

HOLLYCOMBE HOUSE

LIPHOOK



Paint samples were taken from the six main south facing rooms which were designed by Nash and built in 1802.

The object of the investigation was to find out in general terms how these rooms were decorated when first built and how they have been painted in later years. Only approximately twenty samples were taken from each room, so this cannot be seen as a full survey.

p.2	Summary
p.4	Drawing Room
p.8	Study
p.11	Dining Room
p.13	Bedroom
p.14	Dressing Room
p.16	Bathroom
p.17	cross-section evidence
p.24	paint sample locations & examination procedure

SUMMARY

Some structural work took place in the ground floor rooms, at the end of the nineteenth century, perhaps after 1892. This involved replacing a lot of joinery, particularly around the windows.

Another episode of refurbishment took place in the early twentieth century, mostly in the first floor rooms. As a result the Bedroom and Bathroom have almost no paint dating back to 1802

1802 decoration

In all three ground floor rooms soft distempers in shades of green were used on the walls and some ceilings, and pale grey oil paint was used on all the woodwork.

The Drawing Room probably did not originally have a dado rail, and a green distemper was used from skirting to cornice. A paler shade of the same green mixture was used for the ceiling.

In the Study a very dark green was used on the wall mouldings. The skirtings boards were painted black. The treatment of the flat walls and ceiling is not known.

In the Dining Room pale grey oil paint was used for the dado and the joinery, a mid green distemper was used for the walls above the dado, a buff distemper for the cove and white for the ceiling.

On the first floor all trace of wall and ceiling decoration is lost, but we do know that the doors were grained to imitate oak.

Nineteenth-century treatments

The second time that the house was decorated, graining was used for the ground floor doors, and so the doors on both floors were now brown. They remained like this through most of the century.

On the ground floor, distempers continued to be used through the first half of the century. Eventually there was a switch to oil paints. Pastel shades, including a pale blue, were used for the walls of the Drawing Room and the Study. In the Study the pale blue walls were accompanied by gilding on the wall mouldings.

End of century refurbishment

Following structural work to window panelling and some door joinery, the ground floor rooms were decorated in a very elaborate fashion.

The ornate floral pattern seen today painted on the ceilings of the Drawing Room and the Study is part of this work. It is not a printed pattern, it is paintwork. The types of paints used, and the fact that the other details in these rooms went on to be painted twice more before the Second World War means that the work cannot be much later than the early decades of the twentieth century.

In the Drawing Room a dado rail was now fitted to the walls, and the wall below that rail was decorated to match the ceiling.



Early twentieth-century.

The Dining Room was now the only room being painted in very dark shades, with solid brown used for the dado and for all the woodwork, and green oil paint for the walls.

The other two ground floor rooms were painted in paler shades. On each occasion the earlier elaborate paintwork on their ceilings was left visible.

Eventually the painted decoration on the Drawing Room dado was covered over with lining paper and painted a cream colour, but the ceiling decoration was left visible.

On the first floor, following a major refurbishment, the rooms were all painted with white and off-white oil paints.

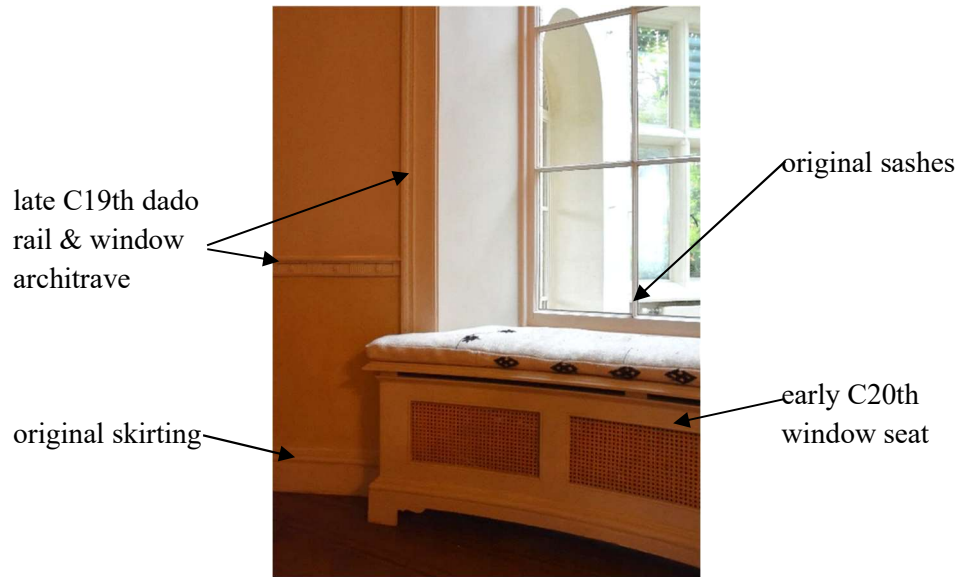
Later twentieth century

Since the Second World War some joinery has been replaced, such as the entrance door to the Study, the skirtings in the Dressing Room, the ground floor French windows and almost all the woodwork in the Bathroom.

Pale shades of paint have been used throughout the house. On the walls these have been applied over fresh layers of lining paper.

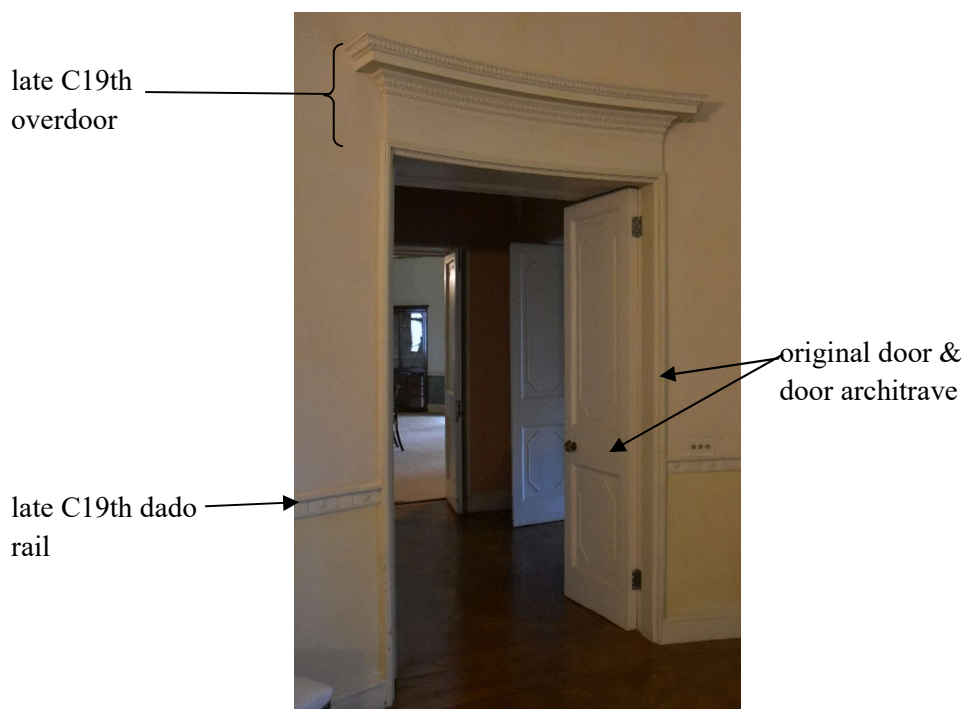
THE DRAWING ROOM

West wall



South wall



East wall**Original decoration**

On the walls, a thin coat of lead white oil paint was applied as a ground layer. This was followed by a pale green distemper, based on a mixture of verditer and ochre [Sample A1, p.17]. This green was found on the upper walls as well as on the lower walls, so there may originally have been no dado rail. The present rail is a late nineteenth-century introduction.

A paler shade of the same green distemper was used on the ceiling [Sample A29, p.17]

Greyish white oil paint was found used on the door and door architraves, and was probably used for other joinery.

The oak sashes of the west window were stained brown and given a thin coat of varnish.

