

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 44/97

WALL PAINTING CONDITION AUDIT,  
BAYHAM ABBEY, EAST SUSSEX

J Davies

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BAYHAM ABBEY, EAST SUSSEX**

J Davies

**Summary**

This condition audit of wall paintings at Bayham Abbey includes a wall painting record, general audit information, documentation of original materials and execution of the painting, and deterioration and damage including previously used materials and treatment, as well as proposals for treatment and monitoring strategies.

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## Bayham Abbey

East Sussex

The following report has been generated by the Wall Painting Section database. This archival system provides a computerised record of all wall paintings in English Heritage Historic Properties and is intended to comprehensively document the collection. Each report has been subdivided into four sections to present the data in a clear format. These include:

**1 Wall Painting Record:**

Includes a description of the site and paintings, as well as archival information, such as bibliographic references and photographic records.

**2 General Audit Information:**

Describes any monitoring undertaken and a synopsis of future conservation requirements.

**3 Technique:**

Documents the nature and condition of the original materials and execution of the painting which is described according to its stratigraphy and any related analysis.

**4 Deterioration and damage, added materials, treatment:**

*Deterioration and damage* lists the types of alterations which may have occurred, that is either deterioration (natural alterations such as cracking or delamination) or mechanical damage (such as graffiti).

*Added Materials* documents all non-original materials present on or within a painting. These may include naturally occurring substances (accretions, such as dirt and dust) or deliberately added materials (coatings, coverings and repairs).

*Treatment* documents previous interventions and proposed treatment and monitoring strategies.

Throughout each section, an area of painting is assigned a number between 1 and 4 which is intended as a general indication of present condition. These are: 1 good, 2 fair, 3 poor, 4 unacceptable.

This report is based on information gathered prior to March 1996 and does not include any changes in condition, further research or treatment undertaken after this date. Amended editions will be produced as necessary.

# Contents

**1** Chapter House

**2** North transept, east chapel

# 1 Wall Painting Record

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location of painting	Chapter house		
Orientation	EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 13 <sup>th</sup>	Date	Height (cm) 1	Width (cm) 1
Subjects included			
Unknown			

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## Description

Premonstratensian abbey formed 1207-1212. East end with transepts added about 1270. The nave was largely rebuilt in the late 14th century. Dissolved under Wolsey in 1525. Parts may have been used as barns, etc., when it passed into private hands in the 18th century. At this time the roof was removed, and the site was landscaped according to the taste for the 'picturesque'. The abbey was excavated in 1973-76.

Courtauld Institute files (5/90) record traces of red pigment on the capitals in the chapter house. These were still in situ during the current audit (7/94). The capitals are picked out with red and black over white limewash. There are eight main areas of fragments, and paint survives mainly in the recesses of carved elements.

## Photographic Record

29/6/94 EH 'current' contact photo files; no images of wall paintings.

Photograph search, DOE files, EH photo library (JD24/03/95)  
Bayham Abbey; no relevant DOE photographs found.

## Bibliography

Rigold, S.E. with revisions by Coad, J. Bayham Abbey, Sussex, English Heritage Guide Book, first published 1974 by HMSO, first published by English Heritage, London, 1985, reprinted 1989, 1992.

## 2 General Audit Information

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY	County	East Sussex
Region	South East		
Location	Chapter house		
Orientation	EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 13th	Date	Height (cm) 1	Width (cm) 1
Auditor(s)	JD	Start date	21/07/94

**Overall condition score**      **3**

### Recommendations

Ideally the fragments should be fully documented and photographically recorded. Visual monitoring of their condition should be undertaken on a bi-annual or slightly longer basis [Time scale: 1 day every 2-5 years].

### 3 Audit Information: Technique

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location	Chapter house		
Orientation	EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 13 <sup>th</sup>	Date	Height (cm) 1	Width (cm) 1
Auditor(s)	JD	Start date	21/07/94

**Overall Condition Score 3**

#### Stratigraphy

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Layer type	Support Layer	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness ? cm

#### Comments

Stone support. Thickness of support varies, from walls to applied pilasters and free-standing pillars.

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Layer type	Ground Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

#### Comments

White limewash ground. No striations of brushstrokes visible.

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Layer type	Paint Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

#### Comments

Red and black decoration articulating architectural elements.

Identified pigments Colours

--- red  
--- black

## 4 Audit Information: deterioration and damage, added materials, treatment

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location	Chapter house		
Orientation	EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 13th	Date	Height (cm) 1	Width (cm) 1

### DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

#### Deterioration phenomena

Type general erosion

Location Entire

Comments The stone support has a generally eroded surface, as the site is exposed to the elements.

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Type loss

Location entire

Comments Painting survives only as fragments. Appear to be relatively stable.

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## ADDED MATERIALS

### Coatings/Coverings

**Type** limewash

**Location** Partial over some of fragments.

**Comments** A limewash coating is present over much of the surface. This has deteriorated and has now become very hard and brittle.

