Part 4:

Taking and editing photographs

Photographs for the PAS database

Photographs are an important part of the record. Like the description, the image should be able to stand alone, and support the rest of the record at the same time. It should provide a minimum standard of information for future researchers, if the written part of the record becomes lost or detached from the image.

Detailed advice on equipment and techniques, including settings for digital cameras, are dealt with in Photography & Image Editing for the PAS Database / the PAS Photography Handbook (available to download or from PAS staff).

Here are the basic standards for images on the PAS database.

We need neat, tidy, informative images.

- All photographs need a scale (see page 88).

- Almost all objects should be photographed on a white background.

- Use supports to take all your views square on, with camera and object level.

- For maximum detail, the object should almost fill the view of the camera.

Almost all objects will need more than one photograph taken.

- Coins need photographs of the obverse and reverse.

- For flat objects, a front view and reverse view is often sufficient.

- For three-dimensional objects, three views (front, side, reverse) are needed.

If in doubt, search for similar objects on the database and see how they have been photographed.

Position your lights to make sure you:

- capture maximum detail
- keep shadows to a minimum.

An example of deep shadows.

It's hard to tell where the object ends and the shadow begins.
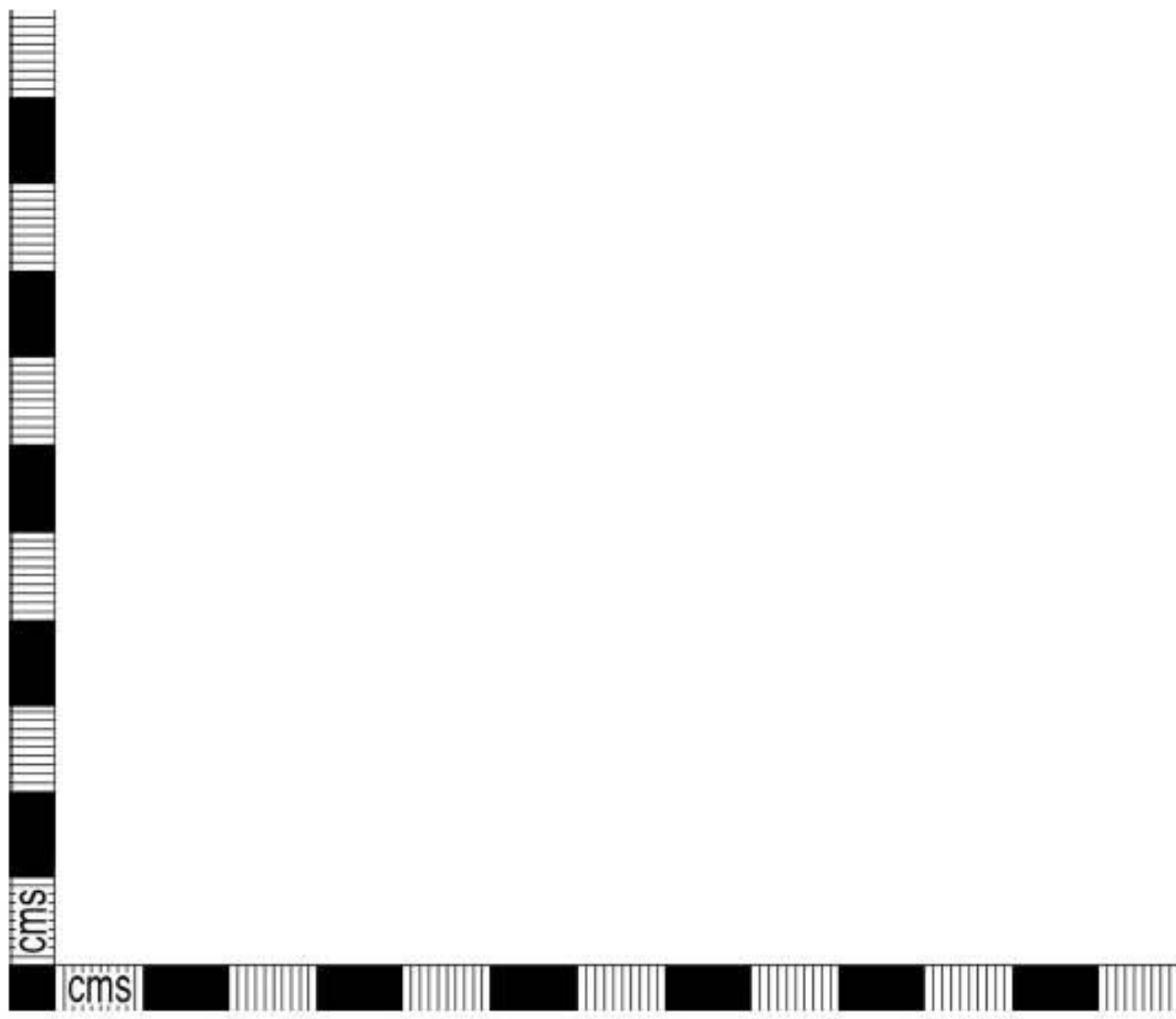
Check your focus