Early nineteenth century decorations

Green distempers continued to be used for the walls the next few times that the room was decorated [Sample A12b, p.18]. These were applied over lining paper.

During this period a lot of the joinery started to be grained. Oak graining was found used on the door, the door architraves and the skirtings [Sample A24, p.19].

Later nineteenth century decorations

The woodwork continued to be grained.

Distempers continued to be used for the cornice and the ceiling, but the walls were now painted with oil paints. The first oil paint was a cream colour, and then there were two lots of light blue, followed by an off-white.

Late nineteenth or very early twentieth-century refurbishment

New dado rail all around the room.

New overdoor above the entrance door.

New window architraves and window reveals on the south wall.

New skirting fascia boards.

A feature of the new pieces of joinery is that many of the mouldings, such as the flowers on the dado rail, were made of composition rather than wood.

All the joinery was now painted pale pink and white [Sample A12, p.18], with some mouldings picked out in dark pink.

The walls at dado level were painted as seen today on the north wall, where later layers have been removed.

The main pigment was lead white [Sample A1, p.17]. Lead white is rarely used after the 1940s. The pink areas were painted using vermilion, a pigment rarely used after the 1920s. The use of these pigments and the fact that certain areas such as skirtings went on to be twice repainted using lead paints, points to this decoration dating to around the turn of the century.

North wall, left of fireplace



late C19th,
or very early
C20th paint
work

That ornate decoration on the dado appears to have been done to match the decoration seen today on the ceiling.

The ceiling decoration is on paper, but it is certainly a painting, and not a print. The same lead-based oil paints and pigments as were used for the dado were found in the samples taken from the ceiling [Sample A29, p.17].

Late C19th/early
C20th
paintwork still
visible today



Samples taken from the cornice decoration show that the same set of pigments were also used for this feature. Some details, such as the dark red background to the flowers on that cornice has not been overpainted since, and so the original vermilion is still visible.

First half of twentieth century

The ceiling and the dado were not touched, but other areas, such as doors, windows and skirtings were repainted twice using lead-based oil paints.

Later twentieth century

At some point after the Second World War, with the introduction of paints based on titanium dioxide white, lining paper was applied over the dado decoration and then the whole room, apart from the ceiling was repainted an off-white.

Since then the room has been repainted a further four times.

THE STUDY

North wall

original walls and
spandrel mouldings

late C20th
door & door
architraves

original skirtings



North/west wall

late C20th
replastering
above cupboard
in the niche



South wall

original window
arched top
[made of plaster]

late C19th
panelled
sides [made of
wood]

late C20th window



Original decoration

A very dark green was used for the wall mouldings [Sample B1, p.19]

The same dark green was used for the skirting mouldings, but the skirting fascia board was painted black



The walls and ceiling were probably painted with distempers, and these were later washed off, because no trace of any original wall paint was found on these flat surfaces. The only clue was in a splash of paint pale green found in the sample taken from the skirting.

The panelling around the window was painted with a light grey oil paint [Sample B12, p.20]. The same paint would probably have been used for the door, but the present door is a modern replacement.

Early nineteenth-century decorations

The original scheme with dark green mouldings may have remained in place a long time. It has thick dirt on the surface.

A second dark green eventually replaced the first. The windows continued pale grey.

Later nineteenth-century decoration

The distempers were replaced with oil paints, and the room was painted pale blue and gold .

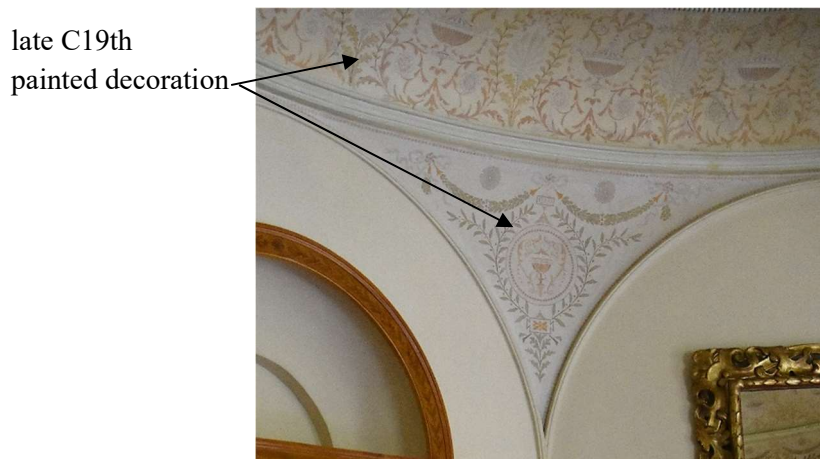
The walls and the ceiling were painted with a very pale blue oil paint based on lead white and some French ultramarine. Oil gilding was used for the wall mouldings.

In the samples taken, this was the first paint found on the walls, and clearly all earlier schemes must have been cleaned off, or wall papers peeled off.

Late nineteenth-century scheme

Some work was done to the windows, possibly replacing shutters.

The floral decoration seen today on the ceiling was painted using oil paints based on lead white [Sample B7, p.20].



The paints that were used look very similar to the paints used for the floral decoration seen today on the Drawing Room ceiling, and the two rooms may have been painted at the same time.

The flat walls and the wall mouldings were painted pale pink.

The joinery was painted a warm off-white

Early twentieth century

The ceiling decoration was not touched but the walls and the joinery were twice re-painted before the middle of the century.

The first time was using paint based purely on lead white. The second time involved an undercoat based on lead white and a top coat based on zinc white. This combination was widely used in the inter-war years, and not after circa 1950.

Later twentieth century

Since the Second World War the room has been painted at least three times using paints based on titanium dioxide white.

THE DINING ROOM

In this room the only structural changes since 1802 appear to have been to replace the skirting boards and some of the panelling around the windows.

The cove, the ceiling, walls, the dado rail, the architraves for both doors, and the west door itself are all original.



Work carried out on
window panelling in
the later C19th

Original decoration

The woodwork was all painted with a greyed white oil paint. The same paint was also used for the dado.

The cornice and cove were painted with a dull green distemper. A white distemper was used for the flat of the ceiling [Sample C20, p.22].

It is not known how the walls above the dado were painted. Nothing early was found under the present lining papers and emulsion paints. A distemper was probably used, and was later washed off.

Early nineteenth-century decorations

The woodwork and the dado continued to be painted in shades of pale grey or off-white. The ceiling was now painted a mid green and the cove a light green

Later nineteenth-century decorations

By the middle of the century the woodwork was all being grained to imitate oak. The graining was also used on the dado.

It is not known how the upper walls were decorated.

Refurbishment in the late nineteenth century

Work was done to the panelling around the windows, including the shutters.

Following this work the doors and dado continued to be grained but the window joinery was now painted a very pale green.

Green continued to be used on the cove, but around this time the flat of the ceiling started to be painted white.

Early twentieth-century schemes

During this period, the Dining Room was being repainted much more often than the Drawing Room and Study. The oak graining that up to now had been used on the woodwork was replaced with a solid dark brown with a varnished finish [Sample C2, p.21]. This now included all the panelling around the windows as well as the doors and dado.

Two dark brown schemes were followed by a decoration which saw all the joinery and the dado painted a very dark green.

The final decoration based on lead white, which must have pre-dated the Second World War, saw a change back to light shades and the window panelling was now painted white. Because of recent paint stripping it was not possible to establish if the doors and dado were also painted white.

Later twentieth-century decorations

Since the Second World War the room has been decorated at least five times.

THE BEDROOM

In this room, major work appears to have been carried out in the first half of the twentieth century, and the only feature where original 1802 paintwork was found, was the entrance door.

Because of the present padded wall covering it was not possible to take any samples from the walls

Original decoration of the entrance door

The first paint scheme on the door is an oak graining. This was used on both the interior and the exterior faces of the door.

Oak graining was also the first scheme on the Dressing Room door, and it may have been used throughout the first floor. On the ground floor, pale grey was used for doors in 1802, and graining was introduced at a slightly later date.

