DOMESTIC WALL PAINTINGS AT
CHALFONT ST. PETER,
GREAT PEDNOR
and
ELSEWHERE

E. CLIVE ROUSE, F.S.A.

Two important additions to Buckinghamshire's already quite impressive list of
Elizabethan and Jacobean domestic wall paintings should be recorded, namely, in
a house (now demolished) at Chalfont St. Peter, and at Great Pednor Manor, Chesham.
In addition, one or two minor items should be mentioned which give further proof, if
any be needed, of the very widespread practice of mural decoration at that period,
even in quite humble dwellings.

CHALFONT ST. PETER

The house in which the paintings occurred formerly stood on the east side of the
High Street, forming, in fact, the street frontage of the quadrangle known as the
Barrack Yard, into which a high, covered, timbered gateway led. The entire block was
demolished in the autumn of 1938, having been condemned by the local surveyor -
the worst of many unnecessary blows to its old buildings that this village has suffered
at the hands of the local authority, its ancient character having now been practically
destroyed. It was in the course of the demolition that the full extent of the wall
painting was revealed. The house is listed as item No. 9 under Chalfont St. Peter in
the Royal Commission's inventory.¹

As long ago as 1918, some evidence of colour was noticed; and I recorded one
panel of painting on the street gable, over what was then Rance's greengrocery shop,
in 1927,² mentioning that there were other indications of painting. As the rooms were
then occupied, it was not possible to make further investigations at that time.

On receiving information of the demolition work, I at once went to the house;
and it was immediately apparent that the extent and elaboration of the mural paint-
ings was very considerable. I found that the two main rooms on the first floor had
evidence of a complete scheme of painting; and the discovery of some painted timber
stud from elsewhere in the house with different designs suggested that there was for-
merly painting in other rooms as well. I must here record my thanks to Mr. J. W.
Reader for coming over and giving me his practical help in uncovering and recording
the paintings under extremely unpleasant and difficult conditions, with the house
literally disintegrating about us. We were fortunate to escape injury when one com-
plete ceiling collapsed on us, owing to the weight of water and various debris on top of it after the roof tiles had been removed. I have also to thank Mr. F. Mead, the demolition contractor, for his co-operation. He allowed me all the time he could; and after his day’s destruction frequently came back and helped me in uncovering the paintings. He, moreover, took down several of the paintings under my supervision so that something was saved from the wreck; and he himself presented one or two objects to the Museum. Mr. Reader has published a few details from the paintings, but the complete series in the house has never been recorded.

The room facing the street had a most interesting scheme. On the street gable, above two late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century four-light windows with moulded wood mullions and a diamond-section wood bar to each light (discovered in the course of the demolition and re-used in a modern house) (plate 2a), was the text already recorded in Records, vol. XII. This is reproduced here (plate 3a), because the original photograph was inadequate, and Mr. Reader’s drawing is only an outline sketch without the text. The frame is a kind of strapwork cartouche in black outline, shaded in green with some red filling, with lion’s masks at the corners in yellow-brown with red tongues. The text itself appears to be a metrical version of Ecclesiasticus viii. 36 (‘Whatever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss’). The centre panel is 6 feet by 3 feet. In the triangular spaces of the gable-end, at each side of the centre panel, I uncovered on the left a Tudor rose with foliage intertwined with shamrock leaves in emerald and olive greens (plate 3a); and on the right a crowned thistle and rich green foliage, and the initials I R flanking the crown in brown and black (plate 3b). The design may be compared with an embroidered panel from a sampler in the Victoria and Albert Museum, illustrated in plate 2 of the small handbook on Samplers, and dated the first quarter of the seventeenth century (plate 4). A similar idea may be seen in the vignettes or embellishments to seventeenth-century heraldic works, of which one such, from the top of the dedication page of Sylvanus Morgan’s Sphere of Gentry, 1661, is reproduced (fig. 1). This whole gable was purchased by Miss Burness; and I successfully

FIG. 1. Decoration at top of title-page of Sylvanus Morgan’s Sphere of Gentry. 1661

superintended the removal of the paintings (plate 2b) and their re-erection at Whan Cross, Chalfont St. Giles, now used as a centre for various conferences and clergy retreats. During the occupation of this place by the army in the war, the paintings were again completely obliterated by cream distemper. However, I was able to uncover them once more, clean and preserve them; and they are now in good order, only
slightly dimished in brightness after not inconsiderable vicissitudes in their 340-odd years of existence. It is of interest that the timbers separating the three parts of the painting were plastered over and painted yellow; and the whole gable seems to have had a narrow outline or border of the same colour.

