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Title: Conference Hall, Frieze

Conservation Report

Manchester Town Hall

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HIRST Conservation

Manchester Town Hall

Conference Hall, Frieze

Conservation Report

Ver 1.0

30/06/2023

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2. Conference Hall Frieze

2.1. General Overview

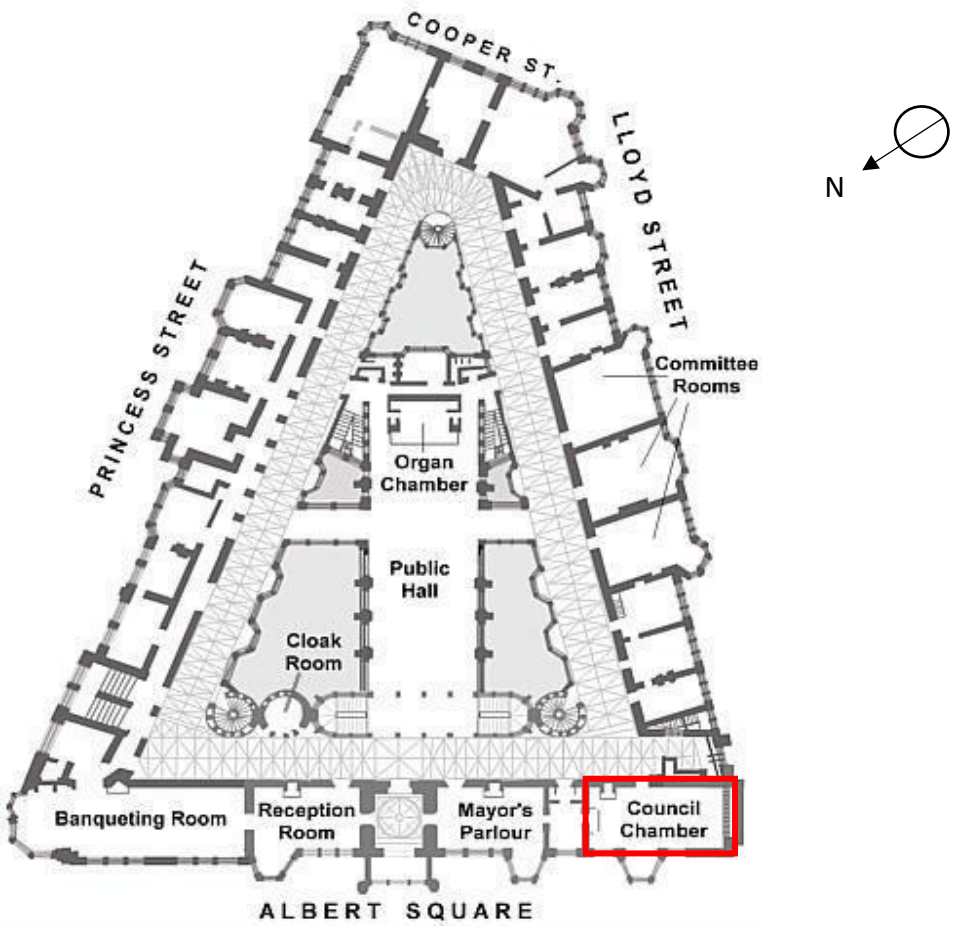


Figure 1: Plan of Manchester Town Hall, indicating the location of the Conference Hall

Above reveals the location of the conference hall situated on level 2 of the Town Hall in the North/West corner of the building.

The room itself was originally referred to as the council chamber. The frieze is located at the wall plate on the walls within the main chamber of the room. The stencilled and hand painted frieze consists of a base decoration of branches, flowers, and cotton plant buds, which then have the city arms on the North wall and other shields of the surrounding areas (such as Salford, Rochdale, Bolton, Oldham, Wigan, Preston, Stockport, Aston-Upon-Lyne, and Stalybridge) that sit upon the base decoration. The upper decorated areas of the city arms and other shields contain a high amount of gilding, while the assortment of flowers within the base decoration consist of a metallic paint.

2.2. Specification of works

As set out in the *Scoping Schedule and Specification Report For Conservation Work to Decorative Finishes:*

> *The scope of this work includes the cleaning of the painted decoration on the plaster finishes of frieze and minor touching-in of missing, worn or flaking paint or gilding.*
>
> *Technical details of methodology and materials references as well as scoping descriptions are taken from the recommendations in the Hirst Architectural Paint Research Report dated March 2019, an extract of which is also included in Appendix F*
>
> *4.01.01 General Cleaning and Assessment of the painted plaster surfaces: Carry out a general clean to all the existing painted plaster surfaces within the Frieze area identified. A chemical sponge dampened with de-ionised water will be effective in removing dirt from these areas and they are to be thoroughly dried with cotton wool after treatment. Some of the overpaint from the early 1980's conservation works may be more sensitive to cleaning, and these should be treated with care, as identified by Hirst.*
>
> *4.01.02 Validation Inspection:*
> *The decoration was fully conserved in the early 1980s and appear from visual inspection to be generally well adhered although some cruder overpaint in acrylic may not be as compatible with the original paints as identified by Hirst. There do not appear to be any other identified condition issues. Following the general clean it will be essential that the conservators carry out a full visual inspection of the painted surfaces to determine any condition issues that have not been foreseen and to validate the scope of any further required action. The extent of any minor defective overpainting to be removed may therefore require further assessment, however, it must be assumed until this has been done that all the areas are sound. A more detailed understanding of the overpaint will inevitably be achieved during the actual works, from increased familiarity of the painted surface and the impact of the general cleaning. All areas that are subsequently identified to be removed should be fully recorded in detail (photographically and with gridded tracings) to enable faithful reinstatement.*
>
> *4.01.03 Cleaning Areas of Gilding:*
> *These features can be additionally cleaned with a solution of tri-ammonium citrate (3% in deionised water) applied with cotton swabs, cleared with deionised water, and dried with cotton wool. This process effectively removes the dirt coating on the gilding and greatly improves the reflectance properties. This is considered to be beneficial to all the gilding and is included in the scope required. Any significant losses of gilding are to be in-filled to match with equivalent quality and colour of gold leaf on oil size but as the current gilding is relatively recent it is assumed at present that all the gilding will clean without any loss.*

2.3. Validation Survey Scope

The validation survey was produced in September 2022 and the works undertaken in October 2022 based on agreement of additional elements of work.

