

The Artefacts Project : an Encyclopedia of Archaeological Small Finds

During the last three decades, archaeology *benefited* from two major changes: a complete renewal of methods, with the generalized use of computers and the internet; and a spectacular increase in the mass of available data, partly due to the development of large rescue excavations. It also *suffered* from two major changes – the same ones. One of the reasons is that the marvellous tools we now have at our disposal were neither generally nor consistently used to balance the inconveniences of such a huge documentation.

There was a time when I complained about not having enough data to study, and this was even a cliché among people studying small finds, but as time passed, I no longer find that this is so. On the contrary, we all know that we ignore an increasing part of the available documentation, even when it is published (let alone what is not). A single researcher cannot cover all the documentation available, and so s/he is forced to reduce the scope of any study undertaken, which is certainly contrary to the overall aim of any research.

I believe that the time has come to change our working methods, i.e. to build international databases that allow specialists to share the available data, as physicians or biologists have long ago achieved. We now have the tools to make this little revolution happen, but only if we accept the consequences of this new era...

This project, **Artefacts**, that I describe below for

Lucerna readers, should not become a book either in the near future, or ever. Its aim is to bring to common knowledge the thousands of objects which are available, either in publications, museums, archaeological archive stores or private collections. In comparison with existing databases, it has the ambition to classify the objects as soon as they are registered, thus allowing another researcher not only to find them, but also to improve the scientific information available for that particular artefact-type. I know that **Artefacts** will never be exhaustive, yet it can provide the main data (identification, date, bibliography...) for a great number of objects, thus becoming a highly useful tool for archaeologists, museums and collectors.

The working group on **Artefacts** is open to anyone having the qualifications to join it; these are detailed at the end of this article.

1/ An online database

Artefacts is an online database, which means that it can only be opened or modified while using a quick-access (adsl) internet connection. It is presently not available to the public on the internet but makes use of dedicated software. For security as well as convenience, the researcher has a copy of the images on his hard drive, and whatever he changes among images is first registered on his computer, then sent to the server. Other information, such as changes

