

When we don't move dirt, we mill timber

New Zealander Mark Morrison always had a passion for sawmilling. He discovered his love for milling wood at the age of 15, when his first job introduced him to running a portable sawmill (a Mahoe Supermill) in Tongariro National Park. That's when Mark discovered his passion for working with trees and wood. From a young age he also had a passion for earthmoving.

"I moved to Rotorua about ten years ago and started working for a local contractor as an earthmover. I really wanted to get back into sawmilling though, so I started looking for ways to combine it with the earthmoving work. This is when the plan started forming to establish a business, together with my wife Jodie. Our company MJL Contractors has been in business since 2018."



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Mark often does milling work on farms in conjunction with earthworks. Often farmers or lifestyle block owners want trees removed to make way for effluent ponds, roading or driveways. Mark practices salvage logging and retrieves valuable timber out of Douglas Fir, Blackwood, Gum and Macrocarpa trees, logs that would otherwise end up as firewood.



Mark falls back on milling when it is too wet for earthmoving in wintertime: "Both activities complement each other well. I often set up the mill at the same job site as where I am earthmoving."

MILLER FEATURE

That way I can keep an eye on my guys doing the earthmoving job (supervising for erosion prevention etc) while working on the mill. Owning a grapple digger (and several other machines) makes lifting logs onto the mill a quick and easy job.”

Mark knew what to look for when he started looking for a sawmill to purchase, having previously owned Mahoe and Lucas sawmills. “While doing my sawmill research, I was looking for a mill that was portable, easy to set up and that I could use to

mill trees that were getting wasted during earthmoving jobs. None of the other mill brands are as versatile as my Peterson Winch Production Frame.”



“I wanted to deal with a local sawmill manufacturer, so that I could interact face to face with the manufacturers. I also wanted to be able to obtain parts easily. Greg and Aaron were great to deal with and made the purchase experience a breeze. The purchase price was a key factor, the Peterson WPF came in within our budget.”

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More recently, Mark added a Peterson Dedicated Wide Slabber to his toolbox. Because the width of the tracks of the DWS is exactly the same as that of the WPF, he can run both one after the other on the same tracks. “I believe the DWS has been a great addition to our sawmill set up. Now I can turn logs that are unsuitable for milling into timber and valuable slabs instead.”



MILLER FEATURE

Mark also purchased the Hi/Lo track upgrade kit, which can be added retrospectively to the WPF as an optional extra. “With the high track system you don’t have any problems with sawdust potentially blocking up the tracks. The WPF is an easy, fast and efficient mill to tackle all sorts of logs with.”

The strong demand for their portable sawmill service has taken the couple entirely by surprise. Mark and Jodie currently have a large amount of milling work on backorder and try to run the mill as much as possible. They hire subcontractors (one is an arborist) to run the mill when Mark is busy with earthmoving jobs.

“Mark always wanted to have another mill”, Jodie explains. It’s a good market to get into, we feel there isn’t a lot of competition.” Mark is very happy too: “I feel my best achievement to date is starting my own earthmoving and sawmilling business. With the assistance of my wife, I was able to make my dream a reality.”



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