See OTH-HIR-TH-XX-RPT-X-0127, Hirst Conservation *Validation Survey, Conference Frieze*

2.4. Limitations

We have not undertaken any salt or moisture profiling and assume that the building envelope is sound and ongoing moisture movement is not an issue. No assessment of environmental conditions within the room or at the surface of the painted decoration has been undertaken as part of our site survey.

In accordance with directions on site, the main focus of conservation was to the painted decoration. Only one active area of plaster was stabilised. No tactile survey of the plaster was undertaken.

3. Condition prior to conservation

3.1. General condition

The overall condition of the frieze is **good.**

Plaster

No detailed inspection was undertaken to the plaster. There is a network of cracks, many of which have darkened break edges suggesting that they are historic and generally appear stable, although a full tactile survey has not been undertaken. One localised blown area of plaster was noted on the north elevation (fault A).

Paint

Visual inspection indicated that the frieze is generally in good condition. Much of the frieze is believed to retain original finishes, although several phases of later intervention were noted.

Assessment in raking light clearly indicates that the painted decoration has suffered from paint delamination and flaking historically. Evidence of previous consolidation (presumed 1980s), together with ongoing flaking and detachment was noted. Areas of loss have been previously retouched/ recreated to a very good level. Treatment records have not been made available.

The cotton seed pods and flowers have received some overpainting to strengthen their appearance from ground level. An impasto technique has been used to the seedpod, presumably to impart textural quality.

The frieze is varnished, this may date to the 1980s conservation. No analysis of the varnish has been undertaken as part of this survey.

The surface of the frieze has surface lying dust deposits, which are tacky to the touch.

4. Treatment undertaken

Surface Cleaning:

While the level of surface dust and deposits were loose they did retain a level of greasy/tackiness. Therefore, these could be removed using a brush and vacuum extraction that has a gauzed nozzle, so that consolidation of plaster and paint could be conducted with less deposits obscuring the area.

Due to the amount of metallic paint evident within the scheme, the use of melamine/magic sponges cleaning was not suitable to all areas due to the micro-abrasive properties of the sponge. Equally the level of paint delamination visible across the frieze were highly vulnerable and were at extreme risk of loss if cleaning with the use of a sponge was conducted.

Cleaning with a combination of cotton wool in hand swabs and weak tri ammonium citrate 3% in deionised water and cleared with deionised water was undertaken. .

Plaster Stabilisation:

One blown section of plaster was noted to the north wall (fault A). This was secured by careful removal of the section and rebedded with casting plaster, followed by filling with toupret fine surface filler and retouching in stable, artists acrylics.

Paint Consolidation:

Prior to any surface cleaning from taking place, the vulnerable areas of paint delamination were consolidated with Paraloid B72 (12% in acetone) applied by brush or syringe and laid flat using a heated spatula (65^{o}C) through silicone release paper to retain as much original material as possible and ensure paint stability.

5. Recommendations

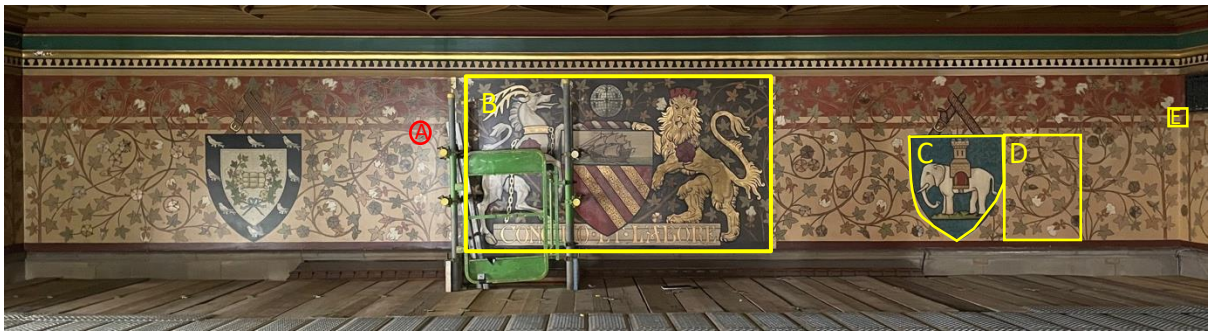
Future monitoring:

Flaking was noted to be particularly evident to the north and west wall, and has previously been consolidated by others. It is assumed that the building envelope and environment will be stable going forwards, and this should therefore be beneficial in the long-term preservation of the finishes. Following consolidation, these areas will act as a 'telltale' should deterioration factors still be active, and should be reviewed on a quinquennial basis.

A small section of blistering paint was noted to the west end of the south wall. Generally, these blisters appear solid however several were noted to be hollow. The cause of this is unclear and may be salt related. We recommend that this area is monitored.

