



**Beekeepers.  
Workbook.**



**2021.  
Paul Petch.**



## **Research Proposal**

When we think of modern farming, we associate it with large commercial agricultural ventures such as the dairy industry and cultivating crops. There are many smaller more boutique honey producers who are often independent from mainstream farming practices and have a rich community and culture. It is this beekeeping community, culture, and independence that I'm going to explore and share the results through a series of images and questions. Having recently read *Practical Beekeeping in New Zealand* (Matheson & Reid, 2018), I've chosen the South Island beekeeping community to explore and research. Furthermore, in a world of excessive farming of the land, and the associated large scale environmental impact, I feel the need to document alternative farming practices that have a low impact on the environment. The goal is to answer several questions visually, through a series of photographic images consisting of environmental portraiture and details of their process and tools.

The main goal of this research project is to share this alternative farming practice, the people, and their impact on the environment, by documenting Christchurch and Canterbury's independent beekeeping community, including the environments they operate in, their process, and the practice they employ.

To ensure a cohesion of the imagery captured, I aim to ask each beekeeper a series of questions, including;

- a) How long have you been beekeeping and why did you start?
- b) Do you believe your beekeeping practice is environmentally friendly?
- c) What makes your beekeeping practice different to the mass production of honey?

## **Artist Research**

Artists who have inspired my goals for this project include Alec Soth and Glenn Busch, Diane Arbus, August Sander and Duane Michals all of which capture people on large format film. Using large format photography not only yields an interesting aesthetic, but it also slows down their process. Soth often captures

subjects within their familiar environments, from a point of view that would often be overlooked (Soth, 2004). “Sleeping by the Mississippi” is Soth’s first photo essay and arguably his most famous, and his process fascinates me, as he drove from location to location with a list of keywords for things, he was interested in. Soth’s work often lacks context, or text, and inviting the viewer to piece the story together. In contrast to Soth’s work that lacks text, much of Busch’s work is accompanied by extensive narrative and context to the imagery (Busch, 1984). Busch’s work is also often captured using large format monochrome film, and documents everyday people going about their business. His defining work “Working Men” shares imagery of working-class men and their own stories. These series of images are simple and uncluttered while focusing entirely on the subjects in question.

Diane Arbus, as Artnet (2021) states, was an American photographer best known for her intimate black-and-white portraits. Arbus often photographed

people on the fringes of society, including the mentally ill, transgender people, and circus performers (Artnet, 2021). It’s the aesthetic of Arbus’s work that I’m attracted to. Like the other artists mentioned, her style of work simply captures the subject as they are, in the environment. No more no less. I really feel magnetised to this way of capturing people with a minimal fuss approach.

Sander’s work is seen to reveal the complexity behind the human condition, and most of his works depict the faces of people from diverse nationalities, genders, classes and professions in a simple, intimate and revealing aesthetic (Hauser Wirth, 2019). I’m drawn towards such a style when it comes to capturing the beekeeper portraits.

Duane Michals, as DC Moore Gallery (2021) highlights, is widely known for his work in series, multiple exposures, and text accompanying his analogue process. Michals work in the 1960’s, in an era heavily influenced by photo journalism, manipulated the medium to



August Sander.



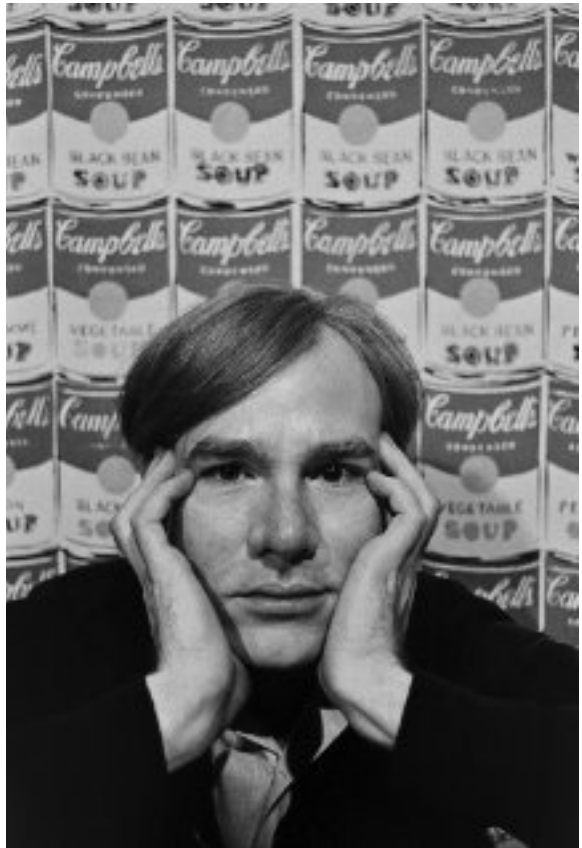
Alec Soth.



Glenn Busch.



Diane Arbus.



Duane Michals.



Larry. Mt. Lyford Honey.

communicate narratives (DC Moore Galley, 2021) with handwritten text for powerful context to his works, similar to that of Busch.

Like the artists highlighted, my aim is to also slow down the photographic process and connect better with the subjects to find their story, their environments, and those moments overlooked. I'll also add narratives to the series, for cohesion of images and context of the subjects own accompanying stories.

## **Literature Review**

### *Practical beekeeping in NZ book 5<sup>th</sup> edition.*

The Practical beekeeping in New Zealand (2018) book is a complete guide to managing hives and provides insights into New Zealand's beekeeping practices. For the inexperienced, it also explains what is required to become a beekeeper and discusses the industry in New Zealand. For those experienced with beekeeping the book shares the

steps for managing colonies all year long and the products that hives produce.

The Practical beekeeping in New Zealand book will be useful, not just an overview of the beekeeping industry as a whole, but also for all the practical steps and equipment required in maintaining a hive. This publication has assisted in addressing my questions relating to the process of beekeeping, as well as the queries relating to what equipment is important for the management of bees.

### *Strategies for "Greening" the NZ Honey Industry.*

This report, produced by researchers from the University of Otago, focuses on the current positioning of the honey industry towards 'greening' and aims to identify social and industry dynamics which are promoting or inhibiting the development of 'green' strategies (Bourn et al., 1999). The report contains interviews with people involved in the honey industry, including beekeepers, who were chosen to have their own views and perspectives of the honey industry. This report also provides views

on organic beekeeping practices, which shows an alternative approach to beekeeping from many commercial approaches. It also explores the individualistic nature of the bee industry compared to other monopolised agricultural production. This report has helped explore a number of aspects of the research questions that will be addressed, in particular it has provided insight to the individual attitudes and environments that beekeepers operate within.

#### *2020 Apiculture Monitoring Report NZ.*

The annual Apiculture Monitoring report by the Ministry of Primary Industries (2020) provides numerous statistics on the New Zealand bee and honey industry. It covers topics such as honey production, including manuka, exportation, as well as hive and beekeeping enterprise numbers across New Zealand, with annual trends and a break down into regional areas. It also highlights key developments, achievements and challenges experienced by commercial as well as

hobbyist New Zealand apiculturists. These statistics and observations have been useful in helping to define and identify the New Zealand beekeeper population and industry. It has also assisted in providing insights to the challenges that beekeepers face including any impacts on the industry from the recent Covid19 outbreak.

#### *Christchurch Hobbyist Beekeepers Club Website.*

The Christchurch Hobbyist Beekeepers Club (2021) website provides information about the current committee members and their contact details, as well as news updates relevant to beekeeping and some statistics about the current membership numbers, and average age. The information from this website, has assisted in providing insights to topics of interest and current issues for beekeepers, as well as helping to define a portion of the Christchurch beekeeping community. The main information that has been and will be utilised from this site is the various contact names, emails and phone

numbers for current beekeepers in Christchurch. This information will be useful to make contact with beekeepers to help answer the questions for research as well as assist in identifying subjects and locations for photography to be produced in response to the research questions posed.

*Video of beekeepers at work in Southern Alps.*

This YouTube video from The Beekeepers Honey (2019) provides a brief look at a Day in the Life of a Beekeeper in the beautiful and rugged Southern Alps, New Zealand. The Beekeepers Honey is a commercial beekeeper operating in the Southern Alps and Canterbury Plains. This video provides a visual experience of the activities beekeepers undertake to look after hives and bees, as well as the natural environment in which beekeepers work in, and the locations that hives are kept. This video helps respond to the research questions relating to the environments that beekeepers work within, as well as some

of the processes of keeping bees and the equipment used for the management of bees. It also provides useful visual examples to assist in producing the photography required to respond to the research questions posed.

<https://tinyurl.com/yzvez2mr>

## **Methodologies**

My goal is to capture images of New Zealand's beekeeping community and their culture, related to their environments in which they operate. I will demonstrate and link how the commercially independent people of beekeeping, and their activities, work with the environment through a series of photographs, and a zine. The images will be created alongside questions to add context and narrative to the beekeepers' unique process and stories. I want to showcase New Zealand's unique beekeeping communities and the environments that they work within.

I will achieve this goal by leveraging into local beekeeping clubs, sellers of beekeeping equipment and small

commercial ventures, and then contacting them to discuss meeting them and documenting their process and portraits. My focus will be Christchurch and the Canterbury Region of beekeepers. This part of my methodology may well be the hardest, as contacting beekeepers mid-Winter could yield little interest. Hopefully moving into the Springtime, with a persistent attitude towards connecting with these farmers, it will result in multiple connections and leads. Another more organic, and interesting approach towards connecting to beekeepers could be applying the methodology that Alec Soth applied to his process when creating 'Sleeping by the Mississippi' (Soth, 2004) whereby, like the fledgling internet of the time, he let each connection lead him to the next portrait, and from each subject, he found another connection and he followed that lead. The results were more organic and created an interweaving lateral body of work that captured the overlooked side of the subject matter. I wish to explore this more 'obscure' side of portraiture too, during this series of image taking,

with pictures within the beekeepers' home, or environments outside of the traditional beekeeping visuals.

Organising meetups and travelling to document leads will be time consuming, as I will cover in my timeline planning, but vital to the success of this project. To accommodate travel in the most economical way, I'll use my campervan setup that I'll stay in overnight if my travels take me outside of Christchurch into the mountains or Canterbury plains.

I aim to answer my questions visually using a Yashica635 (6x6) medium format camera, as well as recording the subjects verbal answers to my sub questions on my iPhone via audio recordings. These recordings will be translated into text to accompany the images and provide cohesion between the two.