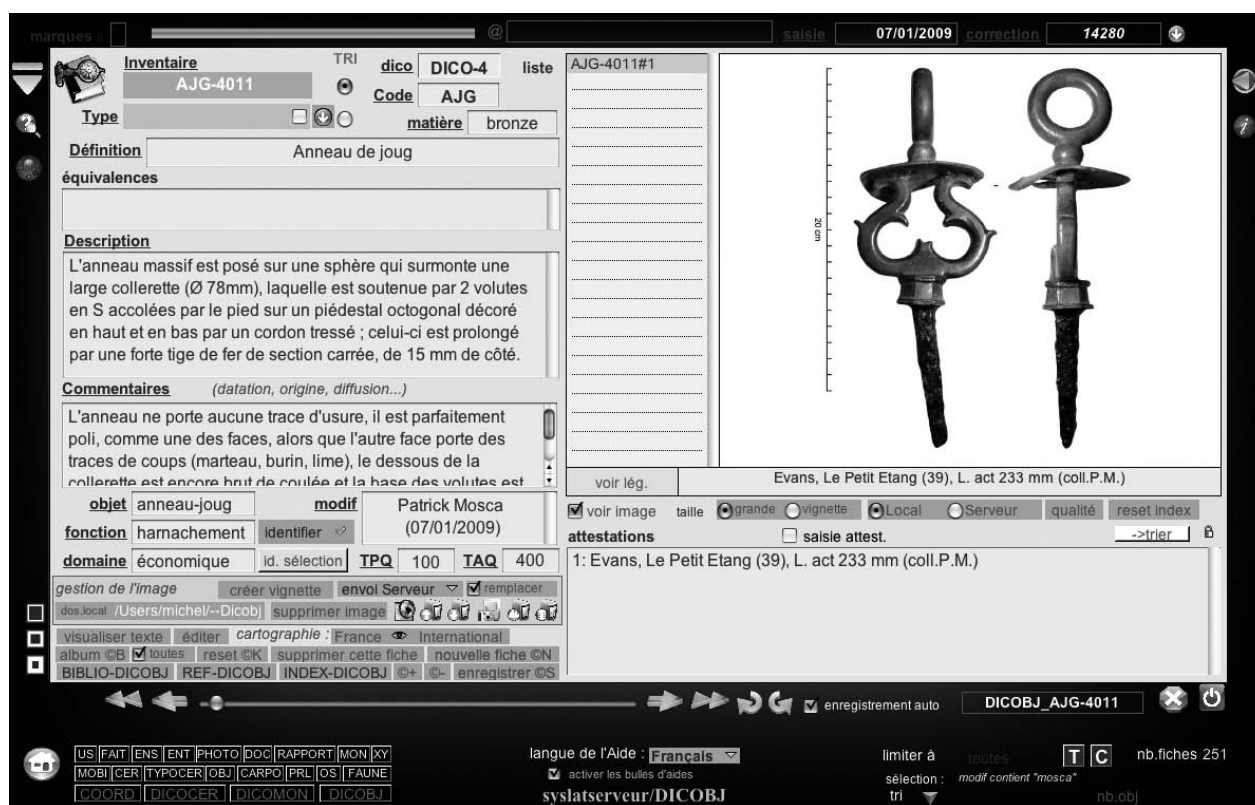


Fig. 1

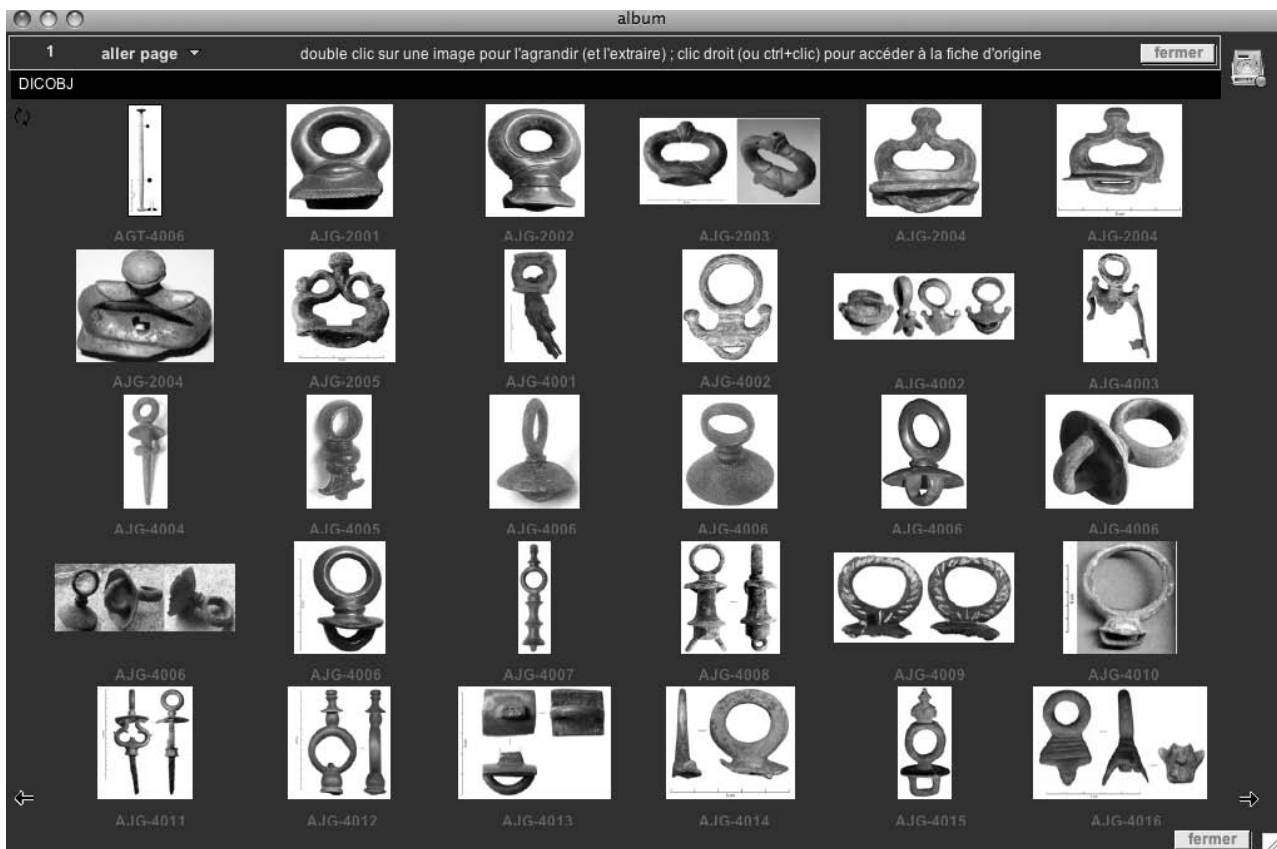


Fig. 2

in the text or keys, are registered directly on the server.

One of the consequences of this is that the data sent by one author can be seen by everyone, so information is immediately shared. But of course, at this stage, the network must be limited to confirmed and responsible researchers, as any of them is allowed to make any change s/he wants in the database. The whole thing now contains 3757 type files, for a total of 13444 registered objects, which is probably a quarter, if not a tenth, of the 'critical mass' which will make **Artefacts** a useful database.