On the inner gable at the opposite end of the room was uncovered a fine and spirited painting of a unicorn (plate 5). It was painted in black outline with green shading on the plain cream plaster ground, framed by broad brown lines. The animal prances over a green hummocky base with sprays of grass and plants on it. It is collared and chained and has a parted mane and flowing tail, and is quite clearly the Royal Unicorn adopted as a supporter to the Royal Arms of Scotland by James I of that country in 1429, and introduced into the English Royal Arms as the sinister supporter at the Union in 1603, in place of the Tudor red dragon. It thus becomes apparent that the scheme of decoration in this room was executed to celebrate (or at any rate to commemorate within a very few years of the actual event) the Union with Scotland in 1603, and explains the rose and shamrock and the crowned thistle with the initials IR on the opposite wall. The initials, of course, represent Jacobus Rex, and are those of James I of England and VI of Scotland, and provide most valuable dating evidence. That it was not unusual to commemorate such events in domestic wall decoration may be seen by comparison with a painted frieze at Paramount Grange, West Marsh, Isle of Sheppey, where the initials IR, flanking a rose, and the date 1603, are found. (See Arch. Joum. XCIII, pp. 197, 198, and plate X.) The flanking spandrels of this wall, unlike those of the street gable, were not apparently painted; but once again the timbers were covered and represented by neat yellow bands, and there was some kind of decorated border in yellow and black on the main tie-beam, too perished to decipher. The panel containing the unicorn was purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum; but was badly broken in the course of its removal and transport by the museum staff. It has been heavily restored, but survives in some form, and could formerly be seen in Room 52.

Upon examination it became evident that the whole room had been treated with a scheme of decoration. The wattle-and-daub panels, surfaced with a thin coat of fine hair-plaster, divided by timber studs between floor and ceiling level, had apparently been outlined in yellow. In one panel beside the fireplace another text was found in a black double-line frame with yellow 'twist' or cable ornament and having a scroll border outside (not illustrated). This was very fragmentary, but it was possible to identify the text as Matthew v. 37, the text and initial letters in red, and the script in black. The text ('But let your communication be gca, gca; Nay, Nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil') foreshadows in an interesting way the Puritan and Quaker tendencies so marked in this part of Buckinghamshire not many years later.

The entire ceiling of this room was also painted, but it was only possible to make the roughest sketches of this before the whole thing fell upon Mr. Reader and myself. The ceiling was sloped at the sides, following the line of the rafters, and cut off flat at the collar-beam, giving the section \[\text{\textit{}}\]. On the sloping portions were remains of the most elaborate frames containing texts in blackletter. These were very fragmentary, and it was only possible to uncover small portions and make rough notes. One frame had a yellow inner border and scroll and strapwork sides and corners with black outline similar to the other framed text (plate 6a). The frame certainly
contained more than one text in blackletter characters, but only one could be identified, namely, Ephesians v. 1. ('Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children' etc.) As before, the source of the text and the capitals were in red, and the rest in black. The corner of a frame on the opposite slope was recovered. It had a yellow inner band and black outline again, with a speckled red border and bunches of fruit, flowers, and leaves, of a most admirable kind (plate 6b). It was not possible to identify the texts in this frame.

