

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 50/97

WALL PAINTING CONDITION AUDIT,  
NETLEY ABBEY, HAMPSHIRE

J Davies  
T Manning

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NETLEY ABBEY, HAMPSHIRE

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Summary

This condition audit of wall paintings at Netley 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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## Netley Abbey Hampshire

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.

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# Contents

**1** Chapel

**2** Reredorter-over-Infirmary



Reredorter-over-Infirmary, detail northeast corner



Chapel, north wall, area of plaster with faint traces of paint



# 1 Wall Painting Record

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location of painting</b>	Chapel		
<b>Orientation</b>	NORTH WALL		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b> 90	<b>Width (cm)</b> 168
<b>Subjects included</b>			
Unknown			

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## Description

The central pier at Netley, a Cistercian abbey, is inscribed with the title and crest of Henry III. In 1536 the abbey was broken up by Henry VIII, then bestowed on the Marquis of Winchester, thence to the Earl of Hertford in the 16C, the Earl of Huntingdon (who converted the nave of the church into a kitchen), after which it fell into disrepair. In 1790 many of the building materials were sold, including the roof. Throughout the 19C it was in private hands, and it was at this time, c1860, that Kell excavated much of the abbey and discovered evidence of painted decoration. Much of what he described no longer survives. However, in the reredorter, fragments of original decoration survive on the east, north, and west walls.

In the chapel, (the only surviving chapel is the southern one of the north transept) Kell, quoting John Smith, noted 'traces of painting on a fragment of the wall,' and stated further, 'it has sometimes been considered, but without any evidence, as the chapel of St. Edward'. These traces were also noted by David Park.

## Photographic Record

## Bibliography

Keyser, 'Wall-paintings in Hampshire churches,' in *Memorials of Old Hampshire*, ed. G.E.Jeans, London 1906, p. 151.

E.Kell, 'Netley Abbey, with an Account of Recent Excavations and Discoveries,' *Collectanea Archaeologica*, ii (1863), 65ff.

D.Park, notes in CIA files

## 2 General Audit Information

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Region</b>	South East		
<b>Location</b>	Chapel		
<b>Orientation</b>	NORTH WALL		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b> 90	<b>Width (cm)</b> 168
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	JD	<b>Start date</b>	16/08/94

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

### Recommendations

The remains of decoration are very fragmentary and there are only scant remains of pigment. The site is very damp and deterioration appears to be active. Photography and brief documentation have been undertaken. Visual monitoring at regular intervals is recommended.

Consolidation and edge repairs to the plaster are urgently required. [Time scale: 1 person, 1 week, within the next 2 years].



### 3 Audit Information: Technique

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location</b>	Chapel		
<b>Orientation</b>	NORTH WALL		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b> 90	<b>Width (cm)</b> 168
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	JD	<b>Start date</b>	16/08/94

**Overall Condition Score      3**

***Stratigraphy***

<b>Layer type</b>	Support Layer	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	2
<b>Thickness</b>	10 cm		
<b>Comments</b>	Stone rubble wall (originally internal) with ashlar quoins; backs onto south transept.		
<b>Layer type</b>	Render Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	4
<b>Thickness</b>	<1 cm		
<b>Comments</b>	Beige coloured lime construction skim, coarse aggregate.		
<b>Layer type</b>	Render Layer 2	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	4
<b>Thickness</b>			
<b>Comments</b>	Appears white: could be thick limewash or could contain a chalk additive.		
<b>Layer type</b>	Ground Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	4
<b>Thickness</b>			
<b>Comments</b>	Difficult to confirm that a lime ground layer exists.		
<b>Layer type</b>	Paint Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	3
<b>Thickness</b>			
<b>Comments</b>	Scant traces of red pigment.		
<b>Identified pigments</b>	<b>Colours</b>		
---	red		

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

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location</b>	Chapel		
<b>Orientation</b>	NORTH WALL		
<b>Century</b> 13th	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b> 90	<b>Width (cm)</b> 168

### DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

#### *Deterioration phenomena*

**Type** losses (render layer)

**Location** The majority of the wall plaster has been lost.

**Comments** The paint fragments remain on a very damaged plaster piece. All damage is associated with damp and the general ruined condition of the building.