Later nineteenth-century decorations of the entrance door

The second time the door was decorated, there was a change. On the Lobby side it continued to be grained, but on the bedroom side it was now painted a cream colour.

Towards the end of the century there was another change and both sides of the door were now being painted a cream colour.

Late nineteenth or early twentieth-century work on roof doorway

The plaster reveal of the doorway in the SW corner of the room has just three lots of lead-based paint on it, compared to eight on the entrance door. Work must have been carried out on this doorway to improve access to the roof.

?1930s changes to the room

Cupboards were built on the west wall, new door architraves were made for the entrance door, and a gypsum plaster skim coat was applied to the ceiling.

Following this work the room was painted pure white. The paint involved a lead-based undercoat and a top coat based on zinc white. This was a combination of pigments commonly used in the inter-War years.

Later twentieth century decorations

The room has been painted at least five times since the Second World War.

THE DRESSING ROOM

This room appears to have had very little structural work done to it.

The door and all the window panelling are original.

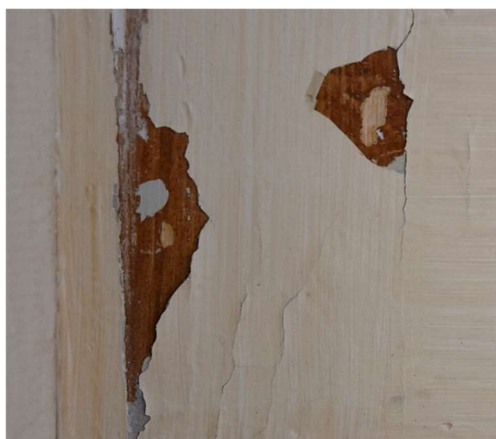
Only the skirtings and the window seats are twentieth-century introductions



Original decoration

The window panelling was all painted a pale grey.

The entrance door was grained to imitate oak. Where paint layers have flaked off, we can see a small patch of this graining today



The cornice was painted with white distemper

The treatment of walls and ceiling is not known. Distempers were almost certainly used, and these would have been cleaned off when there was a switch to lining papers and oil paints.

Nineteenth century decorations

The windows continued to be painted grey. Usually these were quite light in tone, but there were a couple of quite dark grey schemes.

The second time that the room was painted, the inner face of the entrance door was painted with the grey paints that were being used for the window panelling. On the other hand, the outer face of the door continued to be grained throughout most of the rest of the century.

The treatment of the walls and ceiling is not known

Late nineteenth-century scheme with gilding

A sample taken from the bead moulding around the NW niche found gilding as a first scheme.

We can date this to the late nineteenth century because the clear oil size used for the gold leaf is typical of that period [Sample E10, p.23], and the gold scheme was followed by just three more lots of lead paint.

It is not known how the walls and ceiling were being painted when this was done, however one can speculate that green may have been involved, because green paints were used on the next three occasions that the room was decorated



Early twentieth century

As mentioned above, it is assumed that green was being used for the walls, but it was probably applied over lining paper that has since been removed. Traces of the green were only found on the bead moulding round the wall niches.

Paint from this period, applied over lining papers, has survived on the ceiling and the paint samples show that the ceiling was being painted white.

The final lead-based paint scheme, which must have been applied before the Second World War, saw a very dark green used for the bead mouldings around the niches

Later twentieth century

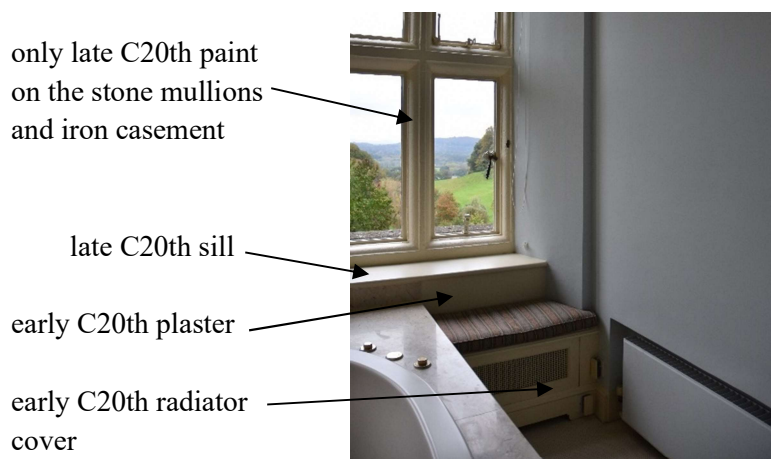
The room has been painted plain white at least three times using paints based on titanium dioxide white.

THE BATHROOM

Like the Bedroom, this room had major work carried out in the first half of the twentieth-century. Further work appears to have been done in in the later twentieth, or early twenty first century.

No feature was found which still had nineteenth-century paintwork.

Work appears to have been done to all the walls, including the application of a thin gypsum skim coat in some areas. The cornice, the cove and the ceiling still have original plaster [Sample F5, p.23], but all early paint layers have been stripped off.



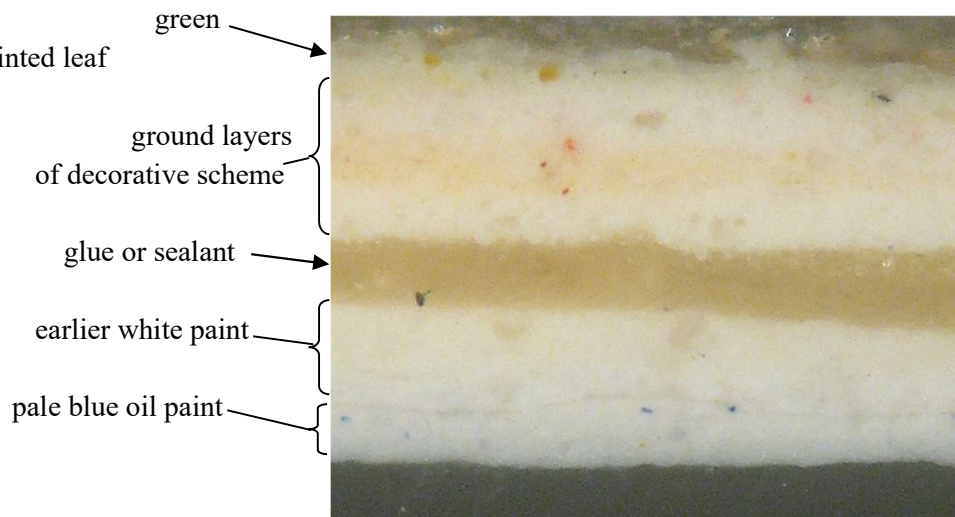
Following that early twentieth-century refurbishment, the room was painted plain white. The paint used was still based on lead white, but it was the last lead-based paint, and so likely to have been applied in the years before the Second World War.

