

PHOTO: COLLECTING UNDER
CHANGEABLE SKIES ON PORTH NEIGWL

WORDS BY CRAIG MASON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUSTIC WOOD CREATIONS

DRIFTWOOD DREAMS



It was back in the late nineties when the band Travis penned the lyric to their seminal ballad, the lovely 'Driftwood'. A closer look at the words tells us of a song of sadness and a sense of an ending:

**You're driftwood floating underwater
Breaking into pieces pieces pieces
Just driftwood hollow and of no use
Waterfalls will find you bind you grind you
And you really didn't think it would happen
But it really is the end of the line**

Craig Mason, the man behind Rustic Wood Creations, has a different mindset about driftwood, collecting it from our local beaches to fulfill his passion for wood-working, bringing it back to life in the form of beautiful, hand-made, home accessories and furniture. We asked Craig to tell us about his life-long connections with Abersoch and how a childhood hobby turned into a sustainable, eco-friendly business:

People have often wondered why I walk along beaches with a large bag or sometimes a container. The simple answer is to collect driftwood. I've had many strange looks from passers-by over the years, often stopping me to ask what I am doing as I stumble across rocky beaches in all kinds of weather to find the best pieces of the amazing, unique chunks of wood washed up by the sea.

My passion for collecting driftwood and beachcombing started from a young age. Around about ten years old to be exact. My parents had a caravan in Sarn Bach, just outside of Abersoch, and we would visit most weekends in the summer season, with six weeks

spent in the school holidays. During this time we would have days out at the many different beaches around the Llyn Peninsula, my favourite being Porth Neigwl (Hell's Mouth). Why? Because each time we walked along the beach at Hells Mouth, there were always new discoveries to be seen, from washed up pieces of shipwrecks to large piles of driftwood. It was these large piles of driftwood my parents would often explore, picking out the most unique pieces to take home and put in their garden as decoration.

wooden swords. So growing up, my interest expanded, taking up carpentry at school and finally collecting my own pieces of driftwood to get creative with. My first project was to turn a large, chunky piece of driftwood into a tealight holder. With my 35mm drill bit in one hand and the driftwood in the other, I set to work producing my first ever driftwood creation. It turned out well!

Having built up a multitude of tealight holders, I began distributing them to family and friends as gifts. It was at this



PHOTO: SAIL AWAY WITH ME, TO ANOTHER WORLD...



PHOTO: CRAIG AT THE WORKBENCH

Seventeen years later, I bought my first caravan in Abersoch not far from Hells Mouth which was ideal. Every morning I'd wake up early and head to the sands, taking along a large bag for beachcombing. I would pick out the most unique pieces of drift-

wood, just as my parents did, but I had a different vision. I had a vision of transforming these pieces into wonderful works of art and nautical themed décor.

From being young, I'd always had an interest in woodwork and being creative, regularly playing in my grandfather's garage with off-cuts of wood, making bird boxes and

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point I realised they were impressed with my work and told me I should try selling my pieces at craft fairs. So my first ever craft fair was booked. It was local so I didn't have to travel far. £15 for the stall, perfect!

That first craft fair was a success. It wasn't a sell out but I still managed to sell a few driftwood tealight holders and generated a fair bit of interest. I began to experiment with other projects using driftwood after this event and built up stocks of handmade décor, gifts and even furniture, much of it sourced from my favourite beach near Abersoch.

Things were getting serious. So much so that eventually Rustic Wood Creations was born – a proper business dedicated to producing beautiful home accessories and furniture sourced from timber and other finds from my favourite beaches. Inspired by the sea and coast, I now create mainly nautical décor, from beach themed signs up to large pieces of driftwood furniture.

Over the years we have developed an increasingly diverse range of handmade products, selling at craft fairs around Manchester, increasingly travelling further afield and also online – there is plenty of Abersoch themed merchandise in our online store. Our handmade products have received amazing feedback over the years not least because all the wood we use for our products is recycled and stops it from being sent to landfill or being burned. All the wood we use, whether reclaimed or driftwood hand collected from beaches throughout the UK, is thoroughly cleaned, brushed, dried and treated before we transform into a wonderful piece of rustic décor.

Increasingly we are working with commercial partners looking for a bespoke sign for their business or a driftwood themed bar – anything is possible by working with the nature and form of the timber and other items we collect. We use a range of techniques, including 'burning' the lettering into signs, with the emphasis being on that 'hand-made' style that our customers find so appealing.

We will always be grateful to Abersoch – the place that captured my heart as a child, inspired the beginnings and development of my business and has provided so much of the raw material that goes into our work. If you would like to see more of what we do please visit our website at rusticwoodcreations.co.uk.