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**Type** losses (paint layer)

**Location** Entire

**Comments** All damage is associated with damp and the general ruined condition of the building. Condition of plaster remains is so poor that evidence which might have indicated mechanical damage has been lost.

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**Type** loss of cohesion (render layer)

**Location** Entire

**Comments** All damage is associated with damp and the general ruined condition of the building.

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## ADDED MATERIALS

### Accretions

**Type** biodeterioration

**Location** Mainly white render/ground layer.

**Comments** Probably black biodeterioration on surface in areas.

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### Repairs

**Type** modern plaster

**Location** Mainly upper edges.

**Comments** Porous but grey-looking (cement?) now in poor condition themselves, and standing proud of friable and degraded surface. Losses of repairs have occurred.

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## TREATMENT

### Proposed Treatment

**Type** FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION      **Date**  
**Person**  
**Comments** Edge repairs need repair or replacement urgently.

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### Past Treatment

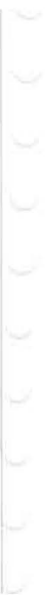
**Type** FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION      **Date** 01/01/01  
**Person** Unknown  
**Comments** Grey porous-looking cement (?) repairs. No longer performing any protective function.

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### Proposed Treatment

**Type** CONSOLIDATION      **Date** 16/08/94  
**Person** JD  
**Comments** Consolidation of plaster layers required urgently.

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# 1 Wall Painting Record

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location of painting</b>	Reredorter-over-Infirmery		
<b>Orientation</b>	EAST, NORTH AND WEST WALLS		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b>	<b>Width (cm)</b>
<b>Subjects included</b>			
Masonry pattern			
Various decorative motifs			

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## Description

This area is known as the 'Reredorter-over-Infirmery' on the current site map, and is therefore referred to as such here. However, it appears unlikely that this room could have been used as a reredorter, due to the ornate stone fireplace and the wall paintings. Kell (1863) referred to it as a refectory, and this seems a more likely suggestion.

The central pier at Netley, a Cistercian abbey, is inscribed with the title and crest of Henry III. In 1536 the abbey was broken up by Henry VIII, then bestowed on the Marquis of Winchester, thence to the Earl of Hertford in the 16C, the Earl of Huntingdon (who converted the nave of the church into a kitchen), after which it fell into disrepair. In 1790 many of the building materials were sold, including the roof. Throughout the 19C it was in private hands, and it was at this time, c1860, that Kell excavated much of the abbey and discovered evidence of painted decoration. Much of what he describes no longer survives. However, in the reredorter, fragments of original decoration survive on the east, north, and west walls. These consist of single red line masonry pattern on the eastern splay of the upper window of the north wall, approx. 15 cm long, and decorative red banding, 7.5 cm thick, at 267 cm above ground level, running around the circumference of the room but now only visible in fragments on the east wall (the largest fragment approx 250 cm high, and 50 cm wide), the north wall (the largest fragment approx 200 cm high and 30 cm wide), and the west wall (approx 30 cm high and 100 cm wide). These traces have also been noted by David Park.

## Photographic Record

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

DOE negative search;  
Netley Abbey; no relevant DOE negatives found.

## Bibliography

Keyser, 'Wall-paintings in Hampshire churches,' in Memorials of Old Hampshire, ed. G.E.Jeans, London 1906, p. 151.

E.Kell, 'Netley Abbey, with an Account of Recent Excavations and Discoveries,' Collectanea Archaeologica, ii (1863), 65ff.

D.Park, notes in CIA files

## 2 General Audit Information

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Region</b>	South East		
<b>Location</b>	Reredorter-over-Infirmery		
<b>Orientation</b>	EAST, NORTH AND WEST WALLS		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b>	<b>Width (cm)</b>
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	TM	<b>Start date</b>	16/08/94

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

### Recommendations

Although the remains of painted decoration are very fragmentary, deterioration is active and the site is very damp. Photography and brief documentation have been undertaken, however visual monitoring at regular intervals is recommended.

Consolidation and edge repairs to the plaster in this area are urgently required. [Time scale: 2 people, 2 weeks, within the next 2 years].