2/ An organized corpus

The principle of **Artefacts** is to register the objects in the correct section, with a proper period identification, which of course is something which can be improved in the course of time. The entry number given to every type contains two identification elements: a 3-letter code refers to a category, for example FIB for brooches (fr. 'fibule') or AJG for terret (fr. 'anneau de joug'). It is followed by 4 numbers, the first one linked to the chronology: 4 is Roman (30 BC – AD 500), 5 is early medieval (AD 500-800), etc. A type is therefore identified by a short code, like FIB-4232 or AML-2005 (the first one being a Roman fibula and the latter a La T ne amulet). Of course, dating in Britain and other European countries is different to that of France, and even within Britain there is not a straight switch into the Roman period in AD 43 for all areas – indeed, in some areas there was no Roman period. Similarly, only the first decade or so of the 5th century can be said to be 'Roman'. A qualification can be used here for finds from particular regions, just as it can for items that have very specific date-ranges within the Roman period.

Let us look a at a typical **Artefacts** file, for example,

AJG-4011 (Fig. 1). This file belongs to the Roman section (DICO-4) and is described as an 'anneau de joug'. There is a description and a commentary but no 'parallels', as we do not know of any study of this type at the moment. The file is signed ('modif') and associated with a large chronology (AD 100-400), which is only a guess at the moment. There is only one object in this file, a find from Evans (F, 39) which is illustrated in the picture window. There could be several occurrences and as many pictures as we like, if it proved necessary.

3/ How to register an object ?

How does one register an object in **Artefacts**... ? Let us take a concrete example: s/he first needs to be an archaeologist to recognize a terret ... If not, for example if s/he only guesses that this is a Roman item, s/he would have to look at all the images of the Roman section one by one until s/he recognizes a similar object. But by knowing what it is, s/he can very easily find the code for a terret in the list of codes in alphabetical order, then check through all the terrets in the database (Fig. 2) to see if examples of the same type have been registered (bottom left of the window). Finally s/he can access the file and fill in the data for the object.

The type files use two 'libraries', one for the bibliography (BIBLIO-DICOBJ), with the usual abbreviation 'Name date', and another for the sites quoted (COORD), which has facilities to locate a site in any country and import its coordinates (Fig. 3). The system allows the items from any file, or from a group of files, to appear on distribution maps automatically edited in a post-script format. There is a variety of maps on the server, for any region, country or larger areas. See, for example, the map of Roman brooches (FIB-4 etc) in France presently in the database (Fig. 4).

COORDONNÉES accès à : Google Earth

Fichier courant: **COORD_dicobj**

commune, site (département): Wood Burcote [Nortants.] (GB) > commune: départ. ou pays:

Lambert I	X		Y	
Lambert II	X		Y	
Lambert III	X		Y	
Lambert II étendu	X		Y	
Lambert 93	X		Y	

ED50 longitude: 0,-59,-7 latitude: 52,6,60
WGS 84 longitude: -0.98574 latitude: 52.116442

corriger coord (France) ajouter coord (France) mode SAISIE

effacer enregistrer supprimer copier coller

Visualisation Interface Google Earth

vue aérienne Photo Google Maps échelle: 14

localisation sur carte MapQuest Carte Google Maps échelle: 12

GeoPortail IGN localiser

enregistrer auto vue auto

index sites

- Whelford, Longdoles Field (GB)
- White Colne [Essex] (GB)
- Whitchurch [Buckingham.] (GB)
- Wien (AT)
- Wien*, Museum (AT)
- Wiesbaden (DE)
- Wiltshire* (GB)
- Winchester (GB)
- Winchester, Grange Rd. (GB)
- Windisch, Vindonissa (CH)
- Windisch, Vindonissa-Est (CH)
- Winterton [Humberside] (GB)
- Withersfield [Suffolk] (GB)
- Wood Burcote [Nortants.] (GB)
- Woodcuts (GB)
- Woodford [Norths] (GB)
- Wroxeter (GB)
- Wylie (GB)
- Xanten (DE)
- Yavneh Yam (IL)
- Yonne* (89)
- York, Fortress (GB)
- Yvelines* (78)
- Zemun-Gardos (SR)
- Zeugma (TR)
- Zugmantel (DE)
- Zülpich-Enzen (DE)