- Is the object in focus?
- Is the scale also in focus? Raise it on a support if necessary.

Photographic scale

How to edit an image

Even the best photographs need to be edited, for at least two reasons:

- so that all the views appear on one image, arranged in the correct way

- to give a clean white background

PAS staff use Adobe Photoshop packages to edit their images. This is ideal, but pricey unless it comes free with your camera. If you don't have Photoshop already, you can download similar photo editing software from the internet for free. **Paint.net** is very easy to use; **Gimp** has lots of features.
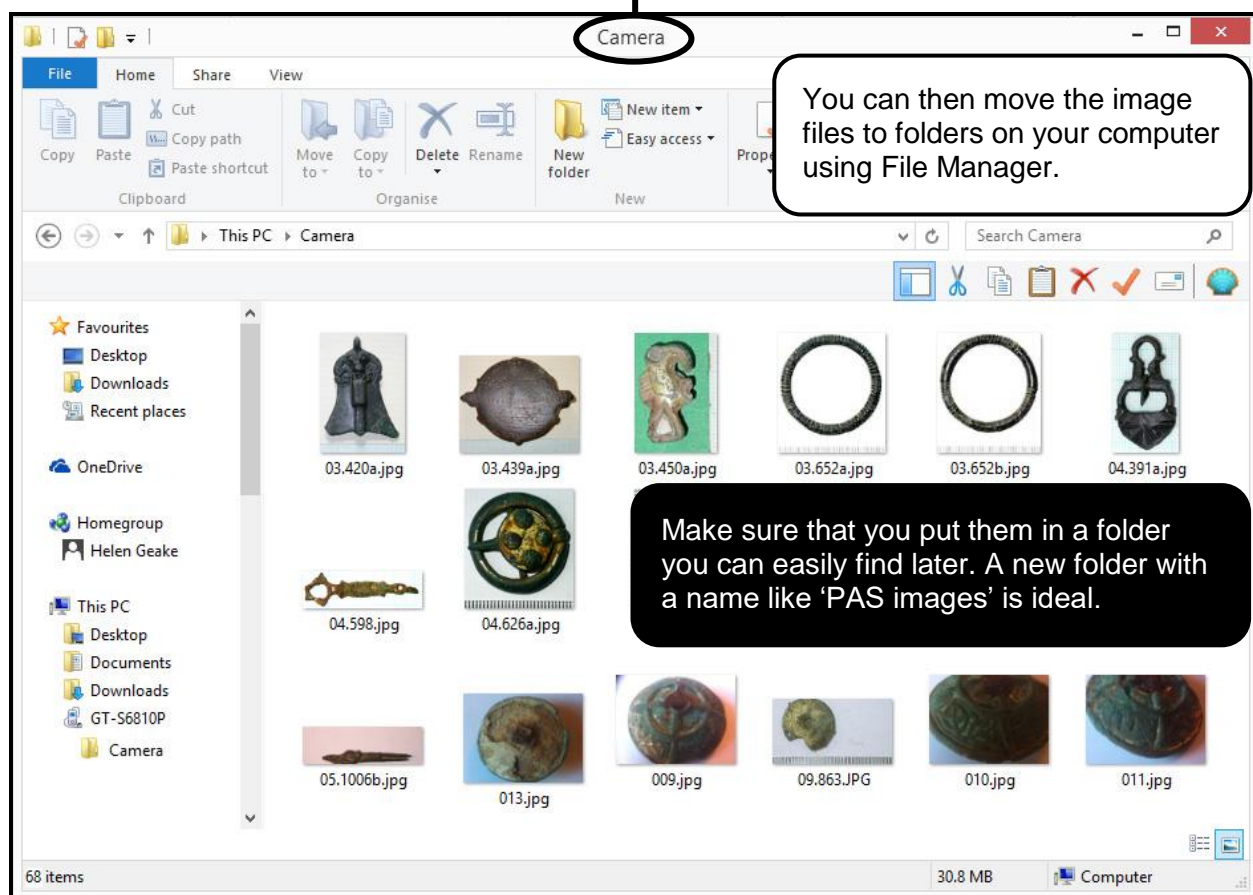
> You can get **Paint.net** here: http://www.getpaint.net/download.html
>
> You can get **Gimp** here: http://www.gimp.org/downloads/
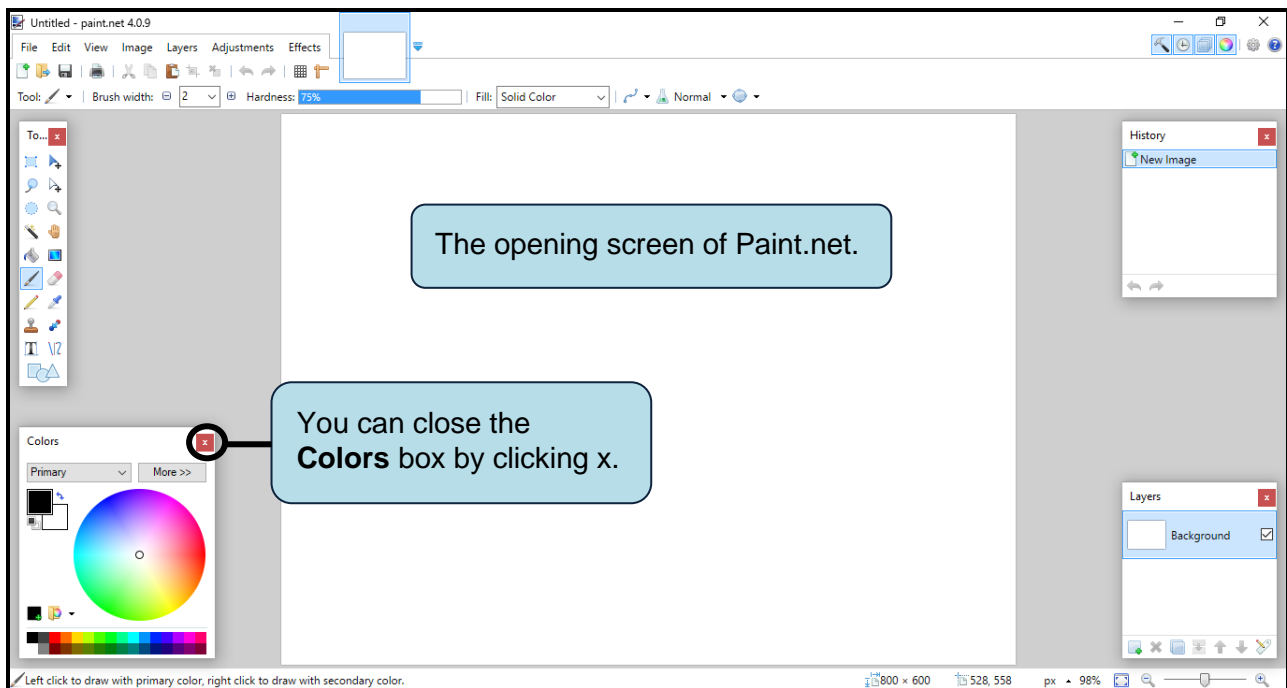>
> If you need help downloading the software, ask a member of PAS staff.