DRAWING ROOM

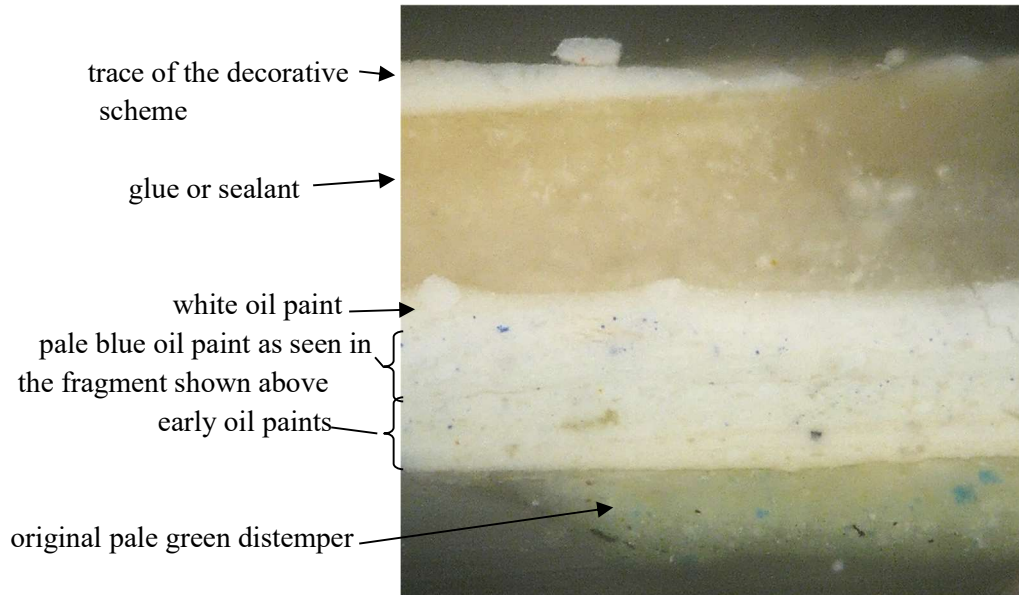
SAMPLE A1

Dado – pale green painted leaf

Fragment (i)
upper layers



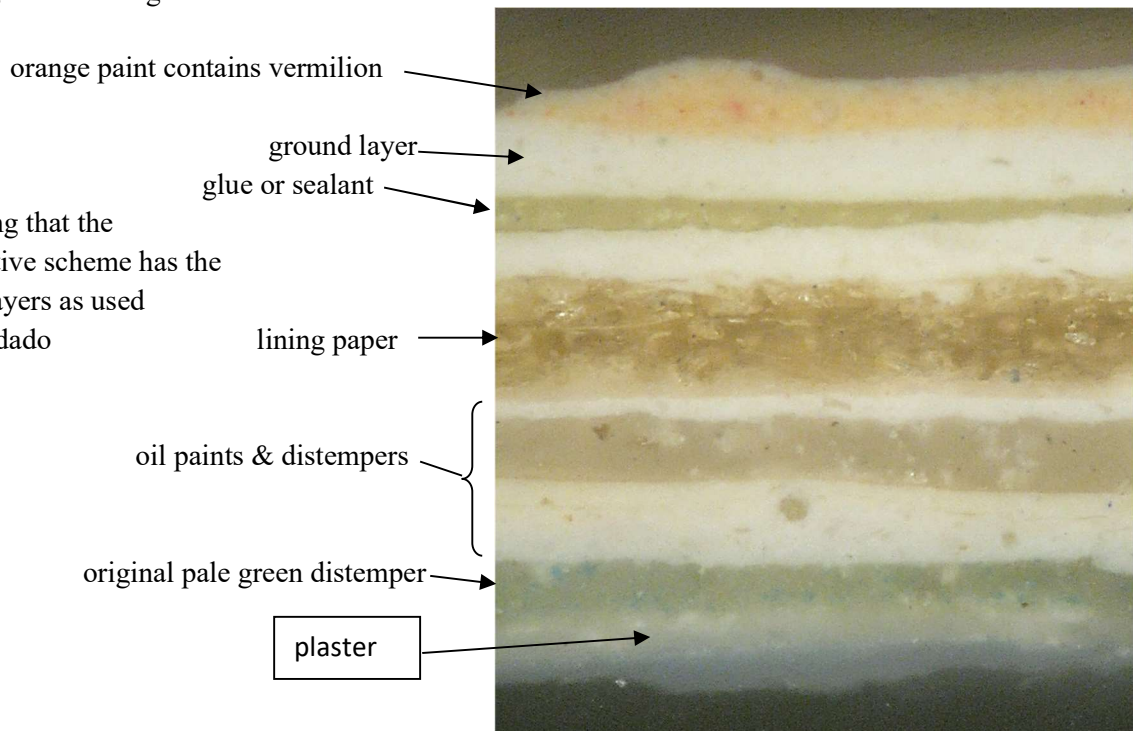
Fragment (ii)
lower layers



SAMPLE A29a

Ceiling – from orange detail

Showing that the decorative scheme has the same layers as used on the dado



SAMPLE A12

Dado rail

Fragment (i)

Upper layers

post-WW2 paints
based on titanium white

two lots of pre-WW2 white
paint based on lead white



Fragment (ii)

Lower layers

late C19th pink &
white scheme resting on
bare wood



Proving the dado rail is a later
introduction

SAMPLE A12b

Wall above dado

Fragment (i)

Upper layers

lining paper →

pale blue C19th scheme →



Fragment (ii)

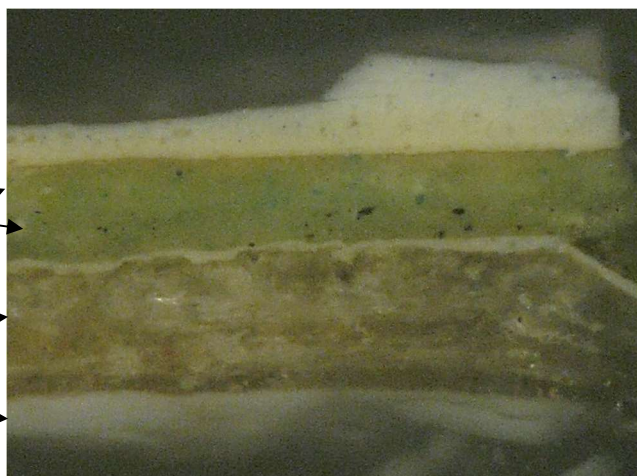
lower layers

showing early distempers over
lining paper

at least two lots of
green distemper

lining paper →

plaster



SAMPLE A24

Entrance door architrave

Fragment (i)

Upper layers

post WW2
paints

greyed white lead-
based paints

remains of graining
schemes



Fragment (ii)

lower layers

later C19th
grainings

original pale
grey



STUDY

SAMPLE B1

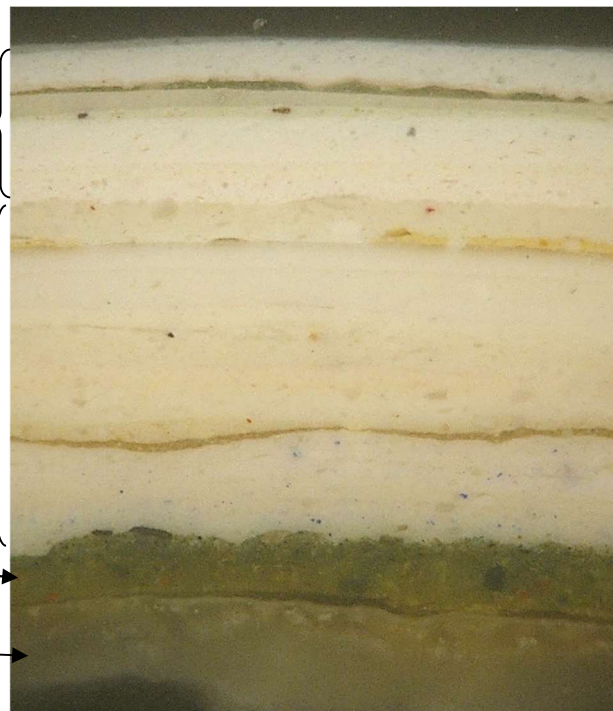
Border of spandrel

post-WW2
paints

later C19th and early
C20th lead-based
paints

original dark green
used on wall
mouldings

plaster



SAMPLE B5

Study - Skirting fascia

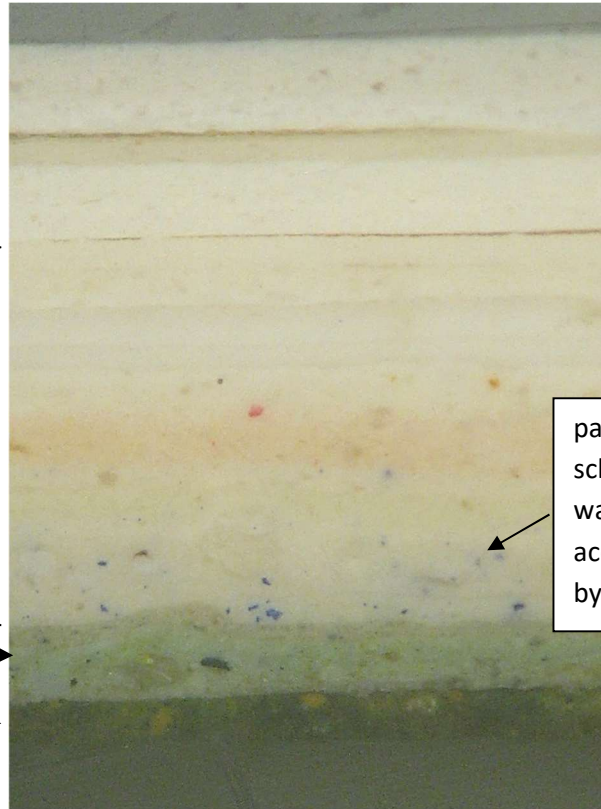
Showing the original dark green followed by paler green, then blues and pinks