The room immediately behind this also had a complete scheme of mural decoration, but it was less well preserved. Several of the walls were wholly or partly outside walls, and the plaster filling between the timber stumps had been much renewed. These panels were originally filled with a painted representation of strapwork panelling with pierced border in a great variety of colours—brown, red, green, blue, black, and white, all shaded (plate 7). It should be compared with other discoveries of painted representations of panelling at Amersham, Wendover, etc. This scheme was carried over all the plaster and woodwork indiscriminately, and even over both sides of the oak batten door and evidently went right round the room, but was only preserved on the partition wall and on a small section of wall near the door. Two of these plaster panels showing the strapwork panel painting with red styles between them, complete from floor to ceiling, were taken out for preservation; but I do not know if they have ever found a resting-place. Above the panel painting, and forming a frieze or border on the tie-beams and carried round the subject-matter on the gable ends, was a fine border of chevron type, the spaces filled with multi-coloured ornament repeating the colours of the panels. This latter may be compared with a similar design at Littleworth Manor, Hants., circa 1580, illustrated in Arch. Journ., XCII, plate XVII.

The party-wall, backing on to the unicorn in the next room, I also found to be painted with a subject filling the whole space between the panelling and border. But since this area of plaster was going to South Kensington, I deemed it safe and did not fully uncover the subject, and made no pictorial record, time being very pressing, with the house already half demolished. The museum, however, despite being told of this second subject on the back of the unicorn, did not see fit to take any steps to uncover, preserve, or record it; and so it is entirely lost. From what I had revealed myself, I am confident that the subject was the very unusual one of Judith and Holofernes; and the loss of this interesting item is the more unfortunate. A headless figure, with blood dripping from the neck, the arms sprawled limply out, was lying across a bed with elaborate canopy or draperies, with one figure, and perhaps a second in female attire who seemed to be walking away. The disposition of the figures, and the drapery, with Judith's maid and the bag ready to receive Holofernes' severed head accord well with the description of the scene in Judith xiii. 1-10.

On the opposite (outside) gable above the window was shown part of the conflict between David and Goliath—a tolerably lurid scheme of decoration for the best bedroom or guest chamber! The elaborate border already referred to goes all round the subject, the bottom being on the beam; and at the top is a piece of the blackletter inscription putting the identification beyond doubt—'...Goliath the Philistine' (plate 8a). The scene shows David as a small figure brandishing Goliath's immense sword as he stands over the prostrate giant, about to cut off his head. David is dressed in a loose tunic with the sling apparently hanging from his waist, bare legs and small brown boots (compare the figures of Julius Caesar and Joshua in the Nine Worthies
Goliath is in full armour, rather carefully drawn, and it is noticeable that on his left hand is a mail gauntlet, while the other is bare. In the background are some trees which it is also interesting to compare with those at No. 61, High Street, Amersham, and at each side are the tents of the opposing armies, in one of which are traces of a figure or figures, possibly King Saul and his court, with the discarded armour, watching the combat. A marked similarity in composition is apparent with the David and Goliath uncovered at Harvington Hall, Worcs., identified by Miss E. Matley Moore as part of a set of the Nine Worthies, though there is no suggestion that the Chalfont painting formed part of such a set. The painting was a good deal faded, but the dominant tones were red, brown, sage-green, and grey, with black outline. The centre part of this painting was taken down, and I believe still exists stored somewhere in a shed.

In demolishing the attics, one beam was found to be painted; and search among the debris disclosed two timber studs with reasonably well-preserved painted decoration on them. One of these is now in the Society's museum. The scheme appears to have been a repeat pattern consisting of a circular flower with petals of irregular shape, separated by a thick trellis pattern. This is entirely in black and white, as at Dean Farm, Jordans, except for a green circle in the centre of the flower (plate 85).

It may be of technical interest to note that all the inner walls were of wattle-and-daub with a thin top layer of fine half-plaster to receive the painting. The gable ends were of split oak laths and daub, with the same fine surface coat. The front room ceiling was of oak laths and plaster; but many of the panels and the ceiling in the back room (all doubtless once painted) had clearly been renewed, as they were of deal laths, and daub or plaster.

This is a remarkably elaborate scheme of decoration for a comparatively modest house; and its destruction or dispersal is the more to be regretted.

GREAT PENDOR MANOR

Evidence of painting has been known in this house for some time; and a painted stud and timber upright were mentioned and illustrated by Mr. Francis Reader in 1934 and 1936. In December 1939, Captain Bruce S. Ingram, the present owner of the house, was having various alterations carried out, in the course of which much painting came to light behind more modern lath-and-plaster facing or partitions. The decoration of an upper room is amongst the best things of its date in Bucks. (plate 9 and frontispiece). I am most grateful to Captain Ingram for giving me every facility to inspect and record the painting, and for his permission to reproduce my water-colour copy, the original of which is in his possession.

