



Loyal to Biesse

After 25 years of loyalty to the brand and more than 20 machines purchased, The Kitchen Works has added a new Rover B FT HD cell to its Biesse-equipped factory.

Graeme Latimer



In an age when it's easy for people to vent their wrath over the smallest hiccup on social media, it's always nice to be presented with the chance to report on something that's helped a manufacturer solve a problem, or a supplier who's gone the extra mile to ensure a customer is over the moon with a service or a product he's bought.

When the occasion arose to visit Graeme Latimer (one of the directors at The Kitchen Works North East Ltd in Gateshead), whose company has recently bought a Biesse Rover B FT HD cell, I was expecting he would highlight the benefits of his new machine, explain what it's done for his production and confirm how the installation process went – but no sooner had we sat down and started the interview, he launched into a story of loyalty to the brand that dates back decades:

"The factory is about 30,000 square feet," he told me, and without a pause or a prompt, added, "We're equipped entirely with Biesse machinery. I've used Biesse machinery for 25 years. I haven't got another manufacturer in the factory, only Biesse and we must have had

20 or more machines from them since we started. That's because of the service, the quality and the back-up. We've always found them to be the best company to deal with and when something's that good you don't change it, do you?"

That's quite an advertisement, all the more so for being unsolicited. Nevertheless, I'm keen to find out a little more about what The Kitchen Works produces, how it's been manufacturing in the past and how the new three-axis nesting cell fits into Graeme's production and his plans for the future.

"Primarily, what we do is manufacture and supply rigid kitchens for the trade," he explained. "They are all colour-coded so they match the doors and they are quite high spec. We supply customers from Inverness down as far as Sheffield and these include high street studios, some builders and some direct sales. The majority of our customers are kitchen retailers.

"A lot of the doors we supply are manufactured for us but we do make some of our own – German-style slab doors, mostly – and we offer them as a bespoke service to fit

any size of cabinet. Although most kitchen units are a standard size, we manufacture cabinets of any width, any height, any depth. If a smaller cabinet is required, or a client needs a cabinet with an odd width like 472mm, we will supply that.

"Typically, when you're producing kitchens, you've got cutting, edging and drilling machines and that's what we've got. We've been using beam saws – Selco EB70s and EB108s. We had three but we sold one to make space for the Biesse Rover B. We've also got Biesse drilling and edging machines.

"What prompted us to look at nesting after years of working conventionally was the speed and the edge accuracy you get from a CNC. When you're using a beam saw, if the board cups during processing you don't get an absolutely square edge and that's something you really need to produce a quality product. We wanted that accuracy of cut. With the nester, we get a perfectly square cut, which makes all the difference when it comes to assembling a cabinet. There's no squaring to be done after cutting. Everything is right when it comes off.

"We were also looking for speed. It had to be either the same speed as the beam saw, or quicker – preferably quicker. We looked carefully at the times and did a few time studies. Having the nesting cell has increased the volume of panels we're producing quite a bit. We were cutting 40 to 50 sheets a day on the beam saw. Because you've got to put them on manually, turn them and transfer the piles, it takes time. With the nesting machine, once the board is on the machine bed it never moves until all the processes have been carried out. We've been getting 60 plus sheets a day through on a normal eight-hour shift. We're easily 20 percent up on what we were doing."

The Biesse Rover B FT HD cell Graeme bought is a single-head, four-axis, flat-table machine that includes Biesse's performance-enhancing High Dynamics, a system designed to provide high speed and optimised cycle times. The head is also equipped with T-Jet, the on-board dust control system that removes dust from the cut line during machining and into the extraction hood, reducing clean-down time at the end of a shift

and eliminating the risk of damage to the panel from chips during machining operations. It's effective even at the high feed speeds the High Dynamics system can deliver.

Although The Kitchen Works doesn't need a vast array of tools, the Rover B Graeme specified has a high-speed tool-changer on board the head, making tool-changing a fast operation.