C19th and early C20th
lead-based paints

second, paler green

thin black layer over dark
green

pale blue
scheme which
was
accompanied
by gilding



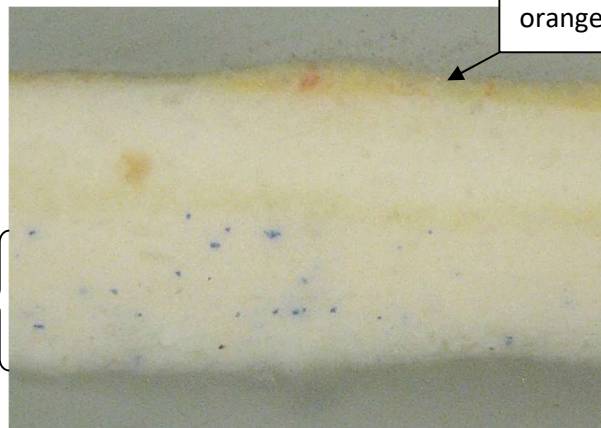
SAMPLE B7

Study - painting in spandrel – orange detail

showing the layers of the decorative paint work over the same distinctive pale blue as seen in B5 above

pale blue with particles
of ultramarine

orange flower



SAMPLE B12

Study – arched top of SW window

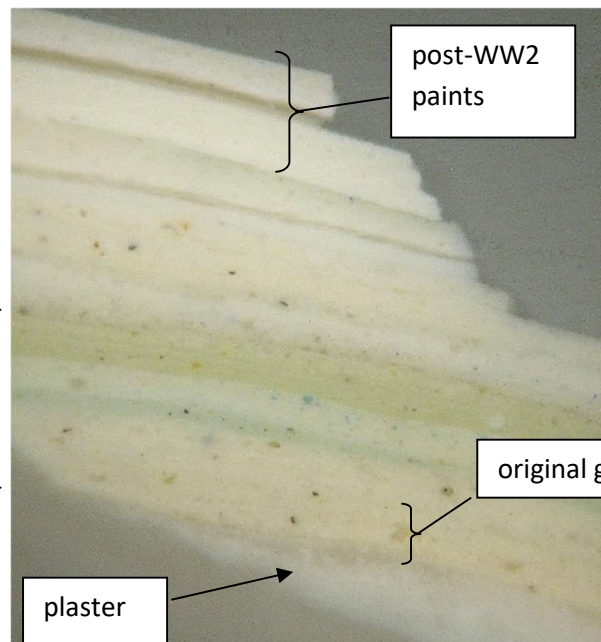
The early layers contain pale greens which may be a clue to how the walls of this room were painted

C19th schemes

post-WW2
paints

original grey

plaster



SAMPLE B14

Study - Wall to left of fireplace

The sequence starts with a later C19th pale blue containing particles of French ultramarine [invented 1828]

The early C19th layers may have been distempers which were later cleaned off

lining paper →

post WW2 paints

post-1828 pale blue

DINING ROOM

SAMPLE C2

Dado rail, west wall

post-WW2 paints

dark green

early C20th dark browns

C19th graining schemes

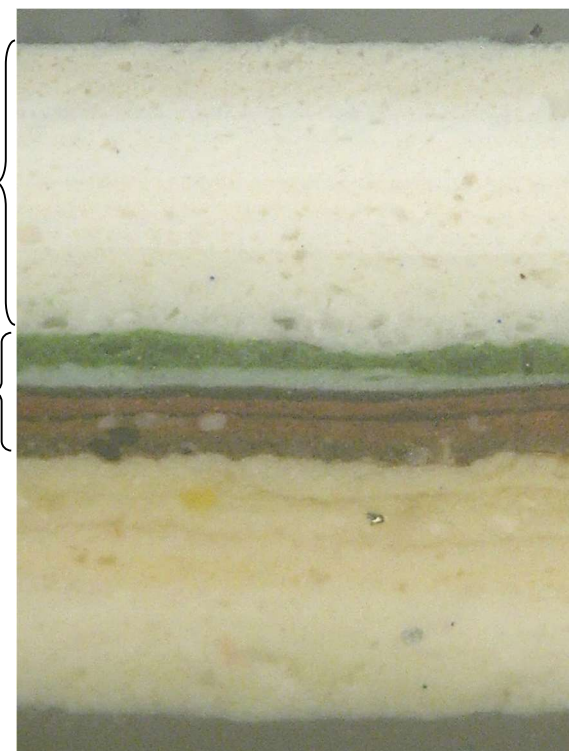
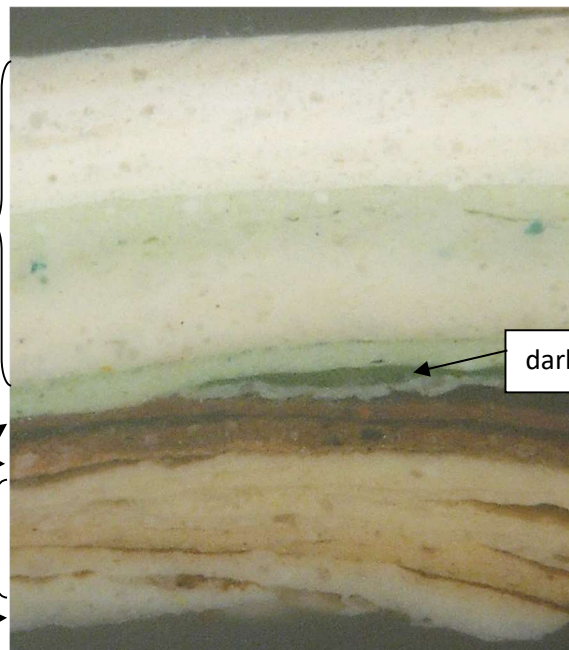
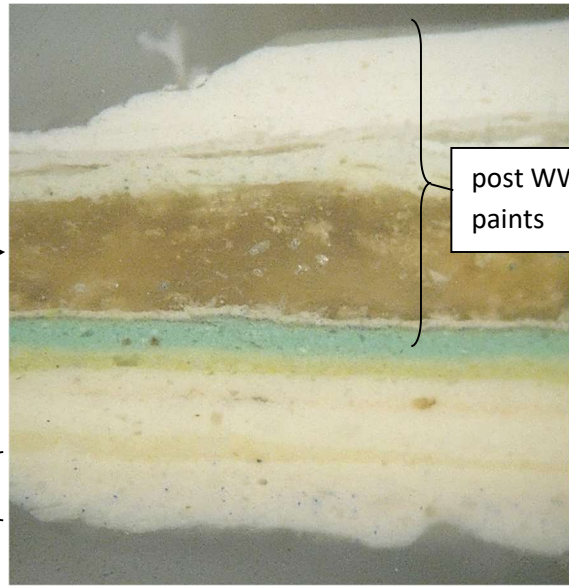
original pale grey

