

DATE: 16 / 03 / 2022

## **CANVAS PAINTING - CONDITION REPORT & ESTIMATE**

Museum: National Army Museum		Accession no.:	2021-12-1-1-1		
Title & date:	Dawn at Waterloo, 1895				
Artist:	Elizabeth Butler				
Medium/support/size (cm):	Oil / canvas	1264 x 1962 unframed		1362 x 2063.5 framed	
Location:	NAM art store, Stevenage				
Visibility:	Limited - viewed in a physically restricted setting, the work framed and with canvas back, sides & corners inaccessible.  NB. it was not physically possible to create photographs of good enough quality to constitute a reliable, visual record of fact.				

## **CONDITION**

Surface	
Front:	Significant layer of loose dust and fibres; and another of compacted surface dirt. Three large drips or splashes, each c. 20-30 x c. 10-15 mm, of an unknown white substance near the bottom edge. A smaller drip c. 10 x 5 mm is in the sky. A curved and continuous drip-mark runs downwards from near the TLHC.
Back:	Back inaccessible behind backcloth, but probably an insignificant layer of dust.
Varnish:	Present. A glossy, universal layer of green-fluorescing varnish applied over one or more older and partially removed layers. Beneath are many blanched areas, some possibly of older varnish; while many others affect overpaint/retouching on top of original but age-cracked paint - as, for example, on Wellington's right sleeve. Some original paint glazes may also be affected by blanching.
	Beneath the topmost varnish there remains a partial layer, very heavily yellowed - most obviously seen in the sky where it presents a thick yellow-brown tidemark.
	An area, (max.) c. 670 x 140, of the upper varnish has been in direct contact with the plastic-based Bubble-wrap packing material which then became stuck to it. The wrapping was subsequently pulled away from the varnish, leaving a characteristic impression of it behind. It is also likely that some small sections of plastic may also remain imbedded in the varnish.
	At the BLHC, left of the signature, is a c. $130 \times 12$ mm abrasion damage to the varnish, giving the appearance of a fine white powder on the surface.

### Original paint and ground

Overall, the paint and ground layers appear to be in stable condition, with no clear indications of loss of adhesion to the canvas, or of historical delamination. There has been previous insensitive and/or over-cleaning of the original paint layers, and considerable overpainting, rather than discrete retouching of the numerous pale drying cracks across the composition. See, for example, the face of the soldier resting his head on his left arm to the right side of Wellington. As a result the original surface now appears somewhat patchy and difficult to read in close-up - the upper parts of Wellington's jacket on his right side, for example - but would be reasonably coherent from a gallery viewing distance.

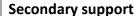
There are two significant historical damages i) & ii), both repaired, and one ambiguous one iii):

- i) in the sky just above the horizon, 150 mm right of centre, a roughly rectangular repair, probably of both paint/ground and canvas, with thick, poorly-matched overpaint extending on top of the original. The area affected being c. 60 x 30 mm. Raking light reveals that the damage and repair extends on a slight diagonal by 40 mm below the horizon, but this is not immediately obvious as the surface there has been affected by Bubble-wrap contact.
- ii) in the sky, 310 mm down from the top edge of the frame and 680 mm from the left side edge of the frame, what appears to be a mended damage to the paint/ground and possibly to the canvas. The area, which fluoresces in UV light, has been retouched/overpainted on top of the topmost layer of vanish. The retouching has discoloured markedly, becoming very yellow-green.
- iii) affecting Wellington's jacket on his right side and the canvas to the left of it is an inverted L-shaped area of puckered canvas, c.140 x 100 mm, with raised and rounded 'pimples' obvious in raking light. This could be the result of localised heat damage, but could also be a site of existing repair.

There is at least one other mended damage, to the top of the cap of the sleeping soldier at foreground centre, and some small unrepaired paint losses on his left sleeve. Other losses and small repairs may well be present beneath the accumulated layers of discoloured/blanched varnish and overpaint, and/or disguised by the Bubble-wrap impressions.

### **Original support**

The back (other than the topmost 10 cm), sides & corners of the canvas are inaccessible being covered by a backcloth. From the front the structure as a whole appears, however, to be stable, a good, even tension being maintained across the canvas. The back appears to be covered with thick brushstrokes of what is probably an adhesive. NAM's SMB did not describe the work as being lined in 1986/7 when she examined it. Dewar reported in 2021 that 'the canvas has been lined' but also that he had not actually seen the back. I'm not able to verify this one way or the other because of the backcloth, but the very clean and even tacking margin seen at the top from behind do look like those of a lining canvas rather than an original, and the apparent adhesive on the back may relate to lining.



A wooden stretcher, probably keyable, but inaccessible.

Frame		
Construction: Back cover: Painting fixings:	Plain gilded slip style. Backcloth. Inaccessible.	
Condition:	Not inspected.	

This report is an accurate account of an examination of the above named painting, carried out on the date specified. The painting was examined in situ and does not constitute a full and definitive assessment of the condition of the painting as a whole.

Signed: Helen Draper, Paintings Conservator

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Painting**

The painting, insofar as it could be examined, appears to be in stable condition in both structural and aesthetic terms, albeit with the reservations outlined above. Certainly the drips of white matter should be removed as soon as possible to prevent or limit any corrosive tendencies it may have. That said, in physical terms it is fit to store, transport and display. Visually, however, the very obvious discoloured varnishes and clumsy overpaint detract considerably from the work's integrity and suitability for display. Again, the blanching of so many small-to-medium areas of the painted surface disrupts the visual cohesiveness of the image, and impairs the sense of depth and spatial recession within the composition as a whole. Most obvious in visual terms are the dozens of Bubble-wrap imprints across the RHS of the composition.

There are two options for treatment with the proviso that no unforeseen areas of concern emerge once the painting is de-framed:

- A) to remove surface dust and dirt; consolidate paint and ground if necessary; test and remove or reduce the 'bubble' effect of the wrapping; and finally spray varnish to saturate and even-out the surface.
- B) to investigate the painted surface and varnish layering closely; investigate the nature of the damages beneath the overpaint; remove both surface dirt and the various layers of varnish, filler, discoloured overpaint and retouching, and with them the 'bubble' effect; realign and/or repair any existing damages to the canvas itself; investigate the nature and reversibility of the blanching; varnish and retouch all losses and tone-in the age cracks as necessary.

## **ESTIMATE OF COSTS: Option A**

Conservation and restoration treatments	Hours min max.	Cost
Technical examination unframed	2 - 3	
Consolidate damages, losses	1 - 10	
Remove dust & compacted surface dirt, splashes	12 - 14	
Remove or reduce 'bubble' imprints/plastic remains	10 - 12	
Fill and retouch small losses	2 - 10	
Spray varnish	2 - 2	
Total estimated number of hours	29 - 51	
Total estimated cost at per hour [VAT is not payable]		

# **ESTIMATE OF COSTS: Option B**

Conservation and restoration treatments	Hours min max.	Cost
Technical examination unframed, microscopy, photography	5 - 7	
Consolidate damages, losses	1 - 10	
Remove dust & compacted surface dirt, splashes	12 - 14	
Test & remove discoloured varnish, overpaint, 'bubbles'	120 - 140	
Remove old filler; investigate damages; realign and/or repair	10 - 12	
Fill losses; varnish	8 - 10	
Retouch losses & drying cracks	70 - 140	
Spray varnish	2 - 2	
Total estimated number of hours	228 - 335	
Total estimated cost at per hour [VAT is not payable]		

Estimates include all materials (unless specified otherwise above) and professional indemnity and public liability insurance, but do not include transportation costs.