



ArcHives: Beeswax as a Biomolecular Archive (an exploratory investigation)

Matthew Collins,¹ Christian Carøe,¹ Alister Sutherland,¹ Samuel Johns,² and Tuuli Kasso²

¹University of Copenhagen

²University of Bristol

Bees are one of the few insects that we have domesticated, valued both for the sweetness of their honey, the high melting temperature and purity of their wax. Now, increasingly valued for their role in pollination, for most of human history it has been their wax which has been the most highly valued. A Carlsberg Foundation funded project has enabled a team of historians and scientists to be assembled to explore beeswax as a biomolecular archive. Facing the challenges of combining a range of different, scientific analyses, with differing densities of information, in the first half of the presentation the different team members will each discuss their contribution to the project so far, then in the second half each will discuss the future challenges of their area of research as seen from their perspective. The project highlights some of the opportunities and pitfalls of a large scale integration project, balancing the need to consider the careers of the team members, the unknowns of this type of exploratory research, and the concerns of conservation staff over destructive analysis of a potentially valuable resource.