SAMPLE C9

Dining Room - Shutter box

post-WW2 paints

dark colours used in early C20th



SAMPLE C20

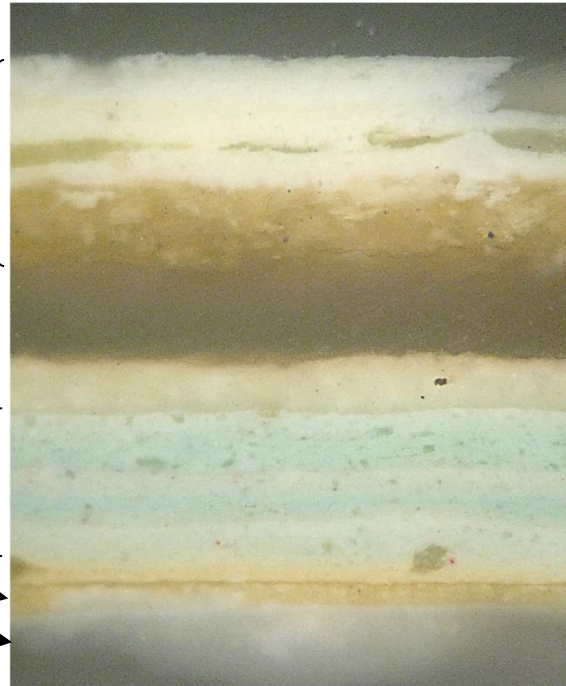
Dining Room ceiling

post-WW2 paints on lining paper

glue

later C19th pale
bluish green oil paints

original white distemper
plaster



DRESSING ROOM

SAMPLE E2

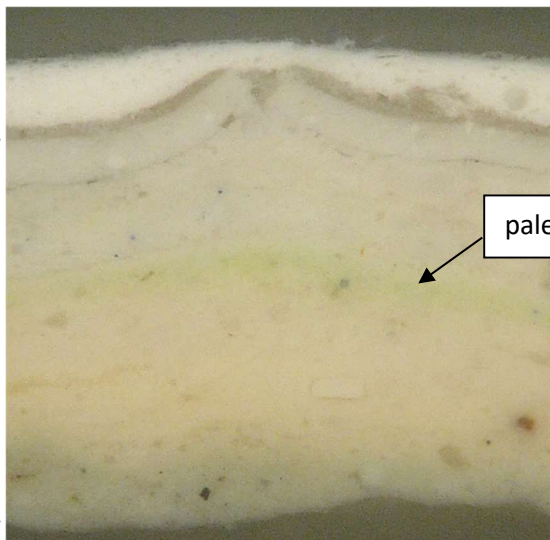
Panelling below window

Fragment (i)

Upper layers

including a pale green which
followed a scheme with gilding
[see next page]

at least eight lots of
lead-based oil paint



Fragment (ii)

Lower layers & wood

Showing the greys used in the early
years – the earliest very pale, later ones
darker

original pale grey



SAMPLE E10

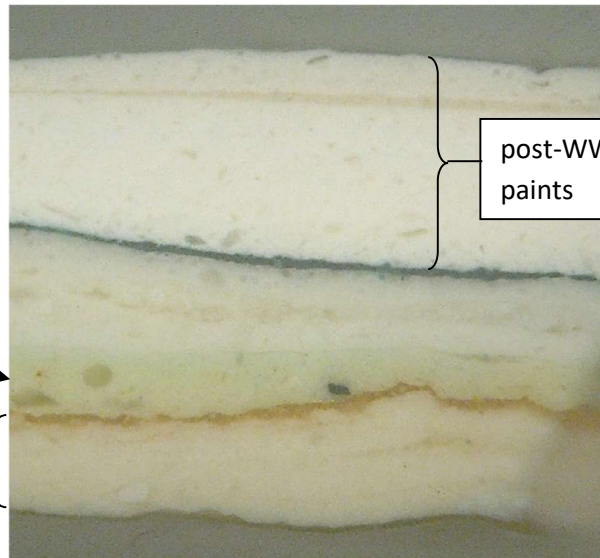
Bead around niche

Under a late C19th pale green [see previous page] is a gilding scheme

late C19th green

oil gilding over white oil paint

post-WW2 paints



SAMPLE E20

Ceiling

not many later paint layers have survived, but the original white distemper sits cleanly on the plaster

post-WW2 paints

later lining paper

original white distemper

plaster



BATHROOM

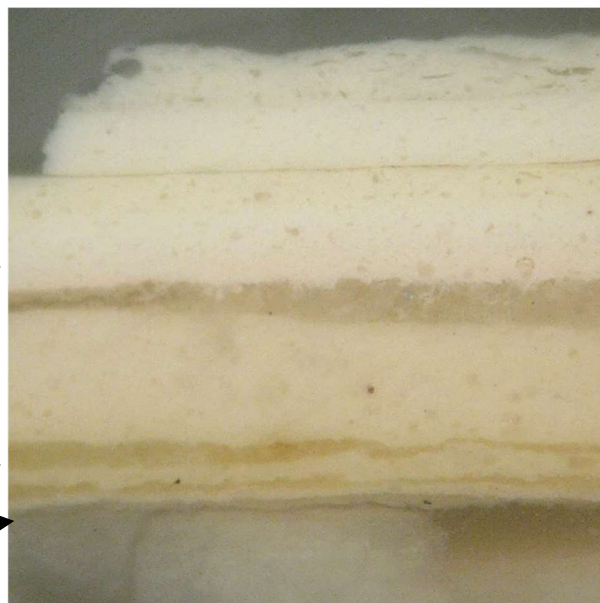
SAMPLE F5

Cornice

Very little early paint survived in this room. The samples show white paints which predate WW2

just three lots of white oil paint based on lead white

plaster



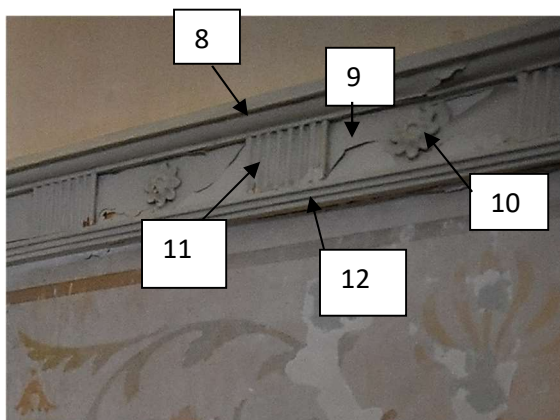
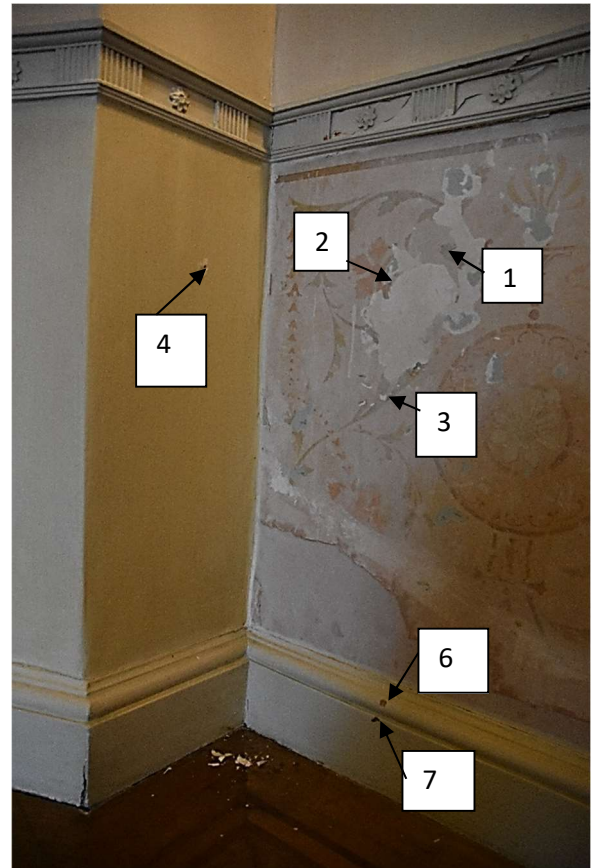
PAINT SAMPLE LOCATIONS