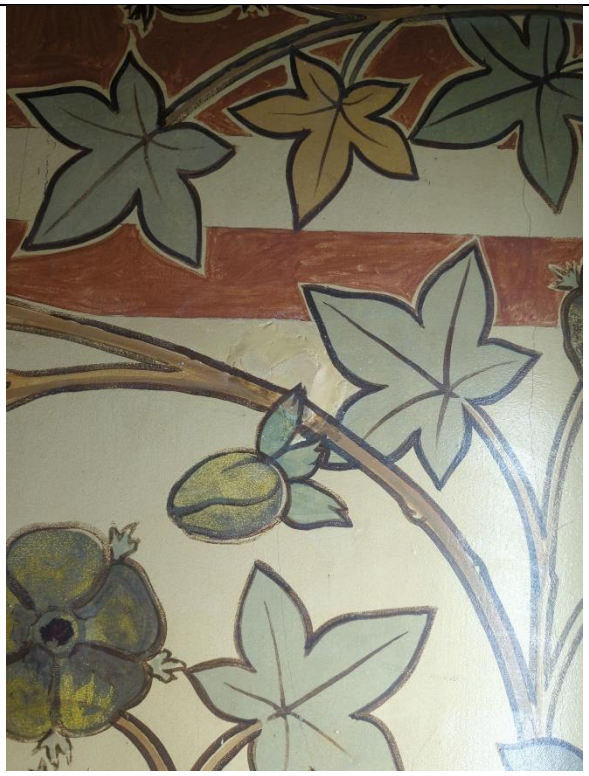
6. Record of treatment

6.1. North Elevation treatment undertaken

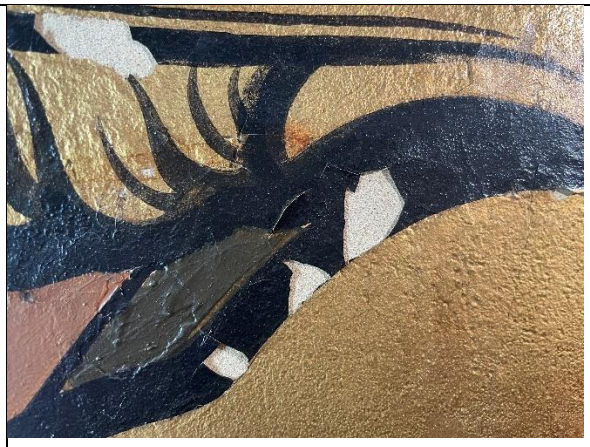


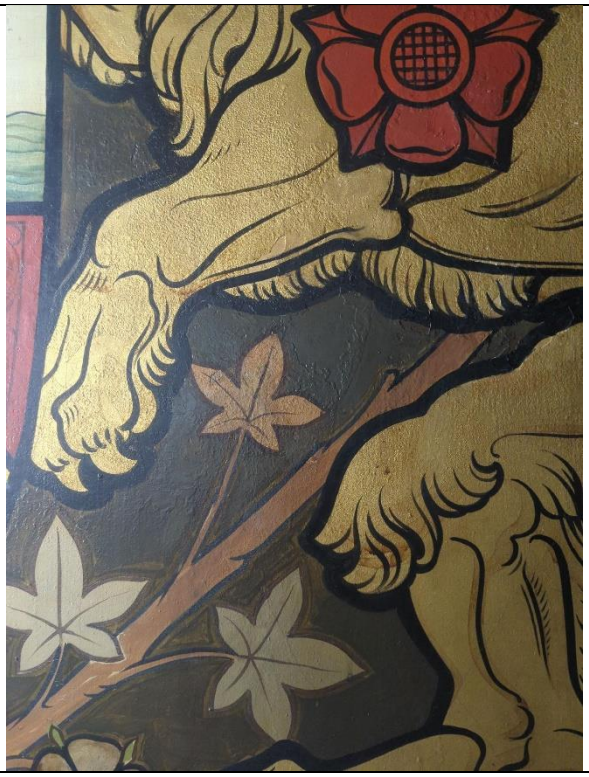
Key
- Plaster stabilisation
- Paint consolidation

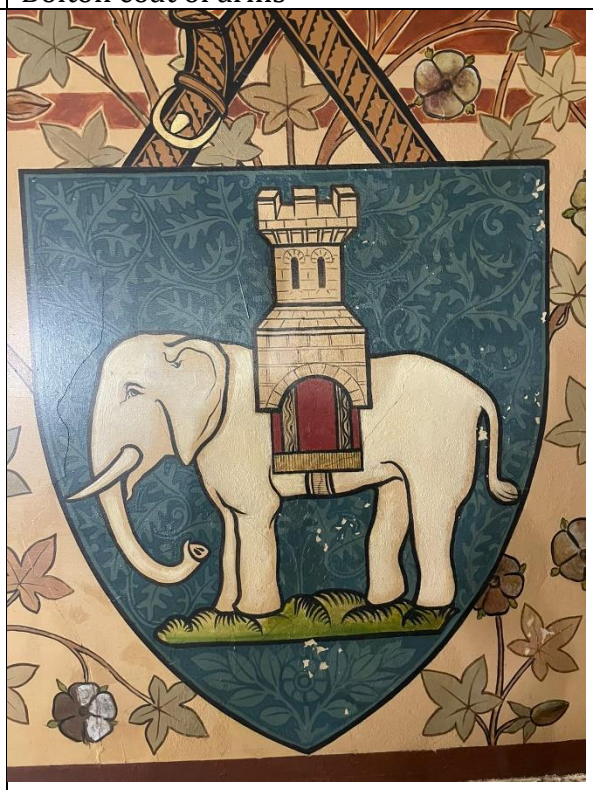
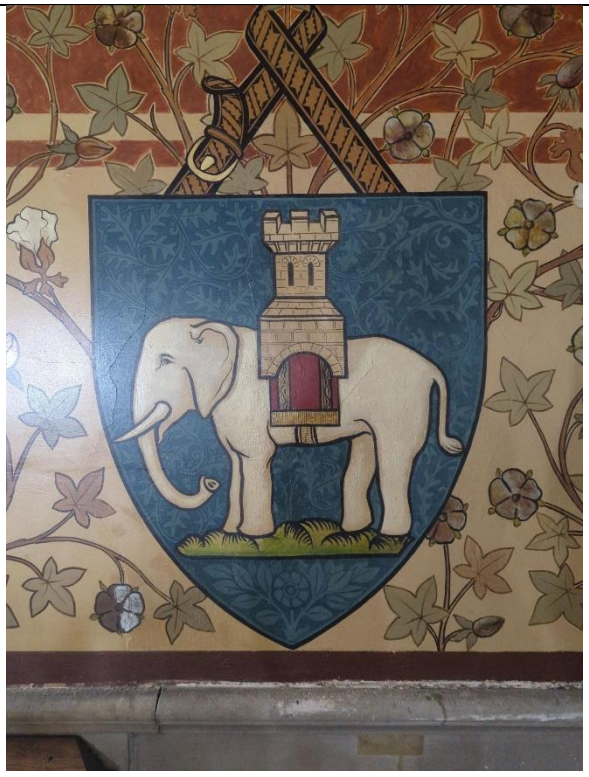
Location	Image	Note
A: Before		Foliate painted frieze: Area of plaster approx. 100mm diameter actively detaching. **Additional works required:** Allow to remove and re-bed.

