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STARTING A BUSINESS BY CHANCE

Life and its ways are wondrous. In 1989, I left Helsinki to spend a holiday in the summer house of my employer of the time. Little did I know that I would be find both a husband and an old, ramshackle, historical milieu during that trip.

A year later I was already living in the place where the summer house is. We had two sons. They grew up and little by little we had to start to think about what we could do for a living here in the peace of the Finnish countryside.

One day we had a great idea. This old ramshackle milieu that was bought by my in-laws a long time ago was still there like waiting for me to do something. I visioned a tourism target into which I could turn the old flax treatment plant. I knew that renovation of the place would not be easy; instead, it would take a lot of time, money and hard labour.

I started a business of my own in 1996. Hankala Flax Brake was opened in the summer of 1999. In addition to myself, I offer employment for three persons part-time.

HANKALAN PELLAVALOUKKU /HANKALA FLAX BRAKE

The old flax treatment plant of Tampella Oy (1888 – 1955) is of cultural and historical value. The plant and the beautiful surroundings are a memorable place to visit. The Flax Brake is the only flax treatment plant that has been retained in Finland.

This target is protected by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities and it has been carefully restored. The old dam was also restored and now the buildings in the area are proudly reflected from the small pond created by the dam. The dam was the crown for the entire area. You can experience history first-hand when stepping in through the flax treatment plant door; the stories about the former operations of the plant just add to this feeling of history.



Modern arts and crafts have also been taken into account: the servant's quarters, the flax storehouse, the former living and office building of the manager and the forge building are filled with wonderful works of artisans. We arrange a dozen of handicraft exhibitions every summer.

There is a café full of feeling in the manager's former home. A woodshed has been transformed into a handicraft shop where visitors can buy gifts to take home with them.

Opening hours: 10 June – 13 August: Tuesday – Sunday, from noon to 4 p.m.; from mid-May to mid-September on order.

VALUE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED

As a recognition for restoring the Flax Brake and its current operations, I have received the following awards:

- Award *Häme teko* ('Accomplishment of Häme') 2005
- Entrepreneur of the Year 2005 in Hämeenkoski
- Suomen helmi* ('Pearl of Finland') Tourism Award 2004 by magazine Seura