My process of capturing the imagery on my trusty Yashica635 medium format camera, is to slow down the end-to-end process like the photographers who inspire me, Alec Soth, Glenn Busch,

August Sanders, Diane Arbus and Duane Michals. I'm going to capture the complete series on monochrome Ilford HP5 film stock, as it has a lot of latitude in the shadows, as well as offering the most neutral negative (Ilford Photo, 2019). For some variation I will also be photographing on colour film, Kodak Portra 400 and plan on self-developing all negatives and digitally scanning them, so that I can have full creative control and reproducibility of the end-to-end process. Camera settings wise, I'm keen to explore capturing the subjects wide open at a low aperture to achieve the distinctive 'medium format look', and I will pose the subjects at ease and as natural as possible, like the portrait works of August Sanders (Hauser & Wirth, 2019).

The medium that I'll use to showcase the beekeeping community and culture on, will be large traditional prints, but as part of this body of work, I will also produce a small run zine that will have accompanying text from the questions posed during the visits, like that of the

'Working Men Series' by Glenn Busch (Busch, 1984).

## **Timeline**

Throughout the next semester I will be traveling to many different locations to create an extensive body of work to answer the questions I've posed. The aim is to work with the beekeeping associations and farmers in the Christchurch and Canterbury region to arrange a series of visits and image capturing sessions.

### **20<sup>th</sup> June – 19<sup>th</sup> July**

During the mid-semester break I plan to use this time for the planning of my project, organising locations, looking at logistics, and booking dates to visit beekeepers within the Christchurch and Canterbury region. I will also be researching more processes of artists to accompany my own goals in image making. I'll plan to make a style guide of the images I'm going to shoot, for consistency at each location.

### **20<sup>th</sup> July – 20<sup>st</sup> September**

During this period, I will be actively meeting with farmers at their location and capturing as much content as I can, following the style guide made previously and utilizing the research and questions previously prepared. I will also be developing and scanning imagery captured throughout this period.

prints and completing the design of the zine ready for exhibition.

### **21<sup>st</sup> September – 29<sup>th</sup> October**

During this period, I'll be deciding to shoot beekeepers again who I built a rapport with during the previous shoots. I'd really like to capture some imagery within their homes or alternative spaces to add another level of intimacy towards their lives. I'll continue to develop and scan imagery, and I will also be drafting the concept for the zine.

### **30<sup>th</sup> October – 23<sup>rd</sup> November –**

#### **Hand In**

During this final period, I'll be completing my workbook and checking it provides an in-depth capture of my experiences, process, and outcomes. The final couple of weeks I'll be doing test

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Kevin's Hive Racks in Yard.





## Beekeeper Simon 08.08.21

As part of this beekeeping project I'm aiming to document keepers at their homes as well as on location at the hives. Put simply, I want to have a series of images that contrast the more personal portraiture with the more anonymous imagery of keepers dressed in their working uniforms. One thing to highlight is just how anxious I've been during the past few weeks with regards to this project, and in particular capturing the portraits of people in their homes. Even though I've been a commercial shooter for more than a decade, that process has been refined over the years to a point of the whole experience is now muscle memory. I've spent thousands of hours refining that commercial part of my photographic life, whereas photographing everyday people with no brief in their intimate spaces is pretty much day one hour one! Even though it's new to me and very much out of my comfort zone to the point of pre-shoot nausea, yesterday went exceptionally well and I'm now over that first creative hurdle. It feels good!

I feel so emotionally invested in this project though that it may be getting in the way. Last night after developing the first roll of images that captured Simon from Goldfern Honey and his family, I sat scanning with a feeling of panic as I watched the images appear on the screen. I want every session of this project to be a great experience for the subjects, myself and my developing process. But I may be setting to high a standard from the start. I've got to be more at peace with myself if sometimes things don't go to plan as I'm choosing to capture this project on film that has an inbuilt capacity to sometimes 'just not work as planned' and look softer than its digital counterpart. I'm 100% OK with these realities when it comes to all of my other film photography, but I guess this project is my most important series to date, and I have high expectations of the results. This emotional roller coaster to most sounds dreadful, but it's this journey in film that makes the whole experience worth the time and effort, as when it does all come together it is utter

magic! It's a constant learning process that I'm 100% invested in and it literally gets me out of bed day after day. I can't say the same for digital anymore. I am telling myself that worst case scenario, I can always reshoot portraits in this series if required, and that's OK.

I'm also struggling to decide if I go all in black or white or colour for the series, and it's a discussion to have with the critique group today at ARA as we move into week 4 of the project. I was pretty set on shooting all of this series on Ilford HP5, but feedback last week was that colour may be a better option for publishing prospects. I've had plans to shoot colour but not as a majority of images made, and as more a 'few here and there', but maybe colour is more important? I've been exploring a lot of fine art photography books from the fantastic University of Canterbury Library this week, and I was in some way compelled to select a stack of work that was captured in colour. Alec Soth's new book "I know how furiously your heart is beating" in particular got me thinking more seriously about using

colour for this project as each of his images plays homage to coloured elements within the frame adding meaning to the story of the portrait. Flicking through his amazing work feels like a journey of discovery and if I'm honest, colour plays a large role in this experience.

He also talks about allowing the creative portrait process to unfold naturally without exploitive practice- but that's a discussion for another blog post. Looking through the pages of the books with most being coloured, I now feel inspired to at least shoot colour as much as possible when it comes to the portraits of people at their home or comfortable spaces. It's a good compromise, and I can capture some monochrome too if it unfolds that way, but for now I'm set on colour for this series as a whole, with black and white for 'B-roll' as such. This is the reverse of my initial plans. This first set of portraits are of Simon and his family at their Cashmere home. Shot on Kodak Portra 400 on the Rolleicord VB rated at ISO 200 instead of 400. Images

developed at home using Cinestill chemistry and scanned using a Epson V550.

While not ideal, the set was shot fully open at F3.5 which does add a dream like feeling to the images. Again... do I want this aesthetic? It's the reality of film though with set ISO, when the light is so dark, and I'm not brave enough yet to push (develop longer to achieve a higher ISO) the film, so I have to work with what I have. Overall I'm stoked with the set and even happier to have got the first portrait done and dusted! I've got quite a list of leads to shoot over the coming weeks and excited to see how it unfolds, and I've moved from a list of contacts in Word- with notes- to a CRM at Capsule. This is helping me keep on top of the admin associated with managing shoots, follow ups, model releases and posing the series of questions, and is free to use upto 250 contacts.

Update. After today's group critique I've decided to make the process of image making simple and utilise both cameras to capture colour and black and white.

My heart says shoot exclusively monochrome, but it makes sense to give my self as many options as possible moving towards trying to get this work published. As part of my image taking process, and as you may well see in this set of images, I tend to shoot 'scenes' in 3's if it takes my fancy. I aim to shoot 3 colour, swap cameras, and shoot 3 black and white, and if time allows and the subject is not annoyed, repeat until I've captured 24 images across two rolls. Simon was happy to shoot more work so maybe we will do a second round in his beautiful back yard in the coming months. Options are good!



Simon and Family at Home. Goldfern Honey.

## Thoughts on Beekeeper Project 13.08.21

Beekeepers I'm now discovering, are literally EVERYWHERE.

I've turned a corner (finally) when it comes to metering images and feel like I've found a middle ground. The reason I was having issues in the first place was that during landscape captures my exposure was quite often under. I'd not had this issue prior when shooting portraits, so it was a bit of a head scratcher. I was using the same metering app and process as employed for portraiture, but as mentioned, the exposures were off. Over the past month I've been testing a few processes to see if I can fix the issue, and I'm finally there. I started shooting and rating the 400 ISO film at 320 for a while and Simons portraits show great results of this approach, that are really good exposures for Kodak Portra 400. But that was for portraits in a small backyard, and even when rating the film at 320 I was still having problems

with landscapes. So during my last hike I tried shooting 2 rolls of Portra and 3 of HP5 rated to 200 instead of 400 ISO to see if this fixed the landscape exposure one and for all. What I found was that all of the images were mostly over exposed so it went to far. Not so much of an issue for HP5, but this played havoc with some of the coloured photos, with loss of proper detail in the highlights/ sky. After this quite extensive experimental period, I've now finally come to a good compromise with metering for landscape portraits, that is rating the film at 320 ISO and expose for the shadows in the FOREGROUND.

Interestingly during this lengthy process I've discovered that instead of choosing elements mid or at the rear of the scene, exposing for the foreground yields the best results with the iPhone app that I use. So the approach for both scenes is to now rate film at 320 ISO, and meter for shadows in the foreground of the scene. Portraits are usually metered

for the subject, and landscapes now for dark or even mid shadowed regions such as the ground or bushes in the foreground.

I'm still tormented by my love for black and white over colour. Honestly I'm so obsessed with monochrome that colour is seemingly more of a distraction to my process it seems. Well that's my point of view anyway. Ilford HP5 also holds highlights so well that subjects such as average skies look like they have something vs that of Portra that struggles. Post editing colour is also unbelievably time consuming, as the grading process is vital and really makes or breaks the image collection as a whole.

I've always had to spend some quality time getting the colours just right, and can require a heap of tweaking as the set unfolds. It's a constant process of backwards and forwards the more you scan and add to the group of captures.

Meanwhile black and white looks pretty amazing from the start, with

editing mostly consisting of contrast and shadow choices. HP5 is also cheaper, hugely! But when a colour image works it's utter MAGIC! So, as mentioned, to ease my anxiety, I'm shooting black and white and colour for the bee project. I'm now leaning more towards mostly black and white once more, with a few colour. It feels like I'm looking for reasons to not shoot colour, and maybe that's true. But when I look at my black and white work it hits hard. It's more emotive. It not only has a beautiful aesthetic, but monochrome seems to tell a story in a single frame, while sets of images in a collection have more cohesion than that of colour. Who would have thought I would have so much inner turmoil over this!

I'm now shooting on my tripod extensively too, and often with a cable release, which allows the obvious perk of managing slower shutter speeds, but it also brings another level of slowing down. I like it a lot. So yes, this week signals the end of extensive personal work and the experimentation of better

exposures. This is good as it has been quite tiring, and very distracting. Best of all the anxiety caused by worrying about exposures once the project kicked off is less!

