older people are more reflective. They are proud of themselves, and you do not feel that you should feel sorry for them. The farms are too small to have a promising future : they need either to grow bigger or to diversify their activity. Tourism may help in this, but is not the only thing that can bring prosperity. They also need social sustainability, which means that they need young families and children. We were worried that we saw so few children.

This is an area of small farms and small enterprises, almost at a peasant scale. The services and social structures are created by the local people, like a common responsibility.

In terms of rural tourism, this is a place for adults who want a pleasant stay and are willing to relax and rebuild their energy. It is good for cycling. It has a strong Gotland character. Local products - honey, jam, herbs, wool and sheepskin – are available in the small shops.

### **2. The case studies**

#### **2.1 Hallvide Iceland horses**

The basis of this enterprise is the Iceland horse, a unique Viking horse from Iceland. It is a very kind animal with a special kind of movement, suitable for inexperienced riders. Irma Hallviden started the business in 1980, on a farm which till then had been used for dairy cows. Horses had always been her hobby, and she wanted to work at home because of the children. She received encouragement from friends and relatives. She started with 5 horses, and the business developed further every year. She received only 40,000 SKr as a State support to build some stables and the arena.

Today, she has 22 Iceland horses, 3 Gotland's Russ and 8 Trotting horses. The animals are very well kept, in natural surroundings and are not over-worked. The enterprise offers riding tours, for up to 8 people at one time, accompanied by two guides. The length of the tour varies, from 2 hours up to three days, offering a true countryside experience. Visitors can also have riding lessons, and can buy souvenirs, food and drink. The enterprise is run by Irma, with help from her husband to maintain the fences, from neighbouring farmers for the riding routes, and from her two daughters and another girl who helps with interpretation to foreign visitors. Good relations with local people are important, to avoid upsets over small problems such as horse droppings on the road. Irma co-operates with the local youth hostel and the Icelandic Horse Association.

The customers are older children and adults. This gentle form of riding is also well suited to disabled people, and to companies as an aid to team building among their staff. The services are marketed on the radio, through advertisements in the local papers, and via the tourist information centre.

Looking to the future, Irma would like to have an indoor riding place. Her dream will be some sort of horse recovery centre. She hopes to hand over the business to her daughters.

## **2.2 Gutevin**

The island of Gotland has a climate, different from the Swedish mainland and suited to growing grape vines. Gutevin is a pioneer enterprise in wine-growing in south west Gotland. Its founder, Lauri Pappinen, previously a publisher, planted the first 2.5 hectares of vines in the area in April 2000, after several years of experiment. A further 5 hectares were planted in 2001 and 2002. The main varieties are Rondo, Regent, Orion, Phoenix, Reichensteiner and Madelaine Angevine 7672. The output from the fields will be at the level of 30 hl/ha. The aim is to produce a unique and high-quality wine.

The Gutevin Wine Cellar, newly created in the former dairy in Hablingbo, will have its first own Wine on the market sometime next year. Lauri Pappinen is also creating a restaurant and distillery, and is encouraging other farmers in the area to plant vineyards. Some farmers are already starting to do so. The Gutevin company imports and resells vine plants and equipment to this farmers who come into this young and growing business, because there is no infrastructure in Sweden to support the industry. 30,000 vines have already been planted. The company has invested in a brand new planting machine which is rented out to the other growers.

Lauri Pappinen perceives that there are three types of people - those who listen, those who talk and those who do. He is a doer : he has learned a lot over the last 20 years, now it is time for doing. Winemaking involves 50% science and hard work and 50% art. He is ready to make mistakes, and wants to make them as soon as possible because it is cheaper to make mistakes now rather than later. His focus is on high quality of wine, not high quantity. If the quality is not good enough, he can still use the wine to make brandy.

