

“AST” WITH INRAP IN FRANCE

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2014, Excavation anthropologist, archaeologist, France, french archaeology, French National Institute for Preventive
Archaeological Research, Hervé Guy, Inrap, preventive archaeology

My name is Hervé Guy and I am an **AST** with **Inrap** (Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives – **French national institute for preventive archaeological research**). Of course, that doesn't mean anything to someone who doesn't work with my research institute. And yet, I am always introduced as: “Hervé Guy, AST, Marseille”. I then see the confusion in the eyes of my new acquaintances, asking themselves questions like : “AST, what does that mean?”; “**Archéologue Sans Terrain?**” (“Archaeologist with no fieldwork ?”); “**Archéologue Sous Tranquillisants?**” (“Archaeologist on tranquilizers ?”). No, it means : **Adjoint Scientifique et Technique** (Scientific and Technical Adjunct). Many of my colleagues think that the “A” signifies Assistant, showing just how mysterious this acronym remains. In fact, I am the scientific and technical adjunct to the inter-regional director, in this case, of the Mediterranean inter-region.



My “territories” and operations in progress ©Hervé Guy, Inrap

I am based in the Provence region, in Marseille to be precise, where I direct the archaeological research center that oversees the Bouches-du-Rhône and Alpes-Maritimes departments. I have many duties, and like a Swiss army knife, depending on the time of day, I am a manager, a scientist (mostly in the evenings), a technical-logistics coordinator, a salesperson, a confidant... Most of my work consists of organizing diagnostic operations and excavations. I thus visit many field sites, sometimes leading me to

dubious places. I also constitute teams (80 people), negotiate excavations, manage the careers of the agents who work for me, and respond to more or less urgent requests from my administration.



My office, the activity control tower. Post-its are my friends © Hervé Guy, Inrap

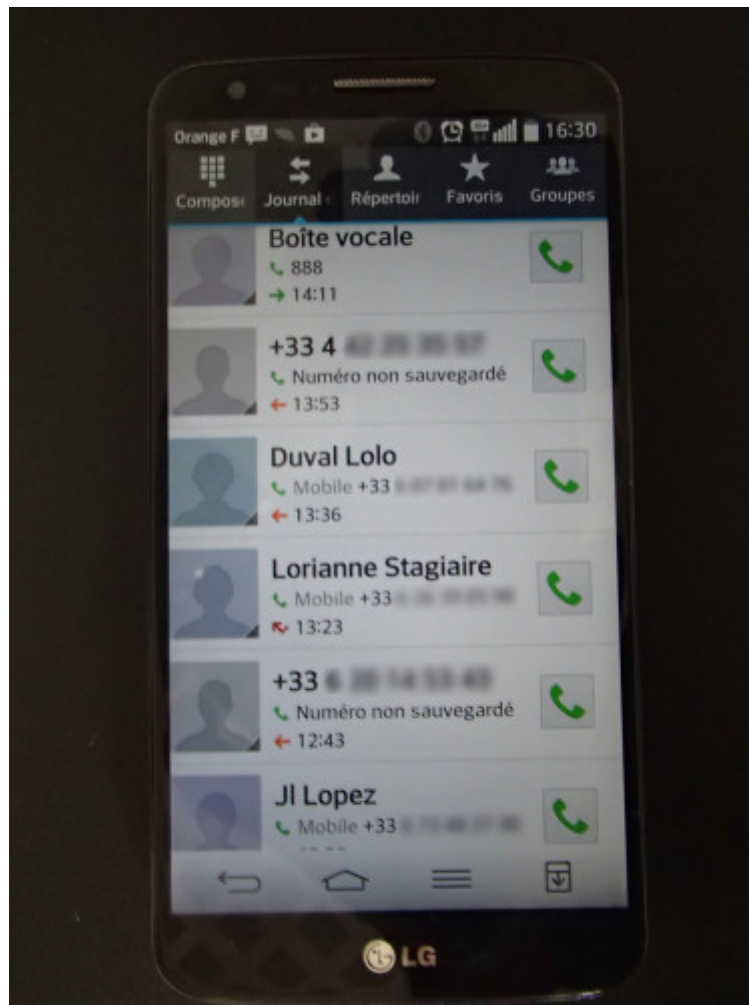
So, as you can see, I don't get bored and there are not enough hours in the day to do all I have to do.

Being a family man, I try to reconcile my professional and private lives. I therefore reserve my morning until 8:15 to take my youngest child to school. Afterward, I don't know if I will get home before he goes to bed.

So, my typical day begins at 8:15 am. By 8:30, the phone begins to ring. It doesn't stop until 8:00 pm. I spend 3 or 4 hours a day with the telephone glued to my ear. My colleagues think this is funny and joke that my mobile phone is like an appendage, a prosthesis. The telephone is the emblem of the "AST", the symbol of his or her function. I carefully avoid reading all of the epidemiological studies on the dangers of mobile phones. If they really do exist, it is too late, I've been doing this job for twelve years. I would certainly be an interesting guinea pig for mobile phone providers. I am living proof that telephones don't kill: probably because I alternate between my left and right ears.

I must say that I dread full days of meetings when I can't answer my phone or read my emails : I end up with dozens of messages to answer. These are people that I must call or write back, and some of them are not pleasant... I'm thinking here of developers who see archaeologists as building preventers, and think that they are detrimental to economic progress, of which they themselves are the mighty heralds.

But let's forget the grumpy ones. Many developers also tell me how much they appreciate our admirable profession.



My job requires that I be available most of the time, not only to developers, but also to the members of the teams that I lead. My team is amazing. Most of its members are very efficient and motivated, and when I become a bit overwhelmed, someone will spontaneously offer their help (which I don't refuse). Of course, as in any human organization, there are some rebellious, grouchy or dissatisfied ones. But generally, I must say that the reigning atmosphere is positive in my research center in Marseille, rather studious, but full of good will.

I like this profession, even if it is sometimes tiring (physically) and challenging (psychologically). I like this profession as an *AST* because we play an essential role in preventive archaeology in France. And what could be more satisfying than seeing all of your efforts rewarded by amazing discoveries?



Being educated as a physical anthropologist, I am sometimes invited to do fieldwork in other countries. Here I am in Yemen where we excavated Bronze Age tombs in association with a pipeline (Mission director: Remy Crassard) © DR