

Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 68/97

WALL PAINTING CONDITION AUDIT, ST
BRIAVEL'S CASTLE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

J Davies
T Manning

Summary

This condition audit of wall paintings at St Briavel's Castle 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.

Authors' addresses :-

Ms J Davies
PAINTINGS CONSERVATION STUDIO
English Heritage
Inner Circle Regents Park
London
NW1 4PA

Ms T Manning
PAINTINGS CONSERVATION STUDIO
English Heritage
Inner Circle Regents Park
London
NW1 4PA



St Briavel's Castle Gloucestershire

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.

1 Wall Painting Record

Property name	ST. BRIAVEL'S CASTLE		
Region	South West	County	Gloucestershire
Location of painting	First Floor, Guardroom		
Orientation	EAST WALL, OVER FIREPLACE		
Century 19 th	Date	Height (cm) 40	Width (cm) 100
Subjects included	Heraldry		

Description

The earliest parts of the fabric of the castle date to the 12th century. The building is currently used as a Youth Hostel.

The area of painted decoration described in this report consists of three coats of arms situated above the fireplace in the first floor guardroom. These appear to date to the 19th century.

Also of note, but beyond the remit of this audit report, is the graffiti located in the window reveals of the Prison Room. This consists of names and dates from the 16th and 17th centuries and is therefore of historic importance.

It should also be noted that remains of early plaster survive in the chapel, specifically in the piscina and above the tie beams at both gable and interior end walls. It may be possible that remnants of painting, currently obscured by later plaster and decorative layers, still exist.

Photographic Record

TM/JD Audit 1995 (June).

Bibliography

English Heritage properties guide 1994.

P.J.Keevil, correspondence, 1987-88.

2 General Audit Information

Property name	ST. BRIAVEL'S CASTLE	County	Gloucestershire
Region	South West		
Location	First Floor, Guardroom		
Orientation	EAST WALL, OVER FIREPLACE		
Century 19th	Date	Height (cm)40	Width (cm) 100
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	03/07/95

Overall condition score **3**

Recommendations

The painting was covered by a perspex sheet following an accident in 1987 when an area of the decoration was damaged. The usage of the room has changed (from a games room) since 1987, and therefore the need to physically protect the painting may have lessened. However, although perspex coverings are often deleterious to painted plaster (by causing an adverse micro-climate), there does not appear to be any direct deterioration occurring.

The perspex sheet prevented full access for audit examination, and so the comments on current condition of the painting within this report are limited. A complete examination will therefore be required in the future after removal of the perspex [Timescale: 1-2 conservators, 2-3 days]. However, it was noted that there are several hollow areas of plaster, probably exacerbated by the insertion of the cover, which may require re-adhesion in the future.

The walls adjacent to the shields are painted with emulsion which may to some extent prevent the wall from 'breathing'. Although this is certainly not beneficial it is probably unrealistic to attempt removal of this paint.

Although outside the remit of this audit report a brief inspection was also made of the incised graffiti in the Prison room and it is clear that a full condition survey is required in order to fully document and assess the present condition of the decoration and to evaluate the necessary treatment requirements. Conservation should include removal of the emulsion paint layers, plaster consolidation and grouting to re-adhere the delaminating plaster to the underlying stone support.

In addition the walls of the chapel were briefly examined and early plaster appears to be present in the piscina and above the tie-beams at both the gable and interior end walls. It may be possible that remnants of painting, currently obscured by later plaster and decorative layers, may still exist in several locations with the chapel and other areas. A full survey of the remains of early plaster throughout the building may therefore provide valuable information on the dates and decorative states of each room. The plaster in the piscina is vulnerable and will require consolidation and edging repairs as well as examination for any remains of paint.

