



PRESS FILE

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GROUPE DE RECHERCHE EN ARCHÉOLOGIE NAVALE

Project :

« Forgotten slaves » Mission 2008

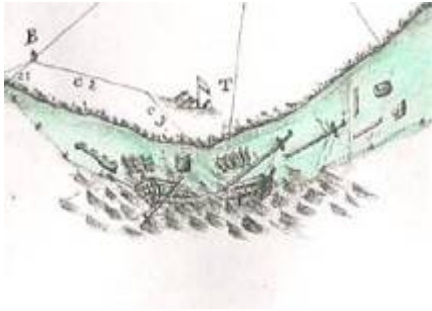
Shipwreck of *L'Utile* on the Island of Tromelin (1761)

27th October – 1st December 2008

www.archeonavale.org/Tromelin



« Forgotten slaves »: Shipwreck of *L'Utile* on the Island of Tromelin (1761)



Detail of the plan of the shipwreck *L'Utile*

A peculiar story:

L'Utile is a ship of the French Company of oriental India in campaign in Mascareignes. Left Bayonne on November 17th, 1760, shipwrecked on July 31st, 1761 on the Sand island (Tromelin) whereas it transports slaves intended for Mauritius coming from Madagascar.

The crew regains Madagascar in a boat of fortune, leaving sixty slaves on the island and promising to come back and fetch them.

This promise was never kept and only after 15 years, on November 29th 1776, that the knight of Tromelin, commanding the ship *La Dauphine*, saved eight surviving slaves: seven women and a baby of eight months old.

The wreck of *L'Utile* was located by the meteorologists who ensure the exploitation at the weather station installed on the island since 1954.

Second archaeological excavation campaign on the island of Tromelin:

The results exceeding all the hopes

Besides the study of the shipwreck site of *L'Utile*, the first archaeological mission carried out in 2006, had the chance to update an element of the habitat of the slaves, objects of the everyday life and had provided the first elements of reflexion on the conditions of survival of the slaves.

Directed by the « Groupe de Recherche en Archéologie Navale » (GRAN) with the assistance of an archaeologist of the INRAP (Institut National de Recherche Archéologique Préventive), the mission proceeded from October 27th to December 1st, its ambition was to look further into knowledge on the material living conditions of the slaves, but also on their degree of social organization.

The localization of tombs constituted another objective of research.

The results of this mission exceeded all the hopes:



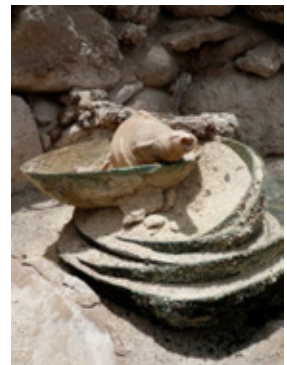
Overall view of the buildings
Photo : Jean-François REBEYROTTE

Buildings of an exceptional scale

If the discoveries of 2006 let think that the survivors had built relatively simple shelters, the excavation of this year made it possible to bring to light a whole of three buildings by which the scale astonishes. If interior space is reduced, the thickness of the walls, measuring between 1 and 1,5 meter, gives them a broad influence on the ground. The walls use as construction materials: blocks of coral, very abundant on the shore and of the sandstone plates present on the east coast of the island. These buildings constitute an original and remarkable unit.

Abundant archaeological furniture found such as it was left in place in 1776

In one of the discovered buildings, undoubtedly the kitchen, abundant furniture, generally metal, was found in place around an arranged home. In the position of its abandonment, on November 29th, 1776, it gives a very alive image of a controlled organization of the things and space and daily living conditions.



Stacking of copper containers
Photo : Jean-François REBEYROTTE



Study of the human bones
Photo : Jean-François REBEYROTTE

The discovery of human bones

In two of the buildings brought to light, human bones belonging to two distinct individuals were found in a cut level corresponding to the construction work of the weather station building, installed on the island since 1954. These two bodies were obviously moved since a burial or a funerary room at the time of these jobs. It is probable that the foundations of the building in question, demolished today, recover other human remainders.