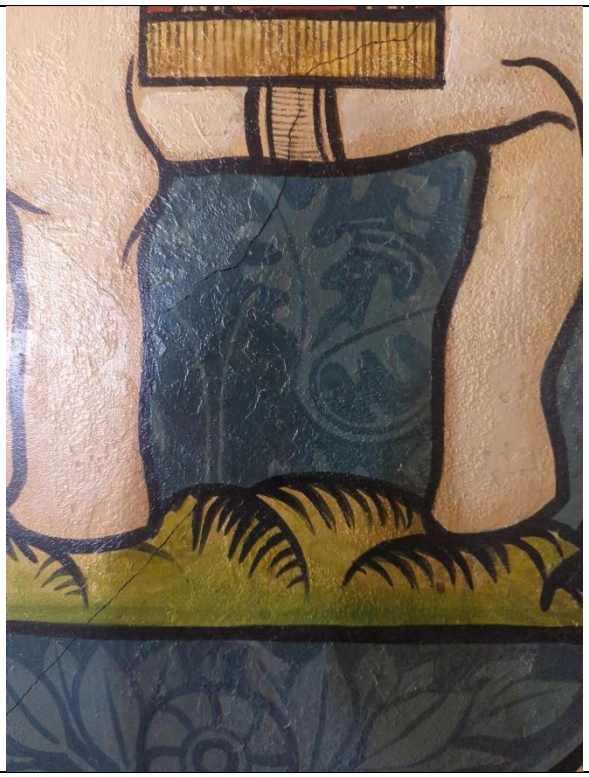
A: After		Fault A: Completed plaster repair and retouching. Plaster was removed and rebedded on casting plaster. Filling was undertaken in Toupret fine surface filler. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints.
B Overview before		City Coat of Arms: Flaking evident to various locations across the coat of arms. **Additional works required:** Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
B: Before		Detail: west side, above unicorn hoof

		Fault b: Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints.
B: Before		Detail: Central painting of ship, extensive flaking and some loss
		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints.

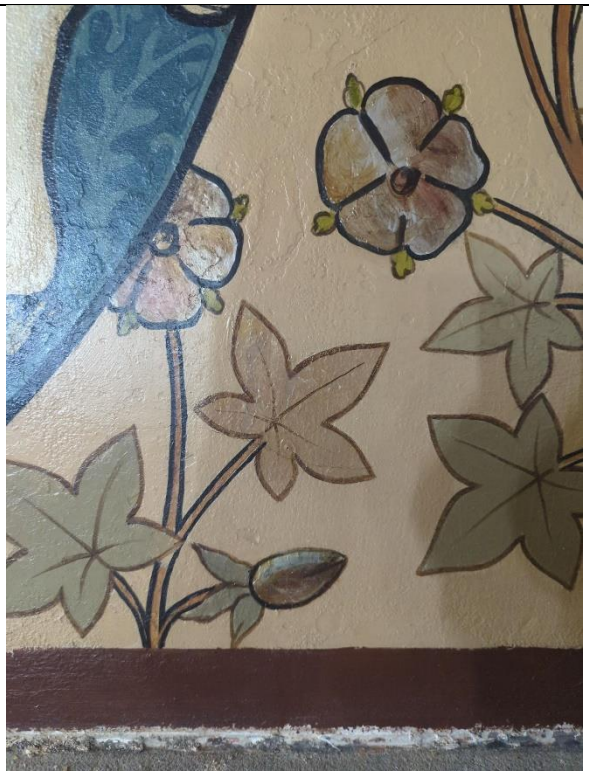
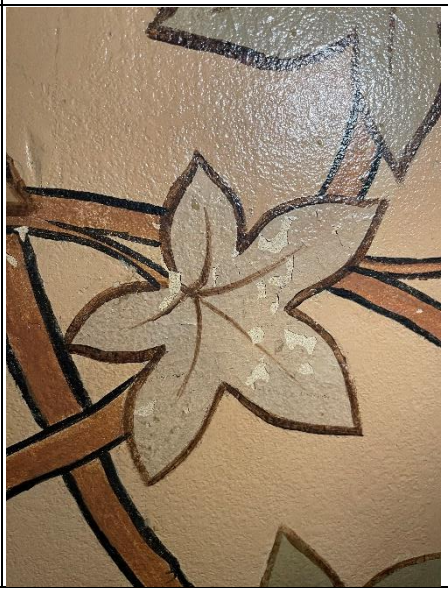
B: Before		Lion's flank, flaking, detachment and loss
B: After treatment		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints.
B: Before		Leaf detail: Flaking, detachment and loss where original paint is extant. Note previous retouching of loss above leaf.

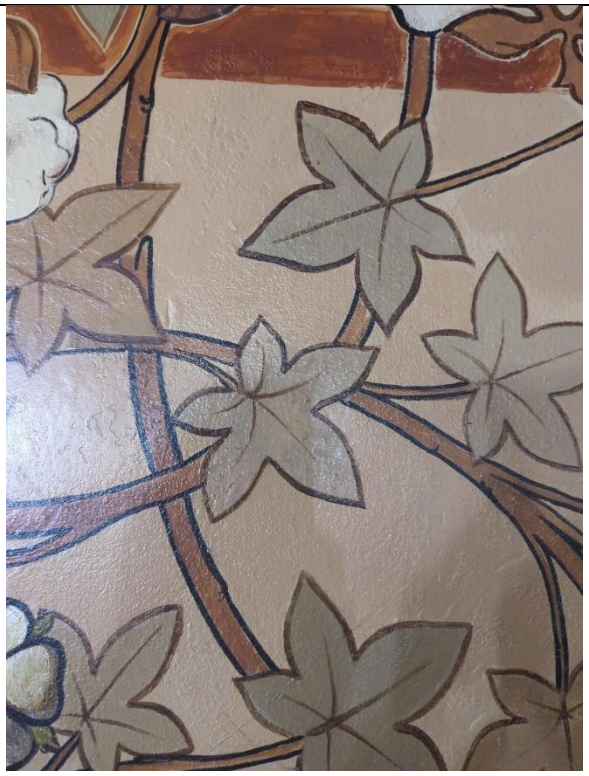
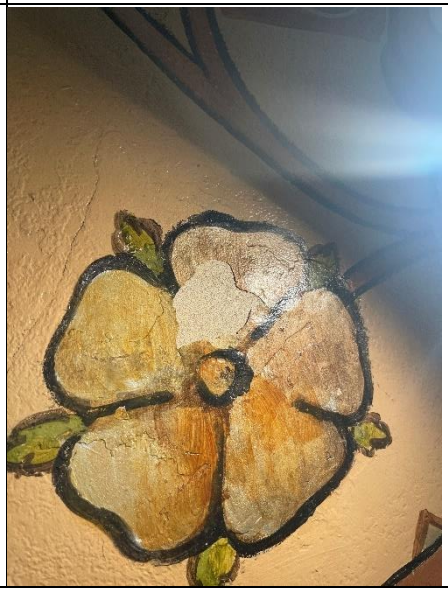
B: After treatment		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