Today was also a big admin day, and it is becoming quite involved as you can imagine. I've got some portraits organised for this weekend and during the week next, which is fantastic. As long as I have weekly shoots organised, I'm happy! I was at the North Canterbury Beekeeping Clubs AGM in Rangiora on Wednesday to meet the group. There were about 18 people present and they were so welcoming. I loved chatting with them about their passions- while organising how we can capture them at home and then hives. They also showed me pictures of their best bee stings on their phones. Ha! The topic of representing the community fully across all ages and cultures was also discussed with Robert, and this has been my goal from the start. The photo opportunities from all angles

are steadily coming into my inbox, and by phone, and I cannot wait to capture a whole range of keepers in their homes and then at their precious hives as it warms up. Here are a few images from the NC Beekeeping Clubs AGM. I was gifted a honey comb by one of the members too, that quite frankly is the best thing I've ever tasted. Wow!



North Canterbury Beekeepers Club AGM 2021.

## **Beekeepers Leah, Rowan and David 15.08.21**

This weekend has been amazing. The hard work of reaching out to beekeepers and commercial ventures as well as the extensive organising of shoots is finally starting to yield some fun. IMAGE MAKING! Initially I was terrified with the scale of this project, and soon realised I had opened a literal can of worms when it came to the logistics and scope of it. Then there were the early nerves and internal battle that my skills were good enough to manage the various levels of this photoshoot as a whole. I'm happy to share that those early nerves have been replaced with pure joy and excitement as I meet more people who are vital for the success of the project. I'm genuinely stoked at how warm and inviting the bee community has been, and the people who I've spent time with for portraits have been fantastic subjects.

I want to quickly discuss my obsessions with monochrome vs colour too. I've posted multiple updates with regards to

the turmoil faced choosing what medium to use, and after yesterdays portraits I came to a realisation that the early critique at ARA which had posed the question WHY do I want to use black and white so much over colour, had knocked my confidence. Just like the studies at Ilam Fine Arts, under the teachings of Tim, the WHY? was also posed towards the majority of my earlier image making too, and it, like now derailed my whole process of image making.

It's quite a profound relationship to the WHY, and my gut reaction was because of the aesthetics, and ability to tell a story, and cohesion of images in as a set. All of which are valid reasons, but I still felt like I had not explored a more meaningful reasoning for monochrome vs colour. Yesterday I came to the realisation that as a photographer I allow the the scene to invite me to capture it in colour or monochrome. I don't actually have a preference, and it's the elements of the image that dictate I shoot black and white or colour. The thing is that this process has always

dictated my choice to capture colour imagery, but it was such a subconscious process that until being asked WHY?, I had never stopped to examine it. I was thrown into a mild frenzy over the past month, and I'm now at peace with it. Does this insight matter? For me yes, as I'm now not anxious about what medium I employ- I will, as I've always done, let the scene dictate the choice and allow that process to continue.

Yesterday I met up with Leiah and Rowan, from Mt. Lyford Honey at a place that they like to spend time outside of work, alongside the River at Leithfield. We captured portraits and chatted about their roles working at a commercial honey making operation. On route the rain was so torrential that I was concerned that the images would look like drown rats! I was also worried about my gear from the 1950's and 60's getting trashed, as these cameras are not weather sealed in anyway. Once I arrived the rain became lighter and we managed to create a set. I did have water droplets on my viewing screen though, and that made for some

interesting focussing. Later that afternoon, I then met with David who works on the hives at ARA that are set on the roof in the city. David is also involved with the Christchurch hobbyist beekeepers club too, and has engaged a connection to this club, with an invite by the hivemaster to shoot images of their members. David's property had such a nice feel to it and we chatted more about his role at ARA where he has worked for more than 25 years, as well as his love for beekeeping. He had a few hives in his yard that with his 'loud' shirt called out for Kodak Portra. Please see above.

I look forward to each week at ARA with the feedback from the group now. It also motivates me to keep making images, and it pushes me to make better photographs too. So yes, this week has been quite interesting towards not only my process as a whole, but also how the project is starting to make some traction. One thing is for sure though, there will be no discussions about light metering or my torment over monochrome vs colour moving forward!



David is a Beekeeper for ARA.



Leiah and Rowan From Mt. Lyford Honey.

## Beekeeper Kevin 16.08.2

Yesterday I spent the late afternoon with Kevin who I met at the North Canterbury Beekeepers Club AGM last week, and we shot his portrait at his Christchurch property. He and his wife were so friendly, as per all keepers I'm meeting, and I captured Kevin inside his home and yard. Kevin has been into beekeeping for more than 30 years and it started with his Father who kept bees. He sent a link to a video made by David Alexander, another NC Beekeeping Club member and former photography tutor, for his 70th birthday in 2020. You can see Kevins story and passion for bees here [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8Nb\\_ThteJQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8Nb_ThteJQ)

Kevin wanted the painting that sits above the family TV captured as it's quite special to him, and is of a scene from Ikoraki Bay, an isolated bay on the southern coast of Banks Peninsula. It shows a Family holiday, with their tent and Fathers combi-van against the rolling hills and ocean.

What's being reinforced as this series builds is just how different the aesthetics of every set of images are on film, and check out the different characteristics and mood of the Yashica635 (monochrome) and Rolleicord VB (colour) with the Yashy showing off some true SOUL. It loves to separate the background wide open, and that lens flare too!

My desert island camera for sure. Yes I'm doubling up here, but felt the need to shoot both, and a pretty interest comparison for sure.



Kevin at Home.

## **Beekeeper Robert 18.08.21**

The whole of New Zealand went into level 4 lockdown yesterday at midnight, but I was fortunate to spend the last light of the day with Robert who I met at the NC Beekeeping club.

His Ohoka property was about 30 mins drive from the city, and nestled amongst some beautiful landscape. The house was built for the family some 35 years prior and the trees that surround the home were just saplings planted as part of the development of the land. For the last 20 or so years of his working career, Robert was involved in the funding of research across a very broad range of projects, with one project in particular involved with the improvement of pollination in Kiwifruit, and it was that project which led him to eventually keeping several hives at home.

Roberts hives are mostly the design found in the UK- but with the traditional NZ hives placed inside. This design I'm assured offers better cooling and warmth year round. You could say that

they are more aesthetically pleasing too.

Robert like all of the keepers I've met is a really warm and friendly chap, and we enjoyed tea while talking about a range of topics surrounding beekeeping, as we waited for the best light of the day. I'm becoming totally fascinated by all of the insights surrounding beekeeping, and already can see myself getting into this hobby over the Summer.

The last frames I captured were of Robert in his beautiful 'retro' styled home, and I'm really stoked that I hit focus. Manually focussing these cameras from 50's and 60's is tricky on a good day, but in a dull lit scene with the sun setting, and towards the edges of the frame, even more so.

One thing I've noticed is that the Yashica635 seems to focus easier for sure, or is it more true to the focussing you see looking into the ground glass? At 3.5 – 5.6 it's also clearly sharper than the Rolleicord too, but the results when either hit focus are worth the anxiety. It's a roller coaster of emotions that only

film offers. I guess both cameras are different across multiple aspects from the aesthetics, to how the lens behaves. Hence why I aim to shoot 3 frames per scene – to increase the odds of focus on these beautiful but tricky machines! With level 4 restrictions now hitting hard NZ wide, this project is on hold until we can freely connect with others outside our bubbles.



A bit of downtime will be good though as I connect more via email with others in search of the diversity that the project deserves, and in particular more female, younger enthusiasts, and Maori beekeepers. Maybe it's time for some still life and self portraits at home to keep me busy?! Thankfully I can still get outside to exercise though while this outbreak settles.



Robert at Home.

## **Hive-master Gordon 15.09.21**

Since the early 1960's Gordon has been involved with the Christchurch Hobbyist Beekeeping Club on this same plot of land. For a decade he's been the hive master too, and yesterday It was a privilege to spend time with Gordon as the sun settled against the horizon. We talked about bee behavior and in particular how temperature affects the colony, and where not to stand around hives if you don't want to get attacked. Gordon invited me to the next club meetup in October which will be a great way to meet more beekeepers, including younger folk and females.

He showed me around the beautiful plot that has a classroom, working hives, BBQ area and a purposefully planted/ cultivated selection of trees, shrubs, and plants that offer flowers to the bees. The light of the day caught me off guard to be honest, and was hard to work with it being so strong and bright. Springtime change has snuck up with the days drawing outwards, and it's time to push shoots forward from 4.30 – 5.30 start.

I'm busy again with image making with the next five days booked out with beekeeper portraits. Good times!

I'm settling into the photographic process again after weeks of lockdown and personal projects, and was comfortable scanning today with the realisation that every portrait of this series is different due to location and light, and now the set has grown, I'm satisfied with this.



Hive-Master Gordon.

## Beekeeper Larry 16.09.21

Larry is a beekeeper at Mount Lyford Honey and lives a few minutes past Amberly in a beautiful area surrounded by green rolling hills. Megan, Larry's step mother organised this shoot, and like others has been really helpful. By next week I will have documented all staff in their happy place, who work at Mount Lyford Honey.

After spending some time on the dirt road outside of Larry's home, he allowed me to spend time inside their family home and was greeted by his beautiful family. Larry is into hunting outside of beekeeping and invited me in to see his wall of stag heads. I'm always ever so grateful when people open up their personal lives to share with me for a few minutes. It's a real privilege. This weekend I'll be visiting beekeepers at Mount Lyford for the first time, and I can't wait.

Yesterday while shooting at 1/4 and f3.5 it was apparent that I need to start having the capacity to capture portraits more reliably indoors for this series. I was asking Larry to keep still as if it was the 1900's to avoid any blur due to such a long shutter speed. I'm looking into carrying the third TLR with the option to shoot colour or black and white (HP5 or Portra) rated at ISO 1600 and push during development. I'll run a few experiments at home first and see what happens.

The other option is to buy some Portra 800 and push to ISO 1600 (+1 vs +2) that might avoid common issues pushing Portra such as increased contrast, colour shifts and increased grain. I LOVE these indoor portraits, but there was an element of luck yesterday with most exhibition some motion blur, which I don't want to test again



Larry. Mt. Lyford Honey.

## **Beekeeper Rod 19.09.21**

Rod is a beekeeper at Bee my Honey and lives in Lincoln on a beautiful lifestyle block, with the hives, Wife and three Daughters. I took my Son Thomas with me on this shoot and he hit the jackpot with horses, dogs and alpaca to spend time with as we waited for the light to get better.

