

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 18/97

WALL PAINTING CONDITION AUDIT,
BUSHMEAD PRIORY, BEDFORDSHIRE

J Davies
T Manning

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Summary

This condition audit of wall paintings at Bushmead Priory 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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Bushmead Priory

Bedfordshire

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).

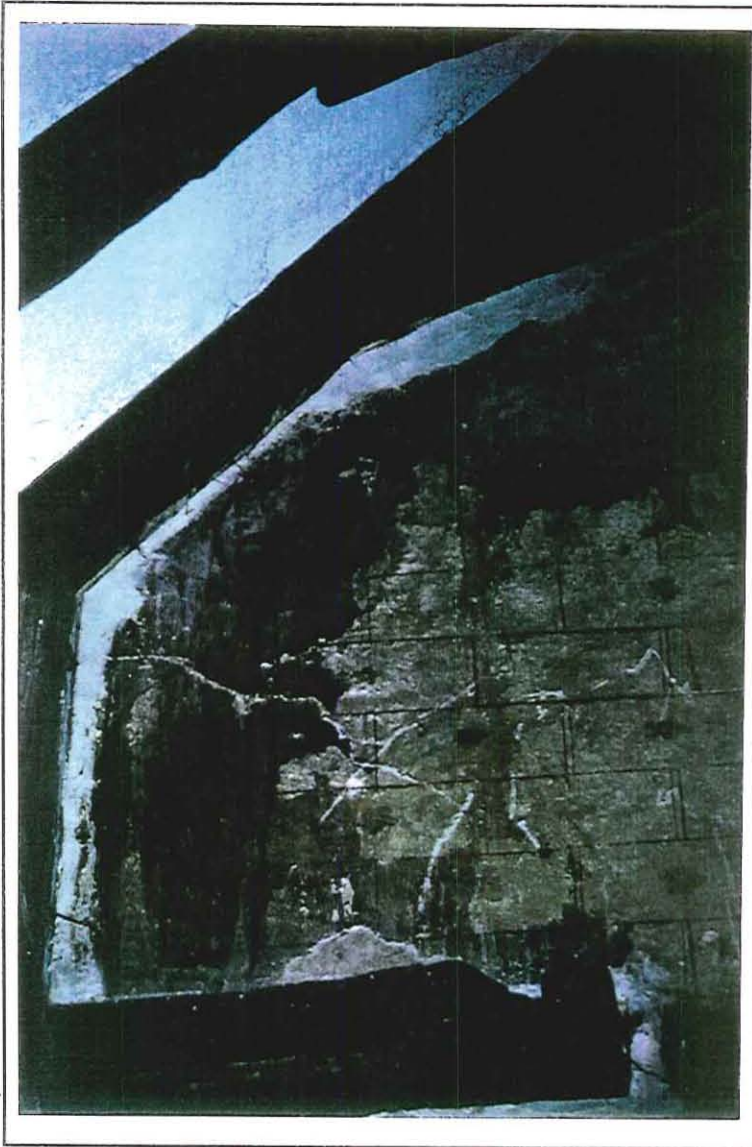
Added Materials documents all non-original materials present on or within a painting. These may include naturally occurring substances (accretions, such as dirt and dust) or deliberately added materials (coatings, coverings and repairs).

Treatment documents previous interventions and proposed treatment and monitoring strategies.

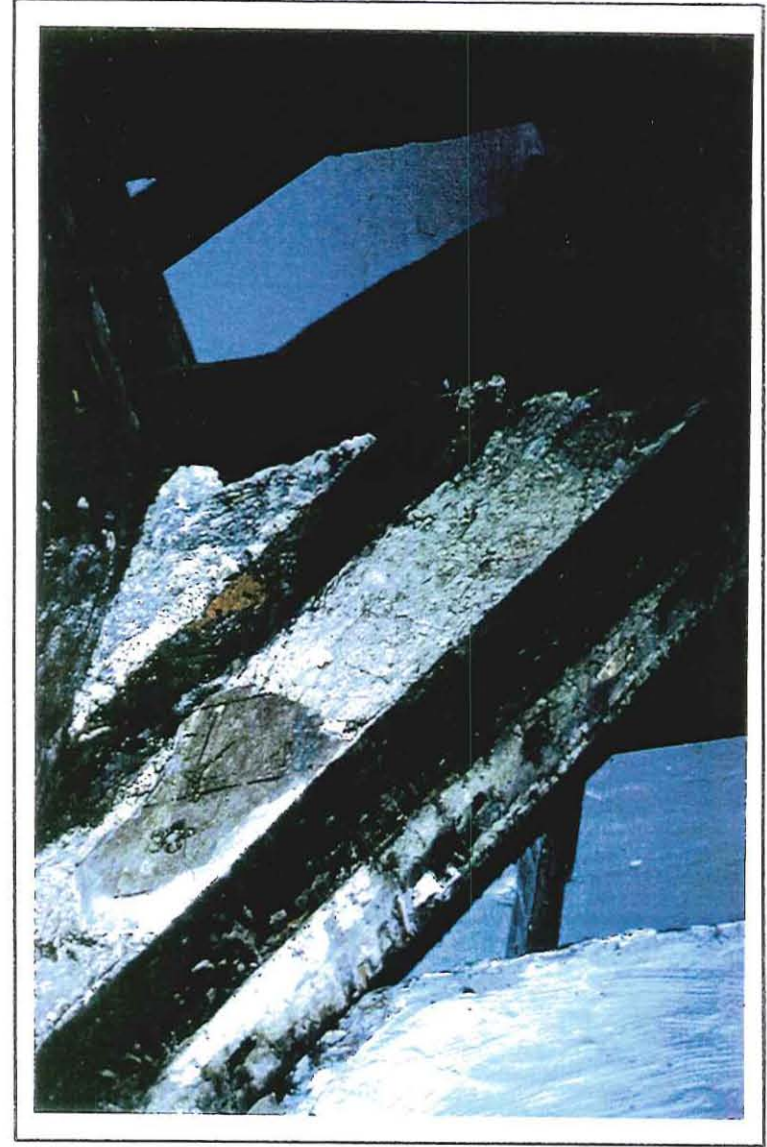
Throughout each section, an area of painting is assigned a number between 1 and 4 which is intended as a general indication of present condition. These are: 1 good, 2 fair, 3 poor, 4 unacceptable.