3 Audit Information: Technique

Property name	ST. BRIAVEL'S CASTLE		
Region	South West	County	Gloucestershire
Location	First Floor, Guardroom		
Orientation	EAST WALL, OVER FIREPLACE		
Century 19 th	Date	Height (cm)40	Width (cm) 100
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	03/07/95

Overall Condition Score 3

Stratigraphy

Layer type	Support Layer	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The support is not currently accessible due to overlying renders, repairs and a covering perspex sheet. However in 1987 the support was described as the 'stone of the chimney breast' (P.J.Keevil correspondence, 30/09/87).

Layer type	Render Layer 1	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The render layer(s) are not currently accessible due to overlying paint, repairs and a covering perspex sheet. However in 1987 the render was described as 'lime plaster, rendered onto the stone of the chimney breast' (P.J.Keevil correspondence, 30/09/87).

Layer type	Ground Layer 1	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The ground layer is not clearly visible due to overpaint, (modern?) limewash, emulsion and a covering perspex sheet. However in 1987 the ground was described as 'lime wash' (P.J.Keevil correspondence, 30/09/87).

Layer type	Paint Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

Comments

It appears that the painting has been substantially overpainted and is also obscured by a covering perspex sheet. However in 1987 the paint was described as having a 'size medium' (P.J.Keevil correspondence, 30/09/87). A note found in EH files (unknown author and date) indicates the presence of lead and zinc pigments. Visible colours include black, white, red, blue, brown, yellow and grey.

Identified pigments Colours

---	black
---	white
---	red
---	blue
---	brown
---	yellow
---	grey

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

Property name	ST. BRIAVEL'S CASTLE		
Region	South West	County	Gloucestershire
Location	First Floor, Guardroom		
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DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

Deterioration phenomena

Type delamination (render layer)

Location Various.

Comments Several small bulges are present in the render and appear fragile, although it was not possible to physically examine the surface due to the presence of the perspex covering sheet.

Type cracking

Location Upper edge of painting.

Comments There is a crack running horizontally across the upper edge of the painting. This line could be an indication of an underlying joint in the support or render, or it could possibly be a result of the presence of the perspex sheet, as the crack corresponds to the upper edge of the perspex.

Mechanical damage

Type insertions

Location Edges of painting.

Comments Fixings to hold the perspex sheet have been inserted into the wall and painting layers.

Type substantial losses

Location Centre Royal-Arms.

Comments 'The vandal has hacked a hole into the centre of the Royal-Arms, approximately 6" in diameter in the area of the central shield in its top right quarter. The plaster has, in places, been removed down to the stonework. There is also considerable loosening to the paint film around the damage. Some of the flaked-off paint has been collected and saved.' (P.J.Keevil correspondence, 30-9-87).

This damage is not now clearly visible due to repairs and deceptive retouching.

ADDED MATERIALS

Accretions

Type dirt

Location Surface.

Comments Not too disfiguring within context of perspex and repainting.

Type cobwebs

Location Surface.

Comments Not too disfiguring within context of perspex and repainting.

Type dust

Location Surface.

Comments Not too disfiguring within context of perspex and repainting.

Coatings/Coverings

Type perspex covering

Location Covers entire surface of painting.

Comments Documented as dating from restoration work undertaken in 1987.

Type repainting

Location Centre Royal-Arms, central shield, top right quarter.

Comments Documented as dating from restoration work undertaken in 1987.

Type emulsion

Location Covers entire wall surrounding the painting.

Comments The emulsion may inhibit the wall from 'breathing'. It overlies some areas of the painting, especially the lower edge. In several areas it appears as though it has been 'thinned', possibly during conservation in 1987.

Type unidentified

Location Background to the painted shields.

Comments It appears that the background has been rather crudely painted over.

Repairs

Type modern plaster

Location Right side (as seen).

Comments There are several 'greyish' repairs to cracks within the painting.

TREATMENT

Past Treatment

Type MONITORING CONDITION **Date** 24/09/87
Person P.J.Keevil
Comments P.J.Keevil records (correspondence 30/09/87) that he inspected the painting on 24/09/87.

