

One of grandfather Neil's favourite artworks of Jacob is one of his early ones, a wax model of bee with its stripes consisting of differently coloured wax.

At university, Jacob has continued the bee and time theme, not always with the unconditional support of his tutors – beeswax is such a difficult medium to work, they say, although they did concede that the bees could be creative wax artists themselves. The spring lockdown couldn't put a stop to his artistry. In some ways it helped. In contrast to many fellow students, who couldn't access university studio equipment during the lockdown, Jacob's material was at home – at the bottom of his garden. Just beyond the apple trees and the chickens, is the family apiary of ten hives in a pastoral setting. There was even a kitchen Aga stove to help soften and make the wax more pliable. As if that wasn't enough, when it came to the need for specialist wax-casting equipment for individual bees, there was even a dental technician in the village happy to allow his older, now obsolete, equipment to be used to mould bees instead of teeth. The spring sunshine also helped because the bees became active early in the season.

### Technical challenges

Ironically, Jacob had his own little run-in with bees and time, and has suffered for his art. When removing the sundial from the hive, he tried to start work too quickly and didn't don his full beesuit. A bee took exception to this interference, stung him, Jacob reacted quite badly and soon an ambulance was on its way. Fortunately, he has recovered fully but he has learned another valuable lesson about time, bees and humans.

Jacob soon discovered that bees will build wax on most items introduced into a hive – and can be vaguely directed by judicious

positioning of strips of foundation or wire. When he placed a beeswax cast of a smoker, made with a silicone mould, in a hive, he found that the bees secured the joints. The delicate-looking sundial benefited from the bees' wax buttressing.

Realising that bees are eager to build wax in the spring, Jacob tries to put the objects in hives as soon as the weather allows and, fortunately, spring was early this year – at the end of March and early April in Somerset. By putting 'foreign' items in a brood box above a queen excluder, there is sufficient space, and no eggs or brood will contaminate the finished result. He has also discovered more about bees' habits – how much tougher their drone comb is than worker comb and how much they will recycle and reuse wax within the hive.

Jacob's highly innovative work takes him into new territories and unusual technical challenges. Lost-wax casting of 105 bees was made possible by the dental technician's equipment and took 42 hours of painstaking work to complete. Having collected dead bees from the front of the colonies in spring, he was able to cast them even showing the detail of wings in incredible detail (and inadvertently and unexpectedly showing little sign of deformed wing virus in the home apiary colonies). The end result is displayed on a hand, with the bees closest to the fingertips of the beekeeper's hand alive while others fall, dead and dying, beneath the palm.

Beehive equipment even comes into play through pyrography and painting – Jacob has burnt an image of his father beekeeping onto a piece of oak and painted a clockface onto a coverboard.

Converting a sand hourglass into a honey hourglass was successful, but not first time. Again, the dental technician came to the rescue with a very fine drill that didn't cause the hourglass to explode in the transformation.

### A medium, a message and the future

Now that as an artist, Jacob has found his medium and his message, does he think he can make a career from his art? Regretfully, he doesn't think so. Although the work of his grandfather's great uncle fetches a good price today, it didn't do so well during his lifetime. Jacob doesn't relish the thought of being a struggling artist but he does hope his creative talents can be used in the modern economy.

**“A picture of a bee on a flower can sell to almost anyone, but my current work attracts the interest mainly of beekeepers.”**

Jacob also finds it difficult to price, and therefore sell, his work. He has sold some pieces, but he admits he doesn't like to let go of his art. His work adorns his bedroom and has since spread downstairs into the living room ... and the kitchen ... and back upstairs into the loft (where, thankfully, it did not succumb to the heat of the summer). He is running out of space, so art lovers may have an opportunity to purchase some soon.

Meantime, you can watch Jacob's progress on social media. He frequently posts on Instagram (@jacobtroodart), and to a lesser degree on Twitter and Facebook (again, @jacobtroodart). Through his global Instagram contacts, he has produced a book, *The World of Beekeeping*, that features his paintings of and



interviews with beekeepers from around the world ([tinyurl.com/BC2020-10-08](https://tinyurl.com/BC2020-10-08)).

Let's leave the last word with grandfather Neil, who combines the practicality, thriftiness and science of the beekeeper with an appreciation of art:

“I like to see things done properly. I don't like ship-shod work, especially when lots of precious wax is involved. I'm proud of Jacob's work.”



**PREVIOUS PAGE FROM LEFT** The painted and waxed crownboard clock • The stopped pendulum clock • The honey hourglass  
**FROM LEFT CLOCKWISE** Individual sculpted bees on moulded fingertips • Jacob Trood with his wax smoker and the Somerset Levels in the background • Wax sundial • 105 bees • Bees' creative artwork on the smoker base