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** Refectory: north, south, east and west walls
- 2** Refectory: screen



West wall, south side, detail painting under south gable



East wall, upper zone, detail painted plaster on lath and plaster support

1 Wall Painting Record

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location of painting	Refectory		
Orientation	NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST WALLS		
Century 14 th	Date	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
Subjects included			
Border pattern			
Chevron pattern			
Creation			
Masonry pattern			
Rosette(s)			

Description

Bushmead Priory was founded c.1195 by William, chaplain of Colmworth, but the adoption of Augustinian rule is due to Joseph of Coppingford (1215-33). The earliest surviving remains of the priory probably date from his priorate or that of his successor John of Weldebof (1233-55). There were never more than six canons and a prior resident at Bushmead.

The Priory lies alongside a river, near the border of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. All that survives (above ground) of the priory is the refectory. It would have stood on the north side of the cloister (normally the location for the church) so that the domestic buildings could be closer to the river. The original location of other buildings, such as the cloisters, church and outer court has been suggested by soilmarks (visible from the air) and various excavations.

The refectory is typical of a small Augustinian priory, measuring approximately 8.5 metres x 22 metres, and built mainly in Barnack stone, of random rubble with ashlar quoins and buttresses of limestone. The core of the walls is of brown flint pebbles, and a softer chalk stone known as clunch was used for architectural detail during the major building alterations of the early 14th century (Sherlock, EH guidebook, 1985), which was also when the painted decoration was carried out. The exterior of the building was originally rendered (except for the dressed details), remains of which can still be seen in a photograph of the west wall from 1958 (see EH guidebook). The building is also remarkable for its magnificent crown-post roof (c.1250).

Substantial alterations made c.1500 include the construction of the first floor, the partitioning-off of smaller rooms, the addition of windows in the north and south walls, and the blocking of the west window, and the insertion of a smaller Perpendicular window within it. After the Dissolution, an axial partition was added on the ground floor, large first-floor windows were created and the interior was further sub-divided for domestic use. A large brick house was added at the east (c.1700) but this was mostly demolished in 1965. A small house, (the remains of the destroyed mansion) still stands, attached to the east end of the refectory.

The original decoration of the refectory is not known, but the present scheme seems to have been executed c.1310. The main element of the decoration is masonry pattern - here consisting of single red horizontal lines, and double red vertical lines. The second vertical line is thinner and gives a certain illusion of depth to the pattern. In the centre of each block is a deep red (now lost, or blackish in appearance due to alteration of the vermillion) five-lobed rosette with a white centre. This masonry pattern continues only to a level c.240 cm above the present floor level, where it terminates in a thick red band. Under this the plaster is unpainted, and may have been covered with wainscoting or textile hangings. A frieze running along the gable rafters of the east and west walls consists of red vine-scrolls (the stalks ending in serrated trefoils). On the west wall, on the south side, the scrollwork emerges from the beak of a crane-like bird, and from a male figure on the north. Within and around the west window itself the decoration includes a bent-riband pattern and imitation marble columns.

The only survival of this frieze on the north/south walls, running along the wall-plate, is that on the east end of the north wall, where the frieze appears to be made up of figurative lozenges interpreted as scenes from the Creation of Eve (see Park, 1986).

Approximate dimensions of the decoration:

North wall: 410x375cms

South wall: 250x50cms

East wall: 200x200cms

West wall: 540x670cms

NB: Access to the fragment of 14C scheme on the east wall was limited during this audit; it is located within the original roof space and is now only visible from first floor level through the lower (later?) ceiling beams. Therefore the dimensions given are very approximate.

Photographic Record

29/6/94 EH 'current' contact photo files; First floor, 3rd room, north, detail masonry pattern, Nov. 1984, A840422. First floor, 1st room, north, detail masonry pattern, Nov. 1984, A840423. Refectory, south, west half, Nov. 1984, A840424. Refectory, west half, from N.E. corner, Nov. 1984, A840425, Refectory, west end, Nov. 1984, A840424. Refectory, west end, March 1985, A850203.