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### Repairs

**Type** lime:sand

**Location** Support

**Comments** This repair appears to be sound.

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## TREATMENT

### Past Treatment

**Type** FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION **Date** 01/01/01

**Person** Unknown

**Comments** Repairs to the support have been carried out at some stage.

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### Proposed Treatment

**Type** MONITORING CONDITION **Date** 21/07/94

**Person** JD

**Comments** Photography, documentation, and visual monitoring of condition are recommended.

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# 1 Wall Painting Record

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location of painting	North transept, east chapel		
Orientation	EAST WALL		
Century	13 <sup>th</sup>	Date	
		Height (cm)	30
		Width (cm)	40
Subjects included			
Various decorative motifs			

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## Description

Premonstratensian abbey formed 1207-1212. East end with transepts added about 1270. The north transept referred to here is the 'new' north transept from this period, and should not be confused with the 'old' north transept, where no painting survives. The nave was largely rebuilt in the late 14th century. Dissolved under Wolsey in 1525. Parts may have been used as barns, etc., when it passed into private hands in the 18th century. At this time the roof was removed, and the site was landscaped according to the taste for the 'picturesque'. The abbey was excavated in 1973-76.

Courtauld Institute files (5/90) record traces of red pigment on the east wall of the north transept, which contains a 19th century memorial to Marquis Camden's deceased infant sons. P. Welford noted this as paint, but the stratigraphy is unclear, as it seems to extend onto a memorial tablet dated 1868.

## Photographic Record

## Bibliography

Rigold, S.E. with revisions by Coad, J. Bayham Abbey, Sussex, English Heritage Guide Book, first published 1974 by HMSO, first published by English Heritage, London, 1985, reprinted 1989, 1992.

## 2 General Audit Information

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<b>Property name</b>	BAYHAM ABBEY	<b>County</b>	East Sussex
<b>Region</b>	South East		
<b>Location</b>	North transept, east chapel		
<b>Orientation</b>	EAST WALL		
<b>Century</b> 13th	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b> 30	<b>Width (cm)</b> 40
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	JD	<b>Start date</b>	21/07/94

**Overall condition score**      **2**

### Recommendations

Routine bi-annual inspection is recommended [1 day every 2-5 years].

### 3 Audit Information: Technique

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location	North transept, east chapel		
Orientation	EAST WALL		
Century 13th	Date	Height (cm)30	Width (cm) 40
Auditor(s)	JD	Start date	21/07/94

**Overall Condition Score      2**

#### Stratigraphy

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Layer type	Support Layer	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness      70 cm

#### Comments

Support consists of a carved stone capital of the pillar flanking the window.

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Layer type	Ground Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

#### Comments

Possible presence of a white limewash ground.

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Layer type	Paint Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

#### Comments

Traces of red pigment visible.

Identified pigments      Colours

---                      red

## 4 Audit Information: deterioration and damage, added materials, treatment

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Property name	BAYHAM ABBEY		
Region	South East	County	East Sussex
Location	North transept, east chapel		
Orientation	EAST WALL		
Century	13th	Date	
		Height (cm)	30
		Width (cm)	40

### DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

#### Deterioration phenomena

Type general erosion

Location entire

Comments Surface of the stone has eroded, as the site is exposed to elements.

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Type loss

Location entire

Comments Painting in fragmentary condition; only minute fragments left.

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Type damp

Location general

Comments Site is exposed and susceptible to weathering.

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## ADDED MATERIALS

### Accretions

**Type** biodeterioration

**Location** entire

**Comments** Microbiological growth on plaster appears black; on stone appears green.

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### Repairs

**Type** modern lime plaster

**Location** Support

**Comments** Repairs have been made to the support.

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## TREATMENT

### Past Treatment

Type        FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION        Date        01/01/01

Person     Unknown

Comments Repairs have been carried out to the support at some stage.