> 1. First of all you will need to download your photos from your camera to a folder on your computer.
>
> This is normally done by linking your camera (or its memory card) directly to your computer via a cable. A new File Manager window will open showing the image files available on your camera.
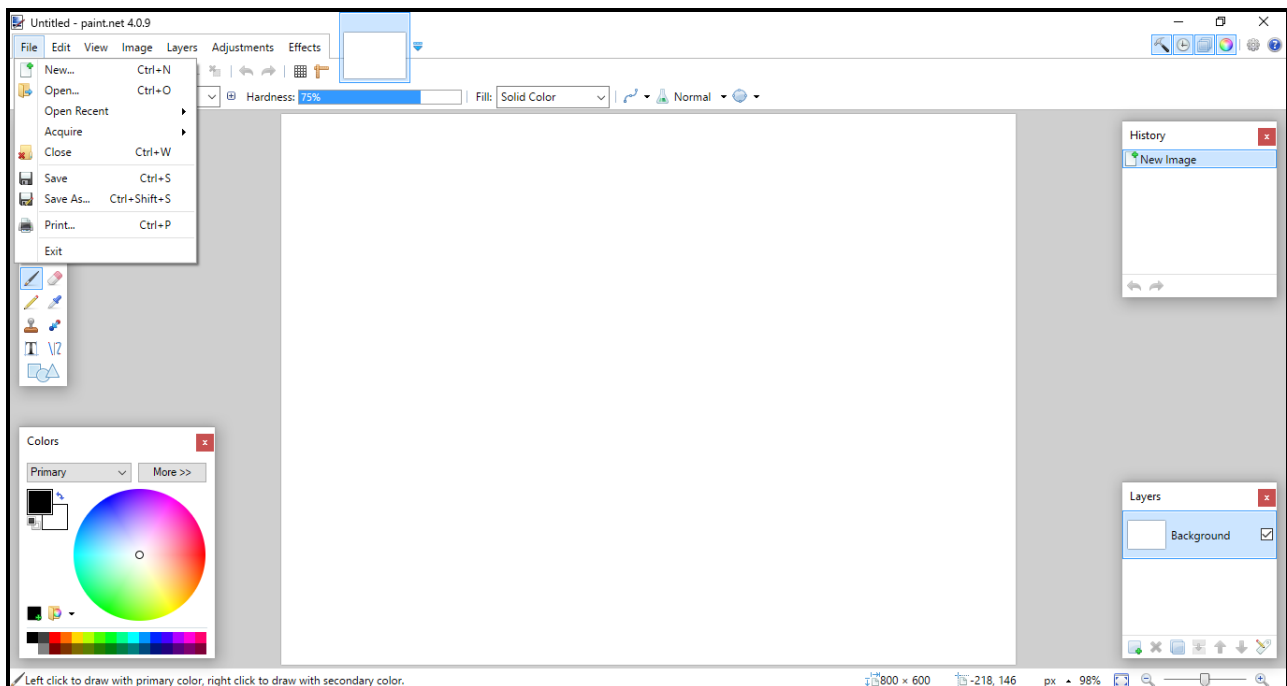