Computer keyword search; Painting of ?, April 1985, A850249, J850107, E850120.

Photograph search, DOE files, EH photo library (JD24/03/95)

Bushmead Priory; 25-7-75 A9359 general shots of interior.

17/10/78 A(CN)10150/1-5.

17/10/78 A10151/1-4.

16/10/81 A(CN)10519/1-5.

7/1981 A(CN)10526/1-16.

Photographic prints in studio files.

17-10-78

*A(CN)10150/1 'Interior-view of the west gable with false window.'

*A(CN)10150/2 'Dark area stained by soluble salts. Light area -where limewash removed in 1978.'

*A(CN)10150/3 'North side west gable.'

*A(CN)10150/4 Detail wall painting, west gable, south side.

*A(CN)10150/5 'South side of the west gable with a crane bird at the base of the border scroll type ornament.

17-10-78

*A10151/1 View of west gable with scaffolding.

*A10151/2 Detail of wall painting on west gable.

*A10151/3 Detail of wall painting on west gable.

*A10151/4 Detail of wall painting (crane?) on west gable.

02-80: various; show timber infestation.i.e.

BU.P.14

BU.P.15

BU.P.16

BU.P.17

11-9-80

*A(CN)10392/1-12 'West window arch after removal of the false window. Visible decayed limewash and early XIVc design.'

*A(CN)10392/3 'West window arch with limewash covering early XIVc design.'

*A(CN)10392/4 Splay of west gable window.

*A(CN)10392/7 West gable, south side.

- *A(CN)10392/8 'Window arch after removal of remains of the false window.'
- *A(CN)10392/9 West gable, window.
- *A(CN)10392/11 'Detail the bird which looks like a crane.'
- *A(CN)10392/13 'South corner of the west gable with scroll ornament.'
- *A(CN)10392/15 Detail west gable, window splay.
- *A(CN)10392/16 'North side of the west gable.'
- *A(CN)10392/18 'Interior - view of the west gable after collapse of the false window.'
- *A(CN)10392/20 'South side of the west gable.'
- *A(CN)10392/21 West gable, window splay.
- *A(CN)10392/26 West gable, window, view up to apex of window from below.
- *A(CN)10392/27 'Window arch view from the base.'

07-81

- *A(CN)10526/1 Detail west gable, lower area of window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/2 Detail west gable, lower area of window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/3 View to west gable, north window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/4 View to west gable, north window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/5 Detail west gable, window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/7 Detail west gable, window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/11 Detail west gable, window splay.
- *A(CN)10526/12 East wall, detail painted fragment in king-post truss.
- *A(CN)10526/13 West gable, upper area of window.
- *A(CN)10526/14 East wall, detail painted fragment in king-post truss.
- *A(CN)10526/15 East wall, detail painted fragment in king-post truss.
- *A(CN)10526/16 East wall, king-post truss with painted fragments.

16-10-81

- *A(CN)10519/1 'North end of the north wall above window arch.'
- *A(CN)10519/2 North end of the north wall above window arch, detail creation frieze.
- *A(CN)10519/3 North end of the north wall above window arch, detail creation frieze.
- *A(CN)10519/4 North end of the north wall above window arch, detail creation frieze.
- *A(CN)10519/5 North end of the north wall above window arch, detail creation frieze.

21-7-83

- *A10874/1 West gable, with tower scaffolding.
- *A10874/3 'Cross-passage screen, ground floor.'
- *A10874/4 Cross-passage screen, ground floor.
- *A10874/5 Cross-passage screen, ground floor.
- *A10874/6 Cross-passage screen, ground floor.
- *A10874/7 South wall, east end.
- *A10874/9 'North end of the north wall seen from ground level.'

2-4-85

- *A850204 'The exhibition room of Bushmead Priory, the medieval Augustinian religious house that was opened to the public by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu on April 2, 1985.'
- *A850207 'The restored refectory of Bushmead Priory, the Augustinian house open to the public in April 1985.'

See also postcards, unlabelled KB? 1981 small colour prints and notes on paper.

Bibliography

The Cartulary of Bushmead Priory, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol XXII (1945).

Alcock, N.W., 'Bushmead Priory, a 13th-century Hall and Roof' Journal of the British Archaeological Association, Vol XXXIII (1970).

Park, D., 'The Creation,... Marginalia and Ornament in the Refectory Paintings of Bushmead Priory,' Bedfordshire Archaeology, XVII (1986).

Sherlock, D., 'Medieval Wall Paintings at Bushmead Priory,' Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal, Vol XVII (1985?).

2 General Audit Information

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY	County	Bedfordshire
Region	Midlands		
Location	Refectory		
Orientation	NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST WALLS		
Century 14th	Date	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	09/11/94

Overall condition score **3**

Recommendations

NORTH WALL: Full access to the upper part of the north wall was not possible, but there appears to have been some deterioration since 1983. A small amount of consolidation and repair is required to stabilise the 'Creation' frieze at the east end of the north wall.

[Timescale: 1 person, 1 week, within the next 5 years].

SOUTH WALL: Minor repairs to cracks and vulnerable edges are required. A small amount of grouting to support hollow areas may also be necessary.

[Timescale: 1 person, 1 week, within the next 5 years].