We had some interesting chats about all sorts of subjects including social media use and how it effects our kids, through to a period when Rod went to the states and returned some years ago to face some dramatic loss of hives due to parasitic invasions. What was apparent spending time with Rod is his love for his family, outdoors and the animals he cares for. A great combination.

Interestingly, I captured a selection of images in this set using Cinestiill 800 which traditionally is used for night time image making. The results were great and looked similar to that of Fujifilm 400H in my opinion.

What a shame though it is \$30 a roll :/  
A pack of Portra 800 for this project is going to be more cost effective for sure.



Rod. Be My Honey.

## **Megan and Steve – Mount Lyford Honey 22.09.21**

This photoshoot was in two parts and my Wife Amy, and Son Thomas came along for the experience. We headed to Megan's Amberly home first on route to Mount Lyford Honey where we met her Daughter Sophie who is also a beekeeper (who I'll be photographing soon), and her five + dogs. We then headed to meet Steve, Megans partner, who owns the Mount Lyford operations, and based in Lyford.

We got there quite late and the light was perfect, but fading fast, so we got straight to it, with views of Mount Lyford who really put on a beautiful display for us with no cloud covering her peak.

We captured around the property, inside the honey packing operations, and finally in Steves living room and a truly magnificent mirror- a giant Piranha. We chatted about all sorts of bee talk and mostly surrounding the technologies in the industry as well as how not

disturbing the bees during honey extraction not only keeps them alive, it also improves the yield. By all accounts it can take upto 2 years for a colony to settle, grow and be happy enough to then produce excess honey outside of the amount required to sustain the colony.

Mount Lyford Honey prides itself on the fact their honey is 100% natural and derived from the available flowers, rather than feeding the colonies refined sugar. A practice that apparently is very common within the New Zealand beekeeping community. After I capture Sophie, who is a keen horse rider, I would have documented the complete crew at Mount Lyford Honey, who have all been brilliant to get to know and spend time with. Thanks for organising everything Megan!

During the development of one roll, the 'funnel lid' of the Paterson tank fell out when I was pouring the chemistry back into the bottle. The light thankfully was not direct from above and leaks were manageable during post editing. The

negatives were mostly OK but I lost a few images due to fogging and a crazy contrast shift, that breaks my heart. It was a mistake that could have been avoided too if I had simply the next day, as I was very tired. I must slow down and respect the developing process more.



Megan and Steve. Mt. Lyford Honey.

## **Beekeeper Robert 23.09.21**

I met Robert at the North Canterbury Beekeepers Club and he was kind enough to invite me and Thomas to his home to capture his portrait with his dogs and chickens. We chatted about family mostly and Robert helped suggest some more leads within the Beekeeping community to help me capture more diversity. Some chat about technology unfolded, and seems to be a topic in the community that divides.

For example, technologies such as automatic weighing sensors underneath hives indicate optimal honey extraction vs traditional methods of checking by hand. It's these types of electronic methods and approaches that commercial ventures, not all it seems, can utilise for better yields of Honey. Or liquid gold, you could say.

During the development of one roll of three, I unfortunately removed the 'light sealing funnel' from a development tank and the whole roll was instantly ruined. It's never nice when you lose images

and especially when they were the 'kookiest' of the set. Robert would be game to re-shoot this set I'm sure, but part of me believes what is meant to be is meant to be, and re-shooting is not true to the natural progression of the project. I'm pretty happy with the set regardless. Yes, this is twice within a week I've messed up during the development stage, and I disrespected the process, so it disrespected me I guess. I declared that I would stop developing in the evenings and went ahead and did exactly that while tired once again. I've now swapped things around, and moved development 100% to the following day, and scanning negatives if required into the evening. I've learnt my lesson.

Next week I'm going to slow things down more. Anyway, next week I'm going to photograph a husband and wife operation near the Southern Alps, and they employ all casual staff who are Mums. I may have hit a jackpot for documenting more females within the community, and I'll share more about this later.



Robert at Home.

## **Beekeeper Gerard 25.09.21**

Gerard was kind enough to invite me to the North Canterbury Beekeeping Club's AGM a few months ago where he is the president and I met some beekeepers – and since documented them. This week I ventured out to Gerard's beautiful Eyreton property where he keeps himself busy with all sorts of projects- with beekeeping being very prominent.

Gerard has all the equipment to harvest and extract honey, as well as an ingenious bee wax melting tool, that facilities candle making. His home is a green paradise with so many trees and plant life, and a handful of hives scattered throughout, and it turns out that Gerard was a Physics and mathematics teacher prior to retiring.

In a few weeks I'm going to attend a hive day and connect with other keepers as we head to the finish of this project at ARA in late November. I'll be continuing the project in two 2022 though FYI as I want to document a complete season and more diversity.



Gerard at Home.

## **Foothills Honey 02.10.21**

Foothills Honey at Okuku are a Canterbury crew headed by James and Sister Laura, and compared to the majority of commercial beekeepers has a younger work force. I was invited to their office and production area to meet the crew as they came back to 'base' after a day out with the hives. While the Winter light was easier to manage, being flat, the brighter Springtime conditions do yield interesting results as I document the change of seasons.

I've been invited to head out with the crew as they work on the hives in the next 3 weeks, that will require me getting suited up. I can't wait! When it comes to being out in the warmest part of the day in the coming weeks, as I document work on the hives, I'll maybe need help with a scrim to help diffuse the harsh midday light.

The photographic process is in a constant flux based on light, and I guess my commercial experience is going to come in handy with regards to avoiding

harsh blown out highlights. Saying that, watch this space, as it's a new experience/ process for me on film as I generally avoid the harsh light of day.

I've also decided to utilise my 35mm auto focus Canon setup for closer and more active image work on the hives alongside the 6×6 TLR's to ensure I get the process captured in the most natural way. It will also be good to get some closeups of the hives and bees!



James, Laura and Crew. Foothills Honey.

## Beekeeper Project Update

11.10.21

I'm heading towards the end of term at ARA in late November, and the beekeeping project has come along way since starting about 4 months ago. I thought I'd share the images that I feel will sit well in the zine/ book and also as part of an exhibition in the coming weeks, as part of my final hand in. Of note is that i've decided to carry on with this fascinating project though 2022 as the beekeeping season is only really starting. The end goal is to publish my first book too outside of university studies, and I feel it warrants more images from locations across the Canterbury Region.

I had to do a Powerpoint presentation a few weeks ago to share my progress at school, and it goes into more detail with regards to the goals of the project, images I've made, and specifics outside of this post.

You can download the PDF of the presentation here on my Google Drive (50MB) for your own perusal, if you are interested. <https://tinyurl.com/4w3baxj7>

### **Some key details from the talk are;**

*19 Beekeeper Portraits. 14 Male & 4 Female. 4 Hobbyist & 9 Commercial. No questions asked yet. No working hives yet. Key to success is Capsule CRM.*

I'm happy with the number of beekeepers that I've documented, especially considering the COVID lockdown that really halted progress. The community is mostly made up of males, but I'm connecting with more female keepers too, so hope to balance the collection more in the last month, and more drastically next year. The question/s that I originally had planned, have changed considerably as I've spent more time with the subjects from all sorts of backgrounds and professions. I honestly feel like simply asking 'Tell me something that you want to share with your imagery' and associate it with their

portraits and connect it all together to make the final artwork for my photography degree.

The reason for no working hive images is twofold. The season is not really in full swing yet so working hives are minimal, and I've consciously focussed on portraits of beekeepers without their 'suits on' at home or in a place they like to spend time. In the last weeks of term, with the days warming up, I have plans to add a set of beekeepers working on hives, from back yards to mountainous locations. I've decided to utilise my 35mm camera that has auto focus for the close up, and as the beekeepers 'work' on the hives. They will accompany the 6 x 6 work that I will continue to employ for staged portraiture.

The foundations of this project has been admin heavy, and I guess is the key to the success of all series driven work. Capsule CRM has been my main tool, and it's so easy to use, while continuing to manage my work load perfectly. Anyway, here are a selection of images

that I've chosen that I feel represents the varied beekeepers that have been so open and accommodating to date. I can't wait to pull this all together in the coming weeks, and also continue with this for another year, to share the faces and stories of Cantabrians behind the New Zealand beekeeping community.

I've got one week of holidays left and will be ramping up image making in the coming weeks to then design the zine/book and decide what prints I will exhibit for my final handing of this 4 year journey! I'd like to thank tutors John and Wendy for their continuing support and feedback, and the beekeeping community who have continually shown me warmth and sincerity.



At Kevins Hive.



## Hive Photography Begins

25.10.21

Things have started to move into another gear as I head towards end of term and the completion of my 4 year of studies. With the beekeeping season only now really starting to push forward to honey production, I've spent the last week organising shoots on location at hives to complement the portraiture captured over the past months. Previous images were predominantly beekeepers at home, suit-less and no hives in sight, but now I want to create a series of images of subjects at the hives working on them. With only 4 weeks left of term, this set of images are vital to being the series together, and I'm feeling a bit anxious to be honest with what looks like a lot of image making left to do. I'm confident it will all come together though!

Anyway, hobbyist Kevin, who I've spent time with previously at his home, was kind enough to show me some of his hives on the weekend and I was a bit rusty to be honest! It had been at least 4

weeks since I last captured a beekeeper, and it took a while to get my head back in the game. I shot one roll of 120 Portra 400 and 80% were under exposed for my liking. Fortunately the 2 images that were keepers were exposed well, but I must get a dedicated light meter, as using an app is so hit and miss (you've heard this many times before!).

I also shot a roll of 35mm Portra 160 and yet to develop it, and what I'm hoping for with the 35mm camera, are some close ups of the trays and colonies etc, to accompany the more staged images. I'm using a Canon 620 body from the 1980's and modern EOS lenses, and in particular the 70- 200mm 2.8. I may also borrow a macro lens from school for some super close ups. On reflection of 120 hive images caught this weekend that do a great job of sharing work on the hives, I might not even include any 35mm images. Let's see.

The following day Kevin invited me to more hives that him and Lorraine take care of. Both were so kind to show me the inner workings of a hive and what

stage the season is currently at. As we head into the warmer months and optimal honey production, queen bees need to be placed into hives, along with checking for parasites and disease. These guys also had 'pollen patties' yesterday too, for hives that needed a boost to get the colony going. Fascinating stuff. I'm loving being out on location with generous beekeepers, and hope to be heading to the Alps in the coming weeks with a commercial venture.

