

Young British furniture maker off to a flying start with his second hand Peterson

We usually feature more mature operators in our blog. Typical (Peterson) mill owners tend to be middle-aged (or older) men. In sharp contrast, Englishman Ben Scott is only 18 years old and already a seasoned miller. While in secondary school (high school), Ben has been milling logs since the age of 15. He has been operating a WPF and a chainsaw mill on the driveway of his parents' home. Ben explains: "We obtained a second hand Peterson mill from an estate sale by chance. To get it up and running I only needed to sharpen the blade. I like using my chainsaw in combination with the WPF. By figuring out beforehand what I'm going to use each part of the log for, I end up with much less wastage."

Ben appreciates the flexibility the Winch Production Frame offers: "We don't use any lifting equipment, every log is lifted and moved by hand. The fact that the rail can be lifted and moved means that we can roll the log into place on its bunks. I didn't have to invest any money into additional machinery, which is making this form of milling much more accessible for me."



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Ben got interested in taking up wood working as a hobby a couple of years ago. He is entirely self-taught, most of his initial skills and ideas he picked up from watching video clips on YouTube. Ben has been developing his wood working skills as a hobby during lockdown periods because of Covid-19. He is very passionate about it and thinks it's worthwhile putting time and money into his hobby.

MILLER FEATURE



Ben muses: “I started scouring pieces of wood around the house and sheds such as old disused oak doors, and turning them into candle holders, chopping boards etc. I successfully sold these items at popular markets in the area. With the income generated I was able to purchase several wood working machines, such as a table saw and a lathe.”

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Ben sources wood mainly from local tree surgeons and farmers. Often these logs would have otherwise been turned into “biomass”, which is a term used in the UK for organic fuels such as wood, other types of plant matter and animal waste. These are burned and used to generate “renewable” electricity. Ben adds: “I rarely pay market rates for logs. Sometimes I gets logs for free, with the promise to return some of it as garden furniture in a couple years’ time!”

Like elsewhere in the world there’s good demand for slabs, however Ben’s focus is more on making refined furniture instead of the rustic style which slabs provide. He makes a good point: “I prefer working with native hardwoods. As a furniture maker I like that I can quarter saw timber with my mill. This gives me much more stable timber to work with, and I am able to process the wood in fewer steps. Compared to chainsaw milling, operating the Peterson is so much easier and quieter.”



MILLER FEATURE



Up until now Ben has been approaching wood working merely as a (serious) hobby. This is about to change when, after the Summer holidays, he will be heading off to Rycotewood Furniture Centre, a specialised furniture college in Oxford. For the next two to three years Ben will be learning about making cabinetry and the design and craft of all sorts of furniture.

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Ben gets excited when talking about the future: “My goal is to gain the necessary skills to be able to turn raw materials (i.e. logs) into bespoke furniture. For the last year or so I have been hoarding cut wood in a shed. The plan is that once I finish college in a couple of years, the wood will be dry and ready to be processed.” Going by his focus and current skill level, we’re sure Ben will become very successful in his chosen profession.



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