Past Treatment

Type CONSOLIDATION **Date** 09/03/88
Person Studio conservator
Comments P.J.Keevil records (correspondence, 09/03/88) 'the programme of conservation as stipulated in my letter of 30th September 1987, ie. 1) Consolidate paint film around damage 2) Fill hole with lime and sand mortar 3) Re-adhere saved paint flakes to new support 4) Retouch/reconstruct paint loss, has now been completed.'

Type FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION **Date** 09/03/88
Person Studio conservator
Comments P.J.Keevil records (correspondence, 09/03/88) 'the programme of conservation as stipulated in my letter of 30th September 1987, ie. 1) Consolidate paint film around damage 2) Fill hole with lime and sand mortar 3) Re-adhere saved paint flakes to new support 4) Retouch/reconstruct paint loss, has now been completed.'

Type PRESENTATION/REINTEGRATION **Date** 09/03/88
Person Studio conservator
Comments P.J.Keevil records (correspondence, 09/03/88) 'the programme of conservation as stipulated in my letter of 30th September 1987, ie. 1) Consolidate paint film around damage 2) Fill hole with lime and sand mortar 3) Re-adhere saved paint flakes to new support 4) Retouch/reconstruct paint loss, has now been completed.'

Type RE-ATTACHMENT **Date** 09/03/88
Person Studio conservator
Comments P.J.Keevil records (correspondence, 09/03/88) 'the programme of conservation as stipulated in my letter of 30th September 1987, ie. 1) Consolidate paint film around damage 2) Fill hole with lime and sand mortar 3) Re-adhere saved paint flakes to new support 4) Retouch/reconstruct paint loss, has now been completed.'

Proposed Treatment

Type GROUTING **Date** 22/06/95
Person TM/JD
Comments Following full inspection the delaminating render may require grouting.

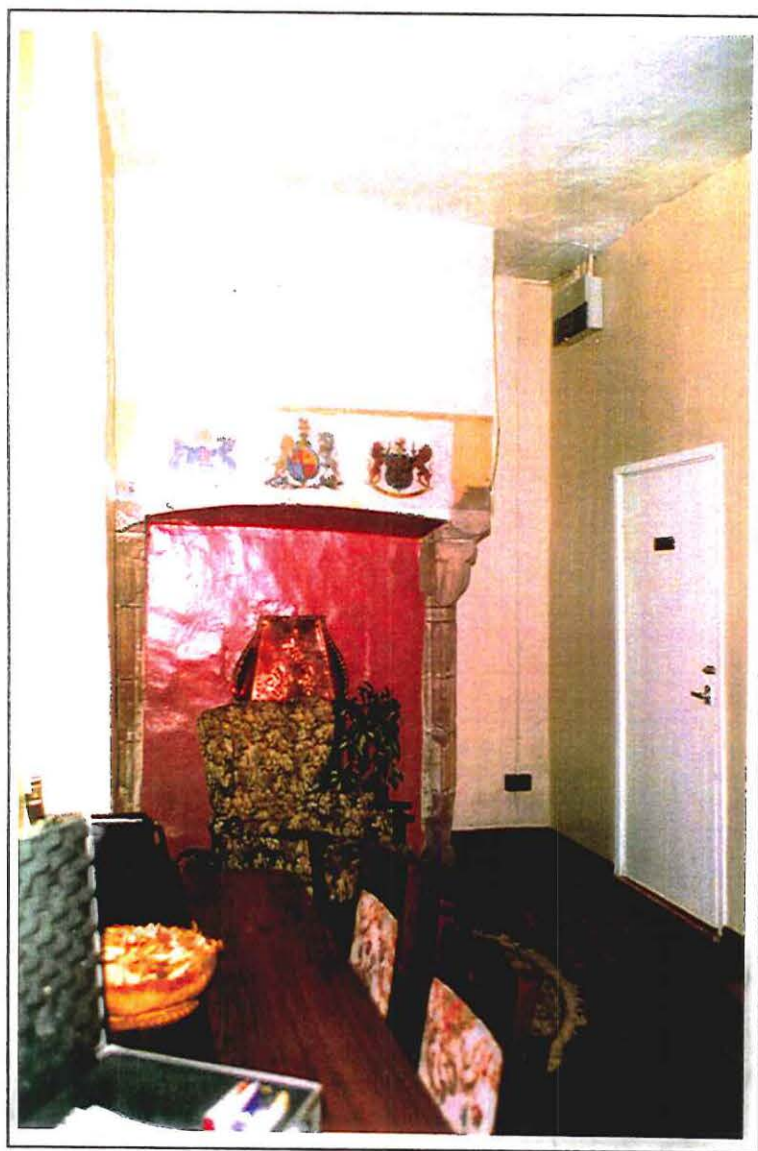
Type MONITORING CONDITION **Date** 22/06/95
Person TM/JD
Comments Monitoring should be undertaken at regular intervals.