My biggest gripe currently though is the time of day that these next series of images have to be captured- during the middle of the day. Hives are not opened below 10 degrees as the cold is bad for the colonies, hence midday workings. Unfortunately this means that it is the harshest light of the day and I'm pretty obsessive about shooting in the best, even lighting conditions. Yesterday for example was mixed harsh light due to the tree cover- and after 2 rolls- I literally got a 5 minute window at the end where the burning sun went behind some clouds that provided the light I

was after. Saying that, overall the collection is good. Maybe this light actually adds something to the set as a whole? Maybe I'm being too much of a perfectionist? Maybe I don't like change? Maybe I'm being averse to the extra work involved managing difficult light? Regardless it sure does add another layer of fucks to the process. HAHA.. breathe.



Lorraine and Kevin at Hives.



## Students and Hives. 30.10.21

Once again the ever so helpful Kevin arranged a hive visit yesterday, and I got to meet 2 student beekeepers Lisa and Tegan (who Kevin is teaching), and a Alison who recently completed the beekeeping course at Otago Polytechnic last year and owns the hives that sat against a beautiful line pine trees amongst beautifully long green grass.

I could not help but notice that her eye was super swollen, and apparently the day before while working on 'hive 5' a bee got into her suit and went for her eyes. OUCH! What a portrait it made though. It might be one of my all time favorites! I got the Yashica 635 out for the first time in a while too and captured a few rolls of HP5 alongside Portra 400 on the Yashica D. I've not shot to much black and white over the past months as I've honestly fallen for colour throughout this beekeeping project to date. As for the black and white results from these rolls, I absolutely love them. It's quite clear that Ilford HP5 manages the hot highlights of the day better than

Portra, and even when its exposed a stop over. I never thought the 'in action' hive imagery would look so good in monochrome to be honest, but I guess it de-clutters the scene from multiple random colours and clipped highlights to simply tones.

At one point, it felt like I was witnessing a scene from Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece 2001: A Space Odyssey as they all worked together slowly to not stress the bees, and looking like astronauts repairing vital machinery in space. HAHA. The white suits do make beekeepers look like astronauts though, and look so good too against the dark trees and grass.

Let's talk about Portra 400. After hundreds of rolls, I've got to admit that in my opinion, is a tad overrated. During the bright light of the day it struggles so hard, and seems to be so contrasty these days. I'm not doing anything different during exposure or development, and I'm finding that I have to de-saturate Portra 400 upto -25 in Lightroom and

drop contrast too. It's like the film is now more like Ektar in some way and way over saturated. Maybe when I shift to Portra 160 for the brighter parts of the day, (still waiting more than 7 weeks from Walkens who have limited 5 rolls per customer now) it might clean up the images? Don't get me wrong, when it all comes together with Portra the results are absolutely amazing, but it does require so much post processing. Way more than digital if I was honest. But at the end of the day, what other colour film do we have to choose from now with the demise of Fujifilm400? Maybe I'm trying to get the Fujifilm400 aesthetic? Compare images with that of the last hive shoot– and you will see the difference in saturation and contrast.

Talking of mood, working with Kevin who is full of care and compassion for the bees and people he spends time with is a privilege. He's such a great guy and with an illness slowly decreasing his ability to do what he loves, it's such a privilege to be part of his story these days. I can't wait to gift him a book and

a framed print as a huge thank you. He is so chilled out and at peace with these beautiful creatures it's fascinating.

Honestly, most people that I've worked with on this project have been so nice, grounded and present- it's really uplifting for ones spirit. I really appreciate their time. I opted to go suit-less yesterday again, as to date it has worked well for me, but I noticed something interesting yesterday as they opened up 'hive 5'. The behavior of the bees changed from slowly 'chilling' outside the hive in a ball like shape to the bees flying faster and from what seemed side to side metres from the hive. They also seemed to swarm around the upper body of the beekeepers.

I took notice of this change of behavior and stepped back well away from the hives, and I guess in this moment I started to display fear. I then noticed what seemed to be bees flying into me- but put it down to the strong-wish winds on location. I moved further away and was happy to wait until the hive was closed and the final group photo. I then

felt a bee buzzing close to my face and instinctively I panicked and started to try and swipe it away. It got pissed off real quick and then stung me just above my left eye. It's the first bee sting I've had and boy did it hurt! The crew helped remove the sting 'barb' and put some cream on it. Thankfully after 30 minutes I had not swollen up or faced breathing difficulties, so I'm not allergic to bee stings, but 24 hours later it's pretty puffy, hot and not looking too good. The student told me that during the course they learnt that bees will go for the eyes when they attack due to them glistening. The best thing to do is not panic, but hunch over looking at the ground, or roll in the grass apparently.

The flying into me was actually a warning the bees display, and it's a gentle 'head but' to warn you off. Apparently, bees are also attracted more to dark colours and yesterday I was in black with a black face mask. After some reflection on just how much the bee sting hurt, and their fascination with our eyes, I'll be wearing at least a face veil

on location with hives moving forward, as some colonies are just simply aggressive in nature and I can only imagine the results of a swarm attacking. Actually, I can. It would be life threatening! Lesson learnt I guess.

What next? Hopefully the recent news of COVID spreading back to Christchurch does not cause too many problems moving forward over the next 4 weeks. I've got more hive locations in mind and next week some spotted around the stunning Southern Alps. Fingers crossed! I feel that after this coming week and the range of hive images I've already got, it's time to call it a day for this project at ARA. That means I have about 3 weeks to put it all together and tidy up loose ends, that ultimately means I'm not going to be rushing. The tasks ahead include, conceptualising the book design for hand in, the accompanying prints, and the curation for exhibiting (dependent on COVID). I'm also going to have to sort out model release of the images, and what words will compliment the images, if any. I also

foresee as I move into the final weeks, and past the academic hand in of this project in a few weeks, and independently working on this project and a book for 2022, I'll be using less colour film overall.

When I say less, I mean applying a conscious effort to shoot less colour and be super selective to what scenes command colour, simply due to the rising costs of Kodak Portra film (apparently 20% more in 2022!). I could for example spread a single roll over 4 portraits, with 4 frames each and utilise black and white more as its far more cost effective. Totally achievable. In other news, I've also applied for a scholarship to move into Masters of Creative Practice at ARA in 2022, and I may well continue onwards with another body of work surrounding bees. Fingers crossed.





Kevin, Alison and Students at Hives.



## **Some Updates – Beekeeping Project. 02.11.21**

I had a catchup with Wendy, one of my tutors for ARA yesterday and we went through some concerns I have with regards to the project. Initially I had none as such, but I guess some of the admin work is becoming problematic. I've been using Capsule CRM for managing the people involved with the project and its has been a life saver to be honest. So so good.

The issue I was discussing surrounded getting model release in the least annoying way. I started the day Googling for a model release plugin to simply install here on my WordPress site, and was stunned to find NONE! What I did find were multiple plugins that allow you to create embedded forms- and with some custom tweaks, including digital signature add ons- you ended up with a link you can send to people and they fill it out.

The trouble is that these 'website form' solutions are either \$200 + per year (yes that's not a typo) or the cheaper ones have terrible design and usability. This matters to me. I spent the whole morning into lunchtime looking for a solution where I could send a link to the subjects- and they take seconds filling it out- and then it gets sent to me as a PDF. In the end I opted to design my own model release as a PDF that's stripped right back, and very clear with regards to what I'll use the images for. I then hooked it up with an online service PDFfiller, that allows me to add interactive test input boxes, and a digital signature to sign it off. The only downside is that its an expensive service upto \$40 per month. The good side is that the first month is free and only charges you if you continue past the first month.

I've spent two full days this week working out a method to release images simply, as well as personalising emails to invite each beekeeper to free up the images to use. Some would prefer a visit with paperwork I'm sure, so I'm catering

to that too. The goal of this final project is to prove that I've done 450 hours of work, and trust me, that ain't going to be a problem! I've been busy on this project from week one, and blogged about every portrait or hive visit. I've decided to make it into a A4 PDF book for submission, but also a perfect bound book that I will submit as part of hand in too. Physical is just better and I'm going to make a book like this for every major project moving forward for my own reference. FYI I'm using Angus Donaldson for my printing needs here in Christchurch, based on such great results on the They Are us zine that they printed. In fact, with this, and a project surrounding lockdown that will be made into a book, plus the beekeeping book design for hand in, I'm spending a fair amount of time designing at the moment.

I was a freelance graphic designer from 2001 – 2008 and book design has always been my favourite process, and in 2021 I'm using the fantastic Affinity Publisher software rather than being held at ransom by Adobe. Honestly, I

actually prefer it to Indesign! It's brilliant to use.

I have a couple of weeks to put it all together now, and I started the beekeeping book design today. Instantly I was faced with the reality that in an ideal world I would love to have the more personal portraits of Beekeepers suit-less juxtaposed to them suited up. But due to the seasonal reality of beekeeping, and time frame for hand-in, that is not likely to happen now, but definitely over the period of the next year.

Beekeepers are very busy now too and up early- finishing late- and I don't want to get in the way this side of the year. In one way it's great to see the layout speak to me this way as I'm adding images to pages, but it also means I have to work a formula for the book based on the series of images I do have, that are mixed portraits and working at hives.

Thankfully I have time. Thankfully I understand this part of the process.