Control of the techniques of construction and of metallurgy

Besides a control of the construction, of which it obviously appears that it evolved with time for better meeting the needs and undoubtedly ensuring a better protection against the cyclones, the use of metal recovered on the wreck of *L'Utile* show an obvious knowledge to make: copper cut out, riveted and used to repair the containers coming from *L'Utile*, to manufacture spoons and pointed needles; nails of frame and iron blades recovered on the wreck or the

shore, omnipresent on the site, used as tools: a poker, a punch, hammer and to undoubtedly ensure the cover of at least one of the buildings; lead melted to manufacture large basins most probably being used for the conservation of water.



Spoons produced starting from remains of *L'Utile*
Photo : Jean-François REBEYROTTE



Riveted copper containers
Photo : Jean-François REBEYROTTE

The conservation of water in lead containers raises the question of a possible lead intoxication of the survivors. Lead being fixed in majority in the bones, an analysis of the last should quickly bring an answer to the question.



Interior room (fireplace) of the building
Photo : Thomas ROMON

A structured organization and a great adaptability to the local resources

This control of the available resources is all the more astonishing as it goes sometimes against the practices of the Madagascans. It is known in particular that at the time on the “Large Island” homes are always built by using plant materials symbolizing the life and that the stone is reserved for the tombs. To build out of stone and with the noted scale is not only practical business of adaptation but also, one suspects it well, of cultural and psychological adaptation.

The small society which was constituted there, facing misfortune, passed the initial stress, obviously stayed standing and organized, bringing a denial healing to those which, by treating them as slaves,

had disclaimed them any humanity.

The unit brought to light constitutes by its quality and the organized space which it occupies an original archaeological site, but also a remarkable place of memory that it is important to protect.



A human adventure

The extreme isolation of this island, only occupied by three meteorologists and the absence of resources transformed this scientific project into a not very common human adventure. The presence on the island during one month of 10 people, the transportation of several tons of equipment, required several rotations of the Transall.



A lost island: Tromelin



Situation of the island of Tromelin

Located at 470 kilometres at the East of the Cape Masaola (Madagascar) and at 560 kilometres at the North of la Réunion and of Maurice, this small coral island of 1 km² culminating with 6 meters is very insulated, deprived of water and of natural resources, it shelters nevertheless a weather station.

It would seem that Tromelin is an ancient reef bench, today emerged, which probably developed on a high point of volcanic origin. Depths of almost 4000m surround this small island.

During centuries the navigators had found it to position this island whose presence even was sometimes questioned.

The island was officially discovered on August 11th, 1722, by Mr Briand de la Feuillée, commander of *La Diane*, ship of the Company of the Indies which travelled from Saint-Paul (La Réunion) towards the Indies.

This one was named “the Island of Sand”, in reason of its coral sand beaches. It had to be waited until 1817 for its position to be definitively established.

This island, is since January 3rd, 2005 managed by the prefect of the TAAF (Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises).

Classified as a natural reserve, this island is a privileged place of lying of the green and overlapping turtles. It also shelters colonies of frigates, Booby with red feet and Masked Booby. The Hermit-crab (or pagures) supplements the fauna of Tromelin.

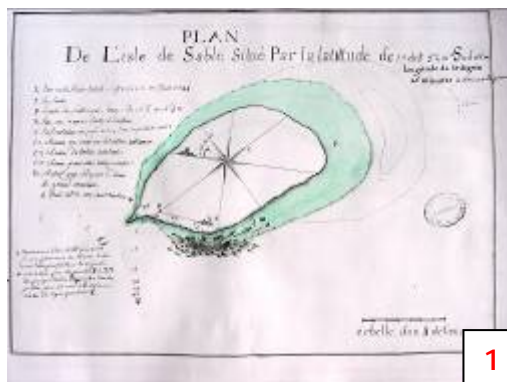
At the end of the document, you will find the following annexes:



1. Contents of the historical and archaeological research
2. The communication in real-time
3. Educationnel action
4. List of the GRAN activities since its creation

List of the available photographs by request like all the photographs presented in this document:

