

Felder fit-out in Ferrymead

Late in 2019, and with some 'gentle' encouragement from his wife – Sean Thom decided it was time for a change. With over 25 years of experience crafting solid timber joinery and cabinetry he decided it was time to move from being an employee to putting his passion and skill set into running his own business. A few months later, and with the support of a business partner, Podocarp Cabinetry was established in Ferrymead, Christchurch.

With so much industry experience, Sean had a clear idea of what machinery he'd need for his new venture, so his research was detailed, and thorough. As well as getting plenty of quotes he also talked to other joiners about their experiences with machinery, and the associated supplier back-up. "I also had to be aware of my budget," he explains. "I was looking at a saw with a powered fence but when I considered everything else I needed I really couldn't justify it."

Sean chose to invest in machinery from Felder Group, made in Austria, supplied and installed by Jacks. "The service back up on offer from Jacks was what made the decision for me in the end," Sean explained. "Pricing was similar across the range of what I was looking for. I was familiar with Felder and knew the quality. But having experienced techs available locally was also key. I also appreciated the sales process – Mark at Jacks was really helpful and answered all my questions."

Just before lockdown last year, Jacks installed a Felder K540S panel saw, F700Z spindle moulder, Hammer A3 31 planer-thicknesser and N4400 bandsaw, and a Felder FS722 stroke sander, all connected to an AF22 extractor. The panel saw features Felder's renowned X-Roll sliding table and Easy-Glide tilt, and with a 2800mm table fits nicely in the limited space Sean has available.



Service back up from Jacks was a big factor when Sean Thom fitted out his new factory with machinery from Felder.

"It hasn't missed a beat," says Sean. "And given how little panel work we do, not having a powered fence is fine." Sean's also impressed with the N4400 bandsaw: "I was used to a huge old thing so was surprised when the much smaller N4400 has dealt with anything we've put its way – including some heavy ripping. It's not as fast but it's doing the job I need."

Felder's FS722 stroke sander is a simple but efficient design, and Sean invested in the optional powered height adjustment, and bigger 4.0kW motor. "I've often wondered if I need a wide-belt sander, but I've always used a stroke sander and for the money they do an excellent job. This one is no different - it's perfectly suited to the work we do here."

Sean's favourite machine is the F700Z spindle moulder. With a tilting spindle, and 1000mm tenoning table, the Felder has really impressed. "I'd never used a moulder with a sliding table" says Sean, "but having the table makes it so much easier to get an excellent result – particularly on end grain. With the eccentric clamp and using the sliding table and crosscut fence then it's

much safer too." A 5.5kW motor gives plenty of power for even the hardest of timbers, and the additional F38 powerfeed offers 8 speeds for good control, and the safety of being integrated with the e-stop system of the spindle moulder.

With branding focused on craftsmanship and sustainability, Podocarp Cabinetry has quickly gained a reputation for quality. Working almost exclusively in solid timber, Sean and his team are busy with everything from furniture, heritage restoration and replication to custom-made timber doors and windows. A focus on sustainability means there are separate treated and non-treated waste streams, offcuts are recycled into smaller products, and there's a general focus on the natural beauty and durability of wood.

Work comes predominantly via word-of-mouth, reputation and some social media exposure. Podocarp Cabinetry are very much in tune with the market they're serving – a customer base seeking high quality, bespoke and hand-made pieces highlighting the natural aesthetics of solid timber. As a result there's always interesting work to be done.

At the time of writing the workshop floor featured a Murphy bed made in Birch ply destined for an up-market apartment in central Christchurch. Other recent work has included Iroko window sills, bespoke entertainment units and even skateboards!

Sean's passion for his work is clear to see – not only in his and the team's craft – but also in the tidy, well-organised workshop, and in their sophisticated online presence. A year into the new venture it's clear that Podocarp Cabinetry is a successful package: passion for their work with the skills and machinery to match.



www.podocarpabinetry.co.nz