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### Proposed Treatment

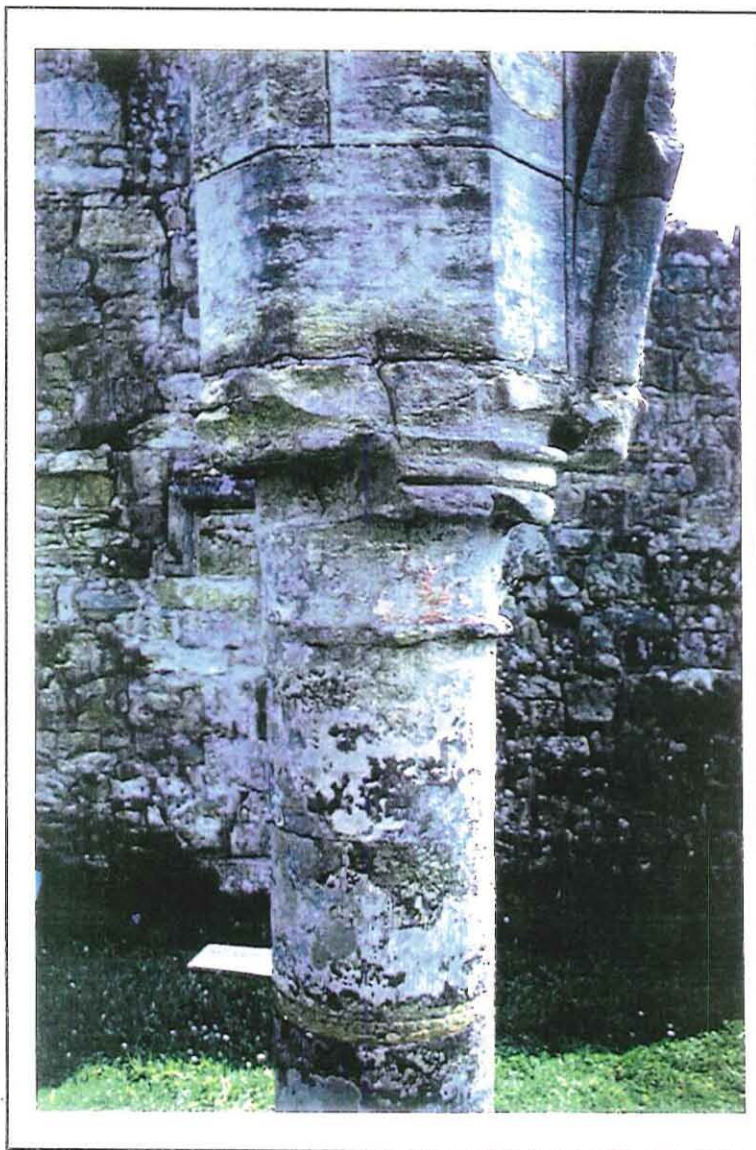
Type        MONITORING CONDITION        Date        21/07/94

Person     JD

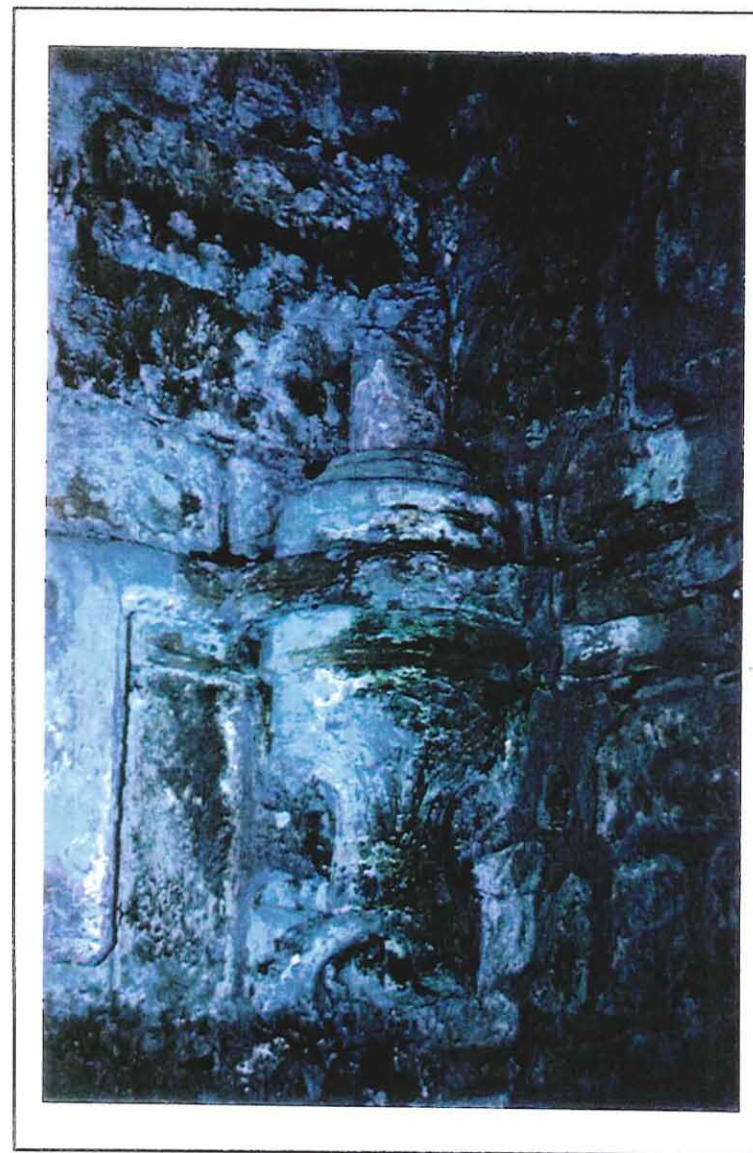
Comments Monitoring and recording should be carried out on a biannual basis.

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Chapter house, central arch, corbel with traces of red pigment



New north transept, south chapel, traces of pigment on pillar base