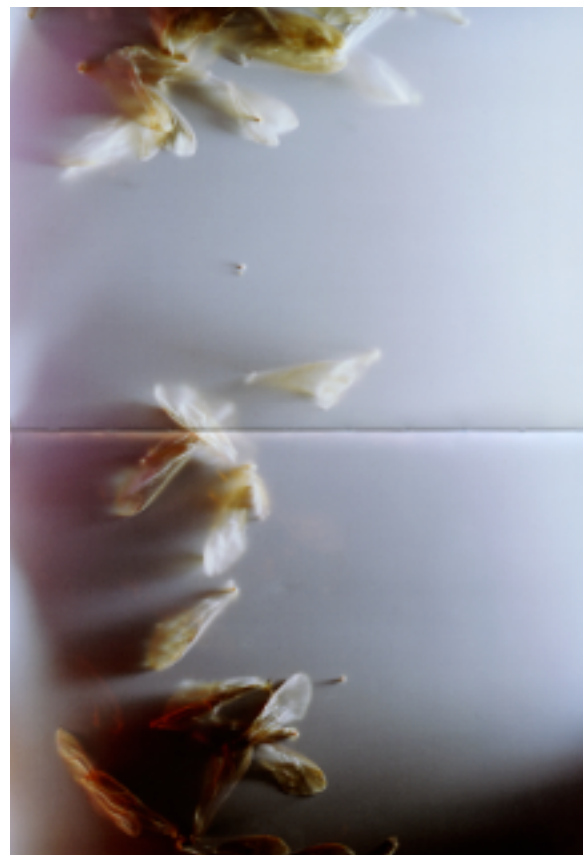
I've been getting more and more into art books this year and recently of note is a

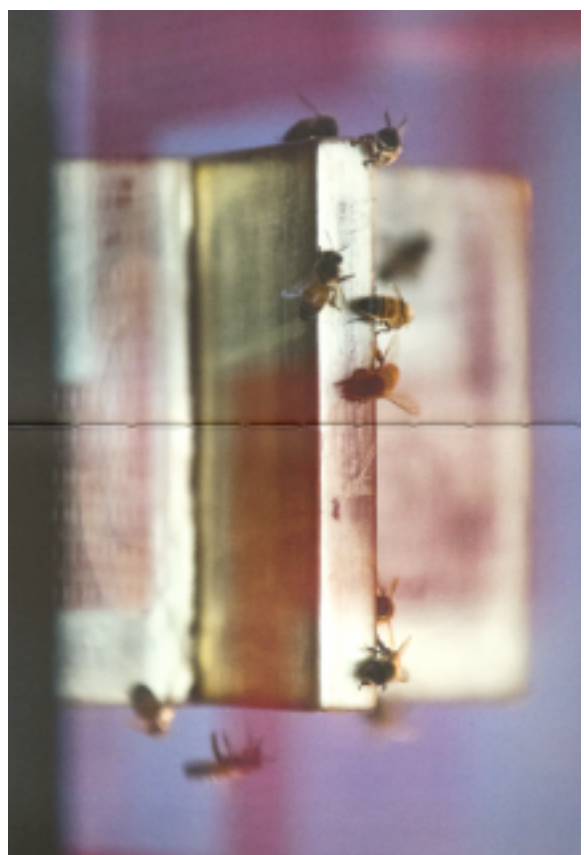
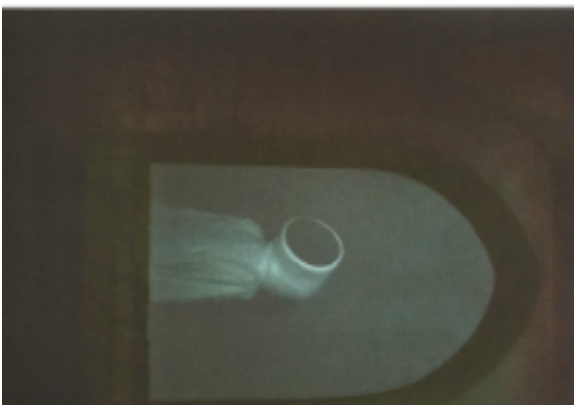
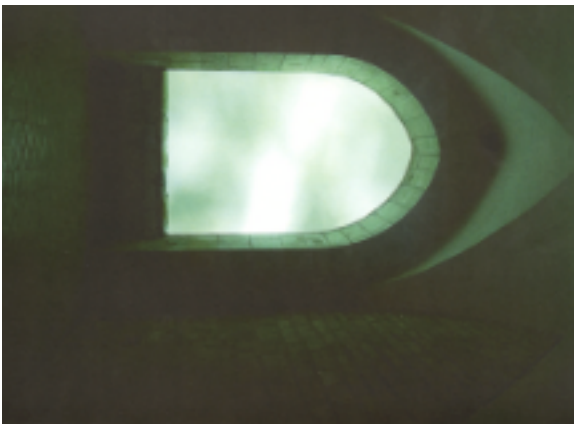
book by Anne Noble “Conversātiō in the company of bees”. It looks at the astounding practice of leading photographer Anne Noble, set against the issues of ecosystem collapse and climate change and examining what an artist can do in response. Its creative focus is on that most important insect, the European bee. Reminiscent of an artist book in its extensive visual content, its appeal is to a wide readership curious about art, ecology, science, literature and their intersections.

It is not just a beautifully designed book, it also speaks to me! I’m feeling very similar to Anne, in that I’m falling for the bees, and their wonderful place within our environment. Simply watching their behavior and colonies develop is so compelling. I’m positive next year that I’ll set up a hive so that I can spend more time observing bees and making more art surrounding them vs the keepers. I guess that’s what this book has highlighted to me that my work is ongoing and surrounds the people of beekeeping in Canterbury,

rather than the bees themselves, and that’s OK. Yet, if I start Masters next year, It’s likely that I’ll continue with the focus on with bees and environment-and that in-between art and science place. I’m now inspired to add some close up abstract imagery into this current body of work.

I’ve applied for some funding to continue Masters into 2022- so fingers crossed.





Some Images From Anne Nobles Book. "Conversatiō In the company of bees".

## **Southern Alps Honey. 06.11.21**

I caught up with Ben and Leah, and some of their crew a few days ago from Southern Alps Honey. This husband and Wife team mostly work alone and manage more than 1000 active hives located in some beautiful locations from Rakaia Gorge to areas close to Mount Somers. On this day there were some staff helping out, and watching the bunch get into the zone and work through the hives was a fascinating experience for sure. It is a very physical and repetitive process, with hive boxes weighing in at 40 KG peak honey flow. The seasonal change is still a tad volatile so we were not able to get deeper into the mountains with recent floods, tree fall and boggy paddocks and trails. Their 4WD actually got stuck on the way to meet with me and they had to be pulled out by the generous farmer. I could not help as my Toyota van is rear wheel drive and gets stuck on wet grass, never mind mud! The two locations we visited were still stunning and set against gorse (or *Ulex Europaeus*) and beech trees, that both provide resources for the

honey bees. Gorse is actually a weed introduced by settlers that seems to thrive in the harsh conditions of the South Island, but has become a vital part of the honey bees life as its bright yellow flowers flourish nearly all year round. Beech trees are native and offer honey dew, a sugary by product of the Beech Scale Insect, that honey bees adore.

Leah and Ben lived in Australia for sometime where Leah worked as a nurse, and Ben a helicopter pilot. After returning to New Zealand they built the business from scratch over a 7 year period to where it is now and a full-time commercial operation. Both are really knowledgeable and passionate about their beekeeping, and I learnt an absolute heap about what it takes to operate commercially, to understanding stages of the colonies process through the seasons. Due to the colonies struggling with the crazy weather patterns in the region, Ben and the crew were adding litres of sugar syrup to purpose made 'feeding trays' within the hives to provide food and a boost to increase the numbers in the struggling

colonies. A first in many years by all accounts. See the high tank on the back of the truck with what looks like a fuel pump? That's the sugar syrup dispenser. This procedure is all about timing, as levels of syrup, (known as C4) if found in the final product is an issue as it's not classed as natural NZ honey. Another discussion surrounded relatively new legislation governing what constitutes Manuka honey now, and how it has impacted the industry immensely.

It's not the first time that I've heard about it either whereby during the introduction of the legislation, honey stockpiled for 2 years unable to be sold, while they worked through the new guidelines. Sadly, industry wide this caused the cost per kilo of honey to drop from \$14 to sometimes as little as \$2. Add covid supply chain issues, and the largest export market, China dictating the pricing too, it's a tough business now to make a living. I also asked if Ben had noticed any decline in the bee colonies over the years, and the answer was that global warming and the erratic weather has been the biggest contributor to their

hive decline, and the relentless need to re-build colonies.

Then disease such as Varroa Mites and American Foulbrood also play a role in the bees decline, and can strike at any time. New Zealand apparently has very strict policies when it comes to hives infested with disease, and often the sick colonies get burnt- hive and all.

Interestingly, other countries such as the USA treat colonies with antibiotics instead. Yuck! Overall,

Ben informed me that New Zealand honey bees are sort after globally due to good genetics, and their ability to great honey producing colonies, and compared to the USA and other countries, our honey is still relatively free of pesticides too, that globally is now the largest killer of bees. Sadly, disease and pesticides (amongst other factors) result in a phenomena called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) which is a major issue for bees moving forward. I found this essay from <https://www.evergreen.edu> by Bryanne McNamar that explains CCD really well.

Southern Alps Honey's hives are located quite far from the Canterbury Plains too, that see a lot of pesticide spraying, so their honey is naturally low in pesticides too. I've been fortunate to taste a lot of raw bee honey comb since I started this project (my favourite) and Southern Alps Honey has been the richest, darkest, and most intense flavoured to date! So good.

Due to restrictions getting to the more scenic locations and the light just being horrid, I'll have to revisit Southern Alps Honey again over the Summer to capture the hives and operations against the mountains. That's all good though, as this project has only really started after 4 months, and like beekeeping itself, the photographic process can't be rushed or forced. Mother Nature dictates both outcomes.

One pleasing outcome of working on more hives now – is that the images are showcasing just how many bees are present at these sites, and it's still early in the season! I can only imagine the

experience of standing in the middle of hives stacked 7 high multiples by 10- 20! I'm now wearing a suit by the way after being stung on the face, and it's a much much better experience all round. A necessity really. There is better safety of course, but it also allows me to navigate and capture more angles, and the process. It's utterly mesmerising being amongst so many bees!

Whats coming up next? I've been working though a list of images I feel will work well and compliment the series. This list mostly includes the flora that the honey bees love, and others are more still life and the equipment. I was stoked to finally capture the stunning yellow flowers of the Gorse, as well as the Beech trees that are so vital, to Southern Alps Honey's hives, and South Island bee keepers in general. It's great to tick off these types of images, as they do really compliment the portraiture and in situ hives. I'm trying my best to wind this project down for hand in by the 22nd November, but I've got some interesting leads at the last minute that I

feel will add to the series. I've got some urban hives lined up in the city, and I'm still chasing a location with a mountain view too! I've also been passionately looking for a Maori beekeeper portrait, and I'm very excited to finally have one lined up, after looking since the project started 4 months ago. I'm also starting to write the 'essay' to accompany the imagery in the book, and have plans to head off in my camper-van and chill in the back to write it. I feel this is the only way it will get done with too many distractions at home. Wish me luck!