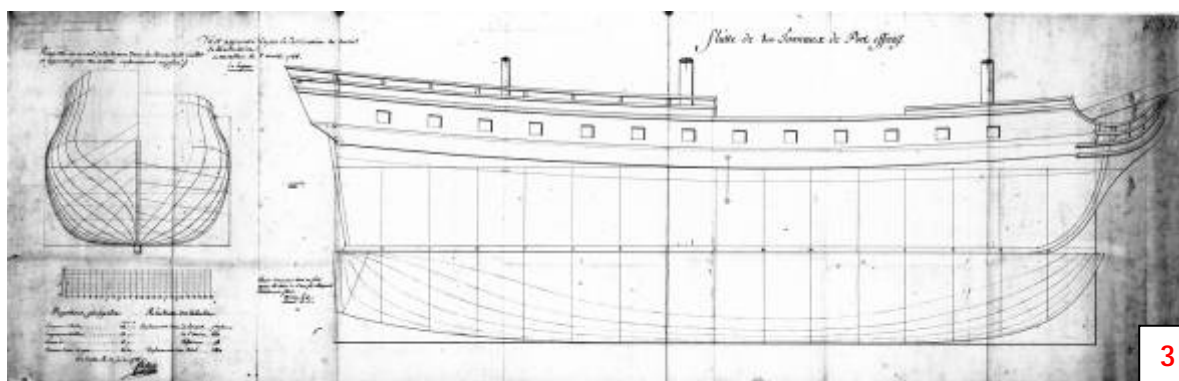
- 1- Plan of the Island of sands (actually Tromelin) drawn up in 1761. Credit: Archives nationales
- 2- *La Marie Séraphique* ship slave trader. Credit: Musée du château du duc de Bretagne, Nantes
- 3- Plan of structure of a frigate of 800 barrels (equivalent in *L'Utile*). Credit: SHD – Marine
- 4- Island of Tromelin. Credit: GRAN/Confrérie des gens de la mer
- 5- Canons of *l'Utile* on the reef flat of Tromelin. Credit: GRAN/Max Guérout
- 6- Diver near an anchor of *l'Utile*. Credit: GRAN/Confrérie des gens de la mer
- 7- Diver taking notes. Credit: GRAN/Confrérie des gens de la mer
- 8- Plan of the underwater site of *l'Utile*. Credit: GRAN/Joe Guesnon
- 9- Details of the 2006 excavations. Credit: INRAP/Thomas Romon
- 10- Thomas Romon (archaeologist INRAP) busy discovering a bowl left behind by the survivors
Credit: GRAN/Max Guérout
- 11- Structure raising (housing?). Credit: GRAN/Max Guérout
- 12- Drawing of the structure raising (housing). Credit: GRAN/Max Guérout
- 13- Container repaired 9 times by the survivors. Credit: GRAN/Max Guérout



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L'Utile... 1761 **2008**
 "Esclaves oubliés"
 Forgotten slaves



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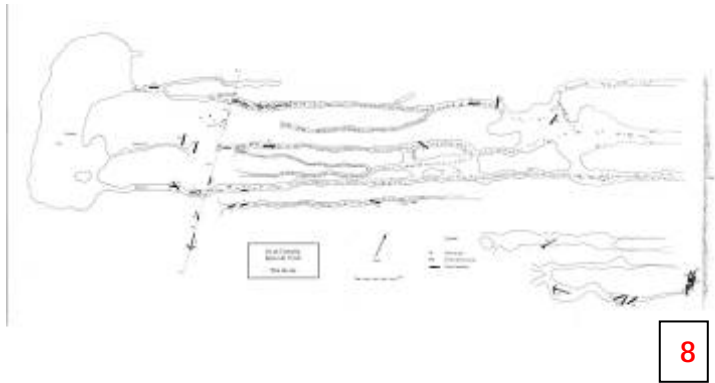
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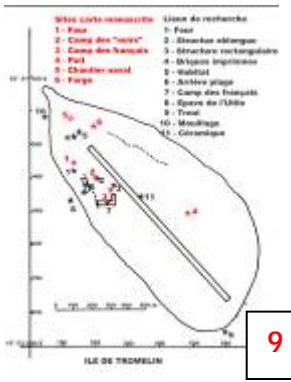
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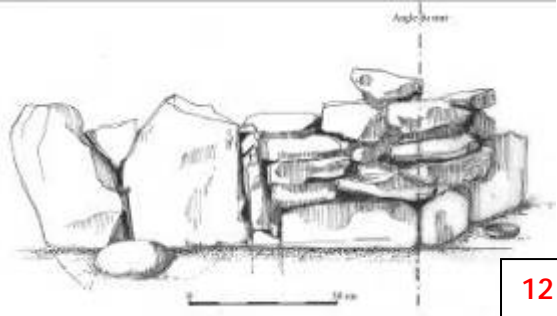
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All these photographs as those which are presented in this document are freely available on the following link: <http://www.neufgiga.com/n/50-17/share/LNK662248f906b35768c/>



PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT

Official Authorities



Préfecture des terres australes et antarctiques
françaises



Ministère de la Culture

Sponsorship



UNESCO – Programme « La route de l'esclave »

CME

Comité pour la Mémoire de l'Esclavage



Société Française d'Histoire Maritime



UMS-CNRS

Unité mixte de service (UMS)
(CNRS – Sorbonne – Musée de la Marine)

Financing



Fondation d'entreprise Banque Populaire

FONDATION



DU
PATRIMOINE

La Fondation du patrimoine



Conseil Régional de la Réunion



Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles



Logistical support within the framework of particular



Météo-France la Réunion



Ministère de la Défense - Commandant supérieur
des armées dans la zone sud de l'Océan Indien
(COMSUP FAZSOI)

Scientific Co-operation



Institut national de recherche archéologique
préventive
(INRAP)



CEREGE

Centre Européen de Recherche et
d'Enseignement des Géosciences de
l'Environnement



Laboratoire ECOMAR – Université de la Réunion



Unité Mixte de Recherche PACEA
(CNRS – Université de Bordeaux)



Académie de la Réunion



Musée de la Compagnie des Indes (Lorient)

Partners Associations



Association Généalogie et Histoire des Familles -
Pays Basque et Adour Maritime



Association « Les anneaux de la Mémoire »
(Nantes)



Association réunionnaise culture et
communication (ARCC)



Annexe 1 : contents of the historical and archaeological researches

Contents of the historical researches

- 1 - Research aiming to support the archaeological excavation: study of the ship and its characteristics, its weaponry by the Company of the Indies, its voyage, the circumstances of the shipwreck, the goods and the people embarked.
- 2 - The study of the context of the traded slaves within the framework of the Company of the Indies in general and that carried out by l'Utile in particular: origin of the Malagasy slaves, circuits of draft, organization of the draft at Foulepointe.
- 3 - Reasons of the abandonment of the slaves on Tromelin, then setting-up, fourteen years after, several expeditions of assistance.
- 4 - The study of the conditions of the survival of the slaves, the attempts of departure and the fate of the surviving slaves.
- 5 - Geographical history of the Tromelin Island, discovered and calculation of its position.
- 6 - Genealogical research to find the descendants of the protagonists of this history.
- 7 - Research concerning the objects found during the excavation.

These researches are placed under the patronage of l'Unité Mixte de Service (CNRS – Sorbonne – Musée de la Marine) Histoire et archéologie maritime.

The researchers associated with the project are to date:

For the § 1- 4 - 5 and 7 – Max Guérout (member of the UMS History and maritime archaeology and the scientific committee of program UNESCO the “Road of the slave”)

For the § 2 – 3 - in particular the professor Philippe Haudrière (Doctor of history author of a thesis on the Company of the Indies and professor at the University of Angers)

For the § 2 et 6 – M. Sudel Fuma (University of la Réunion) and various Associations of la Réunion.

Contents of archaeological research:

- 1 - The study of the vestiges of the wreck which were already located by the meteorologists of the French Central Meteorological Office (Joel Mouret).
- 2 - Research with ground to try to find traces of the stay of the slaves on the island: base camp, well...
- 3 - Research aiming at drawing up how the vestiges of the shipwreck on the one hand and natural environment on the other hand could contribute to the survival of the shipwrecked men during 15 years.