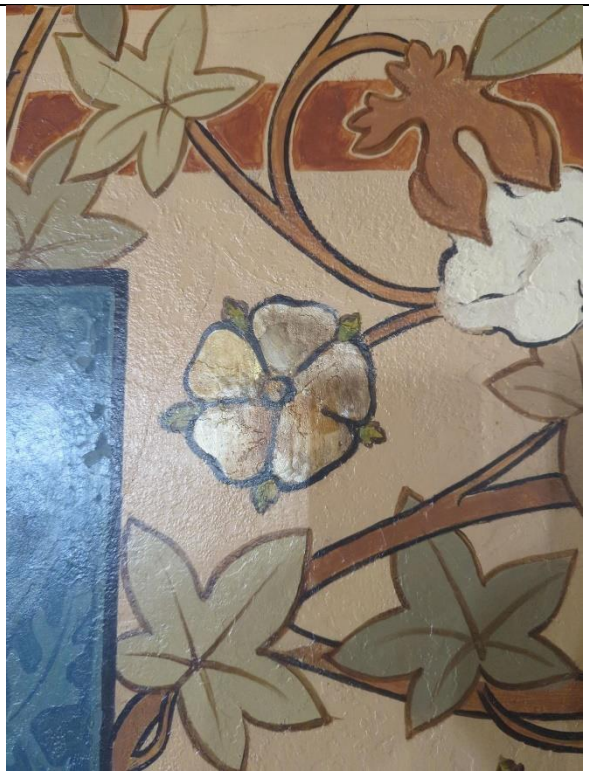
C	Bolton coat of arms	Extensive active paint flaking and detachment. **Additional works required:** Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works. Overall image shows numerous areas of failure and loss to the right half of the shield.
C Before		
C After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

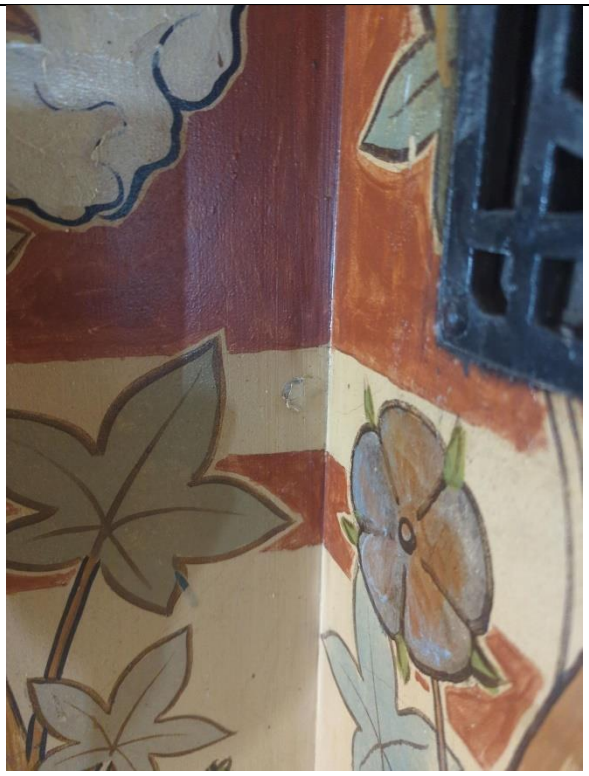
C Before		Detail of detachment, flaking and loss to area below gilded ground. Cracking to plaster also evident.
C Before		Detail of detachment, flaking and loss to area below elephant's stomach. Cracking to plaster also evident.
C After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

D	Frieze to east side of north wall	
Before		Various areas of flaking and detachment to the east of the Bolton shield and into the corner. **Additional works required:** Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
D Before		Flaking and paint loss to leaf.

D After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints
D Before		

D After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints
D Before		

D after		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints
E Before		Blister to NE corner, **Additional works required:** Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching.

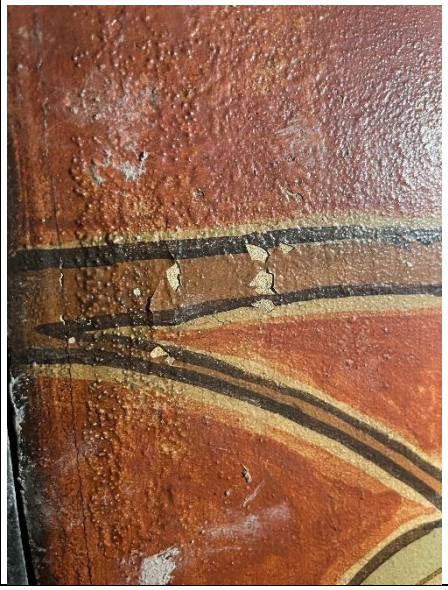
E After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

