

## Finding Passion And Success Milling Valuable Slabs

Mike Savill grew up in Southampton, United Kingdom and operates a mobile milling service servicing the South of England.

Mike began his working life as a scaffolder. He discovered his passion for working with wood when picking up a piece of Black Mulberry wood to make a table for use in the renovation of his father's house.

One day a friend gave Mike a lesson in using an Alaskan mill (a basic chainsaw mill). This turned out to be an eye-opening experience, because he discovered that every tree has a different story to tell on the inside. When they finished cutting that first slab and lifted it off for the 'reveal' of what it looked like on the inside, it ignited a passion in Mike's chest that he still feels when he mills timber today.



Shortly after, Mike purchased a second-hand Peterson Winch Production Frame (WPF) which enabled him to cut dimensional timber for the pole-barn he was building.

### **“I'm Impressed With The Accurate Cuts I Can Get With My Peterson Mill”**

Prior to this, Mike had never heard of Peterson Portable Sawmills and was also new to custom milling but was keen and eager to learn. The previous owner of the mill taught him the basics of setting up and operating the WPF.



Once Mike gained more experience with his mill, he started promoting his services on social media, and the custom sawmilling business swung into action. Mike then ordered the complementary clip-on slabbing attachment from the Peterson factory in New Zealand, which enables him to cut slabs up to 5 feet (1.5 metres) in diameter.

Mike quickly discovered the high demand in Dorset and Hampshire for the capability to mill slabs over a metre wide. In this area, good

# MILLER FEATURE

quality wide Oak or Walnut slabs sell for well over UK£1,000. Mike has also milled various other types of soft and hard woods, such as Giant Redwood, Burl Oak, Walnut and Lebanon.

With large bandsaws being very expensive, and the aforementioned Alaskan mills demand on one's back and shoulders, Mike is finding success in this profitable niche with his Peterson. Today Mike is a skilled craftsman who takes pride in his work because of the time and detail he puts into each project. He operates a one-man business and uses the help of people at the milling site when handling large and heavy slabs.

Mike attributes the demand for his services to a large extent to his Peterson Sawmill, which can handle log sizes that are simply too big for other portable sawmills in the area. Mike is regularly contracted to a local commercial sawmill, cutting their oversized logs into slabs with the clip-on slabber.

With the growing demand, Mike needed to increase production, so he recently ordered Peterson's Dedicated Wide Slabber, a purpose-built slabbing unit capable of cutting up to 30 slabs per hour.

## **“The Thing I Enjoy Most Is Experiencing The ‘Soul’ Of The Tree And Witnessing Its Reincarnation Into A Beautiful And Functional Part Of The World”**

Mike's business has grown due to word of mouth and by using Instagram to interact with his customers and others in the industry. Mike represented Peterson at the APF Show in 2018 by demonstrating his WPF mill on the site of RIKO, our agent in the UK. This brought yet more leads to Mike's Mill.



The going rate for a custom sawyer in the UK is around UK£300 per day, which includes the machine and operator. Mike offers land owners a special deal if a tree has fallen down on their property, milling the log in exchange for one or more slabs. Mike recently milled a huge Beech tree in return for a slab, which he will use in a kitchen project.

# MILLER FEATURE

“I’m impressed with the accurate cuts I can get with my Peterson mill,” says Mike. Being able to make precise adjustments to the blade makes all the difference. “It really is a remarkable machine that can take on any job. I have used a Norwood bandsaw in the past, but I prefer working with a swingblade because it’s much more hands-on. You get a feel for each individual piece of timber that you cut as you work through the log, as opposed to turning the log all the time to square it off.”



Currently Mike is so busy contract milling, that he has a ‘back-log’ of wood on his own property to mill. While he is certainly enjoying the success of his business, Mike looks forward to resume milling for personal use again soon. One of his projects involves milling large English Walnut sticks that he purchased over summer.

“The thing I enjoy most is experiencing the ‘soul’ of the tree and witnessing its reincarnation into a beautiful and functional part of the world,” Mike said. “My Peterson Sawmill is enabling me to live my passion.”

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