One entire wall, some 19 feet in length and 8 feet high, has been exposed; and there is reason to believe that the scheme continues behind modern facing on two other walls. The painting is carried over plaster and timbers in the usual way; but an interesting technical point revealed here is that to make an even join where the timber had shrunk or the plaster was not a close fit, narrow strips of canvas, varying from 3 to 6 inches in width, were glued over the joints, further fastened down by small leather studs or washers, and the whole painted in with the rest of the scheme.

The design consists of an elaborate all-over pattern of interlacing quatrefoils in greeny-yellow, outlined on alternate edges in black and a brilliant bluish emerald-
green, giving an impression of relief or light and shade. Each quatrefoil encloses sprays of flowers and foliage, and the other spaces are occupied by various types of Tudor and other roses surrounded by dots. The whole background is of a rich salmon-or orange-pink; and it is of interest that this must have contained a considerable proportion of vermillion which in certain areas has changed to the black sulphide from the red sulphide of mercury and quite altered the character of the painting. This is a defect of vermillion which is liable quite unpredictably to occur in lime painting. There is a deep plinth or skirting of purplish-red with top border and guilloche design in cream. At the top is a frieze with panels framed or enclosed in interlacing guilloche pattern, and separated by strapwork in red outlined in white, each panel containing a text in a rather poor blackletter script. The strapwork separating the text panels is almost exactly similar to the frieze at Rothamsted House, Herts. (See Arch. Journ., vol. XCVIII, plate VII.) Five panels, or parts of them, survive, and it has been possible to identify the texts as being from the metrical version of the Psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins. The design is extraordinarily similar to the first painting discovered in the Painted Room, No. 3, Cornmarket Street, Oxford, except that the interlacing members have ogee and not simple rounded foils as at Pednor, and they enclose alternate bunches of fruit and sprays of flowers; while the plinth is less elaborate, and the frieze more so at Pednor than at Oxford. The Oxford example was able to be dated on the evidence of the initials of Joan Tattleton, the occupier of the premises between 1560 and 1581; and the Pednor painting is quite clearly of about the same date, though the work is less accomplished in the country, as one would expect as compared with the town.

The texts, reading from left to right, facing the wall, are as follows (the square brackets indicate perished or indecipherable portions restored from the edition of the Whole Booke of Psalms, printed for the Company of Stationers in London in 1612):

Panel 1

Then shall the earth encreas, great store of fruite shall [fall]
And then our God, the God of peacle, shall[i blesse us ete withhall.]

Panel 2

[God] shall [us] bles allway, and then both farre and neare,
[The folke] throughout [the earth allway] of hym shall [stand in feare.]

These are from Psalm lxvii, verses 6 and 7, 'Done into English meeter by John Hopkins'. Each verse is arranged in two lines instead of the four of the printed version.

Panel 3

[If] I set my hart within in wicked workes rejoyce!
De ps I have delitte to syn, God will not [heare my voyce.]
Panel 4

But surely God my Joyce hath hard and what I do require;
By prayer he doth it well regard and granteth my desier.

Panel 5

All people to hym that hath not put, not cast me out of mind:
For yet lyt mercy from me thin, which I doe ever find.

These are from Psalm lxvi, verses 18, 19, and 20, by Thomas Sternhold, and correspond very closely to the edition of the metrical Psalms published by John Day in 1583, though there are some slight differences of spelling both between that and the 1612 reprint already referred to. There was a further edition by John Playford in 1699, which shows considerable divergences from the Pednor version. Thomas Sternhold was born about 1500. He was Groom of the Robes to Henry VII and Edward VI, and died in 1549. Only nineteen Psalms appeared in the first metrical version originally attached to the Prayer Book; and thirty-seven in a second edition dated 1549. There was another edition with additional Psalms of John Hopkins in 1551. The first complete set appeared in 1562, and was afterwards constantly reprinted. Sternhold was responsible for forty Psalms and Hopkins for sixty, the remainder being the work of five or six other authors. Both from the evidence of the artistic style of the drawing and the comparatively early version of the Psalms, it is clear that the Pednor work must have been done between 1562 and 1580, when the metrical Psalms were new and fashionable.