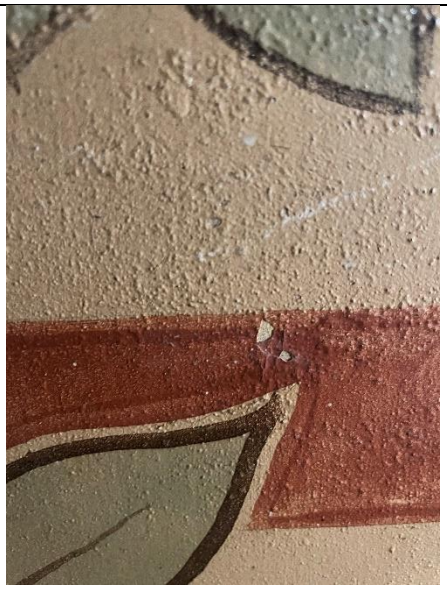
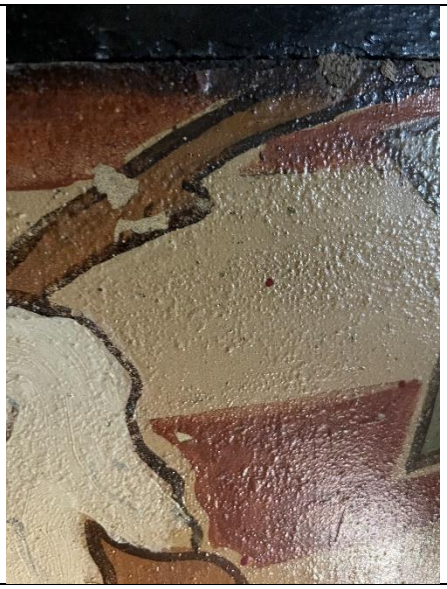
6.2. East Elevation treatment undertaken

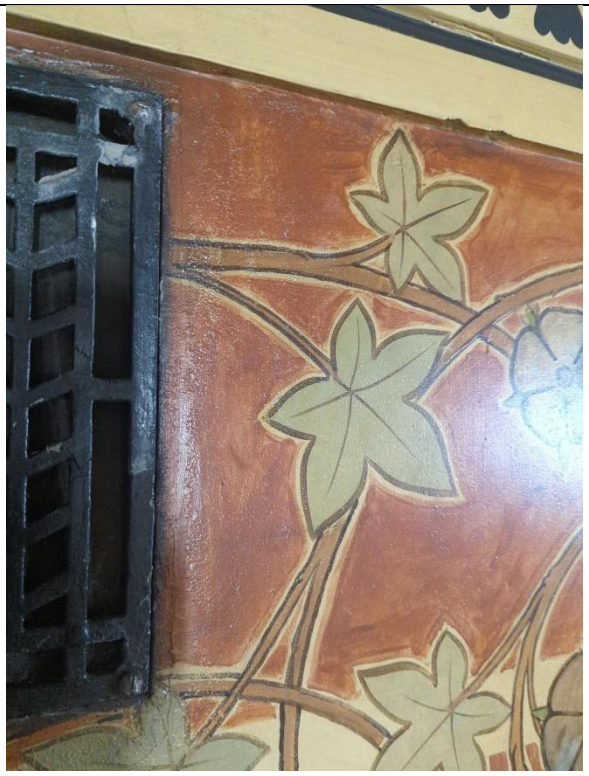
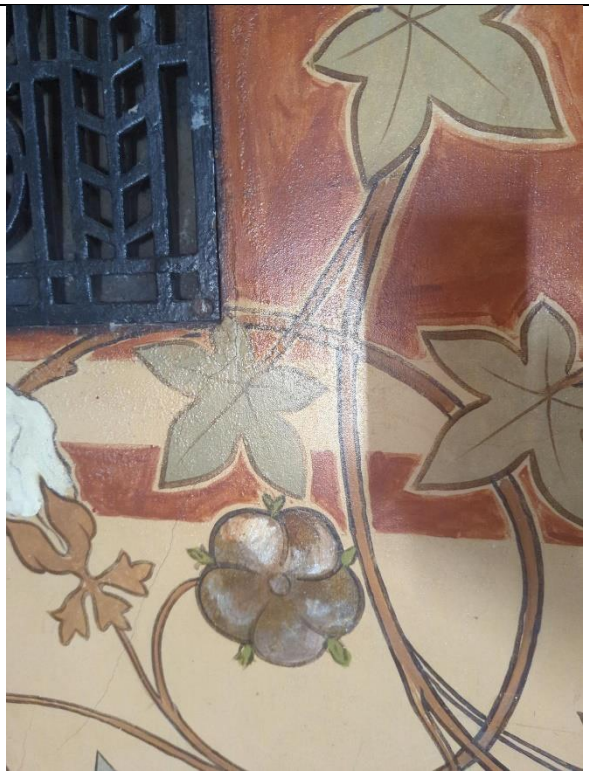


