



From left: Peter Turnbull, Rory Wharerau, Glen Howley, Chris Wilson, Nigel Furguson, Erin Glassey, Peter Howley, Richard Meikle

PHJ - long established ties in Southland

In 1993, after 17 years working for someone else, Peter Howley decided it was time to work for himself. The recession in the 80s hadn't treated joinery in Invercargill well, and those that survived understood the value of hard work. So, when Peter set up in a shed in Otatara he knew what was ahead of him. Working alone, seven days a week he soon established his business, and today Peter Howley Joinery has 13 staff, and is a well-established name on the Southland joinery scene.

The Company's work varies, with than half their output being bespoke kitchens for residential customers. Peter Howley Joinery (PHJ) also have long-established ties with some of Southland's builders. There's also quite a lot of commercial work, both locally and further afield, and then a reasonable proportion of bits and pieces – including an increasing amount of insurance work. “We do all kinds of work” explains Peter. “We focus on the client – providing a quality service, and working with what they want. There's no standard size cabinets here – everything is bespoke, and often a new kitchen is part of a renovation so there's other related work. We also do stairs, doors, windows – you name it.”

Working across two adjacent buildings, Peter and his son Glen's team are busy, with organised spaces and clearly well-looked after machinery. At the rear of a workshop against a wall well-insulated against Southland's southerly wind is PHJ's new Brandt 1120FC. “We'd put millions of metres of tape through our old machine” says Peter, “so after 10 years it was starting to wear, and needed replacing.” The Brandt – made by Germany's Homag Group – wasn't just a replacement, but a significant upgrade in terms of capacity. “Now we've got pre-milling and corner rounding we've noticed a huge improvement in speed” says Glen. “We used to triple handle everything. After the saw we'd have to buzz every panel, pick it up, edge it, pick it up again, and then round by hand. Then there'd also be some cleaning down or finishing. Now we go straight from the saw to the Brandt. Handling it just once also means we're faster, and we reduce the risk of scratching or damage.”

Everyone in the workshop has trained on the Brandt. “During the installation process the Jacks tech trained all of us to operate the machine” says Glen. “It's pretty simple – most adjustments are made from the controller, and

the only manual adjustments are simple ones – such as changing tape thickness. Three of us went a bit further and were trained on fine adjustments, maintenance and the like. That way we minimise the number of sticky fingers under the hood.” Since its arrival back in March, Glen and the team have already made good use of the Brandt's versatility – including processing with 3mm timber clashings. “The guys love it” say Glen. “The combination of pre-milling and corner rounding is great. And the finish is excellent.”

With a team that includes two designers, and eight in the workshops – all who are qualified tradesmen – then PHJ certainly has plenty of skills in-house. The team often includes an apprentice, and Peter likes to train internally when given the chance. The workshop team includes three people who served their apprentice with the Company, and have chosen to stay. It's clear to see why: Peter and Glen are well aware of the value of being good employers, and take their responsibility seriously. “We're not just in this game for the money. Our customers need a good product, and our team have families, financial commitments. So we work hard to keep the work coming in – we don't just sit back and rely on our reputation.”

With a workshop of qualified staff, Peter Howley Joinery is able to operate a little differently to similarly-sized joinery shops. After client consultation including a visit, designers Jan or Sharon use PRO100 software to prepare the customer plans. Once the contract is confirmed, the job is allocated to one joiner who takes it right through production and then installs it. “With this method the guy owns the work – it's his job, and we get good results” says Glen.

Peter feels the business is about the right size and in good shape and he's started a gradual hand over to Glen. “We've had a great winter” Peter says. “There's plenty of work around.” Glen agrees, citing the influence of the recent dairy pay-out rises as contributing to local growth. As for the company's future, with a strong reputation, well organised team and the benefits of a new edgebander, Peter Howley Joinery is looking good well beyond Invercargill's chilly winter.



Brandt is sold in NZ by W & R Jack
www.jacks.co.nz