He has invested 7 million SKr in the business so far. Of this, half a million SKr is in State support, 1 million SKr in bank loan, 3 million SKr from shareholders, the rest is his own money. Having many shareholders means that he has many potential buyers. He is confident of the product, and aims to produce expensive wine to be sold to his shareholders, the upper class and the Gotland restaurants. The enterprise offers a dream, a chance for the stakeholders to start with something unique. It is based on fun, and willingness to learn and to profit.

Lauri Pappinen has a shrewd sense of publicity. Local artists are designing the labels, which will become collectors' items. He welcomes visitors to the Wine Cellar, and also offers overnight accommodation. He is creating an image for himself, and gets a lot of free publicity. He believes that the place is going to be the biggest attraction for the southern part of the island. He convinced us!

## **2.3 Environmentalist in Näs**

On the coastline at Näs, near the great array of wind turbines, we met Curt Niclasson of the local group of Organic Farmers. Our aim was to discuss issues related to farming, ecological values, the landscape and education.

Curt's occupation is farming and clipping his own and other farmers' sheep. This brings him into contact with all the sheep-growing farmers. He is keen to promote the organic way of farming in this specific region, in order to protect the quality of the soil, the water and the general environment.

The standards for organic farming are set at national level by KRAV. More than half of the local farmers are observing these standards. Gotland is closer to nature than other places. The farmers receive school classes on their farms, and accept some students as helpers on the farms. This is good for the farmers, in that they get somebody to talk to; and it also helps to educate new customers of ecologically friendly farm products. The farmers hope, in this way, to shorten the supply chain for their food, and to gain added value by selling food on or near the farm. Farmers' markets have not yet developed on Gotland.

Wind turbines already produce 15% of the total energy needs of Gotland. At present, the turbines are located on land, where the soil is thin and where farmers can make more profit from the turbine rents than from farming. There is potential for more turbines to be built in the sea. For many local people, the turbines are becoming an acceptable part of the landscape, although artists do not agree with this view.

## **2.4 Skåls Gallery and Café**

On Skåls farm in Näs you can find a rustic café in the old barn. Around opening time, at 11 o'clock, the smell of freshly baked rolls drifts from the kitchen. Around lunchtime, you are enticed by the aroma of onion, basil, lamb curry and cheese pie. On Saturdays in July, they bake bread in the old stone oven at the farm, open for anyone to visit.

We could imagine that, on a cloudy, rainy day, it feels good to sit inside where the lit candles warm and light up the semi-darkness. We preferred to sit outside in the yard, enjoying the special atmosphere, looking at the chickens led by the rooster scratching in the grass and hoping for crumbs from the tables.

In the farmhouse shop, you can find vegetables, honey, jams and juices, bread, smoked fish and other food items from the farms in the area. There is no service staff, so you are supposed to write down what you buy and put money in a box. On the second floor of the barn, oak furniture made by local craftsmen is for sale, and there is an exhibition of tiles, paintings, graphic arts and ceramics. The summer exhibition is of works by Gösta Gierow and Marylyn Hamilton Gierow.

The owner of this enterprise, Ingrid Lyberg, has the philosophy that 'If you have trust in people, people will trust you in return'. We discovered for ourselves that a good harmony and a true farm atmosphere put visitors in the right mood.

Ingrid is one of a group of twenty women who have started the Näsduken Co-operative, which has revived the traditional textile patterns from farms on Gotland. These textiles are now reproduced by the skilful hands of the older women. This gives to them a sense of local identity and their own income, from which comes real happiness.

## **3. The Group's reflections on the study tour**

In this area, farming has been the traditional 'glue' of the social structure. Now, it is being replaced by tourism, and by a focus on Gotlandic culture and identity. People wish to be independent, not to be subsidised. Many entrepreneurs have their roots in Gotland, or at least some connection with the island.

We found two kinds of entrepreneurs - those who are continuing a well-established tradition; and those, whom we call the "createpreneurs", who are prepared to do new and apparently impossible things. Lauri Pappinen is an example of the second category, an inspiring person who does things with all his heart and yet stays normal, without any arrogance. Their activity helps to create something special, which is needed if visitors are to be attracted to the south of the island.

