

The Earthborn guide to historic paint colours



earthborn[®]
Beautifully different paint



Paint for historic buildings and period properties

At Earthborn, we're known for our high performing, eco friendly paints that are healthier to live with and better for the planet.

But it doesn't stop there. With a host of unique qualities, Earthborn is the perfect choice for listed buildings and period homes.

From historic medieval churches to sprawling Georgian mansions, compact Victorian terraces to mid-century bungalows; our paints are regularly specified by homeowners and professionals alike for a variety of heritage projects.

Of course, every period building has its own unique characteristics and considerations, not least when it comes to decorating. So we've combined our own paint knowledge and colour know-how with the expertise of Lincoln Conservation, to produce this guide on how to choose paint for older properties and create historic paint colour palettes that remain suitable for modern living.

Whether you are looking for technical advice or authentic colour inspiration, read on to find out more.



VIRTUALLY
VOC
FREE

Please note, colours used in this booklet are as a guide only. To check that a colour is the right shade for you, take a look at our Classic colour card (painted with real paint) or try one of our sample pots.

Lincoln Conservation

Lincoln Conservation specialise in the conservation and restoration of interior and exterior features in listed and historic buildings, historic artefacts and historic paint analysis.

Alongside the conservation of decorative interiors in historic buildings, the team at Lincoln Conservation are also researchers, advisors and practitioners on the conservation of historic decoration and artefacts.

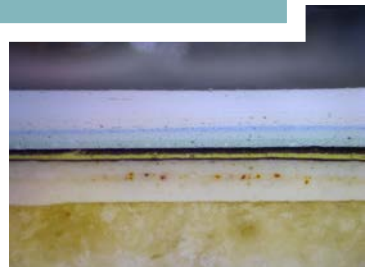
The consultancy has been involved in the conservation of numerous iconic, historic properties throughout the British Isles, for a range of clients responsible for their shared built heritage.



We're proud that Earthborn has worked in partnership with the experts at Lincoln Conservation who, through research and paint analysis, have helped to create Earthborn colour palettes suitable for a range of architectural styles and eras, as well as shedding light on some significant historical paint colours.



Claypaint is available in a palette of 72 signature shades including many based on historic colours



Choosing the right paint

Painting an historic building is more than just choosing the right colour; the finish and properties of the paint are equally important. When it comes to decorating an older property, breathability is key.

Interior walls & ceilings

For interior surfaces, Earthborn's Claypaint is a luxurious, ultra matt emulsion that softens and enhances the light in a room. With a thick and creamy texture, it is highly breathable with excellent coverage, resulting in a much more user friendly alternative to limewash.

Claypaint is perfect for use on lime plaster, in older properties and buildings with damp problems. Its high breathability helps to reduce mould, mildew and trapped moisture, whilst its natural clay content helps to even out humidity, making for a healthier, more comfortable environment.

Plus, it is equally suitable for previously painted surfaces and non-breathable materials (including standard gypsum plaster) helping to create a seamless transition between old and new.

Exterior masonry

For exterior surfaces, Earthborn's Ecopro Silicate Masonry System is an advanced mineral based coating for masonry substrates, suitable for brick, stone, lime render, pebbledash and concrete.

Like Claypaint, it is highly breathable and is an ideal alternative to limewash. Unlike limewash however, it does not need reapplying every few years because it forms a physical, chemical bond with the masonry surface, knitting into the fabric of the building. This results in a durable, weather resistant yet fully breathable finish.

Significant paint colours

Certain paint pigments have fascinating stories to tell; from the highly prized yet poisonous Arsenic Green to the fly repellent properties of Slaughterhouse Blue. The experts at Lincoln Conservation helped us to delve a little deeper into some of the most historically important shades...

Lead white



“Used for over half a millenium, lead white was the most common white pigment added to oil paints. Although incredibly toxic, it not only gave a warm white colour with excellent coverage, but it also helped the paint dry to a durable, but flexible film.

Its use dwindled in the 19th and twentieth centuries due to health concerns, and the introduction of alternative white pigments, such as zinc oxide and titanium white, and the invention of new synthetic paints. ”

Earthborn's White Clay carries the same warm white characteristics as lead white, making it especially flattering in older properties.