4 - Complementary underwater archaeological research concerning the presence of other wrecks on the island (the remainders of a ship shipwrecked are announced by the survivors of the shipwreck of l'Utile).

According to the wish of the local government agencies of la Réunion and/or Museum of the Company of the Indies, it is possible to take certain elements or objects and to carry out their treatment of conservation before exposure. The recovery of important archaeological objects could give place to a later intervention.

These researches will be carried out by a team of the reinforced GRAN of a terrestrial archaeologist of the INRAP



Annexe 2 : The communication in real-time

The GRAN has already significant experience of this type of communication. They are available for consultation via the site: www.archeonavale.org.

Concept

The concept of scientific communication in real-time consists in diffusing via Internet of information making it possible to follow uninterrupted an operation in scientific matter proceeding on the “ground”.

Realization

If the operation proceeds at sight of an antenna relay or close to a fixed connection to the phone network (which is not the case here), information: text, sound, still images and animated images are transmitted to an operator charged of the information management and setting on line of the diary.

If the operation precedes out of reach this type of relay, information is transmitted by a satellite connection, here the station Immarsat Fleet 77 of the weather.

Editorial Organization

A daily diffusion appeared to us the most adapted, because it makes it possible to give to the reader a regular appointment, it allows also a sufficiently fast follow-up of the operation all while not preventing from fixing more brought closer appointments, if the interest justifies it.

The diary is diffused in two languages (French and English) throughout the whole operation. It is preceded by a general text of presentation of the operation, of its human and material means, and its partners.

The diary consists:

A fixed part:

- Title
- Geographical location of the operation.
- Scientific Context of the operation.

A made up periodic part of daily articles:

- A report of the day passed with one or two photographs.
- A heading introducing a participant in the operation: short biography and photography.
- An illustrated article of two or three pages concerning the scientific aspects of the operation.

If the networks set up allow it short video sequences are put periodically on line.



The articles put on line the previous days, can be consulted permanently.

Technical organization

The diary is put on line daily as of reception, translation and verification of the articles. It is accessible directly on Internet site www.archeonavale.org/tromelin or starting from bonds set up in various places (Internet site of UNESCO, the TAAF, and the Ministry for the Culture...). Its access is free on Internet.

Museums wishing to use it as animation by making it available to the public on an interactive terminal or a big screen must subscribe.

After the operation, the diary gives place to the edition of a CD-ROM and is integrated into the site www.archeonavale.org/tromelin .



Annexe 3 : Educational action

Concerned Domains:

- Underwater archaeology,
- history - geography,
- languages: English,
- Science of life and the ground (geology, biology [Tromelin is a natural reserve], meteorology [a weather station is on Tromelin]),
- data processing (Internet, communications in real-time,...),
- sciences (magnetometry, side sonar...).

Principle of the educational action suggested:

With an aim of widening its audience, to make known its actions with youth, to make known with the greatest number the problems involved in the last and contemporary history of slavery, the GRAN wishes a partnership with State education. The nature of its activities on the scientist plans and of the human adventure in general can arouse the interest of the schoolboys or high-school pupils often in search for outgoing ideal of daily monotony.

Practically, within the framework of its Internet site, the GRAN set up a bilingual diary (French-English) daily which makes it possible to follow in nearly real time the carried out actions and the daily life of a research team during the programs of excavations carried out everywhere in the world.

This realization of a diary was possible thanks to the first experiments carried out by the GRAN then by its participation in the program "the navigation of the knowledge - Network of the historical arsenals of the Mediterranean" co financed by the European commission within the framework of the program Euromed Heritage II placed under the cultural aegis of UNESCO.

The groups of interested pupils, framed or controlled by their professors could be connected at will on the diary which will be implemented at the time of the preparation and of the course of the operation "Forgotten Slaves" for:

- Take note of the carried out actions and the daily life of a scientific operation in a far country (although it is always about France).
- Contact in an interactive way by email members of the team engaged in the campaign to exchange impressions, observations.
- Ask questions in report with the carried out operations or on the living conditions during such campaign.
- Write internet pages themselves thanks to specialized software;
- Be interested through these actions on great subjects such as:
 - The black and slavery trade in general and in the Indian Ocean in particular,
 - the company of the Indies,



- sea routes,
- sailing ships,
- the interaction between wrecks and fauna or underwater flora.