EAST WALL: Deterioration and loss of plaster has occurred since the painting was photographed in 1983. This area requires detailed examination from scaffolding (access is difficult due to the height and position of the paintings).

It is highly likely that some conservation treatment, including edge repairs and consolidation, will be required.

[Timescale: 1 person, 1 week, within the next year].

WEST WALL: It appears that flaking and loss of painting have occurred to the south side of the decorative frieze since the paintings were photographed in 1983. Therefore flake fixing is urgently required.

Access was limited during the 1994 audit. A thorough inspection is therefore required to establish the exact condition of the painting. A small amount of cosmetic work is also necessary.

[Timescale: 2 people, 2 weeks, within the next year].

NB. Further to a site-visit in August 1995 to inspect the wall paintings it was found that the walls containing the painted decoration were in the process of being 'brushed down' in order to remove dust and cobwebs. Although this is a very necessary housekeeping measure for many sites, it is of particular importance that this procedure is never conducted by a non-specialist where wall paintings exist. Such painted decoration is invariably extremely delicate and even the lightest dusting can cause irrevocable loss to areas of original plaster and paint. If this work is considered necessary then it should only be undertaken by a conservator.

3 Audit Information: Technique

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location	Refectory		
Orientation	NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST WALLS		
Century 14 th	Date	Height (cm)	Width (cm)
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	09/11/94

Overall Condition Score 3

Stratigraphy

Layer type	Support Layer	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

Comments

All the walls are composed of rough-dressed Barnack stone with early fourteenth-century alterations in clunch stone (Park 1986: 72). Later brick repairs are also noticeable. All the walls are damp at lower levels; algae, moss, powdering plaster and salt efflorescence are all present. The drainage consists of a stone and gravel paving to the exterior. No guttering is present. A photograph of the priory taken in 1958 (EH guide 1985:7) shows remnants of a render coat. This has now been lost/removed. On the east wall the painted decoration is supported on the timber studs and plaster of the eastern gable end of the roof. The plaster appears to be dark brown mud containing chaff/straw.

Layer type	Render Layer 1	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The thickness of the render throughout the room varies depending upon the topography of the underlying support and pointing. Render layer 1 has a pinkish tone and contains fine reddish rounded and grey/green aggregate. Largest aggregate dimension is approx. 0.3 mm.

Layer type	Render Layer 2	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

It is unclear whether this layer is a render or a thick coloured ground layer. In some areas it is quite thickly applied and appears to contain fine pale-coloured aggregate particles. In addition it has a slightly 'trowelled' surface texture.

Layer type	Ground Layer 1	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The ground layer may be easily confused with the render layer 2 as the appearance of the surface layers varies. In areas the ground layer looks like the pinkish render 2 (although apparently in a separate layer) to appearing whitish and translucent. The variation in appearance may be the result of application of a later coating or of the formation of a veil of salts.

Layer type	Paint Layer 1	Specific condition Score	2
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Thickness

Comments

The scheme is comprised of masonry pattern in red over a pinkish background with brighter red rosettes. In general the rosettes appear blackish-brown, however a few still contain redder patches. Barakan states that the rosettes were painted with vermillion which has now darkened (letter to D. Sherlock, 1985). A frieze runs east-west along the upper part of the north wall (at wall plate level) surviving mainly at the east end, where a small scene has been identified as the Creation (D. Park). The Creation frieze appears to consist now only of the original underdrawing.

Identified pigments Colours

vermillion	red
---	red
---	black

Analysis undertaken

Method POLARIZING LIGHT MICROSCOPY

Person K. Barakan **Date** 01/01/85

Comments Barakan identified mercuric sulphide using microchemical tests.

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

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location	Refectory		
Orientation	NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST WALLS		
Century	14th	Date	
		Height (cm)	Width (cm)

DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

Deterioration phenomena

Type pigment alteration

Location Rosettes on north wall

Comments The pigment used for the rosettes has been identified as vermilion (see letter from K. Barakan to D. Sherlock, 1985). It is possible that their greyish appearance is due to an alteration of the vermilion, or a burning-through of the lost paint layer.

Type salt activity

Location Surface of north wall

Comments Possible salt crystallisation, appears as a fine powdery veil. Under magnification these appear as pustules.

Type cracking

Location Associated with repairs on north wall

Comments These cracks are associated with repairs. Some are filled and retouched.

Type cracking

Location Lower east side of north wall

Comments May be associated with mechanical damage.

Type cracking

Location Central repair in north wall

Comments Crack through centre of central repair (possibly K. Barakan repair?), possibly indicating structural movement since insertion of the repair.

Type delamination (render layer)

Location Above window in north wall, easternmost lozenge

Comments Within the lozenge frieze, the easternmost lozenge (showing the Creation of Eve) appears vulnerable. The hole in this area was visible in the 1983 photographs, but the render seems to be detached and should be examined more thoroughly for treatment.