Stone colour

“The term ‘stone colour’ was often used in painting specifications, particularly in the 17th & 18th centuries. At the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford (Sir Christopher Wren, 1669), in his bill, the decorator Richard Hawkins makes reference to the use of several hundred yards of ‘ye stone-couler’ applied to the ‘comish, windowes, wainscot and Vicechancellor’s Gallery’. Rather than referring to a single colour, the term relates more to a family of colours. These neutrally toned colours were, unsurprisingly, intended to mimic stone. They came in broad range from warm to cool and pale to surprisingly dark. ”

Slaughterhouse blue



“ In historic slaughterhouses, pantries, kitchens, potting sheds and toilets, you might find a blue paint hiding beneath the layers of overpaint. It was believed that there was something about the blue paint – either the colour or the chemical make-up, that repelled flies. ”

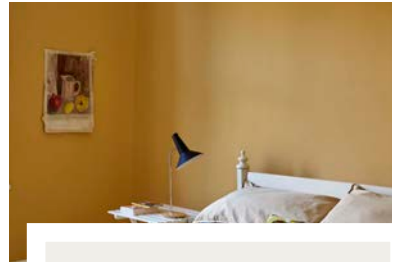
Different shades of blue have been found in a 19th century farm complex – a dark blue in the slaughterhouse and a light blue in the outdoor toilet. In the southern states of the USA you'll see the underside of porches painted a pale blue. Although now a tradition, it may have its roots as a fly repellent. ”

Pink

“ When is pink not pink? When it's yellow! In the 17th century, pink referred to a yellow lake pigment. Whilst most pigments are made from ground minerals which are innately coloured, lake pigments are made by dyeing a carrier (such as chalk) to make them a certain colour. ”

The colour was known as Dutch pink, Italian pink and English pink, the former being more of a golden yellow, and the latter a slightly greenish yellow.

No one really knows why the word changed to mean a light-red, although the popularity in the late Tudor period of a flower of this colour, a type of carnation called a Pink, may have been the cause. ”



Golden yellows like Humpty Dumpty are particularly suited to period homes.



Invisible green

“ Invisible Green is part of a family of mid to dark-greens which were popular during the 19th century, and traditionally associated with exterior features. Invisible Green was frequently used on gates and railings, and gets its name from its function; to make whatever it was applied to appear invisible against the dark green shrubbery of parks and gardens. ”

Georgian paint colours

1714 - 1830

In the Georgian period, choosing a colour for your home was often a matter of price. Colours made from pigments that were easy to obtain were used to make 'common colours' like stone, earthy yellows, lead grey and white. A more colourful palette needed more expensive pigments. These 'fancy' or 'party' colours, such as blossom and pea green, could be triple the cost, if not more, than the common colours.

Green

A colour that falls somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, and can often be seen in paintings of rooms from this period, is olive green. This was applied from floor to ceiling, normally on wooden panels, complemented by a white or blued white ceiling, chocolate coloured doors and sometimes a chocolate coloured skirting.



Greens work just as well in today's Georgian properties. The owners of Grade II Listed Moreton House (above right) have used Gregory's Den and Seagull reflect its Georgian heritage. No.38 The Park (right) is a boutique Georgian townhouse hotel featuring a palette of warm Earthborn greens.



Pastels

Robert Adam was an influential architect and interior designer whose eponymous neoclassical style was incredibly influential in the Georgian period, favouring a subtle palette of pale blue, pink and lead white.

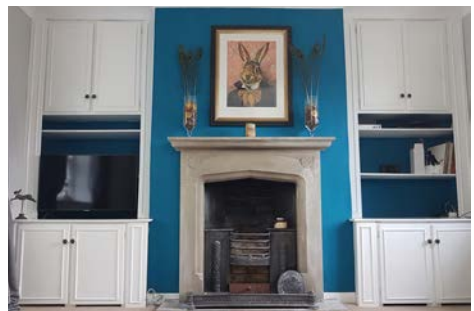


Pastel colours like Dorothy, Milk Jug and Rosie Posie are perfect modern day alternatives for a playful yet authentic Georgian palette.