In a room on the ground floor a complete range of painting can be seen in a crevice behind a modern matchboard covering. This scheme is in the room (now the kitchen) from which came the painted studs and timber upright figured by Mr. Reader. The design is obviously contemporary with, and a variant of, that in the upper room, the interface being angular instead of curved. There are the same flowers in the same spaces, the same strapwork divisions on the frieze, and the same guilloche pattern enclosing panels with blackletter texts. It is hoped at some time to uncover this wall, when there is no doubt the texts will be identifiable. The house at Pednor, as Mr. Reader has pointed out, was one of some standing, having belonged to Molland Abbey prior to the Dissolution. After that it passed to the Wedon family as tenants and later as owners. They were in possession from 1541 to 1677, and it is probable that the decoration was done not very long after their entry. The house is not noticed by the Royal Commission.

MARKET HILL, BUCKINGHAM

Since Mr. F. W. Reader recorded this example in Arch. Journ., XCVIII, pp. 241–2, fig. 5, considerably more of it has come to light, and it is clear that it extends round the room, with a ‘twist’ or cable ornament border between it and the ceiling. The original ceiling, moreover, is now seen to be completely painted in a kind of imitation of coffering, in black and yellow, very similar to the design at Paramour Grange, West Marsh, Isle of Sheppey, which Mr. Reader has compared with the ceiling of Wolsey’s Closet at Hampton Court.
In the course of listing ancient buildings in the town for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, I was told of wall paintings in No. 1, London End—promises belonging to Mr. J. Perryman, which extend also into the market-place and form part of No. 3, London End, the latter being listed by the Royal Commission. The fact may be recorded here for future reference, though the walls of the room concerned, on the first floor, are now covered with wallpaper. I ascertained that there was, in fact, evidence of painting on the plaster and beams beneath. I was informed that the plaster panels between the timber studs contained figures and foliage or flowers.

**BETLOW FARM, LONG MARSTON, HERTS.**

This building, in an isolated situation in the parish of Tring Urban and Rural with Long Marston, is actually in Hertfordshire; but being not more than 100 yards outside the Buckinghamshire County Boundary, it may conveniently be included here. I am indebted to Mr. M. D. Perkins for bringing the painting in this house to my notice, and to the present occupier for allowing me facilities for inspecting it and making a sketch. The house, though not promising from its exterior except for a timbered range on the north, is an important one with fine roof trusses and braced king-

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**Fig. 2. BETLOW FARM, LONG MARSTON, HERTS.** Wall-painting in room on first floor
post, possibly of early sixteenth-century date, and much other timber; to say nothing of a complete horse-driven churn in wood in an outbuilding, similar to that recorded by Mr. Eland at Manor Farm, Broughton, and now in the Science Museum at South Kensington. The house is not noticed by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in their Hertfordshire volume.

The walls of a bedroom were found during redecoration to contain considerable traces of painting beneath wall-paper. Part of one plaster panel between timber up-rights is preserved. Its condition is somewhat fragmentary, the surface coat of hair-plaster being a good deal shattered, and loose from the undercoat. The design seems to have been carried indiscriminately over plaster and timbers, and is of the familiar late sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century type, consisting of a frieze with framed texts or inscriptions, and a repeat mould-work pattern of geometrical character of interlaced circles, with flowers in the spaces (fig. 2). The colours are somewhat faded, but the black-letter texts (indecipherable) on white panels are framed by a guilloche border outlined in black and white, as at Great Pedmore, an alternate red and grey grounds. The interlace below is likewise outlined in black and white to simulate light and shade to give an impression of relief, and the flowers are in dull reds, pinks, and greys on a neutral background. The accompanying sketch is a partial reconstruction based on all the visible details. The closest parallel to this example that I have found is at Bramley Old Hall, near Guildford, illustrated by Mr. Reader in Arch. Journ., XCVIII, plate IX, A. The painting is quite a valuable addition to the list of decorative schemes of this type and date.