Type	loss
Location	Above window in north wall, central lozenge
Comments	In frieze over the window, the central lozenge (showing God resting on the seventh day) appears to have suffered from recent loss. The whole upper edge appears vulnerable.
Type	cracking
Location	South wall
Comments	Cracking generally associated with loose plaster. Several run continuously through the original and later plasters.
Type	loss
Location	South wall, west edge, centre
Comments	During the present audit a small piece of plaster (c.4cm) was found on the floor, which had fallen away from a cracked area on the western edge of the painting. This appears to have occurred due to the fragility of plaster, and not from any mechanical damage. The fragment was photographed.
Type	delamination (render layer)
Location	South wall, centre and upper areas
Comments	Several areas are hollow, but they are surrounded by well-adhered plaster. Appear to be relatively stable.
Type	pitting (surface)
Location	South wall, centre
Comments	Small pits and losses, possibly caused by 'popping' of slate/mica aggregate. Could also be related to mechanical damage.
Type	loss
Location	East wall, between timber braces in roof space.
Comments	Clearly the remaining fragments were originally part of a more extensive decorative scheme. Large losses of render and presumably paint have occurred adjacent to the surviving remnants. On the upper south side, a piece of painted render, known from EH photographic records to have been present in 1983, has fallen and been lost.
Type	general erosion
Location	East wall, paint layer generally
Comments	The paint surface has eroded, probably due to a combination of environmental conditions and past treatments, such as covering and uncovering.
Type	staining
Location	West wall
Comments	Discolouration and staining throughout the surface, probably caused by infiltration. The damage is historic and appears unchanged since the photographic survey taken in 1983.

Type losses (paint layer)
Location West wall
Comments Decorative frieze, south side, upper level (above crane). This appears to be recent damage caused by flaking (in the last ten years). This loss does not appear on the photographs taken in 1983.

Type cracking
Location West wall, central window, north and south window splays
Comments Appear unchanged since photographs taken in 1983.

Mechanical damage

Type insertions
Location Centre of north wall, at floor level
Comments Wooden insertions (not the large holes associated with floor beams) probably related to the changing floor levels and varied use of the building over the years. These are visible elsewhere in the building.

Type nail holes
Location General in north and south walls
Comments Some nails still present.

Type scratches
Location General all walls.
Comments Old marks and scratches, probably of several dates.

Type substantial losses
Location East side of north wall
Comments Caused by the addition of the house next door (c.1700) -- this brick structure was incorporated into the medieval building, causing substantial loss of the eastern side.

Type abrasion
Location General in north wall
Comments The paintings have been limewashed-over and uncovered, causing some abrasion to the surface.

Type substantial losses
Location South wall, surrounding plaster
Comments Loss associated with the insertion of the eastern window, floor and partition wall.

Type minor losses
Location South wall, centre
Comments Small pits and losses, possibly caused by 'popping' of slate/mica aggregate. Could also be related to mechanical damage.

Type abrasion
Location East wall, paint layer.
Comments Possibly the result of previous treatments, such as covering and uncovering.

Type keying marks

Location West wall, centre

Comments This damage could be attributed to some sort of keying, but is more likely related to the use of the structure as a barn. The damage is at hay manger height, and could have been caused by hay forks (as in Stables at Acton Court).

Type graffiti

Location West wall, south side, centre

Comments Incised circles and rosettes may be related to consecration crosses, or are some form of graffiti. Access was limited, and therefore the date of this damage could not be clarified further.

ADDED MATERIALS

Accretions

Type dirt

Location Entire

Comments

Type dust

Location Entire

Comments

Type cobwebs

Location Entire

Comments

Type bat excreta

Location North wall, centre, entire; and upper east corner

Comments This appears to be bat excreta, especially as the deposits are heavier in the corner.

Coatings/Coverings

Type limewash

Location North wall, edges of fragments

Comments The painting was limewashed over, and remnants remain around the edges. However it is unlikely that more of the design could be recovered.

Type unidentified

Location North and south walls

Comments Shiny unidentified coating, which does not fluoresce under ultraviolet light. K. Barakan noted a 'mineralised' appearance due to a fine salt veil. However, this is unlikely as drips were noted as well as shiny 'oily' repaint in old repairs.

Type distemper

Location North wall, in losses

Comments Fragments of blue remain in early losses, now coated as the rest of the plaster. The room was probably painted blue at any time from the 15th to the 19th centuries.

Type unidentified

Location West wall, entire

Comments K. Barakan noted a 'mineralised' coating on the surface, which she attributed to the accumulation of a fine salt veil, and which she was unable to remove. As access was limited during the present audit, it was impossible to determine whether this coating was the same as that seen on the north and south walls (a brittle and shiny coating, probably applied as a preservative). The remarkable staining of the surface may be a result of this coating/veil having been solubilized by water infiltration.

Type hair plaster
Location South wall, western edge
Comments Remnants of hair plaster. Contains hair, straw and sand. Lies over earlier plaster (associated with window) to east.

Type unidentified
Location East wall
Comments The nature of the coating is unknown and close examination was not possible. However, glossy yellow coatings were noted on other walls and also appears to be present here.

Repairs

Type modern lime plaster
Location North wall, all over in small losses; possibly large central repair
Comments Possibly lime, sand and brick dust. Repairs seem stable and fairly sound. The central one has a crack through its centre.

Type hair plaster
Location North wall, east and centre and south wall, east and west sides.
Comments Smooth, lime rich hair plaster.

Type modern plaster
Location North wall, centre
Comments Crude 'red' repair at centre. Retains some earlier reddish limewash/distemper coating.