THE DRAWING ROOM

North wall, dado with painted design

- A1 green leaf and all layers under
- A2 orange flower and all layers under
- A3 stem and all layers under
- A4 return wall, all layers
- A5 wall above dado rail
- A6 skirting moulding
- A7 skirting board

- A8 top edge of rail
- A9 flat of dado rail
- A10 flower on rail
- A11 vertical mouldings on rail
- A12 bottom edge of rail
- A13 wall above dado rail



- South wall
- A16 window architrave mouldings

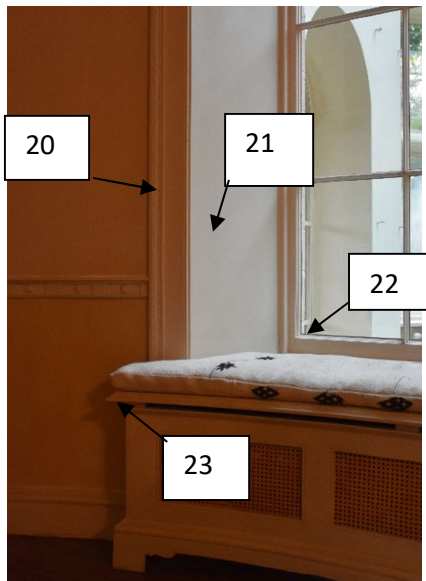


- A17 shutter
- A18 interior of shutter box
- A19 French windows



West wall

- A20 architrave moulding around window
- A21 window reveal
- A22 window
- A23 window seat



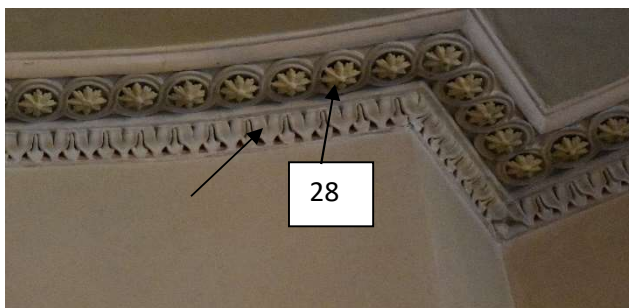
East wall

- A24 door architrave
- A25 door
- A26 overdoor
- A27 wall above overdoor



SE corner

- A27 cornice – leaf
- A28 cornice - flower



A29a ceiling

A29b ceiling

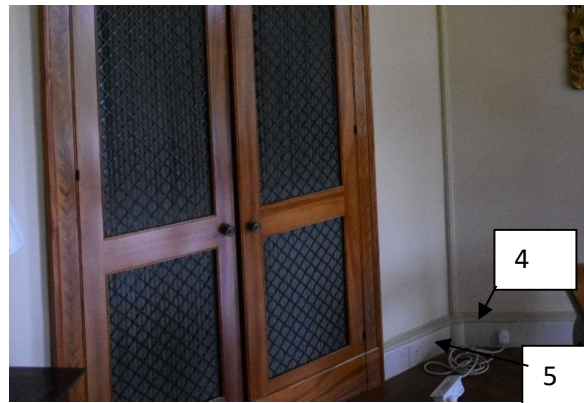
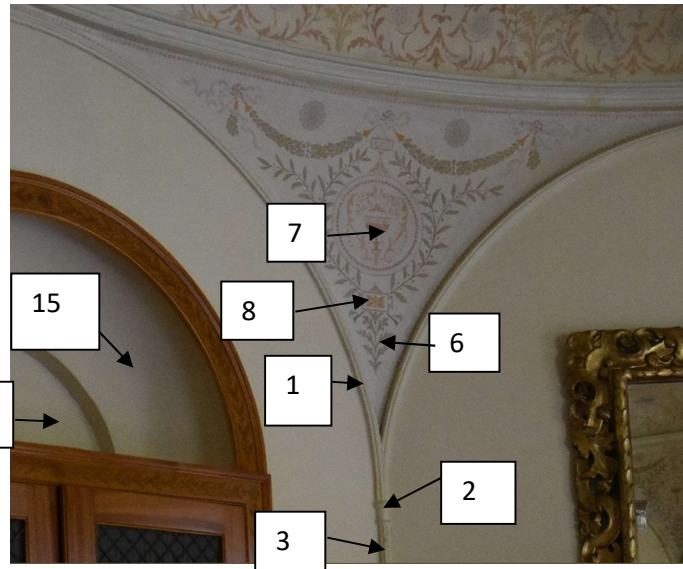
THE STUDY

- N/E corner
- B1 border of spandrel
- B2 column 'capital'
- B3 column

- Decoration in spandrel
- B6 green
- B7 orange
- B8 red

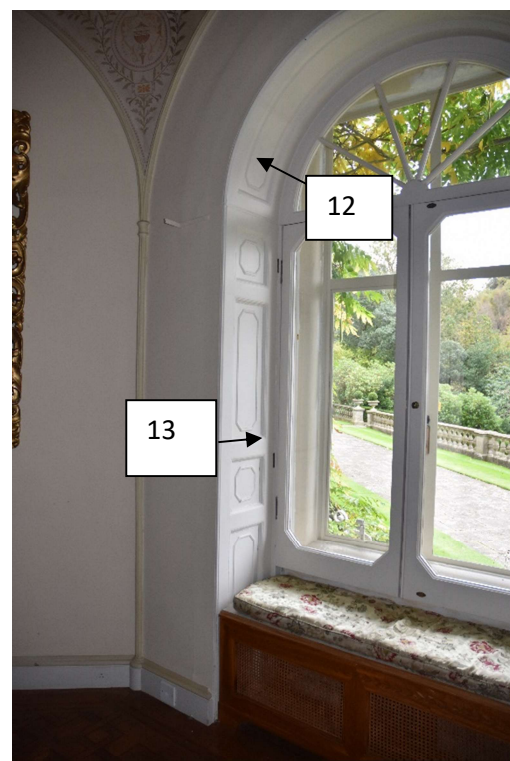
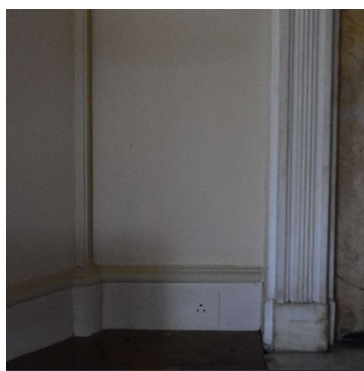
- B15 concave arched top of niche
- B16 flat in arched top of niche

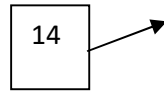
- B4 skirting moulding
- B5 skirting board



- Door [not shown]
- B9 architrave
- B10 door
- B11 wall above door

- South wall
- B12 plaster window reveal – arched top
- B13 wooden sides of window reveal
- B14 wall to left of fireplace

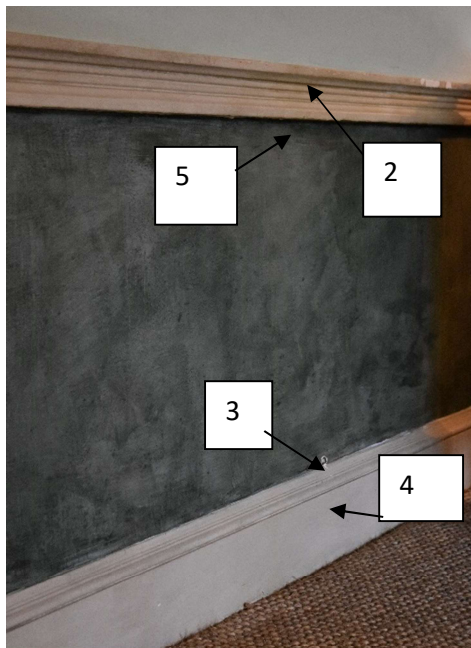




THE DINING ROOM

- West wall
- C1 door architrave
- C6 wall above door [not shown]