Average hardware requirements:

- Microcomputer provided with an internet connection and a printer,
- digital camera (optional),
- subscription with a supplier of access with a sufficient connect time for the consultation of the online news and the exchanges under consideration between the group of pupils and the scientific team engaged in the mission.

Methods of start-up of the partnership

- Request for partnership established on standard printed paper form by the adult person in charge of the group of pupils concerned. This request is transmitted to the GRAN by the chief of establishment with his agreement.
- Answer of the GRAN within the limit of the material possibilities of reception of partners.



Annexe 4 : List of the GRAN activities since its creation

1980 – 2005 : The GRAN conducted to many campaigns of prospection and excavations as well in France as abroad



Plate powder horn - Wreck of Slava Rossii Island of Levant [1980]

In 1980 – Survey on the wreck of the flute of the Roi *La Baleine* sank on the Island of Port-Cros in 1710. In 1980 and 1981 – Excavation of the Russian vessel wreck of 64 canons *Slava Rossii* sank in 1780 on the Island of Levant next to Toulon.

From 1982 to 1990 – (9 campaigns, 4750 divers) Excavate of the wreck of the « nave » génoise *Lomellina* sank in the harbour of Villefranche-sur-mer in 1516.



- Icon (triptyck) - Wreck of Slava Rossii Island of Levant [1981]

In 1986 – Discovered wreck of the cast Patriotic French trading vessel in the harbour of Alexandria in 1798 during the expedition of Bonaparte in Egypt, then execution of two excavation campaigns.

In 1988 – Two prospection campaigns to the accesses of the island of Gorée in Senegal and discovered of three wrecks of which the brick *Sénégal* sank in 1780.

In 1990 – Expertise in the port of Scarborough on behalf of the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the site of the battle of Tobago (1677).



- Cut in majolica - Wreck of the Lomellina Villefranche-sur-mer [1982]

In 1991 and 1992 – Prospection's in the estuary of the Loire and discovered of 5 sites of shipwreck of which the wreck of the English vessel of 64 Essex canons sank in 1759 during the battle of the Cardinals.

In 1994 – Discovered wreck of the Magenta armoured frigate sank in 1875 in the harbour of Toulon whereas it transported many cases of Punic antiquities coming from Carthage and updated in 1995 of the head of the statue of the Empress Sabine (IIth century after J.C.), in 1997 of 45 fragments of Punic steles (IIth century before J.C.) and in 1998 of 40 Punic steles.



- Ceramics -
Wreck of the Lomellina
Villefranche-sur-mer [1982]

In 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2001 – Prospection’s at the open of Brest to find the wrecks of Cordelière and the Regent sank on August 10th, 1512.

In 1998 – At the request of the Management of the Equipment of Martinique: prospection preliminary to the construction of a terminal for container ships to the Pointe des Grives in bay of Fort de France.

In 1998, 1999 and 2000 – Program Raphaël “Large ships of la Renaissance ».

In 1999 – Prospection to try to find the wreck of la *Grande Maitresse*, nave of François 1st, sank in 1533 in the harbour of Toulon.



- Octant -
Wreck of the Patriote
Alexandrie [1986]

2002 – In November, prospection - inventory of la Baie de Valparaiso (Chile) within the framework of the project « Valparaiso Sumergido ».

2004 – In June prospection’s magnetic in the bay of Gnejna (Malta) on behalf of the « Superintendence of Cultural Heritage » within the framework of the program « La navigation du Savoir ».

2007 – Expertise with the assistance of the National marine of the wreck of the Polynesian steamer, torpedoed in Malta in 1918.

2008 – Scientific department of the excavations under marines of the 2008 Vanikoro expedition.

1999 - 2000 : Inventory of the underwater inheritance of the island of Martinique



- Ecus d'or au soleil -
Wreck of la Lomellina
Villefranche-sur-mer [1988]

1990 – Bay prospection’s of Fort de France, with the handles of Arlet, and Saint-Pierre on the site of the combat of 1667.