Type modern plaster
Location North wall, east edge
Comments White, lime-rich plaster, possibly coeval with the brickwork of the house.

Type modern plaster
Location North wall, lower centre, east side
Comments Very white, large square fill.

Type modern plaster
Location North wall, lower east side
Comments White, painted blue. The blue (distemper?) paint is flaking.

Type lime:sand
Location South wall, general
Comments Small lime mortar fills (cut back and toned) by K. Barakan, c.1982.

Type modern plaster
Location South wall, general
Comments Retouched repairs, with shiny 'oily' appearance, probably pre-date K.Barakan.

Type modern lime plaster
Location South wall, upper east side
Comments Small white putty-like repair

Type modern lime plaster
Location East and west walls, edge repairs
Comments Edge repairs have been carried out in what appears to be a lime sand mortar. This work was probably undertaken by K. Barakan. In a letter dated 5/8/83, K. Barakan advised the site foreman to use a specific mortar mixture for further repairs on the west wall, to be undertaken in her absence. It was described as a 'mixture of lime, sand and brick dust'. Barakan was not pleased with the resulting work and planned to clean most of the affected areas.

Type lime:sand
Location West wall, general, small fills throughout.
Comments Edge repairs have been carried out in what appears to be a lime/sand mortar. This work was probably undertaken by K.Barakan. In a letter dated 5/8/83, Barakan recommends that the site foreman use 'a mixture of lime, sand and brick dust' and this is probably what she used here.

Type modern plaster
Location West wall, apex of window soffit, north side
Comments Unidentified grey mortar, possibly cement?

TREATMENT

Past Treatment

Type APPLICATION OF COATING **Date**

Person Unknown

Comments NORTH WALL: The surface now appears shiny and brittle. K. Barakan noted a 'mineralised' appearance to the paintings, but there are drips throughout the surface which indicate the application of a coating.

Type PRESENTATION/REINTEGRATION **Date**

Person Unknown

Comments NORTH AND EAST WALLS: Several areas of abrasion and loss appear to have been retouched (see photographs) with a glossy yellow material. This retouching is most probably associated with the application of a coating (much of the surface now appears shiny), and presumably pre-dates the treatment by K. Barakan.

Past Treatment

Type CLEANING **Date** 01/01/79

Person K. Barakan

Comments EAST WALL: This treatment may have begun as early as 1978: in a report of 24/8/78, K.Barakan notes, 'At the east gable end there are remains of painting which should be secured immediately.' According to a later letter, dated 8/8/79: 'I have also restored the fragments of the painting on East gable end. It is a fine evidence of similar decoration existing on both sides of the building.' In the same letter, the treatment is described as 'removal of limewash and cleaning.'

Type CONSOLIDATION **Date** 01/01/79

Person K. Barakan

Comments EAST WALL: This treatment may have begun as early as 1978: in a report of 24/8/78, K.Barakan notes, 'At the east gable end there are remains of painting which should be secured immediately.' According to a later letter, dated 8/8/79: 'I have also restored the fragments of the painting on East gable end. It is a fine evidence of similar decoration existing on both sides of the building.' In the same letter, the consolidation carried out is described as 'spraying the painted surface several times with limewater'. However, in the letter of 24/8/78, the planned treatment is described as 'fixing the powdering paint with limewater and with a weak solution of PVA if needs be'.

Past Treatment

Type CLEANING **Date** 01/01/82
Person K. Barakan
Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall. The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Barakan (8/8/79) planned the 'removal of limewash and cleaning'.

WEST AND EAST WALLS: In a letter dated 8/8/79, K. Barakan stated that 'removal limewash and cleaning' were undertaken on the west wall. By 5/8/83, she stated, 'in 1982 the conservation of the painting...was completed. Grey salt stains were left to be removed later with abrasive equipment...Now the new scaffolding is erected on the left side of the window and the process of cleaning has begun'.

Type CONSOLIDATION **Date** 01/01/82
Person K. Barakan
Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall.

WEST WALL: The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Barakan states (in a letter of 8/8/79) that the treatment included 'spraying the painted surface several times with lime water'.

Type FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION **Date** 01/01/82
Person K. Barakan
Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall.

WEST AND EAST WALLS: The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Many small fills (characteristically porous, un-toned lime-based fills) throughout the surface probably relate to this period of treatment. Barakan noted (in a letter of 8/8/79) the 'securing of the loose parts' and 'making good the edges and the whole surface'.

Type GROUTING **Date** 01/01/82
Person K. Barakan
Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall.

WEST WALL: The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Grouting may have taken place during this campaign, as Barakan noted (in a letter of 8/8/79) the 'securing of the loose parts' and 'making good the edges and the whole surface'.

EAST WALL: This treatment may have begun as early as 1978: in a report of 24/8/78, K.Barakan notes, 'At the east gable end there are remains of painting which should be secured immediately.' According to a later letter, dated 8/8/79: 'I have also restored the fragments of the painting on East gable end. It is a fine evidence of similar decoration existing on both sides of the building.' During the restoration of this area, it is probable that some grouting was undertaken.

Type PRESENTATION/REINTEGRATION **Date** 01/01/82

Person K. Barakan

Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall.

