

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

APICULTURE NEW ZEALAND RECOGNISES WOMEN IN APICULTURE

Hannah Amante, Apiculture New Zealand Communications Coordinator

Since Mary Bumby introduced the honey bee to New Zealand's shores in 1839, women have long contributed greatly to the success of the beekeeping and honey industry. But they don't always get the recognition they deserve.

In honour of International Women's Day (8 March), Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ) celebrates women working in all sectors of the beekeeping and honey industry in New Zealand.

Four women shared their stories with ApiNZ, reflecting on their passion for their careers and the 2019 International Women's Day theme #BalanceforBetter. Like many in the industry, these women wear many hats as beekeepers, scientists, marketers and more.



Julie Hayes, Owner/Operations Manager of BeeNZ and Buzz Apiaries Ltd

Based in Katikati, Julie co-owns two companies with her husband David: BeeNZ and Buzz Apiaries. During a downturn in the horticulture industry 30 years ago, the couple purchased a kiwifruit orchard which then grew and turned into four orchards. They soon found that one of their biggest yearly expenses was pollination, so they purchased 100 beehives to pollinate their own orchards.

One hundred hives soon became 300, which pushed them into honey production. In 2010, they built their own extraction facility to extract honey for themselves and for other beekeepers. It was then that Julie took over the administration of the extraction

shed and the day-to-day running of the risk management programme (RMP), while David continued to work with the hives.

In her dealings with others in the industry, Julie has observed that men and women tend to have different roles.

"Most of the honey meisters/blenders/processors seem to be male, but most of the export/marketing/admin [workers] tend to be female," she said. "Definitely on the logistics side of things, there tends to be a more female role in the industry."

"It would be great to see more females represented at association board level. It seems to me to be quite male dominated," she said. "I think that will happen as more females are entering more senior management roles within the apiculture industry."

Under Julie's leadership, BeeNZ has flourished, winning several accolades over the last few years, including ranking in Deloitte's 50 fastest growing businesses in New Zealand and ExportNZ's Bay of Plenty Best Emerging Business in 2018.

Despite having no previous experience in international marketing, Julie quickly upskilled and took a leap. "I've had to dive in the deep end to get our brand out there," she said.

She credits the success of her business with the brand's unique story of controlling the supply chain "from the paddock to the plate, from the hive to the jar".

"We're not a big corporation so when people come to visit, they actually get to spend time with David and myself," she said.

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Dr Oksana Borowik, ApiNZ Science and Research Focus Group member and commercial beekeeper for Coromandel Honey Ltd

Oksana is a commercial beekeeper and scientist with a special interest in honey bee health and queen breeding. She is a member of the ApiNZ Science and Research Focus Group and serves on the advisory team of the Bee Pathogen programme coordinated by the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI). Originally from Canada, Oksana has been based in Coromandel for the past ten years and is the Oceania representative for COLOSS (Prevention of honey bee COlony LOSSes).

Oksana is currently the only woman in the ApiNZ Science and Research Focus Group. She believes that #BalanceForBetter needs to be achieved at higher levels in the industry. "Women just need to be asked to do it," she said. "I was asked to go onto the focus group and I accepted but had other women been asked I don't know."

"There are many, many women in beekeeping. They're my friends, they're commercial beekeepers, they're queen breeders, they're marketers," she said. "They're just not represented in the industry and so I think it's really important to give women a chance to be on the boards and to be on the focus groups."

Oksana's proudest career achievement to date has been her contribution to researching alternatives to antibiotics for stopping the spread of the destructive honey bee parasite *Nosema ceranae*.

"The apiculture industry is indebted to scientific research, from the optimal hive design, fighting honey bee parasites, as well as advanced genomic techniques that have greatly increased our understanding of honey bee biology," she said. "Without the application of scientific principles to beekeeping, we would not have an apiculture industry today."

With both of her grandfathers as hobbyist beekeepers, Oksana's earliest memories were watching them look after bees and extract honey from the hive. While working as a TV producer in Canada, she took up beekeeping as a hobby and joined the local beekeepers' association. With a background as a science and nature documentary filmmaker, Oksana has also produced a series on varroa for Plant Health Australia.

When Oksana moved to New Zealand, she soon began working at Plant and Food Research with Dr Mark Goodwin, researching varroa.

"Beekeeping is science," Oksana said. "It's very important to know the science and the biology of the bees and not just the bees but honey as well. It goes hand in hand."

Assessing brood viability after heating comb to kill Nosema.
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Maureen Conquer, Vice President/NZ Representative of Apimondia Oceania Commission

As a trained chef, helicopter pilot, motorcyclist, former architect and someone who does "welding for fun," Maureen Conquer has never shied away from entering traditionally male-dominated spheres.

She currently represents New Zealand on the world stage as the Vice President of the Apimondia Oceania Commission. This involves meeting with other international representatives and looking at market access, bee health and other issues from the New Zealand perspective.

"I ensure that what is being proposed is good for our beekeepers and bees as well as other regions," Maureen stated. "I hear what research is happening globally and when I hear that there are people here working on the same issues, I refer them to the other representatives."