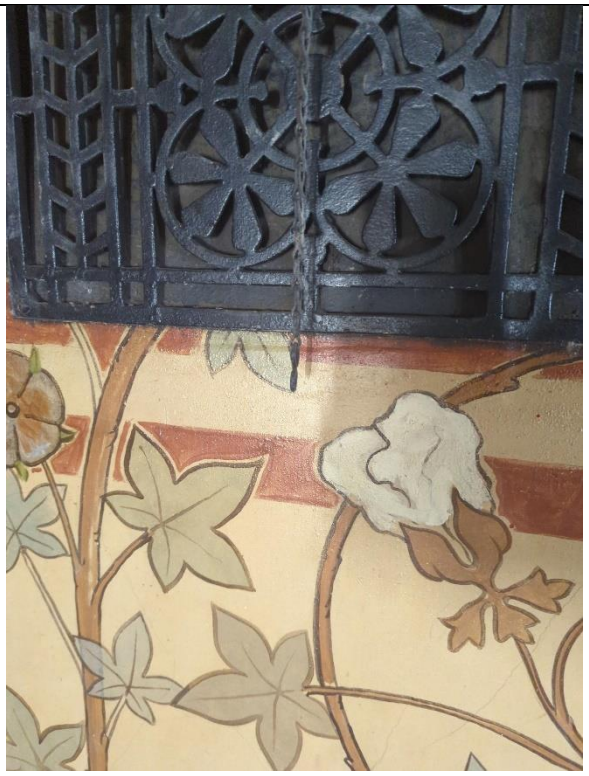


Key
- Plaster stabilisation
- Paint consolidation
- Retouching

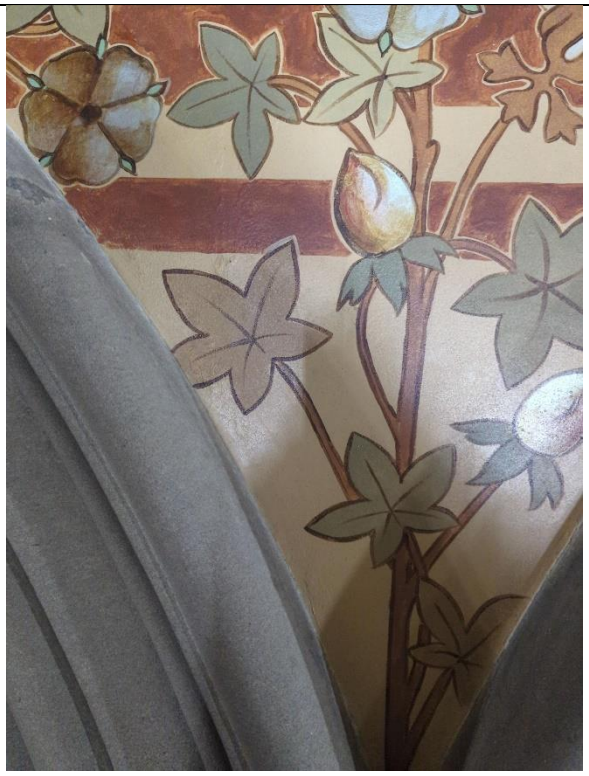
Location	Image	Note
F	Flaking and loss to paint around air vent	Additional works required: Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
F Before		Detail of flaking and loss of figurative paint work and historic (?) texture to plaster.

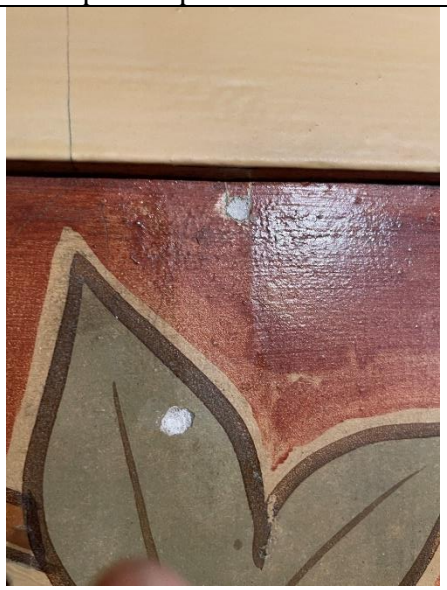
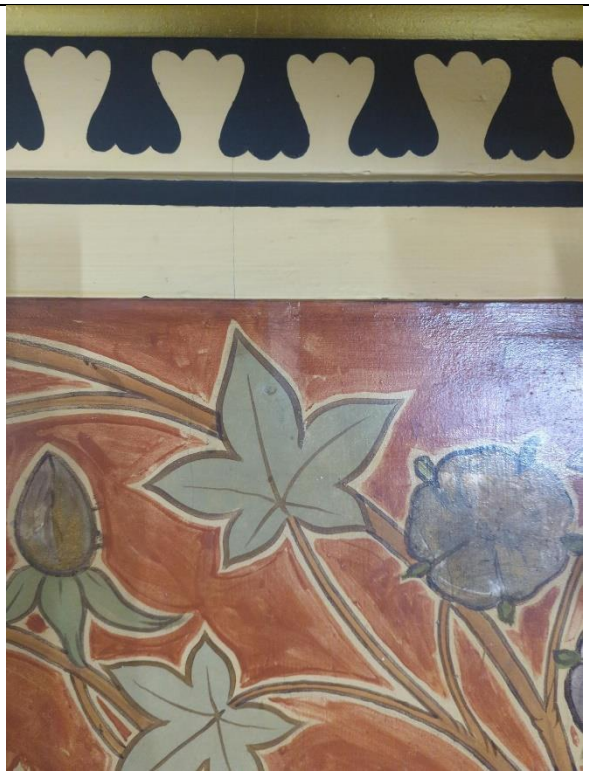
F Before		
F Before		
F Before		

F After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints
F After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

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G	Spandrel E2	
		Overall view of area.
G: Before		Detail of blistering of paint. , Additional works required: Paint requires consolidation.

G: After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

H	Examples of previous losses	
H: Before		Minor mechanical paint losses – retouch only
H: After		swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

