

Furniture inspired by nature

If you drive up the avenue of trees at Old Park Farm you will shortly come to an unassuming workshop that houses one of Britain's finest makers of contemporary furniture. On a bright January day *Ali Beckett* went to visit Edward Johnson to find out more about his business.

How would you describe your work?

We make luxury bespoke, freestanding furniture using various materials but especially solid wood.

What is your background?

I was brought up near Arundel and did a degree in Furniture Design at University. I graduated with a first and went to work as a cabinet maker. I set up my own business in Brighton in 2009. Then about 5 years ago I won a 'Be the Business' award from Chichester District Council which enabled me to expand and get these premises.

Why did you choose Bosham?

I always knew I didn't want to work on an industrial estate, so this workshop is just perfect. The sun streams through the windows and we are surrounded by trees. It is a very calm environment for our work. The proximity to Chichester College was also a factor. I work closely with the College as they provide a pool of local talent.

How many people work for you?

At present we have six people who are all from the local area. Some have been here for a number of years. Our most recent recruit has been with us for 6 months and trained at Chichester College. They are all extremely talented craftsmen but humble about their abilities. The workshop is at the heart of the business and I really value the skills of my staff.



Who buys your furniture?

It is mainly private customers, some know exactly what they want, and others just have an idea and we work through the design process together. Other orders come from interior designers and recently I have been making pieces for Super Yachts but I'm not allowed to give any names or details!

How are you influenced by the environment?

I love being out in nature whether that's walking around the harbour or in my garden on the South Downs and I know that it has a sub-conscious influence on my designs. Ripples and curves are a regular theme in my work. I look at how nature slowly builds its designs and often take that as a start point by cutting timbers right down to small pieces and then gradually reforming them to the shapes I want.

What is your favourite part of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

I especially like the walk from Itchenor to West Wittering with its outstanding views and gnarled, windswept trees. This year I plan to walk around Thorney Island and hopefully get a glimpse of the seals.

Ali Beckett

The Edward Johnson Studio will be open on the following dates in May as part of the Chichester Arts Trail:

Saturday 4th May,
10.30am – 5.30pm
Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th
May, 10.30am – 5.30pm