The background to the project

The excavations in the Baths Basilica at Wroxeter between 1966 and 1990 are rightly seen as a milestone in excavation methodology, leading to the recovery of evidence for occupation on the site extending onwards from the 'Roman' fourth century until well into the seventh century. When the report was published (Barker *et al* 1997), the focus was on the stratigraphic narrative as witnessed by the inclusion of a container of loose plans weighing 2.5kg with the letterpress. The decision was taken that the bulk of the artefacts found were residual Roman items, and thus of no direct relevance to the fifth to seventh century occupation. As a result over 7,000 small finds were summarised in a 28 page illustrated essay concentrating on aspects of interest to the post-excavation team, and a ten page listing in the final report. The very extensive finds reports and catalogues on which these were based were consigned to archive. It is appropriate to quote what authors said themselves of this approach.

'… we earnestly hope that it may be possible at some time in the future to compile a comprehensive catalogue of material from the whole of the Roman town so far excavated.' (Barker *et al* 1997, 249).

The approach was understandable at the time as it was only subsequently that it became to be understood that amongst 'residual' Roman items found on fifth century sites there was an entire suite of material of both new types and actively re-used old objects. This idea was first introduced in a paper published by one of the current team (Cool 2000), and has been explored subsequently by others, e.g. by Swift (2012). The complexity of fifth century behaviour patterns and use of material culture is also starting to become apparent with the use of ^{14}C dating such as the date obtained for a burial at Bradley Hill which was accompanied by a coin of AD 388-98. This individual is as likely to have been buried in the later fifth to early sixth century as in the first two-thirds of the fifth century (Gerrard 2011, 191 fig. 2).

With the exemplary stratigraphic recording in the Baths Basilica, it was obvious that the finds assemblage from the excavations would provide an ideal opportunity to explore and to identify the fifth century, and possibly later, suites of small finds that could then be used to identify occupation of that date on other sites. With the known problems of using coins and pottery after the end of the fourth century, it was clear that the small finds would provide the best route forward.

In order to use the Baths Basilica finds, it was clear that an archive project would be needed to make all of the work available as a research resource. Barbican Research Associates approached English Heritage with an outline for such a project in November 2012 and were invited to submit a project design. This was done early the following year and the project was promptly commissioned. The work was completed in 2013 and the team who worked on it and their responsibilities are outlined at the end of this section.

The Research Aims

The project had the simple aim of preparing and publishing the finds archive in such a way that it can be used as a primary research tool. It was felt that the material had considerable potential to contribute to future research in two main areas.

The first area, which was seen of national importance, was the contribution it could make to our understanding of the fifth and sixth centuries as already outlined. The paper archive relating to all the work carried out on the small finds during the 1980s had been deposited alongside the finds themselves in the English Heritage store at Atcham. An evaluation of these carried out during the preparation of the project design had confirmed that the resolution of description and typological work, together with the stratigraphic information, would enable useful stratified assemblages to be

extracted to enable the suites that are diagnostic for fifth century and later to be identified. That this could be done using stratified assemblages from Wroxeter has already been demonstrated on a broad level using bulk pottery assemblages (Cool 2006, 232-3, fig. 19.3).

The second area related to regionality. This has been a research question of some interest for a number of years now. Mapping recurring distribution patterns of regional types in Roman Britain allows us to map meaningful, coherent regions within the province, and by doing so gain a better understanding of the period. Small finds are one of the most useful tools for doing this. The re-current patterns seen in items such as hair pins (Cool 1991, figs. 15-7.), toilet equipment (Eckardt and Crummy 2008, figs. 29-31) and cosmetic sets (Jackson 2010, Maps. 4-15) show that this regionality is not just a product of individual collection strategies. Once the regions are mapped, we can then start asking questions about why the people living in them were using material culture in different ways.

Whilst the regions of the southern part of England and Wales are relatively well understood, the West Midlands are less so. In part this has been because of the lack of finds assemblages from large urban centres which always provide large enough groups to start mapping differences. There are increasing hints from currently unpublished excavations in places like Worcester, that this region too has a diagnostic suite of small finds. The very large assemblage of finds from the Baths Basilica excavations, allied with the material from the Webster excavations on the Baths Macellum that was published in a more conventional manner (Ellis 2000, Webster 2002), will enable us to define what this was in some detail. This will be useful on both a national and regional level.

It may also be noted that the publication of the Baths Basilica finds will also make the data available for anyone doing type-specific research in the province and empire generally.

The records of the original post-excavation work on the small finds and stratigraphy

The original archive relating to the small finds consisted of four different elements. There were introductory assessments of the material and final reports in typescript and hand-written sheets. Information had also been put onto a database. The fourth element of the finds archive is the drawn and photographed record.

The final reports

Angela Bliss had completed reports on all of the copper alloy, worked bone and other skeletal material, and the glass objects. These were lengthy reports where material was assigned to typological categories, aspects of dating and manufacture were considered, detailed *comparanda* were presented and some preliminary analysis with regard to stratigraphic location carried out. The site details of each item assigned to a particular type is given at the end of each report (context, area of site, finds number etc), but there are no detailed catalogue entries.