US FAIT ENS ENT PHOTO DOC RAPPORT MON KY
MOBI CER TYPOCER OBJ CARPO PRL OS FAUNE
COORD DICOCER DICOMON DICOBJ

langue de l'Aide : Français

activer les bulles d'aides

syslatserveur/COORD

navigateur interne
navigateur externe

CARTO

Fig. 3

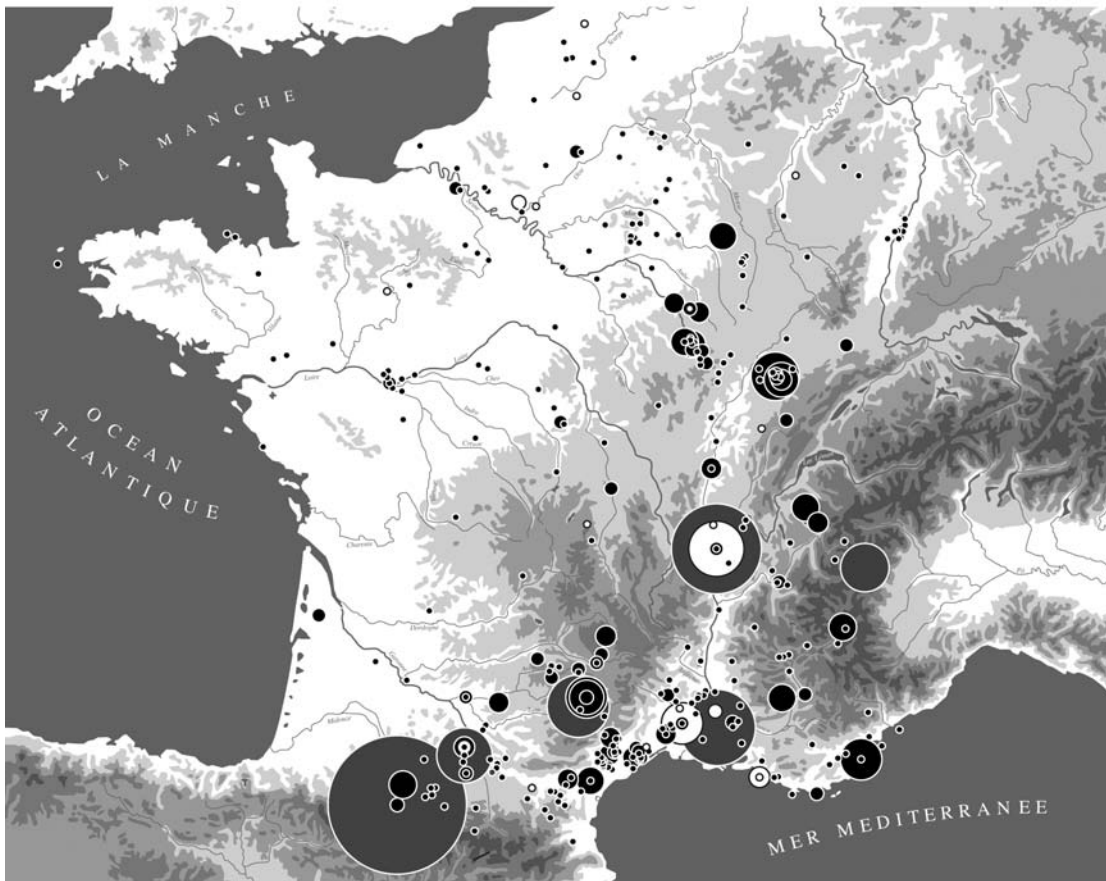


Fig. 4

4/ An international project, really... ?

At the moment, **Artefacts** is a project initiated by researchers from Southern France, which has so far raised interest from researchers from the whole country. But, technically as well as scientifically, there is no reason why it should be restricted to one country. In the pre-Roman

Iron Age as well as in Roman or later times, many object-types travelled long distances, and their study cannot be limited to the boundaries of our modern states. There is, therefore, a strong need for such a project to remain wide open to contributions from other countries, which will benefit from the database just like our fellow citizens.

At the moment **Artefacts** is a French software: the lists, aids and descriptions are in French, but there is no reason

why we should not work on translations in different languages, depending on the investment of researchers from other countries.

We therefore strongly wish to welcome foreign colleagues to our working-group!

5/ Who can join the group ?

Contributing to **Artefacts** requests the following abilities :

- a specialized interest in small finds, either in general or in one category (for example, lamps, militaria, brooches, tools...etc). The time needed to use Artefacts is only justified if you are either working on small finds as a job, or have a bit of time to devote to them as a private hobby...;

- dealing with the images presumes that you are familiar with the ad hoc softwares: how to cut a picture and paste it onto a white background, change its size and add a graphic scale;

- to work on the database you need to be familiar with basics computer processes: such as importing images, saving in the right folder etc. ;

- last but not least, as everything is in French at the moment, you need some basic knowledge of this language, if only to recognise the types, or the fields and their contents....

Starting with **Artefacts** needs constant support, so I advise potential candidates to use a Skype or IChat account to allow me to hold their hand. On both of those, I am available during work hours under the following name: 'michelfeugerepc'. If you want to know more about **Artefacts**, please do not hesitate to contact me, either like that or by e-mail. I really hope this will bring some of you to get involved with **Artefacts** and enlarge our present working-group.

If you would rather start out by asking a few questions to a fellow Briton who has already looked at the software, then contact Nina Crummy (ninacrummy@yahoo.com).

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