Many of the tourism entrepreneurs appear to depend on their own strengths. Their enterprises grow little by little, using their own money, without much dependence upon other people. The employed staff are very often of local origin : they can tell visitors about the region.

### **Reflections on the individual enterprises.**

We received a very warm welcome at the **Iceland horse enterprise**. It was clean and nice. Irma Hallviden was polite and customer-minded : she took our visit seriously, and gave us a lot of time. We noted her three rules for success

- be professional and have knowledge about your work
- grow step by step, investing year by year
- listen to local people, give and ask for information, be humble.

There is a future for the new generation to continue this enterprise.

Lauri Pappinen at **Gutevin** inspired us. He is a true 'createpreneur'. He made us think that we can do things, nothing is impossible! His three rules of success were :

- have fun, enjoy what you are doing
- be willing to learn and be professional
- the idea must create profit within a reasonable period.

He emphasised that you should calculate your risks and always have a 'plan B'. Do not let yourself be disturbed by too many things. Focus on your goals and your vision.

The group of organic farmers at **Näs** pointed us towards the need to achieve a balance between the environment and the people. The search for that balance appeared to give joy. We met a man aged 47 who appeared to be only 30 ! His advice for staying young is to have fun in your daily life. Harmony is important.

At **Skåls Gallery and Café**, we were impressed by the unique atmosphere, a combination of spotlights, colour and smell, with care in every detail. It was a public space, but it felt like your own private yard in the Provence de Gotland.

From these enterprises, we drew the conclusion that new activities can sustain the life of an area. People do not wish to live in a museum. Small companies, with roots in the local community, can sustain local vitality better than large companies with no such roots. Such large companies carry the danger that they will close their local branch, and leave a legacy of unemployment, empty buildings and underused services.

**Is the development sustainable?** We saw several examples of social, economic or environmental sustainability :

- The Näsduken co-operative sustains a social vitality and a cultural tradition.
- Several entrepreneurs stressed the fact that they communicate their plans with local people and seek their advice : they try to find win-win or fun-fun solutions so that the whole community can be part of the venture.
- The wind turbine project is a fine example of renewable energy, helping to reduce the use of fossil fuels.
- The use of sheep appears to be environmentally friendly, suited to the local ecosystem.
- The enterprises offer employment to local people, use local raw material as much as possible, and sell local crafts and other products.
- Wine-making has brought a new use to the old dairy.
- Guests are asked to recycle their wastes : surplus food is fed to animals : compost is used as fertilisers.

Local people, especially the entrepreneurs, were making their dream come true and having fun in the process. We became part of that dream and were able to share it with them. We

changed the win-win situation into a fun-fun situation. We bought many local products, thus contributing to the finances of the local community.

**What about tourism in the future?** The entrepreneurs whom we talked to believe that more visitors could be attracted to the area. There is scope to develop and diversify the enterprises further, to offer a complete Gotlandic product. Synergies can be found between the different enterprises : they could work together to create new and additional products. Young people could also take part in this, to make it more socially sustainable.

For the future of tourism in this area, we offer the following ideas :

- A marina might be built to serve sailing boats on Baltic routes.
- There is scope for more local information points or signboards : this would make the area look interesting and lively, and assist the tourists.
- There is scope also for more education activity on farms.
- It might be good to concentrate certain shops and facilities together, in order to create a focus for tourists and a place where local people can meet.

#### **4. Group's reflections on the process of the study tour**

As a group, we concentrated on the goals we had to achieve. We enjoyed our time together, and co-operated in a very harmonious way. We had much discussion in deciding on the process that we should follow. This appeared to work really well, though we do not know what the results would have been if we had more worked in a less balanced way.

We did not have a formal leader in the group. The men probably took the lead in a mild way, for example in driving the car, realising common decisions, making contact with local people. The van was a green miracle.

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