Existing typologies were used where they existed, e.g. Guido (1978) for the glass beads and recourse was also made to unpublished PhD theses where appropriate such as Cool 1983 for metal personal ornaments and Greep 1983 for the worked bone. As the finds assemblage from the Baths Basilica was so large, Bliss often developed Wroxeter specific typologies where no useful published typology existed. These had associated dating systems developed from Wroxeter and the studies of the *comparanda*. This means that the assemblage for these categories has a very secure typological underpinning. Given the reliance on province-wide PhD surveys, the reports also took the opportunity to include lengthy considerations of the types *not* present.

In total there are 83 separate reports consisting of 1,126 pages. The main organising principle is by material, and within that by functional categories following Crummy 1983. The reports had been written during the mid-1980s with up-dating carried out in 1989

In addition to the Bliss reports there was also one on the brooches by Don Mackreth. This included catalogue entries and was the normal Mackreth format where each individual brooch was considered in detail.

The preliminary reports
There were preliminary reports for all of the categories of material for which there were final reports apart from the brooches. These include additional catalogue detail. In addition there is an extensive report on the very large assemblage of jet and shale objects (75 pages). This is a hybrid report including the detail of the final reports of the other material and the catalogue entry data of the preliminary reports. The authorship of these preliminary reports is rarely stated.

The database
The database survives as final print-outs that had clearly been used and annotated by Kate Pretty during the preparation of the work on the finds that was published in the final volume. The entries made use of coding, and concordance lists of the coding used in relation to the finds themselves survived in some cases. Other information included find number, context, area of site etc. and summary measurements. There are print outs for all the categories of both final and preliminary reports, and also for material such as gold, iron and worked stone for which no reports are present. In these cases these are catalogue items of the material.

The line drawings and photographs
A considerable proportion of the assemblage had been drawn and there are finished inked drawings of publishable quality. The drawings are at 1:1 with detail where necessary at 2:1.

There were also a total of 480 high resolution scans of slides of artefacts of all types taken by Sidney Renow and scanned by Graham Norrie.

The stratigraphic record
A fully developed phasing scheme was published in Barker *et al* 1997 but that volume does not include a concordance which would allow individual finds to be assigned to a phase. Matrices exist for each area of the site but had not been copied as they are physically too large. The information from them was copied into a number of concordance lists that phase all context / feature / layer numbers used for the entire site.

The 2013 Archive project

At the outset of the project no digital records of the earlier post-excavations work could be located other than the scans of the slides. During the lifetime of the project some of the digital data was found on discs of various sizes (5.25inch and 3.5inch). Unfortunately these were found to be corrupt, and so all of the digital files in this ADS resource have been created during the archive project with the exception of the photographs.

The database was re-created from the print-outs by entering the data into an Access database. Each record has a unique identifying number and it is this that is used to identify individual finds in the summary reports of sections 3-14, and the digital files of the drawings and the photographs.

It had been hoped to scan the Angela Bliss reports but this was found to be impractical. They survive as pale double-spaced print-outs from a dot matrix printer with some hand-written additions and alterations. Using OCR technology in different programmes, it was found that so many corrections

would be needed in the scanned text that re-typing from scratch would have been quicker. The decision was taken to create new reports that summarise the typological information about the Wroxeter finds that they contain. This often includes additional information about the size of objects that is not present in the database print-outs and which can no longer be read in the preliminary reports. Unfortunately parts of the pages of those have faded making the information illegible. The majority of the *comparanda*, the detailed excursions into manufacturing methods and wider discussion in the original final reports has been omitted here. The decision to do this has been made on pragmatic grounds as we have sought to make sufficient information available for future researchers to use this resource as the raw material for future work, whilst keeping within the available budget. Had Angela Bliss's reports been published at the time they were written, they would have been a major advance on what was being published in small finds reports at the time. As it stands, some of the work has been overtaken by new finds and studies in the quarter of a century since they were written. Equally some of the digressions in the reports whilst interesting, are not essential.

Sections 3 to 13 which summarise the finds have been structured according to the ordering presented in Appendix 1 of the letterpress volume about the excavations (Barker *et al* 1997, 249-58). This summarised the material into major functional groups and within each group by material. There are discrepancies between the information given there, the Bliss reports and the data-base print-out. These have been noted where appropriate. For those categories of finds where no reports exist (iron, lead alloy, gold, worked stone, fired clay), summaries of the material present have been created from the database and the illustrations. Section 14 summarises the late Saxon and later material.

The line drawings have been scanned as high quality images that are suitable for re-production in letterpress (those at 1:1 at 12000 dpi, and those at 2:1 at 600 dpi). All of the photographs where the items could be identified have been included as well as some group shots.

The stratigraphic concordance has been checked and the references to all the relevant plans have been included. An introduction to the Wroxeter phasing and the way in which the finds work was conducted has been written. This and the concordances form sections 15 – 22. The appropriate phasing for each find has been included in the database.

The guide to the database forms Section 23 and the bibliography is section 24.

It should be noted that this was essentially a project to make available an archive. No new research has been carried out, although some additional information has been included in the footnotes to sections 3to 14 where appropriate.

The 2013 team and their responsibilities

The database of the finds has been created by David Griffiths and Hilary Cool. They were also responsible for scanning the line drawings. The checking of the stratigraphic information and creation of the concordances was done by Stephen Linnane (Sections 14-20).. Roger White collaborated in this work and wrote Section 13. Sections 1 to 12 and 21-2 were created by Hilary Cool.