One other worry is that I'm running out of Kodak Portra coloured film, and with the prices increasing by 20% (that's 50% in the past 2 years) It's a bit of a rush to get a good stash purchased and put in the fridge, to safe guard shooting not just in the coming months, but also next year. Thankfully black and white Ilford HP5 is still affordable. Worst case, that will be the film of choice, because I'm not going to abandon this process!

Finally, this set I feel represents the working hive best to date, as I'm getting to know the 'work place' and commercial routine of beekeepers better. All of which would not be possible without the generosity of the people I'm spending time with. Thank you for your time and passing on your knowledge to me.





Southern Alps Honey Crew.



## **Foothills Honey. 08.11.21**

I spent half the day with Laura from Foothills Honey and we visited several hive locations towards the hills of the Southern Alps, and the light was pretty good. I know I talk about light a fair amount, but when it's diffused behind clouds or within the last hour of the day it's mostly nice and even, flat and the subjects don't have to squint. I met more Beekeepers from the crew at Foothills, that's about 20 in the peak of the season, and again I was fascinated with their process and hard work. Beekeeping is simply a physical job with no short cuts to the results. Laura spoke about the colonies being pretty strong this year, and the yield this season may well be a good one.

We spent a fair amount of time in the ute between locations, and most of what we spoke about is not really beekeeping related at all. It was simply a great chat with a like minded soul that I thoroughly enjoyed, and I cherish more and more during these strange times, where I see a lot of division over popular

culture heading onto 2022. One things for sure though, I'm now shooting less rolls, as I'm becoming quite selective towards the types of photos I'm looking for. I'm ticking off 'portraits where I can see the face' – 'portraits in hive suit' – 'flora' – 'landscapes with hives'.

On the weekend, I also visited a 'hive day' for the Christchurch Beekeeping Club and the turn out was fantastic! There must have been 60 + people of all ages, and apparently this was a small turnout! I'm also going to visit the North Canterbury Beekeeping Club next weekend where I expect I'll get to see more presentations from experienced beekeepers, and experience a great feeling of community – just like on the weekend. I handed out a few fliers to interested people, but with the project spilling into 2022, I'm not really looking for more portraits right now, so keen to take it slow when it comes to mustering up subjects.

The more time I spend with beekeepers, the more I feel like its a community that's for me. I'll have no worries setting up my first hive next Summer I'm sure with so many friendly people willing to help. I volunteered to help with an image bank for CBC moving forward too, so that will be fun, and the least I can do to give back to the community. It will all be digital of course.





Foothills Honey Crew.



## **Perry, Lindsay & Christchurch Beekeepers Club. 10.11.21**

I attended the Christchurch Beekeepers Club hive day on the weekend (and added a few images below) and it was really interesting to see some very experienced beekeepers, such as Gordon talk about setting up and maintaining hives. One thing is for certain, that owning a hive takes a lot of work to maintain it, and keep the colony healthy.

There are so many diseases and opportunist parasites that can reap havoc if the colony is sick or weak. It's a hobby that takes some devotion. One speaker caught my attention as he spoke about what causes swarming in a hive, where the queen and all her followers leave looking for more space, and just how to avoid it. Lindsay also talked about how he is often called to swarms, and how he gets them back into hives where they can be safe and productive once again.

We chatted afterwards and it turns out that he is a hive inspector. His role is to check hives for disease mostly, and then give the a certificate of health to beekeepers who can then legally own and maintain hives. It's an annual event that safe guards and traces disease throughout the New Zealand hive community, and that makes total sense. Through such inspections 'hot spots' of disease are known across the islands and helps a cause of action to remedy it.

Lindsay was visiting Kaikoura on Monday to inspect some hives for a fellow called Perry, who had 15 hives spotted at the base of, and top of some high country there. I asked if I could join them and document it, and with Perry's consent I drove down Monday to see the hives and Lindsay in action. It has been a long time since I've visited Kaikoura, and I was excited to join them.

When I first arrived they were suited up and checking out some hives just off the coastal road near Goose Bay at a strawberry farm. Walking towards them I could see a fellow patting his head,

and flicking a branch around as if he was trying to warn off some bees. As I got closer the pissed off bees were onto me, and I could feel the anger! Unlike last time this happened when I started swatting them, and I got stung, I took the advice of Kevin, to curl into a ball face down on the ground when being attacked. I did i exactly that and after a few 'head butts' and rapidly buzzing around my head, the bees flew off. I then had time to suit up. I was like WTF Perry! haha.

Apparently a bee had got into his suit and stung him, and I had caught the event unfold the moment I arrived. Now suited up I was quite anxious still, as it was another borrowed suit, and clearly had some repairs to the face mesh.

Maybe I was a bit paranoid having seen a bee get into yet another Beekeepers suit? After about 10 minutes and no sign of any bees getting into my suit, I mellowed. We then left that site and headed upwards in a great little 4WD.



Perry's family has a holiday home in Kaikoura, and it comes with 700 Hectares of bush, and boy oh boy was it lush and rich with New Zealand flora! When we got to the high point, the hives were literally overflowing with bees and they were showing signs of swarming. Several hives had heaps of bees covering the outside, signalling that the space inside was not much. It was super foggy and quite humid-warm- with absolutely thousands of bees flying around as they opened up the hives to check for disease. I mentioned to Lindsay that this job was not for everyone as it's quite the experience being inside a huge loud 'swarm' of pissed off honey bees as you rummage through their home. From what I've heard, commercial beekeepers struggle to find photographers due to the remoteness of the work, and also working with the bees themselves. For the faint hearted I guess, it is quite scary. Thankfully I'm pretty comfortable being remote and with the hives, and aware that the images I'm capturing are quite unique in the sense of documenting what Beekeepers experience day after day. I feel my imagery is more for the

Beekeepers and a celebration, than commercial work that is about the product ultimately. It's an ongoing privilege to spend time with Beekeepers too, and appreciate it very much.

Perry must have taken 5 boxes of honey back home to Christchurch on Monday, and after tasting some, I can share that it was utterly beautiful. Pure 'bush' honey from bees who are surrounded by flowering natives from Manuka, to Kanuka to Beech Trees and more is divine.

At one point the fog lifted and the sun broke through to reveal some peaks and sky. It was beautiful. Boy oh boy was it hot in that suit though. I was not even lifting the 40KG boxes, or on my knees working through rack after rack, but felt very hot and uncomfortable during the day. A few times I had to walk off about 500M and just sit in the shade with my vale off. It's quite intense when your hot and amongst such active hives, and the more time I spend with beekeepers, the more I appreciate just how physically demanding the job is. It must be brutal

on hot Summer day for sure. The bonus of the fog though, even though it sacrificed views to the ocean, was just how well it showcased the sheer numbers of bees flying about due to it offering a 'white background'. I feel that I caught images that showcases just how intense it actually is right in the middle of a giant 'cloud' of bees. The close up images of hive 'comb' and the larger peanut shaped cells, for the growing the queen bee in, are crops taken from my 35mm camera.

Overall the day was great, and It was pretty nice too, being called the young bloke at 47, with Lindsay in his 60's, and Perry mid 70's. I hope I'm as active and passionate as these guys in 20 + years time. Haha. Cheers fellas from the experience and good yarns.





Foothills Honey Crew.



## **Sophie, Jeff & Maia. 20.11.21**

I've captured David's portrait at his home previously, and it was time to see the hives he manages at ARA Christchurch this week. After clambering out of the window, we got to see the active hives in a great sheltered spot between a beautiful tree and the 'U' building roof, where David teaches cooking skills. It's fascinating where hives thrive isn't it? I'm really happy to be able to add an urban location to the growing collection of hive imagery that has taken me high into the mountains, into peoples back yards, and now on top of city developments. I have another urban hive shoot lined up this week.

At a totally different environment at Amberley, I then captured Sophie's portrait from Mount Lyford Honey surrounded by open green paddocks and trees. I've now documented the six staff at Mount Lyford Honey, and Sophie's happy place is with her amazing horses and dog. I actually dropped one of my cameras when with Sophie, and the back popped right open! On developing I lost

3 images from the shoot with David, but due to my obsession with 'backing up' with black and white, not all was lost fortunately. Hive photos of the crew working at Mount Lyford will now have to wait until the new year, with the end of this week signalling the final image taking of the university hand-in, and development/ scan.

Then focus then switched back to urban hives with Jeff, who has been hiring ready to go hives across Christchurch for many years. The hives we got to spend time with were on top of Ballantynes department store in the central city, and the light was on our side and lit the scene well, rather than being behind! I finally got to spend time with a Maori beekeeper too and her name is Maia.

We actually met twice as the first time the light in her the yard where the hives lived, was too harsh and the highlights combined with dappled shadows, was simply yuck! The second visit was near sunset and it was pretty flat, but gave us a beautiful lens flare with golden light. Maia is officially the last beekeeper

portrait go the ARA project. I'm so tired that I can't really even think straight. Shooting film has definitely been a full-time process, and the grind has been real over the past 4 + months. I'm deep into the copy for the book now too, and also printed a selection of images at ARA for the end of year exhibition. I'm pretty delirious to be honest. Emotional too.

I'm happy that we are at the end of this stage of the project, and looking forward to a break into 2022. The hours invested in this project have very quickly started to build up to the 400 required for the project. I'm really happy overall. Tick tock.... I've truly LOVED capturing everyones portrait, but its now time to rest and make sense of what's happening here in my beautiful New Zealand.



Foothills Honey Crew.



**Foreward from the “beekeeper”  
book handed in for marking.  
November 2021.**

Bees are modern day superheroes, and vital for the earth to exist, from the smallest flowers to the largest forests. Without them, most of our food production would cease. Their role as pollinators is key to making this beautiful home of ours flourish, and feed us.

This project set out to discover who the beekeeping people of Canterbury New Zealand are, and to explore their working environments. Spending time with these unique farmers and hobbyists, highlighted that their relationships with the bees is of fundamental importance. Without beekeepers, bee colonies would simply collapse. What became apparent as the weeks passed, was that New Zealand honey farmers are a diverse and passionate community, that are united in their quest to keep bee populations alive.

New Zealand Beekeeper’s, whether individuals, hobbyist groups or large honey making enterprises, all maintain the same caring relationships with the environment. Their bonds with the bees and the environment are grounded and proactive. While acting independently, the culture is observant of others, and overall supportive towards common goals. Their efforts are constant, repetitive, seasonal, and vital for the bees to survive.