You can then move the image files to folders on your computer using File Manager.

Make sure that you put them in a folder you can easily find later. A new folder with a name like 'PAS images' is ideal.

2. Next, open up the photo editing software. We'll use Paint.net as an example.

The opening screen of Paint.net.
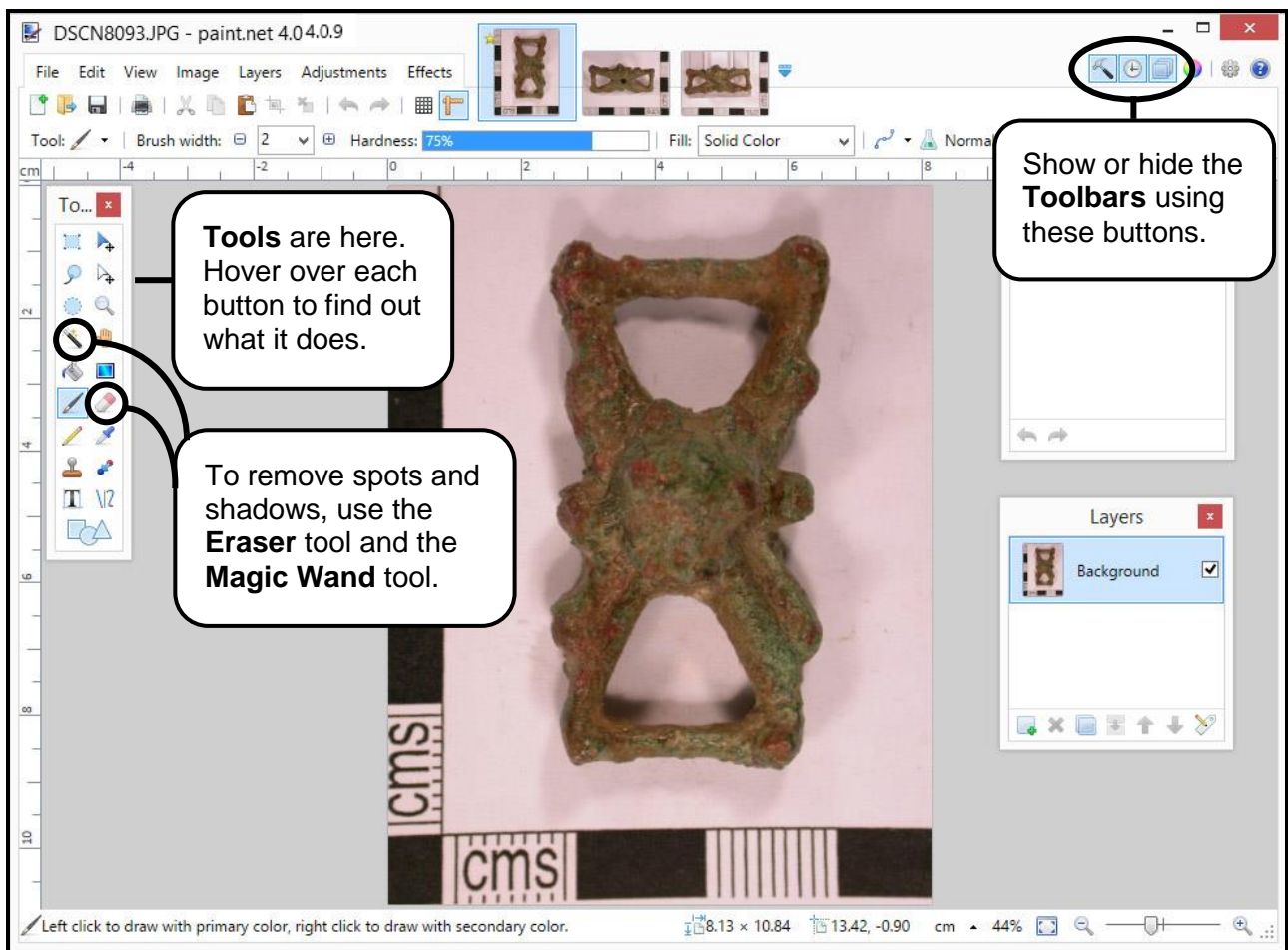
You can close the **Colors** box by clicking x.