- C2 dado rail
- C3 skirting moulding
- C4 skirting board
- C5 wall below dado rail



- C7 wall above inset cupboard
- C9 shutter box interior
- C10 shutter
- C12 bead moulding around the windows
- C13 panelling on front of windows

- C11 architrave of door at east end



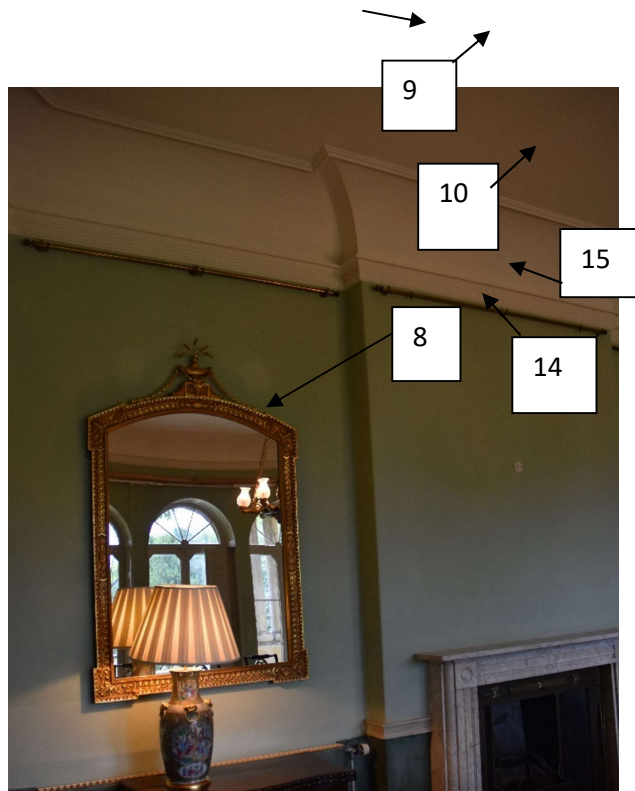
C8 wall above mirror on north wall

C14 cornice

C15 cove

C16a ceiling

C16b ceiling



FIRST FLOOR BEDROOM [not photographed]

D1 entrance door – exterior

D2 entrance door – interior

D3 door architrave

D6 wall above door

D9 cornice above door

D10 cove above door

D4 cupboard door architrave

D5 cupboard door

D7 wall above cupboard

D11 cove above fireplace

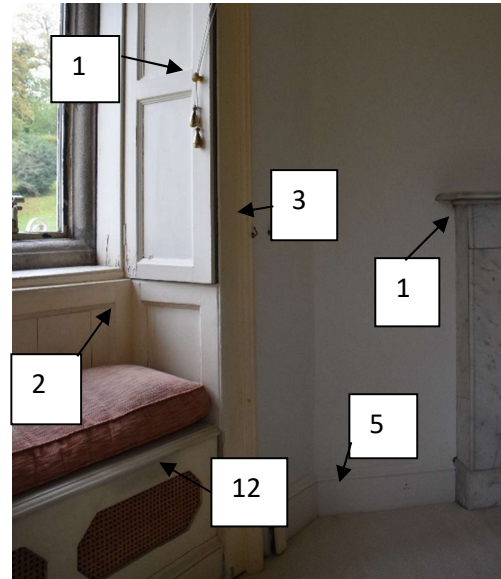
D8 French doors to balcony

D12 plaster reveal of doorway to balcony

THE DRESSING ROOM

West window

- E1 shutter
- E2 panelling below window
- E3 window architrave
- E4 interior of shutter box
- E5 skirting moulding
- E11 wall next to fireplace
- E12 window seat



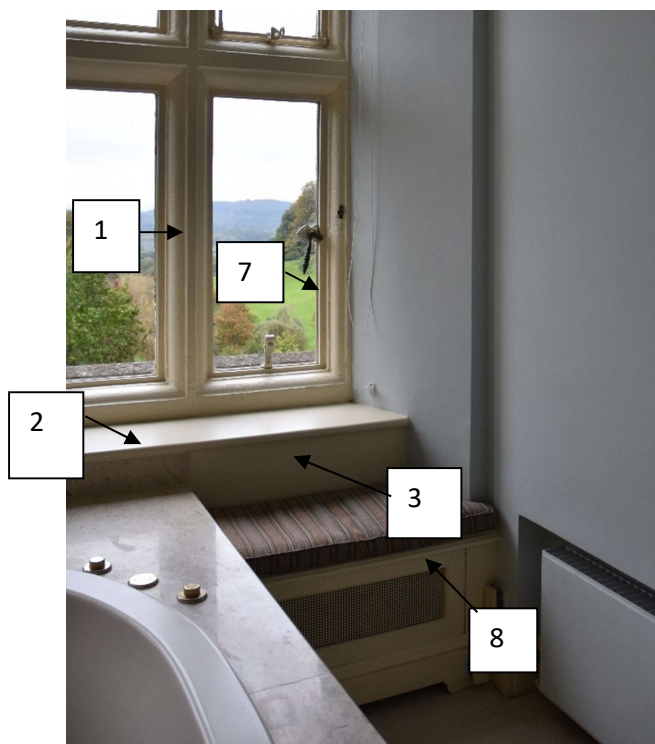
- E6 wall above door
- E7 wall in niche
- E8 cornice
- E9 ceiling
- E10 bead around niche

- E13 door – inner face
- E14 door – outer face



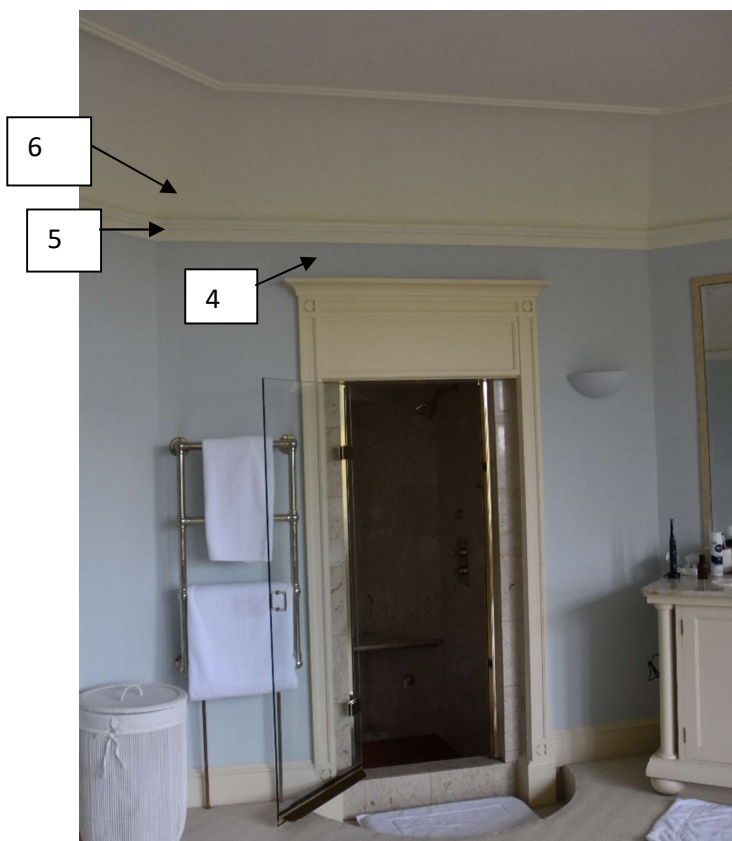
THE BATHROOM

- F1 stone window
- F2 window sill
- F3 wall below sill
- F7 iron casement
- F8 window seat



- F4 wall above shower
- F5 cornice
- F6 cove

- F9 entrance door [not shown]
- F10 door frame [not shown]

Examination procedure

The samples were examined under low magnification and then the fragments were mounted in cold-setting polyester resin to be cut and polished as cross-sections.

Material from key layers was dispersed on slides and the pigments identified using a polarising light microscope. A chemical test for lead was carried out on each cross-section.