Bold colours

While pastel shades and earthy tones are most often associated with Georgian interiors, bolder paint colours can also be used to great effect when decorating a home from this period. Georgian property owner Andy Watson, who documented his Georgian Cottage project in Listed Heritage magazine, chose a palette of bold teal Reading Room and warm grey Cat's Cradle for his living room. He says:

“We chose Earthborn paints primarily for their permeability. We live in a 200-year-old Georgian cottage, which has lime plaster and needs to breathe. But we also picked them because of the wide range of colours, the mix of muted and vibrant shades.



When we renovated our living room, we decided on a combination of Cat's Cradle and Reading Room. This ties in with what we're trying to achieve throughout the cottage, classic Georgian styling blended with smart, contemporary living. ”

Victorian paint colours

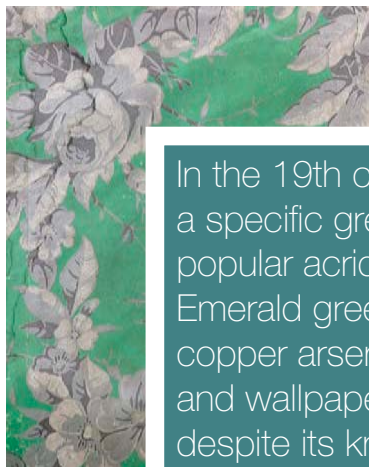
1837 - 1901

The Victorian era spanned almost 65 years and in that time tastes, fashions and technology changed hugely. This period saw a boom in British housing stock, so it's unsurprising that Victorian houses remain one of the most common eras of property in the UK today, especially in towns and cities.

Decorative colours

The Aesthetic movement of the late 19th century advocated for a new visual world, where decadent beauty could be appreciated for itself; a concept known as 'Art for Art's sake.'

Decorative inspiration often came from nature. Sunflowers and peacocks were the unofficial emblems of the moment with colours used to reflect this, including rich greens, blues, turquoise, homely yellows, terracotta and brown.



In the 19th century, people were dying for a specific green colour – literally. The highly popular acrid green, known as Scheele's green, Emerald green and Paris green, is a highly toxic copper arsenite pigment. Everything from paint and wallpaper to socks were tinted this colour despite its known danger to health.

Behind the scenes colours

Practicality, efficiency, and cleanliness; these were the concerns of the interior design for behind the scenes areas of Victorian buildings. From features such as curves where the floor met the skirting board to reduce the build-up of dust, to the use of durable and washable tiles, every feature had a function.

This held true in the colour schemes used. The lower part of the wall, which would gather dirt as people brushed past it, was painted a dark colour to create a dado. To add light and a sense of visual cleanliness, the upper part of the wall and the ceiling was painted a lighter colour; cream or white.



The one decorative flourish in these practical areas of the Victorian home was a thin line between the dark dado and the light upper wall, a trick that's still used by interior designers today.

Victorian colour schemes for modern living



Deep shades are synonymous with Victorian interiors, but dark doesn't have to mean drab! Colours that work especially well in today's Victorian homes include opulent blues and greens, vivid earthy reds and yellows, and luxurious greys.

A flash of colour against a neutral backdrop gives a contemporary feel to a Victorian property, with a subtle nod to its past.

20th century paint colours

The 20th century saw a boom in the use of 'colour science' and 'colour psychology' to select interior colours, particularly in the 1950's where a scientific approach to design was in vogue.

Hallways were 'the handshake of the house' and should be painted a warm, inviting colour. Places to relax and heal were often a soothing blue. Places to be productive were a colour interesting enough to avoid boredom, but calm enough to avoid distraction.

In schools it was suggested that the blackboard wall was painted a slightly more interesting colour to draw the eye to the front. Wards with new mothers were advocated to be painted a warm and rosy colour to match the occasion of a new arrival.



YOU CAN DO WONDERFUL THINGS WITH COLOR . . .

inside the house and out! It's by far the easiest and least expensive way to decorate . . . to make a dull room sparkle with excitement . . . to create a happy, inviting atmosphere in every room of your home.

You'll find dozens of practical color schemes and decorating ideas in this book. Some feature colors that are currently fashionable, others show the happy color combinations that are enjoyed year after year. Choose one you like and follow it—or have fun developing a color scheme that's yours alone.