Since the early 2000’s, bee populations have declined dramatically due to the farming practices of monoculture (growing one type of plant), and a lack of year-round food. In particular, urban hives struggle with resources to feed colonies. Interestingly, as I’ve been informed by many beekeepers, Christchurch has a hive on average, every 500 meters, that makes the search for sustenance very competitive. Other issues threatening survival, include the aggressive use of pesticides causing colonies to collapse, and parasites that take advantage of weakened bee communities.

In discussions with commercial beekeepers on the decline of New Zealand honeybees, the consensus is that climate change is the largest influencer on colony health, as we move towards the most unsettled weather patterns of our time. Behind the scenes beekeepers are battling to keep numbers robust with healthy colonies engaging in maximum pollination. While other countries are struggling to halt the decline in bee population, New Zealand bees are in great demand, thanks to their stronger survival genetics, and a higher resilience that sets them apart.

The beekeepers who I've spent time with all have the common traits of being calm, down-to-earth, and present. These traits seem to be vital for connection to the bee colonies and ensuring that they are also calm and grounded. It's believed that bees sense fear and anxiety, that can make them aggressive or unhappy.

Some beekeepers spend time with hives completely unsuited, while others are covered in bee protection suits. The unsuited seem to be the calmest and the

most confident that they are in no danger. It's fascinating to experience.

This year long project has consisted of a lengthy research-based stage, followed by more than four months of image making. During the year I've had the privilege of meeting more than 30 beekeepers in the Canterbury region.

I've learnt that every hive behaves differently, and every location offers varied natural environments, micro climates and foods for the colonies to grow. The honey itself is made by bees to feed their hives, in particular during the colder months of the year. Every honey takes on board the different flowers, honey dew, and other flora to create a unique flavour for that hive.

I've been gifted dozens of jars of honey and they all taste unique, and I've become obsessed with raw honeycomb that, by all accounts, helps a range of ailments such as high cholesterol and boosting energy. Honey is seen as a health food, full of nutrients, and in

particular Manuka, that is highly prized overseas.

The average demographic of the selection of beekeepers that I spent my time with, were mostly Pākehā male, with an age range from mid 20's to 70's. Their experience ranges from students, through to beekeepers of 40 years. Practices seem to be consistent and have evolved with the science of disease control, and the effect of global warming over decades unique to the Canterbury environments.

The motivations to keep bees seems to range from financial to lifestyle. All beekeepers are aware of the value they add to pollination and the importance of their roles. They all have a profound connection to the environment and work with the bees to the best of their abilities. The meditative and repetitive quality of the process, and a genuine love for the colonies that they help, motivates their continued efforts season after season.

The principles applied to keeping bees seem to have not changed for centuries. The hives and racks that promote honeycomb development are standard in design, and often purchased from the same suppliers. The designs of hives work with the environment and offer safe residency for the bustling colonies. Unlike the USA, for example who treat diseased hives with American foulbrood and antibiotics, New Zealand calls for the burning of these diseased hives.

This not only controls the problem universally, but avoids the addition of medicines into the final honey production. In New Zealand Parasitic Varroa infestations are treated with pharmaceutical solutions or 'home-made' options such as Oxalic Acid. Neither of these options lead to adding toxins into colonies, honey or the environment.

I've spent time with a diverse range of beekeepers, many of them are hobbyists who care for a lower number of hives, than their commercial counterparts. Hobbyists are also often associated with

community clubs that celebrate the joy of beekeeping, teach others and in some ways are more fascinated with the wonder of the world of bees, compared to commercial keepers. Being involved with the mass production of honey does add the politics of honey pricing and best yields, bringing more anxieties to the experience. One striking similarity between commercial and hobbyist is the relentless drive for healthy hives.

I've had many genuine and varied conversations with this generous community over the past four months. This publication offers a series of reflections and observations of my personal experiences while spending so much time with Canterbury Beekeepers.

These portraits and insights into their processes and environments in which they operate, hold testament to the amazingly hard-working people behind Canterbury beekeeping. A celebration of all ages and cultures, who against all the odds, get up every day to care for our bees and rebuild their colonies

relentlessly. Both bees and their keepers are vital for our species to survive.

## Acknowledgements

This project is the end game of four years of study. The experience has expanded my views of the world, and my artistic process. It has been like having my societal programming 'hacked' with alternative perceptions, and a relentless self-reflection of what my art means to me, and others.

I would not have made it through the darkness into the light without the support of my wife Amy, and my son Thomas. I'm grateful for the insights, that my teachers, from both Ilam School of Fine Arts and ARA Institute of Canterbury, have offered me. Through their own practices and process, they have helped me recalibrate my moral and creative compass.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the beekeeping community who welcomed me, and shared their knowledge. During these challenging times, I cherished the

warmth and generosity of beekeepers, who gave me hope; that not all of society has lost the connection to each other and to our natural environment. I've documented all of my experiences, processes and images captured for this project in an online journal. You can read about it at my website:

*[tinyurl.com/468wpjsb](http://tinyurl.com/468wpjsb)*

### **Final Reflection.**

My project aim was to document the people behind beekeeping in the Canterbury region of New Zealand and the environments in which they operated. Early plans were to create cohesion between the images with posed questions to the beekeepers. I believe I achieved the goals of the project.

Documenting a range of beekeepers of all ages and cultures was important to me for this vast project. Early on the abundance of middle-aged white males was apparent, and I had to spend additional admin time and scope to widen my audience to ensure I got to

document a true representation of the community.

Admin was a difficult process from the start with this project, and quickly outgrew a simple word document with contact details. I utilised a customer relationship tool called Capsule CRM that allowed me to add all details of 'leads' and accompanying notes with calendared prompts to follow up. This software was central to the success of the whole assignment. Without this tool I would have not been able to manage such a vast group, from initial contact through to shoots and model release.

Did I manage to represent the diversity of the beekeeping community? Yes, I feel that I did. I captured both male and females ranging from 20's to 80's. Some diverse cultures, and hives in urban settings to high country. It took persistence and hope. I had both.

Early anxieties included a reservation to shoot subjects due to this process being so unfamiliar to me outside of 'prescribed' commercial image making

that I'm accustomed too. I also had to dig deep and trust my process that moved from hand holding the TLR's onto a tripod with cable release. Compositional challenges were apparent too, and central to creating images from the start that would work across all images at project completion. On top of these worries I had inner conflicts surrounding what film to use. Colour or black and white?

Thankfully as I captured more subjects and developed the two types of film, I not only felt more comfortable with subjects and the images that I was making, but using a cable release was a great way to connect more with the subject/s. As for monochrome vs colour, it became clear that my coloured work was simply better aesthetically than the monochrome images. After several class critiques and feedback towards this reality, I trusted colour process more and for the complete project invested in this primary with monochrome as more of a backup. I'm happy with the results.

From the start I wanted to keep the process simple so that I could focus on the subjects and their environments. I wanted to explore the aesthetics of beekeepers and their world through a series of photographic images, and feel I did exactly that. I applied the same process to all keepers from the initial contact email, time of day to shoot (mostly), and height/ angle of camera on the tripod. Repetition was key and paid off well as the collection of images grew. The biggest hurdles became making time in the best light, and travel which is I good place to be I guess vs problems with photographic cohesion and style. I'm happy with the end results.

Aside from the process of photography, I had excessive travel and the physical development of every roll with digital scanning. The time and energy I invested was relentless from week one. At times I was very tired and found that I needed a break from image making. I also had school holidays to accommodate. Thankfully using the CRM enabled me to back off when

needed, and then simply follow up leads once I had the energy/ focus again. It worked really well. Warning signs that I needed a break included boredom and making simple mistakes during the chemical developmental process. I listened to these signs throughout the assignment and thankfully it worked well.

Artists who have inspired my goals for this project include Alec Soth and Glenn Busch, Diane Arbus, August Sander and Duane Michals all of which capture people on large format film. I also found their aesthetic and process compelling in the sense that they simply had subjects stand and look at the camera. This process in my own work blossomed as I spent more time shooting. I guess I see it as both subject and photographer stripping away the façade and agenda for a second or two. Having a cable allowed me to stand away from the camera and upright- looking the subject in the eyes. I was not hiding and as vulnerable as the subject. The results speak for themselves.

I've been getting more and more into art books this year too and recently of note is a book by Anne Noble " In Conversatio; In the Company of Bees". It looks at the astounding practice of leading photographer Anne Noble, set against the issues of ecosystem collapse and climate change and examining what an artist can do in response. Its creative focus is on that most important insect, the European bee. Reminiscent of an artist book in its extensive visual content, its appeal is to a wide readership curious about art, ecology, science, literature and their intersections. It is not just a beautifully designed book, it also speaks to me!

I'm feeling very similar to Anne, in that I'm falling for the bees, and their wonderful place within our environment. Simply watching their behaviour and colonies develop is so compelling. Anne's passion definitely motivated me mid way through the project to continue. Very inspiring.

The regions that I visited enabled me to explore the beekeepers in their environments fully. I had no idea at the start of the assignment that beekeeping was so reliant on the seasons. Early images were captured during the winter and autumn months in which the bees are basically hibernating in their hives surviving the cold weather. It was not until Spring and right near the end of hand in (late November) that hives were being tended to for colony growth and honey production for the warmer months ahead.

As luck would have it, this reality actually worked in my favour as I set out to shoot portraits of keepers in their homes and 'happy places' first, then onto subjects wearing suits and amongst the hives as it warmed up. The series document this well and makes for a great experience within the final book too. You see the faces of these people who get up daily against all odds, and keep bee colonies alive, and then see them hard at work about half way through the collection and book.

The seasonal aspects bring me to my final comments with regards to the project as a whole. The research 'questions' simply did not fit the characteristics of this unique community. They were dry and clinical. Boring and generic. They were also going to be time consuming and I opted to not bother the beekeepers more than I already was with regards to the image making and their valuable time. Once the season kicked off, most commercial keepers work from 7am to 9pm, and there was no way any time could be allocated to my annoying inquisitions. So I decided to leave them alone and in 2022 alongside the continuation of this project towards a book, ask for anonymous essays instead. I can visualise a hardback book filled with half stories and essays, and then photography.

Anyway, for this project and final hand-in, I turned the planned questions towards myself in the forward of the book. I believe it works well and adds some insights to the experiences I've had spending time with such a warm and inviting community. I'm happy with how this 'cohesion' evolved and played out.

