

Quality and safety in Hobbiton

With his background in customised kitchens, wardrobes and interior fittings, German-trained cabinetmaker Paul Drebing (22) is now applying his skills to a different area of manufacturing: building traditional wooden furniture and props in a variety of scales, customised cabinetmaking, shop interiors and counter-fabrication. You name it, and Paul's got the skills to create, replicate or repair it – crucial skills when you're running the joinery shop for one of NZ's premiere tourist attractions: Hobbiton, the movie set in 'the Shire' known from the 'Lord of the Rings' and 'The Hobbit' trilogies, located in rural Matamata.



Paul Drebing in front of the new Felder F700 Z spindle moulder at his Hobbiton workshop.

Hobbiton's wide variety of joinery requires Paul to be constantly creative – both with his skills and with materials – but also constantly vigilant regarding safety. A constantly changing workload means ever-changing hazards. His Felder K540S panel saw gives him the flexibility to deal safely with the wide variety of different species of timber he uses, and his ever-changing workload. "I'm regularly using Macrocarpa, Ash, Blackwood and Matai" explains Paul. "But I'm just as likely to be cutting up a few sheets of melamine. So it's good to have a machine like this that is solid, accurate and simple to use, no matter what material I'm working with."

Paul is well aware of safety issues in his workshop, and a quick glance around shows he is clearly house-proud. The workshop is tidy and ordered – with beautifully made storage units for blades, spindles and tools. "A lot of my training in Germany made it clear the importance of having a safe and well organized work environment, and here at Hobbiton we place a lot of emphasis on

safety, including use of all the right attachments and guarding for each job."

An example of Hobbiton's focus on safe, quality machinery is the new Felder F700 Z spindle moulder in the workshop. Paul has specified the machine with plenty of features to ensure he can undertake all aspects of his work using best practice and safe operation. This includes table extensions with an easy-to-install kickback guard – essential for introduced or 'stopped' milling and grooving – and an X-roll sliding-table to enable tenoning.

His F700 Z is also equipped with an interchangeable spindle system allowing for the whole spindle to be lifted out and replaced – saving a huge amount of set-up time while also allowing use of Felder's highspeed router spindle running at up to 15000 rpm. He also has Felder's unique combination of a dial display for height and angle alongside the 'MULTI-fine' adjustment system on the fence - which allows for simple replication of previous mouldings with pinpoint repeatable accuracy.

Safety features abound on the F700 Z. A workpiece holder for small or hard-to-guide workpieces – alongside the integrated powerfeed – increase the accuracy and safety when undertaking finer machining. "A manual feed can never achieve a constant feed speed plus pressure on the table and fence when the workpiece is several metres long" says Paul. "Working a few hundred metres of T&G or moulding makes the powerfeed essential." Also, the integrated nature of Felder's powerfeed means the E-stops on the spindle moulder stop the powerfeed too – a key element to maximising operator safety on a type of machine renowned for being hazardous.

A key safety feature is that the tilting spindle only tilts back – meaning the cutterblock is away from and under the operator's fingers, and allowing the use of the power feeder, even on very narrow workpieces. Topping off the safety features is the AIGNER 'integrated' spindle fence set, which offers continuous workpiece guiding with integrated guiding – and guarding – rails.

"No tools on the spindle moulder should have blades sticking out more than 1.1mm" explains Paul. "This limited cutter projection reduces the risk of kickback." Just as with many other aspects of Paul's workshop, this guard offers the maximum level of safety – ensuring he gets to focus on craftsmanship without compromising either the use of the machine, or his own safety.

"If I use quality machines correctly, and keep them well maintained, I get quality results" states Paul. And quality results are important at Hobbiton – where the authenticity of the visitor experience is crucial to its popularity – over 1000 visitors a day! And just like Hobbiton, Paul uses craftsmanship and creativity to help recreate one of the world's most popular stories.

Paul's results, and the Hobbiton workshop's continued focus on good, safe machines and craftsmanship, are sustaining a reputation to be proud of.

