

THE SPREAD OF SHIPWORM IN THE BALTIC

*David John Gregory – Conservation department at the
National museum of Denmark, Denmark*

Wooden historical shipwrecks are subject to biological degradation in marine environments. Specialized fungi and bacteria are able to degrade the lignocellolytic material present in the wood cell walls but this degradation is, however, very slow compared to the aggressive behaviour of the marine borers such as shipworm. In the Baltic sea, preservation conditions for shipwrecks has been unique due to the absence of marine borers. The low salinity of this water has excluded the marine borers and today the Baltic contains a unique collection of well preserved historical shipwreck and other ancient wooden constructions from the past. However, there have recently been indications of a spread of marine borers (*Teredo navalis*) into the Baltic, and climatic changes could be one of the reasons. A recently completed EU project, Wreck Protect, aimed to identify and understand if this was real and could be caused by changing environmental conditions in the Baltic. The project also sought to identify best practice methods for preserving wooden UCH in situ. A summary of the project results will be presented.