Graeme's Biesse FT HD cell could have been equipped with integrated robots for loading at one end and unloading at the other and everything could have been in a cab instead of just the machine, but Graeme felt the scissor lift and automatic loading system Biesse's Malcolm Storey recommended would provide enough of an uplift in production to prove the value of moving from conventional manufacturing to nesting – and give him the incentive to move all his production over to nesting in the future.

So what's the Rover B FT HD cell like to work with?

"Very easy," Graeme confirmed. "We order sheet material in rainbow stacks – maybe six oak, followed by four grey, two

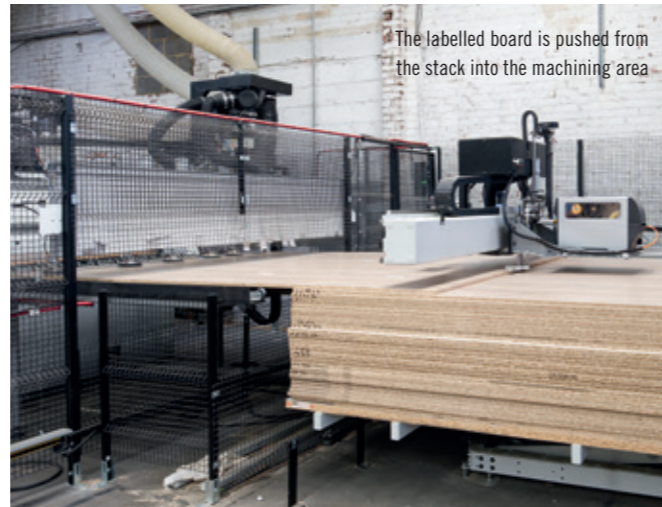
Caption



Forklift delivers rainbow stack



Aligning the board prior to labelling



The labelled board is pushed from the stack into the machining area



The panel is taken by the vacuum system on the Rover B and loaded onto the table



Drilling and cutting out the nested panels

white, five light oak and so on. The stack is put onto the loading system with a forklift.

“With the beam saws, you get a roll of labels and each label is for the next panel to be cut. With the nesting cell, the scissor lift lifts the stack one board at a time and squares each one up, then it labels before transferring the sheet onto the bed. Even before the board is cut, the labels are applied. While it’s drilling and cutting the first board, it’s labelling the next. One person operates the whole machine and when the panels come off at the outfeed, they are already

labelled, cut and drilled, ready for transfer to the edgebander.

“When the sheet is on the main bed, the onboard drilling head drills all the shelf holes, the hinge holes, and the cam and dowel holes in one operation. While this is happening, the router head carries out a tool change and using a diamond cutter, it cuts out all the panels. With three operations carried out on the nester, it’s saving time on the beam saw where you’d be labelling or putting the labels on. It’s also saving time transferring to the drilling machine because it’s doing the

drilling on the bed. We only need to end drill and that’s a quick operation. It’s saving so much time.

“We specified a labelling machine at both ends because sometimes a label gets damaged if it gets caught by the skirt on the extraction or something. That label is important and it needs to be legible when it goes to the next stage. The operator brings up the picture of the screen, presses the panel he wants a new label for and it prints the correct one off.”

With such a long history of working with Biesse, it came as no surprise to learn Graeme



Head and tool-changer showing Biesse's T-Jet system



A second printer at the outfeed enables replacement of any labels that might have been damaged during machining



Programming the Biesse Rover B

was delighted with the whole installation: “I think we ordered it in September last year and it arrived in January, slightly earlier than expected. It was installed and commissioned by March and was up and running pretty quickly.

“It’s an easy machine to use and our operators are coping well with it. The beam saw operator is on there today. He’s getting trained by one of the other lads.

“I can’t recommend Biesse highly enough. We have a history dating back about 25 years with them and it’s a good working relationship. You can always try to get something a bit cheaper but in the end you get what you pay for. We’ve always found Biesse great to work with and they deliver a good service. That’s what you need.”

For more information on the Biesse Rover B FT HD, call 01327 300366 or visit www.biesse.com/uk/wood/cnc-work-centres/rover-b-ft-hd

Some of Graeme's previous Biesse machines