Type UNCOVERING

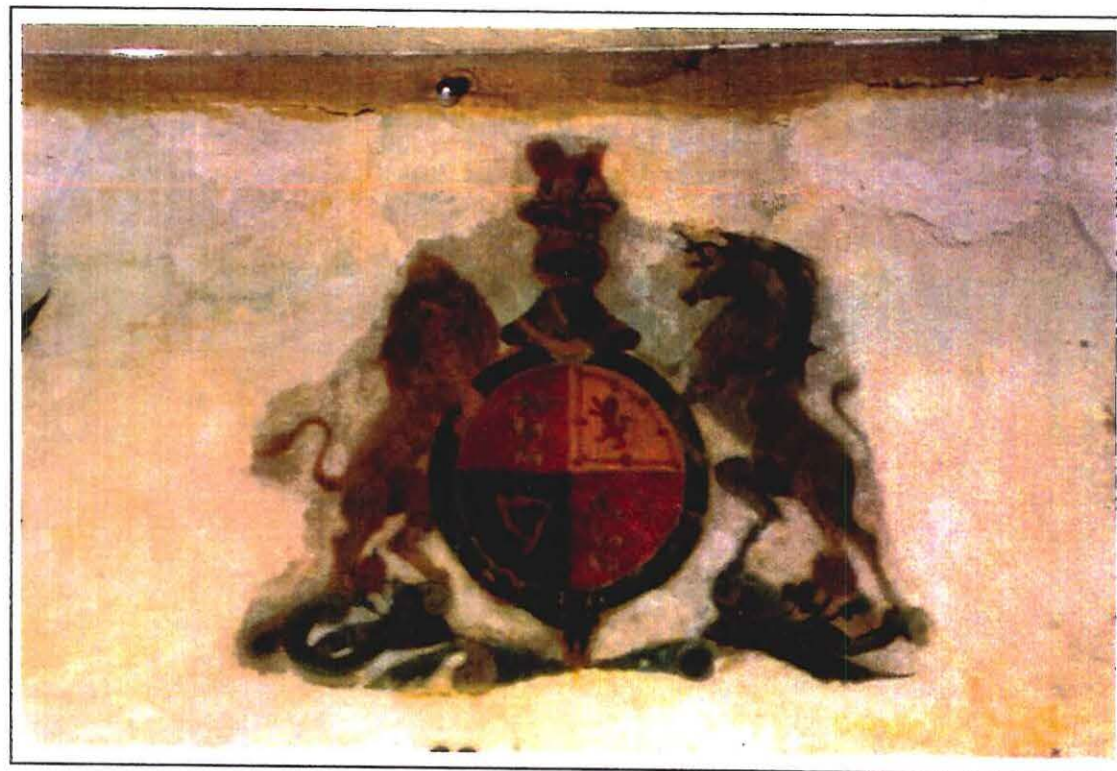
Date 22/06/95

Person TM/JD

Comments The perspex covering should be temporarily removed to allow full assesment of the condition of the painting. It may be worthwhile considering the merits of permanent removal of the covering as the room is no longer used as a games room.



First floor, guardroom, view toward east wall, fireplace



Detail, painted heraldry over fireplace