3. Open up all the photos of one object, using **File** then **Open** as normal.

Or you can use the shortcut for Open – hold down the Ctrl key and press O at the same time (Ctrl + O).

Move between the different photos by clicking on the thumbnails here.

DSCN8093.JPG - paint.net 4.04.0.9

File Edit View Image Layers Adjustments Effects

Tool: | Brush width: 2 | Hardness: 75% | Fill: Solid Color | Norma

Show or hide the **Toolbars** using these buttons.

Tools are here. Hover over each button to find out what it does.

To remove spots and shadows, use the **Eraser** tool and the **Magic Wand** tool.

Layers

Background ☑

Left click to draw with primary color, right click to draw with secondary color.   8.13 × 10.84   13.42, -0.90   cm   44%

The background should be clean and white, with no shadows or supports showing.

To lighten the whole photo, use the **Brightness/Contrast** slider (find this under the 'Adjustments' menu).

You may need to **crop** the photo so that there is not too much background visible around the object.

Try to keep the object close to the scale, but not too close – leave a bit of space between.

Use the **Rectangle Select** tool to draw a line around the part of the photo you want to keep, then choose **Image**, then **Crop to Selection** to crop the image.
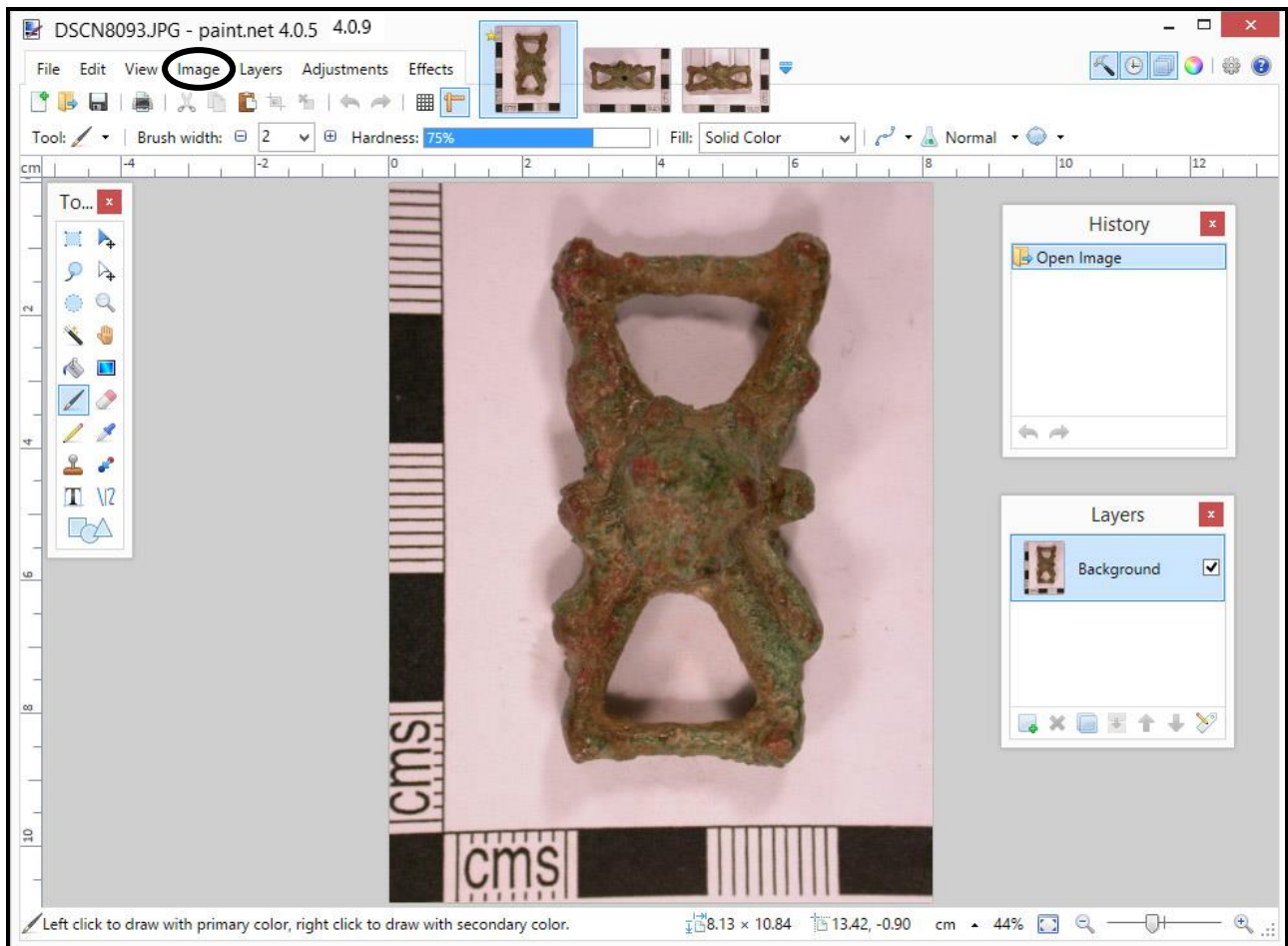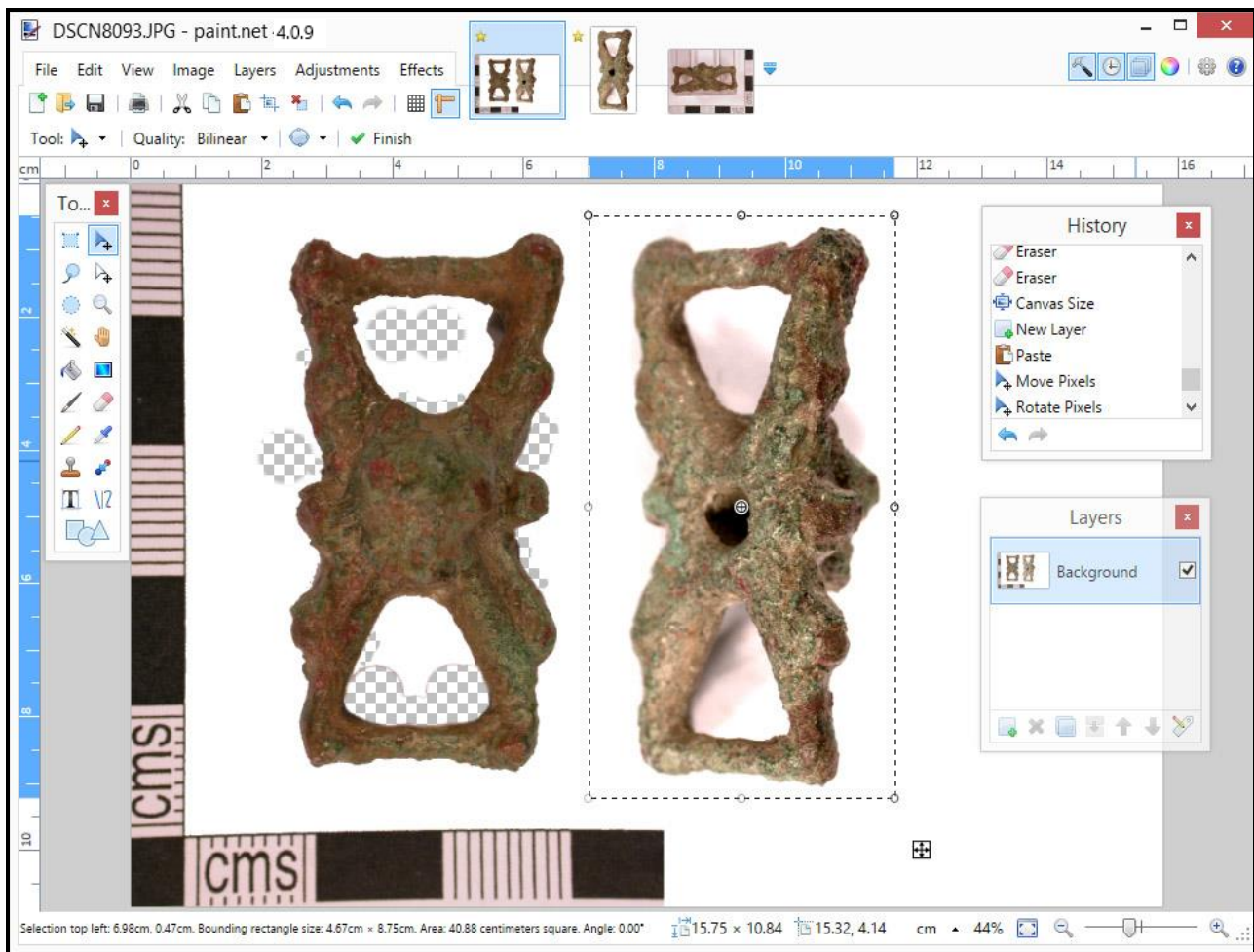