6.3. South Elevation treatment undertaken

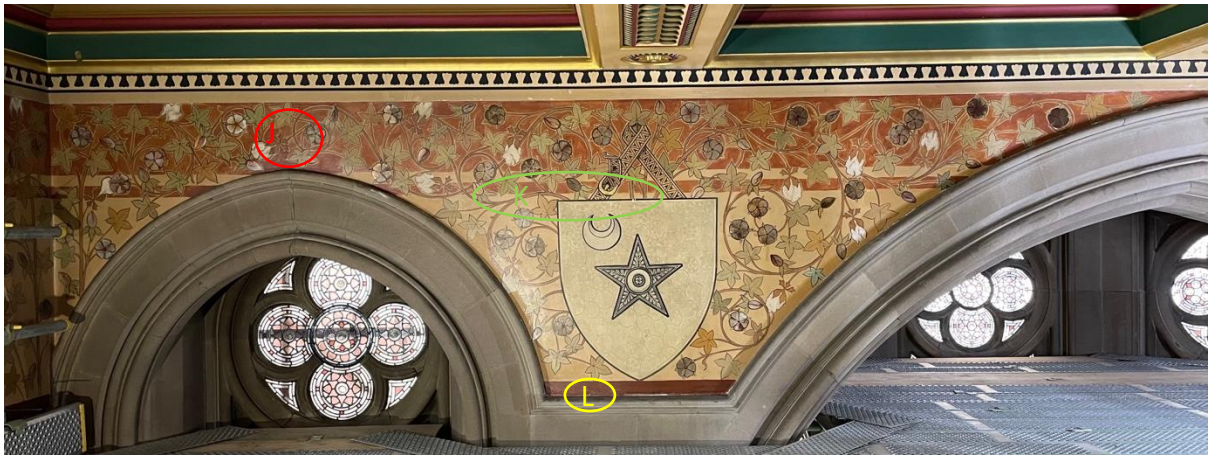


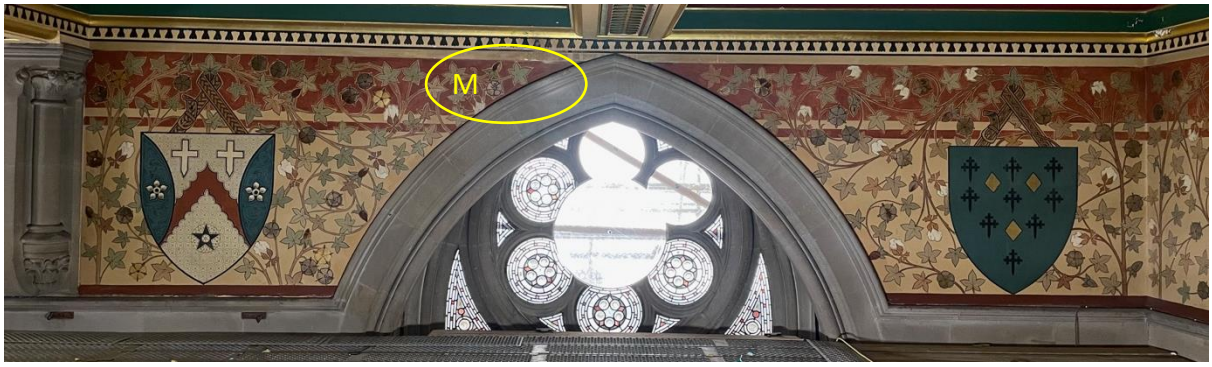
Key
- Plaster stabilisation
- Paint consolidation
- Retouching

I	West End	
Before treatment		Blistering of paint, appears to relate to inclusions in the plaster although several of the blisters were noted to require consolidation. Additional works required: Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
After treatment		Fault I: following consolidation. Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints **Note this area will require**

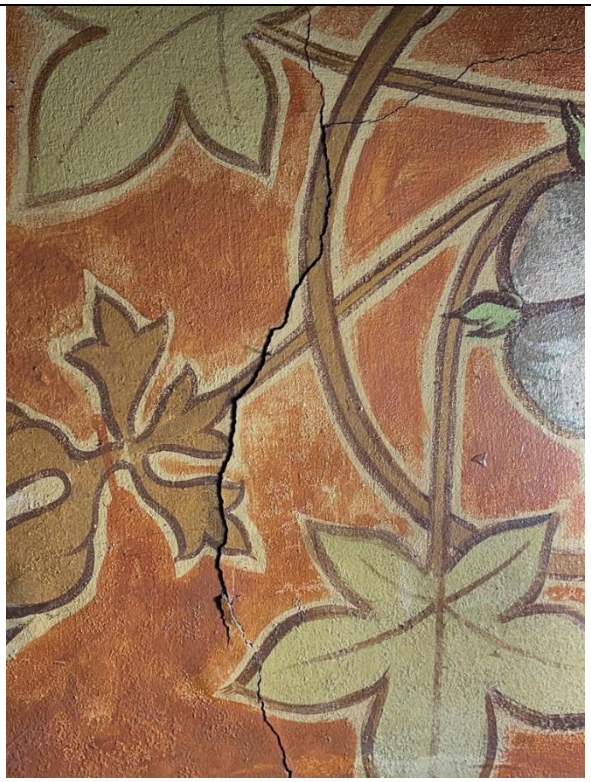
		monitoring for any ongoing issues with salts.

6.4. West Elevation treatment record





Key
- Plaster stabilisation
- Paint consolidation
- Retouching

j	West End	
		Positioned above the window arch, cracking in plaster – appears to have been previously stabilised. The crack is displaced and has several small shards along the break edge. Initial inspection indicates that this is currently stable, but **this area should be monitored for future movement/ loss.** swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water.
K: Before		Minor mechanical paint losses – requires retouching.

K: Before		
K: After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints
L: Before		Localised detachment and loss. Additional works required: Paint requires consolidation, and retouching. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
L: After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

M: Before	Flaking paint to south of the northern most window	
M: Before		Visual inspection indicates that this area has been previously consolidated and retouching/ reconstructed. Active flaking and loss of paint films apparent in this area. Additional works required: Paint requires consolidation, swab cleaning and additional retouching , to include recreation of missing detail.. No interventions to plasterwork proposed as part of this phase of works.
M: Before		
M: After		Completed consolidation, Paraloid B72 12% in acetone, swab cleaning 3% TAC in deionised water, cleared with deionised water. Retouching was completed using Golden Acrylics high permanence acrylic paints

7. Materials

Paraloid B72
Conservation Resources
Building 345, Heyford Park
Upper Heyford
Bicester
Oxfordshire
Tel: +44 (0) 1869 377 940
https://conservation-resources.co.uk

Acetone
Industrial Plasterers
63 Netherstreet, Bromham
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 2DP
Tel: +44 (0) 1380 859 638
https://industrialplasters.com

Tri ammonium Citrate
Fisher Scientific, part of Thermo Fisher Scientific
Bishop Meadow Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 5RG
Tel: +44 (0) 1509 555 500
https://www.fishersci.co.uk/gb/en/home.html

Casting Plaster
Industrial Plasterers
63 Netherstreet, Bromham
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 2DP
Tel: +44 (0) 1380 859 638
https://industrialplasters.com

Toupret Fine Surface Filler
Toolstation
Unit 2
Mallard Court Express Park
Bristol Road
Bridgwater
TA6 4RN
Tel: +44 (0) 330 333 3303
https://www.toolstation.com

Golden Acrylics
Jackson's Art Supplies
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