



bespoke oak office for a customer in Londonderry. But Robert's initial inspiration for his new high-end career was right at home. "We were getting a new kitchen in and they came along and installed it and then they left some offcuts. I'd been watching them and thought 'I could do that' so I started into making a matching oak architrave and then I made the units for the utility room."

As they look identical to the main kitchen, Robert has obviously done an excellent job. But furniture-making presents other challenges. Now quality timber is increasing difficult to source locally and timber such as Kauri and curly maple has to be imported directly from the USA or from specialist timber suppliers. He's also having difficulty finding a kiln to use for drying his wood.

But as we look out over the farmland surrounding his house, he's looking to the future, with an area of native woodland planted to provide a sustainable supply of fuel wood. Robert has planted just over three hectares of new native broadleaved woodland, after deciding to invest in a wood gasifying boiler to heat his home. It's a hefty consumer of wood, using up to twelve tonnes per year. He buys up wood from a tree surgeon at £40 per tonne, but it then needs sawed up to put in the stove. In future, the very 'green' idea is that he will use thinned branches from his woodland of aspen, alder, willow and birch, as well as the slower-growing ash and oak as fuel. The trees were established with grant funding from the Forest Service, but Robert acknowledges that the fully grown oak probably won't be of significant size for another fifty or one hundred years, so he won't be crafting those trunks into furniture. But his flagship product - the museum quality rocking chairs will undoubtedly still be around then. It's another of the bounties to come

radio carbon dating shows them to be over 40,000 years old. Robert lovingly rubs his hand over one of his latest beautiful chairs, pointing out the grain in the ambrosia maple, with little tracks, made by long dead insects. It's an awaiting collection by a customer and is standing alongside tree trunks like sequoia and cut wood shipped in from across the world, north America, Belize and Africa, as well as walnut and ancient oak from English forests. Robert specialises in making rocking chairs, but also works on other projects and bespoke items of furniture, working closely with his clients to produce his quality pieces. He's perfected his traditional joinery techniques, whilst using his beautiful figured timber. And taking up a lot of his workshop at the moment is a

from his new career, following in the rocking legacy of American craftsmen like Hal Taylor or Sam Maloof. Now Robert has made his own mark in furniture-making. "I've been asked to contribute to a new American coffee table book on furniture. At first, I thought

they'd made a mistake, because they don't make coffee tables, but realised that that is where you find the book. Nice to be asked, says the ever modest Co An craftsman. A film of Robert is online at [www.rkernohan.com](http://www.rkernohan.com)