THE COLOR WHEEL shows the relationship of one color to another. On one side you'll find the warm colors—cheerful yellows and exciting reds, on the other the cool colors—restful blues and refreshing greens. Warm refers to the brightness of a color, *value* to its lightness or darkness. Dark colors are called shades, light ones tints. Use the colors you like best. Blend them, contrast them. They express YOUR moods, YOUR personality.



Wall: "Frank Kerr" Sandy Gray



ENTRANCE AREA: Walls: "Frank Kerr" Downway leading to bathroom: "Frank Kerr" same color

START WITH YOUR FAVORITE and build a color scheme around it. Or be colorful—shine, a sunny garden, or a treasure. If you're redecorating, you may want to choose the colors in the furnishings you already have—your carpet, perhaps, or the color in your sofa.

In your planning, be sure to consider the size of the room, and what natural and artificial light it receives. And remember that color is affected by its neighboring colors: a great sofa looks swifter against a lighter green wall, larger if the wall is white.

You'll probably want to set off your furniture and

In an age where creativity was encouraged, colour wheels were advertised to housewives so they could create the most harmonious settings for their homes.



In 1917 Howard Kemp-Prosser painted a ward room in McCaul Hospital for Officers, London. The walls and floor were a bright, warm yellow, the woodwork spring green, and the ceiling firmament blue. This extreme make over was to test the theory that colours had a certain effect on mental health.

Every decade of the 20th century is associated with certain interior colours. From the black and white chequerboard floors of the twenties to Mamie Eisenhower's 1950s pink bathroom, to the orange and browns of the 1970s; this century saw an explosion of individuality expressed through decor.



Styles might have changed but these 20th century ideas on choosing the right colour for the right space are just as relevant when decorating a home today.

Historic colour palette summary

Need some inspiration? Below we've put together a selection of shades from our classic range that complement the historic eras mentioned within this booklet.

Georgian era (1714 - 1830)



White Clay



Seagull



Gregory's Den



Cat's Cradle



Rosie Posie

Victorian era (1837 - 1901)



Bugle



Tick-Tock



Humpty Dumpty



Freckle



Cupcake

20th century



Smidgen



Hippo Hooray



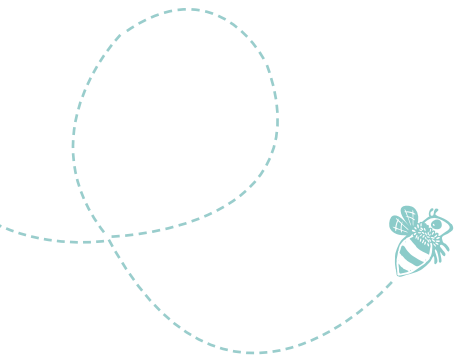
Daisy Chain



Peach Baby



Delilah



Head to our website to see our full range of 72 shades and read our real-life case studies for more inspiration!

www.earthbornpaints.co.uk



Milk Jug



Dorothy



Reading Room



Secret Room



Can-Can



Lady Bug



Hobby Wood



Hobgoblin



Mister Toad



Bo Peep

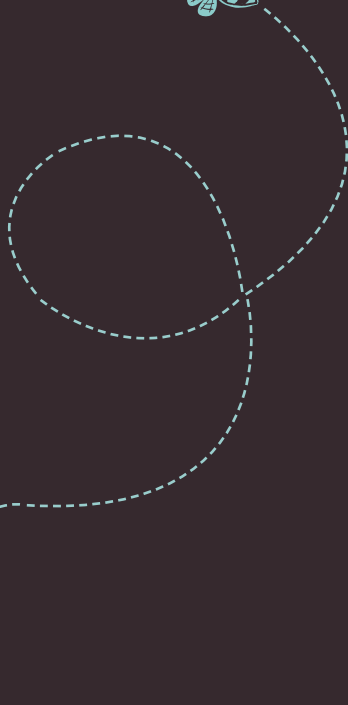


Polka Dot



Toy Soldier

Get in touch to find out more
about Earthborn and we'll
turn somersaults to supply
whatever you need.



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