



PRETTY AS A PICTURE

Once upon a time, this Tarn farmhouse was a ruin occupied only by pigs, goats and cows, but just look at it now, says **Ruth Wood**

Brave souls still snap up a ruin from time to time in France but most estate agents will tell you that wreck renovators are a rare breed these days. Why risk hassle and heartache with a major project when so many beautifully renovated barns and farmhouses are readily available and relatively affordable?

The truth is that not many of us could look at a few crumbling walls and timbers and envisage a dream home, never mind create one. With only a sketched outline on the canvas, it probably helps if you are an artist, like the British landscape painter who bought and oversaw the transformation of this enchanting property near Puylaurens in Tarn.

“When I found it in 2004, 90% of the house was a ruin, the majority of the building having been used to house cows, pigs and goats,” says owner Hermione Owen. “But the house is in a romantic setting in its own grounds with beautiful panoramic views. In spite of the devastation I knew this farmhouse would make the perfect home – I could feel its hospitality. There was no doubt that this was the right house. It was a powerful emotion, one that I think shocked the rest of the family!”

The renovation project was enormous but a local artisan stepped forward and the results

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speak for themselves. He has resurrected the classic south-facing farmhouse with fairytale *colombage* (half-timbering) and 280° views over the grounds, which run to three acres. Inside are six ensuite bedrooms, two of which are on the ground floor, a 46m² living room, study and fabulous farmhouse kitchen-diner. A cloakroom, WC with shower cubicle, utility room and studio complete the living space, and there are views from every room.

Outside is a heated, salt filter swimming pool offering views down the valley, plus a changing room cabin and a shed housing the pool machinery. Other outbuildings include a wood store and tool shed, separate shed, two wooden cabins, a garage and machinery store and a large studio or games room.

All this is set in idyllic and extensive gardens

that are easy to maintain and water, thanks to an irrigation water system fed from a well and a separate underground tank catching rainwater from the roof of the house.

Beyond the gardens are an orchard, meadows and woodland to explore. For those who want to travel further, the shops are only five minutes’ drive away while the market towns of Puylaurens and Lavaur are just 20 minutes away.

Within an hour you could be wandering the citadel of Carcassonne, sampling the wine in Gaillac or admiring the paintings of Toulouse Lautrec in Albi.

“When it comes to walking, we are spoiled for choice and for a landscape painter I have been in heaven,” says Hermione, who is selling the house because family circumstances require her and husband William to be back in the UK full-time. “This is a very happy house and I am confident that whoever takes over will enjoy living here as much as we have.” ■

The property is on the market for €649,000
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