WINGRAVE

A small area of painting was found in an upper room at Dene (or Dean) Leys, Nop End, a good many years ago. Both Mr. Reader and I have seen this, but it has not been recorded and our notes were mislaid. Miss Cicely Baker, F.S.A., has kindly given me fresh details and a sketch.

The area of painting has obviously been a good deal extended since I first saw it; and more could evidently be recovered. The painting is in an upstairs bedroom, over the main living-room, on the interior wall. The area visible is about 7 feet 8 inches by about 5 feet, and was apparently carried over timbers and plaster. The timber up-rights seem to divide the design roughly into panels 3 feet 10 inches wide. There are traces of painting on the heavy upper beam—two narrow borders with a space of some 8 inches between, in which there might have been lettering. There has been a deep plinth to the design, on which the border is traceable at intervals.

The main part of the composition is in black and white, with a black background, and is of an elaborate type of which we have only one other example in Buckinghamshire, that at Loughton Manor House, described and illustrated in the Royal Commission's Inventory. They date it as late sixteenth-century. This Italian arabesque style, with full classical detail, is well known in domestic wall-painting and is usually to be dated in the last half of the sixteenth century. Mr. Reader gives several examples of it in his papers in the Archaeological Journal already frequently quoted above. Those most similar to the Wingrave example are at Shire Hall, Wilmington, Kent; Royston, Herts; and Elmstead Hall, Essex.

The Wingrave design appears to consist of opposed female demi-figures or busts
(or possibly amorini), two to a panel, holding up elaborate cups or vases with sprays of roses in them, surrounded by bunches of apples or other fruit and foliage, and rich acanthus scrolls. The narrow top border is the same as that at Great Pednor Manor. It is hoped to publish a drawing of this example in a future number of the Records.

1 R.C.H.M., Bucks., S. vol., p. 81.
2 Records of Bucks., vol. XII, pp. 47-9, and plate.
3 Arch. Journ., vol. LXXXVII, 1942, pp. 150-3, fig. 34. Also Arch. Journ., vol. LXXXIX, 1942, pp. 171, and plates XXIV and XXV, A.
4 Arch. Journ., LXXXIII, 1939, pp. 32, plate III, LXXXIX, p. 132, plate V and fig. 3; XCV, p. 114, plate 1, etc.; and XCIII, plate XII, No. 6 (where they are reproduced with comparative examples).
5 Records of Bucks., vol. XII, pp. 378-9, plates V and VI.
6 Archæologia, vol. LVIII, 1907, plates LXXXVII, etc.
7 Records of Bucks., vol. XII, pp. 384-7, plate XIII, A.
8 Records of Bucks., vol. XIII, pp. 42-3, plate I; and Arch. Journ., vol. XCVII, p. 265, and plate VII.
10 Records of Bucks., vol. XII, pp. 42, 43, and plate 1.
11 R.C.H.M., Bucks., S. vol., p. 41, B, item 16.
12 C. Stirling, in Bucks., pp. 75-7, and plates.
13 R.C.H.M., Bucks., N. vol., p. 133.
14 Arch. Journ., XCVII, p. 268, fig. 1: ibid., p. 362, fig. 2: ibid., vol. XCVIII, p. 233, pl. VIII.

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PLATE 2a. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Oak mullioned window discovered in the course of demolition.

PLATE 2b. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. The house described in this article in course of demolition. The text, rose and thistle have just been removed from the panels above the main tie-beam in the gable.
When anything thou takest in hand to do,
Or wert a portly youth marked well the equal end
Where of that base Apple, know God.

PLATE 3b. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Street gable, right side

PLATE 3c. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Street gable, left side

PLATE 3d. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Street gable, centre panel

From measured drawings by E. C. R.
PLATE 4. Detail from a sampler of the first quarter of the 17th century
PLATE 6a. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET.
Details of texts and frames on ceiling of front room.

PLATE 6b. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET.
Details of texts and frames on ceiling of front room.
PLATE 7. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Detail of painted representation of paneling, and border or frieze.
PLATE 8a. CHALFONT ST. PETER, HIGH STREET. Painted timber upright or stud. (Now in the Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury)
PLATE 9. GREAT PETERS MARA. Section of painting on the first floor, now in a passage.