WEST WALL: The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Barakan confirms (in a letter of 8/8/79) the use of 'retouching in rigottino technique'

Type UNCOVERING **Date** 01/01/82

Person K. Barakan

Comments NORTH WALL: There are no specific references to the treatment carried out on the north wall; however, presumably the methods employed were similar to those used in the treatment of the west wall.

WEST AND EAST WALLS(?): The paintings were first assessed for treatment in 1978, and completed by 1983. Barakan (8/8/79) undertook the 'removal of limewash and cleaning'.

Past Treatment

Type FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION **Date** 01/01/83

Person K. Barakan

Comments WEST WALL: In a letter from K.Barakan to D.Sherlock (5/8/83), Barakan states that she was 'asked by a foreman to advise on a suitable mixture which could be used for feathering the remains of the medieval plaster. He was advised to use a mixture of lime, sand and brick dust'. She also noted that 'the work was done very unskilfully. Putties were applied too wide on the floral design and the left side area was smeared with a white mixture in an attempt to wipe lime drippings away...Mr Rudd who has done the above mentioned repairs assured me that he was using Limbax - ICI (pure dehydrated lime).' Barakan planned to clean these repairs but they still look like they have been smeared over the surface'.

Proposed Treatment

Type CONSOLIDATION **Date** 09/11/94

Person JD, TM

Comments NORTH WALL: The 'Creation' frieze over the window requires stabilisation attention and possible consolidation of the plaster.

EAST WALL: A large chunk of plaster (3/4 of the fragment on the south side) has been lost since the photographs taken in 1983. This area should be examined more thoroughly and consolidated if necessary (access is difficult due to the height and the rafters) in order to prevent further loss.

Type FILLS/REPAIRS INSERTION **Date** 09/11/94

Person JD, TM

Comments NORTH WALL: The 'Creation' frieze over the window requires stabilisation and possible consolidation of the plaster.

SOUTH WALL: Fills to cracks and edge repairs should be carried out in the near future.

EAST WALL: A large chunk of plaster (3/4 of the fragment on the south side) has been lost since the photographs taken in 1983. This area must be examined more thoroughly (access is difficult due to the height of the room), and the edge repair replaced around what survives. The edge repairs of the other fragments on the north side should also be assessed.

Type FLAKE FIXING **Date** 09/11/94

Person JD, TM

Comments WEST WALL: Urgent treatment required of flaking on south side within decorative frieze. Proper access is needed to assess the extent of the damage and method of treatment.

Type GROUTING **Date** 09/11/94

Person JD, TM

Comments SOUTH WALL: Grouting could be carried out after further inspection of upper edges of painting. However, most of the hollow areas appear relatively stable. Minor grouting near cracks and edges may be necessary.

Type MONITORING CONDITION **Date** 09/11/94

Person JD, TM

Comments WEST WALL: Access was limited during the present audit. The building requires stationary scaffolding (due to uneven cobbled floor and timbers on display against the west wall) to a sufficient height. Thorough inspection is required, especially as several areas appear to have been lost since the work was undertaken in 1983.

1 Wall Painting Record

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location of painting	Refectory - 15C screen		
Orientation	BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 15 th	Date	Height (cm) 0	Width (cm) 0
Subjects included	Various decorative motifs		

Description

Bushmead Priory was founded c.1195 by William, chaplain of Colmworth, but the adoption of Augustinian rule is due to Joseph of Coppingford (1215-33). The earliest surviving remains of the priory probably date from his priorate or that of his successor John of Weldebof (1233-55). There were never more than six canons and a prior resident at Bushmead.

Bushmead Priory lies alongside a river, near the border of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. All that survives (above ground) of the priory is the refectory. It would have stood on the north side of the cloister (normally the location for the church) so that the domestic buildings could be closer to the river. The original location of other buildings, such as the cloisters, church and outer court has been suggested by soilmarks (visible from the air) and various excavations.

The refectory is typical of a small Augustinian priory, measuring approximately 8.5 metres x 22 metres, and built mainly in Barnack stone, of random rubble with ashlar quoins and buttresses of limestone. The core of the walls is of brown flint pebbles, and a softer chalk stone known as clunch was used for architectural detail during the major building alterations of the early 14th century (Sherlock, EH guidebook, 1985), which was also when the painted decoration was carried out. The exterior of the building was originally rendered (except for the dressed details), remains of which can still be seen in a photograph of the west wall from 1958 (see EH guidebook). The building is also remarkable for its magnificent crown-post roof (c.1250).

Substantial alterations made c.1500 include the construction of the first floor, the partitioning-off of smaller rooms, the addition of windows in the north and south walls, and the blocking of the west window, and the insertion of a smaller Perpendicular window within it. After the Dissolution, an axial partition was added on the ground floor, large first-floor windows were created and the interior was further sub-divided for domestic use. A large brick house was added at the east (c.1700) but this was mostly demolished in 1965. A small house, (the remains of the destroyed mansion) still stands, attached to the east end of the refectory.

The central area of the refectory is thought to have been screened off, to form a cross passage during the late monastic period. Traces of decorative floral painting of red rosettes over a green background are visible on the east face of a screen dating to c.1500.