### 3 Audit Information: Technique

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location</b>	Reredorter-over-Infirmary		
<b>Orientation</b>	EAST, NORTH AND WEST WALLS		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b>	<b>Width (cm)</b>
<b>Auditor(s)</b>	TM	<b>Start date</b>	16/08/94

**Overall Condition Score**      **3**

#### Stratigraphy

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<b>Layer type</b>	Support Layer	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	3
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**Thickness**

**Comments**

Random rubble support with ashlar quoins.

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<b>Layer type</b>	Render Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	4
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**Thickness**      1 cm

**Comments**

Lime/sand render with coarse aggregate.

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<b>Layer type</b>	Render Layer 2	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	3
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**Thickness**      0.5 cm

**Comments**

Thick lime white layer, possibly with the addition of chalk?

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<b>Layer type</b>	Ground Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	2
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**Thickness**

**Comments**

Appears to be a thinner lime skim, similar to render layer 2, used as preparatory ground for red painting

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<b>Layer type</b>	Paint Layer 1	<b>Specific condition Score</b>	2
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**Thickness**

**Comments**

Red, traces (drips?) of yellow also visible in places

**Identified pigments**    **Colours**

---                    red  
---                    yellow



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

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<b>Property name</b>	NETLEY ABBEY		
<b>Region</b>	South East	<b>County</b>	Hampshire
<b>Location</b>	Reredorter-over-Infirmery		
<b>Orientation</b>	EAST, NORTH AND WEST WALLS		
<b>Century</b> 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Height (cm)</b>	<b>Width (cm)</b>

### DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

#### Deterioration phenomena

**Type** delamination (render layer)

**Location** Entire

**Comments** Coarse mortar and damp conditions have caused de-cohesion generally, and delamination in areas, especially towards the edges of the fragments.

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**Type** loss of cohesion (render layer)

**Location** Entire

**Comments** Coarse mortar, and damp conditions have caused a loss of cohesion. It is soft and crumbles away easily.

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**Type** damp

**Location** Entire

**Comments** Damp (and biodeterioration) has affected the support, renders and paint layers. The room is situated over a water source, and the structure is open to infiltration.

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**Type** loss

**Location** Entire

**Comments** Painting only fragmentary. Biodeterioration has undercut the render (west wall). Loss also at vulnerable edges, and due to brittle edging repairs.

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#### Mechanical damage

**Type** graffiti

**Location** Surrounding ashlar, and lower portions of fragments, especially on the north wall.

**Comments** The graffiti consists of carved and etched names. Because the fragments are covered with a limewash, it is difficult to ascertain the level of damage to the original paint layer.

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## ADDED MATERIALS

### Accretions

**Type** cobwebs

**Location** entire, especially corners

**Comments**

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**Type** biodeterioration

**Location** entire

**Comments** This varies from a bright, intense green, to an olive green, to a rust-red colour, throughout the room.

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**Type** insect activity

**Location** entire

**Comments**

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**Type** dust

**Location** entire

**Comments**

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### Coatings/Coverings

**Type** limewash

**Location** entire

**Comments** The limewash has flaked away in areas, exposing the painting. It pre-dates both the plaster loss, and old graffiti.

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### Repairs

**Type** cement

**Location** Edges (especially lower) on east, north, and west walls

**Comments** These have not been positively identified as cement, but appear extremely hard, dark grey and smooth.

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**Type** modern plaster

**Location** North wall, east corner, uppermost edge of fragment

**Comments** Access limited, due to the height of this repair, but it appears yellowish and softer.

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## TREATMENT

### Past Treatment

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

**Person** unknown

**Comments** There are two types of edging repairs in the reredorter; a brittle, grey, cement-like one, and a softer, yellower one (access limited for closer inspection).

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### Proposed Treatment

**Type** FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION      **Date** 16/08/94

**Person** TM

**Comments** Many edges are still vulnerable, and edging repairs may be the only treatment necessary to ensure the stability of the fragments. This should be done using a soft, coarse aggregate lime mortar due to the softness and elasticity of the original.

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**Type** GROUTING      **Date** 16/08/94

**Person** TM

**Comments** Due to the delamination of several areas of the render, this is a treatment that can be considered, but only after closer inspection. Edging repairs may be sufficient.

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**Type** UNCOVERING      **Date** 16/08/94

**Person** TM

**Comments** Much of the paint layer is obscured by a limewash layer. This could be uncovered, but is by no means necessary and would probably jeopardize what does survive. The decoration is visible enough for recording and study.

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