As it did for Julie, a need for pollinating fruit trees was what led Maureen, who had already been working in food and wine industry for 27 years, to beekeeping.

"When I first started there was a lot of resistance to me as a beekeeper from a lot of traditional beekeepers who thought that women should be seen and not heard," she said. "There's obviously a physicality involved with some of the work that is more suited to men, but with modern equipment, women are equally able to be beekeepers within New Zealand and generally speaking, women have a more sensitive palate. So when it comes

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to blending and bottling, I would say that women have an advantage over men."

She describes having her big 'aha' moment when she tasted fresh honey from the hive. "The palate was like, whoa," she said. "Instantly my mind started working and I could see the honey that one apiary was producing was quite different from the one down the road."

This moment eventually led her to a career in marketing gourmet and monofloral honeys, which at the time had not been as popular as clover and mānuka.

Maureen has expanded her industry palette and palate by judging honey in competitions worldwide. "Certainly when it comes to judging honey, I work and have worked for the last fifteen years as an international honey judge and time and time again it's the women's entries that take up the prizes," she said.

Maureen notes that in many developing countries around the world, beekeeping is actually a job for the women. "The men own the hives, but the women actually do the work of looking after the hives," she said. "You see that in places like Africa and South America."



Moira Haddrell, Honey Business Advisor, Prolife Foods Ltd

Moira Haddrell has been in the honey business for over 25 years, having started Cambridge Bee Products with her husband Richard when she was a primary school teacher.

The business grew substantially over the years, with Moira mostly taking on the office duties, "pretty much anything that didn't require me to get into a ute or a truck and go and lift beehives."

By the time Cambridge Bee Products had started exporting, New Zealand's mānuka honey story had taken off. She soon became involved with UMF Honey Association, spending ten years on the Executive, including as Chairperson. During her time there from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, she worked on establishing the UMF trademark and developing a levy system for marketing and research.

Moira says that throughout the years there has been an "ebb and flow" of women taking up leadership roles in the industry, but women have for the most part consistently had a seat at the "top table."

When she and Richard first started, there were many other couples entering the business as well. In terms of dividing roles between men and women, "We sort of quickly established what we can do well rather than what we can't do.

"One of the things that women do really in the beekeeping industry is that we are much better queen rearers," she said. "They're really good, they've got the fine motor skills. They've got the patience to sit there and scoop out eggs, and they have smaller hands!"

One of Moira's career highlights was taking her brand Haddrell's of Cambridge from Cambridge, New Zealand "and then getting on the train in London and going out and seeing it on the shop shelf in places like Cambridge in England. And on the High Street in London."

When Cambridge Bee Products was bought by Prolife Foods three years ago, she took on a consultancy role as Prolife's Honey Business Advisor.

"When Cambridge Bees turned 25 years old last year in October, I had the cool fun job of going to Singapore and doing marketing, doing some TV/radio and cutting cakes," she said.

But what she enjoys most about her current role is using her years of experience to upskill others. "[I enjoy] being able to contribute the knowledge that was developed and gained over the 25 years," she said. "It's exciting to be able to mentor people into our industry and I've been able to replace myself, if you like, in the office with another, younger woman who brought other really important skills to the beekeeping industry."

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NZ WOMEN BEEKEEPERS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Oksana Borowik shared some text and images from Isaac Hopkins' book *The Illustrated Australasian Bee Manual and Complete Guide to Modern Bee Culture in the Southern Hemisphere*, first published in Wellington in 1886 by Gordon & Gotch. The following text and photo comes from page 11 and the other photos are from pages 11–12, 114–115 and 138–139.

Bee-keeping for Women

"Commercial bee-keeping is as suitable for young women as it is for the opposite sex, as proved by the number that have taken up honey-raising commercially since undergoing a season's training at the Government Apiary; up to the present time over 80 young woman cadettes have received tuition at that apiary, and no doubt many more at private apiaries. The work is not arduous, and well within the strength of the average young woman, and moreover, commercial bee-keeping is a healthy outdoor life. The following illustrations are reproductions from photos taken at the Government Apiary, and show the then manageress and a lady cadette at work. They are not in their work-a-day bee dress, for lady-like they preferred their usual costume to appear in the photos."



Fig. 77. First position in handling frames.

Fig. 78. Second position in handling frames.

The photos above appear to show the apiary 'manageress' demonstrating the first and second positions in handling frames.



(Top)

Fig 1. Part view of Apiary, and first honey house.

(Bottom)

Fig 2. Making and painting hives.

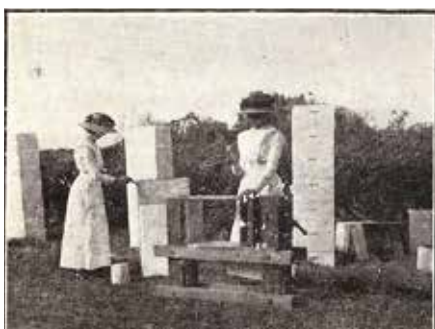


Fig. 88A: A large swarm of bees clustered in a handy place for hiving it.



(Top) Fig. 4. Opening hive, second operation.

(Bottom) Fig 5. Examining super comb.