To combine views on one image, you will need to make the 'canvas' bigger so that they will all fit. Choose **Image**, then **Canvas Size** on the first view to do this.
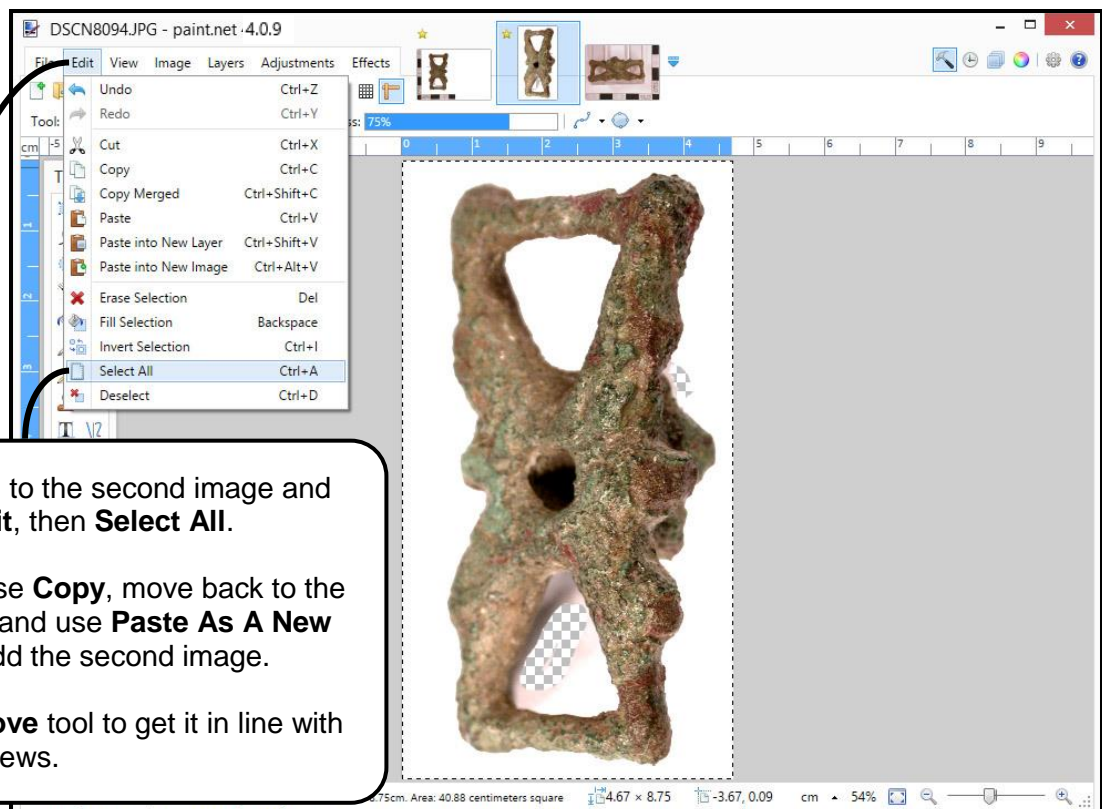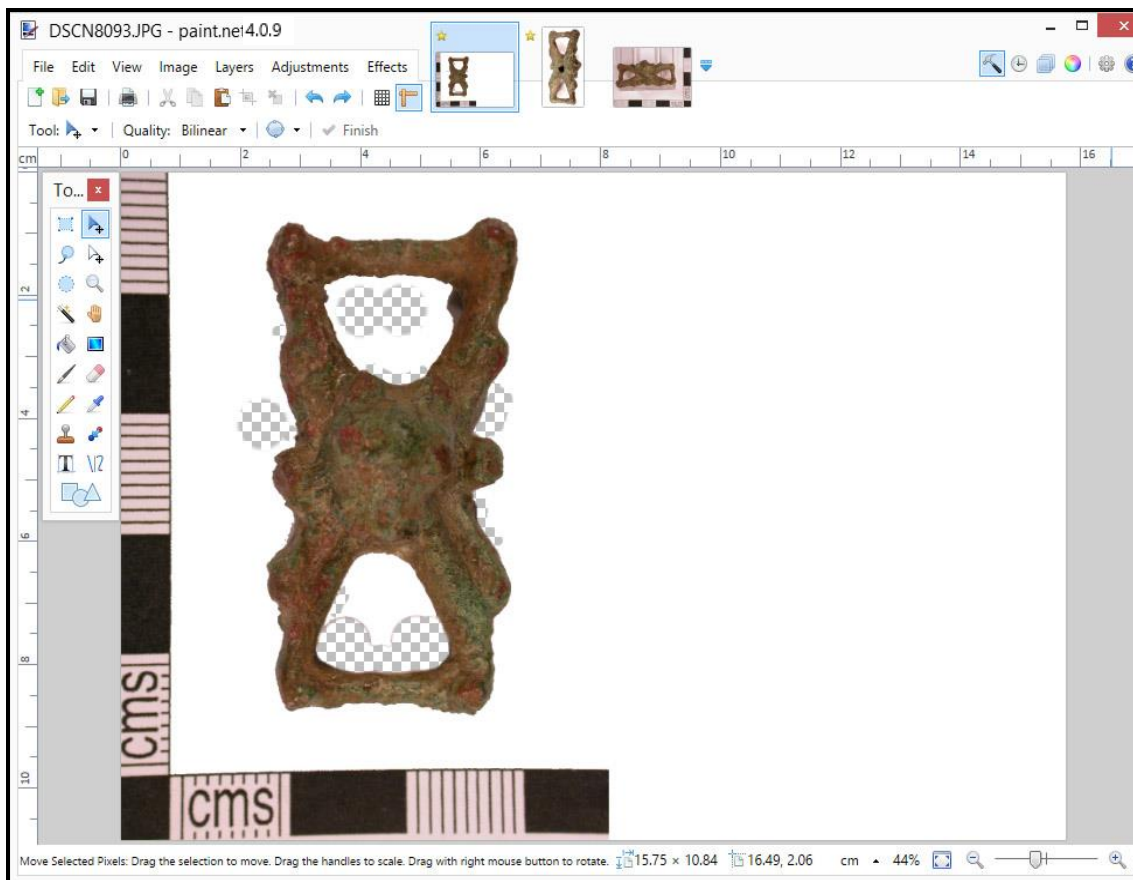
Then move to the second image and choose **Edit**, then **Select All**.

Then choose **Copy**, move back to the first image and use **Paste As A New Layer** to add the second image.

Use the **Move** tool to get it in line with the other views.

You may also need to increase the length of the scale bar.

Copy the image by pressing Ctrl-A to select all, Ctrl+C to copy, then **File**, then **New Image**, and Ctrl+V to paste.

Select the area of the scale bar you need, then crop to this, and add it to your image.

You can explore both Paint.net and GIMP and find lots more tools and techniques.

Save the finished image as a jpeg with as little compression as possible.

The ideal file size is around 1Mb for a coin-sized object, and larger for a larger object. The maximum size of image that the database can accept is 20Mb.

It is best to use the PAS record number as the filename, so that the file is easy to identify when uploading to the database.

Photography and photo editing are complicated, and only the very basics are covered here. The PAS regularly runs training days so that you can learn more, and we also have a photography guide available with lots of handy hints. Ask a member of PAS staff for details.