1991 – Prospection’s in la Baie and with broad of the Robert, discovered of 4 sites of shipwrecks of which that of a ship slave trader and wreck of the Edouard sank in 1854 close to the islet of Loup Garou. Discovered and survey of the wreck of the imperial brick impérial *Cygne* sank in 1808 at Prêcheur



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-- Gun-
Wreck of Cygne
Martinique [1991]

1992 – Prospection in the zone of Vauclin, identification and expertise on the wreck of the corvette *Caravane* sank in 1817, and of the wreck of the Norwegian trois-mâts ship, *Cato* sank in 1898.

1992 to 1994 - Bay Surveys of Saint-Pierre on the wrecks of the sunken buildings during the eruption of the Peeled Mountain in May 1902, within the framework of the project of inscription of the city on the list of the World heritage of UNESCO. In 1994, survey and identification of trois-mâts *Biscaye* of Bordeaux.



- Head of a statue of the empress
Sabine-
Wreck of Magenta
Toulon [1995]

1993 – Prospection's in the bay and with broad of Trinité. Expertise of six sites of the de none identified shipwrecks.

1996 – Expertise and reading of the wreck of *Notre Dame de Bonne Espérance* shipwrecked on the caye Pinsonnelle in 1687.

1997 – Prospection's between Diamant and islet Cabrit. Discovered of two sites of shipwrecks of which that of *Pigwidgeon* sank in 1856. Reading and expertise of four sites of which that of *Raisonable*, English 74 canons (ex French) sank in 1762 in Salines.



- Punic steles (2nd century before
J.C.) -
Wreck of Magenta

2000 – Prospection's at the bay of Trinité, research of the wreck of *Saint-Yves* sank in 1704.



1993 to 2003 : Inventory of the underwater inheritance of the Polynésie française

1994 – Statement of the wreck of the Danish three-masted ship *Nordby*, sank in Raiatea in 1900 and expertise wreck of the Chilean three-masted ship *Concepcion* at Tahaa (islet under the wind).



-Basalt Heminette -
Construction site of the pass
Tupapaurau in Moorea
Polynésie française [2003]

1995 – Discovered and expertise vestiges of the wreck of l'*Africaense Galey* (Dutch) sank in 1722 sur l'atoll de Takapoto (Tuamotou), expertise wreck of the four-master *County of Roxburgh*, wrecked in 1906 on the atoll of Takaroa (Tuamotu).

1996 – In co-operation with the maritime Museum of Sydney, seeks and discovered wreck of the three-masted ship *Julia Ann* sank on the atoll of Scilly (Islands under the wind) in 1855 and of a second wreck dated of the XIXth century.

2000 – In March, localization and expertise of a site of shipwreck on the atoll of Amanu (Tuamotu) and in October, excavation of the wreck of *Francisco Alvarez*, sank in Mangareva (Archipel des Gambier) in 1868.

2003 – February to April, search of the du site Polynesian site of the pass Tupapaurau at Moorea (Polynésie française).

2002 to 2005 : Formation to the techniques of archaeology

2002 – In September, formation course with the techniques of underwater archaeology at Villefranche-sur-mer on the wreck of *Lomellina*. Within the framework of the program « Euromed - Heritage II - La navigation du savoir - Réseau des arsenaux historiques de la Méditerranée ».



- Model of restitution of the
Lomellina -
construction site of formation to
the techniques of archaeology.
Villefranche [2002]

2004 – In June, formation course with the techniques of underwater archaeology, in Malta, within the framework of the program "Euromed - Heritage II - La navigation du savoir - Réseau des arsenaux historiques de la Méditerranée".

2005 – In June, formation course with the techniques of underwater archaeology, in Algiers, within the framework of the program "Euromed - Heritage II - La navigation du savoir - Réseau des arsenaux historiques de la Méditerranée". Discovered the wreck of l'avisos vapeur *Sphinx* and of the wreck "*des dix meules*".



L'Utile... 1761

"Esclaves oubliés"
Forgotten slaves