Photographic Record

K. Barakan, 1983.

29/6/94 EH 'current' contact photo files; First floor, 3rd room, north, detail masonry pattern, Nov. 1984, A840422. First floor, 1st room, north, detail masonry pattern, Nov. 1984, A840423. Refectory, south, west half, Nov. 1984, A840424. Refectory, west half, from N.E. corner, Nov. 1984, A840425, Refectory, west end, Nov. 1984, A840424. Refectory, west end, March 1985, A850203.

Computer keyword search; Painting of ?, April 1985, A850249, J850107, E850120.

Bibliography

The Cartulary of Bushmead Priory, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol XXII (1945).

Alcock, N.W., 'Bushmead Priory, a 13th-century Hall and Roof' Journal of the British Archaeological Association, Vol XXXIII (1970).

Park, D., 'The Creation,... Marginalia and Ornament in the Refectory Paintings of Bushmead

2 General Audit Information

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY	County	Bedfordshire
Region	Midlands		
Location	Refectory - 15C screen		
Orientation	BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 15th	Date	Height (cm) 0	Width (cm) 0
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	10/11/94

Overall condition score **3**

Recommendations

The building is very damp and the base of the wooden screen lies directly over the rough earth and stone floor, making it very susceptible to deterioration. The timber of the screen is indeed very degraded at its base and may require some consolidation and preservative treatment. Specific advice should be sought from a polychrome timber conservator.

3 Audit Information: Technique

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location	Refectory - 15C screen		
Orientation	BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 15th	Date	Height (cm)0	Width (cm) 0
Auditor(s)	TM/JD	Start date	10/11/94

Overall Condition Score 3

Stratigraphy

Layer type	Support Layer	Specific condition Score	4
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Thickness

Comments

The thickness of the support varies with the extent of carved decoration. The timber support has become damp and degraded at its base.

Layer type	Ground Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

Comments

Examination in situ indicated that a 'white lead type' ground may be present. However this is uncertain as the paint remains are extremely fragmentary and abraded. Microscopic examination of samples in cross-section could confirm the stratigraphy.

Identified pigments Colours

--- white

Layer type	Paint Layer 1	Specific condition Score	3
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Thickness

Comments

The red rosettes are of an especially intense, bright colour, set against the deep emerald green background. The paint appears to have an oily binding medium, however no analysis has been undertaken to confirm the identity of the binding medium.

Identified pigments Colours

--- green

--- red

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

Property name	BUSHMEAD PRIORY		
Region	Midlands	County	Bedfordshire
Location	Refectory - 15C screen		
Orientation	BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH		
Century 15th	Date	Height (cm)0	Width (cm) 0

DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

Deterioration phenomena

Type cracking

Location Support

Comments Cracking appears to be related to movement of the support in response to changes in relative humidity and temperature.

Type flaking

Location Paint layer and ground (?)

Comments Flaking is not currently active but has clearly occurred in the past, resulting in loss of the paint and ground (?) layers.

Type loss

Location Entire

Comments Extensive loss has occurred to the paint layer, the ground (?) layer and at low level to the support. The deterioration seems to be the result of dampness and fluctuating environmental conditions.

Type damp

Location Support

Comments The base of the timber support has become soft and is decaying due to the presence of dampness.

Type pigment alteration

Location Rosettes.

Comments In several areas the red rosettes have become a blackish-brown colour. A single rosette (to the south edge of the east face) remains a vivid red.

Mechanical damage

Type insertions

Location North end

Comments The northern (originally) arched opening has been blocked and the decorative timber frame has been removed. Now filled by modern plaster.

Type scratches

Location Entire, particularly at low level.

Comments Probably the result of numerous accidental knocks over several dates.

Type insertions

Location Entire surface.

Comments It appears that the screen was covered with lath and plaster at some date as marks from the plaster keys or laths are present.

ADDED MATERIALS

Accretions

Type dirt

Location Surface

Comments General thin deposit, not very disfiguring.

Type cobwebs

Location Surface

Comments General thin deposit, not very disfiguring.

Type dust

Location Surface

Comments General thin deposit, not very disfiguring.

Coatings/Coverings

Type plaster

Location Entire

Comments Remnants of a lath and plaster coating are still present on the painted screen.

Repairs

Type wood

Location Adjacent to medieval screen.

Comments There are several replacement timbers adjacent to the medieval screen. Some of the modern timbers appear to be placing weight onto the original medieval timbers and the stability of this arrangement should be thoroughly assessed.

Type wood

Location General medieval screen.

Comments There are several replacement timber plugs within the medieval screen.

TREATMENT

Past Treatment

Type VARIOUS

Date 01/01/83

Person Unknown

Comments No record of treatment of the screen exists, although a photographic survey was undertaken in 1983. There is ample evidence of previous beetle infestation of the timbers within the priory and it can be assumed that these, including the painted screen, have been treated.

Proposed Treatment

Type CONSOLIDATION

Date 10/11/94

Person TM/JD

Comments Timber consolidation may be required at the base of the screen.

Type VARIOUS

Date 10/11/94

Person TM/JD

Comments The structural stability of the screen and adjacent timbers should be checked. The screen is fragile and very deteriorated at its base and therefore should not be used to support additional timbers.
