

THE GEORGE HOTEL, RYE

EXTERIOR PAINTWORK



Samples were taken from the windows, doors and walls of the High street elevation and the lion street elevation, as listed on p.18

- p.2 High street elevation
- p.7 Lion Street elevation

- p.9 Cross-section evidence
- p.18 Sample locations and examination procedure

The building underwent a major refurbishment in the eighteenth century, which involved new exterior walls, new windows and new doors. No exterior surfaces from before that refurbishment are any longer visible.

Following the refurbishment parts of the exterior have been repainted more than fifty three times, which is approximately once every five or six years [see Sample B1, p.9].

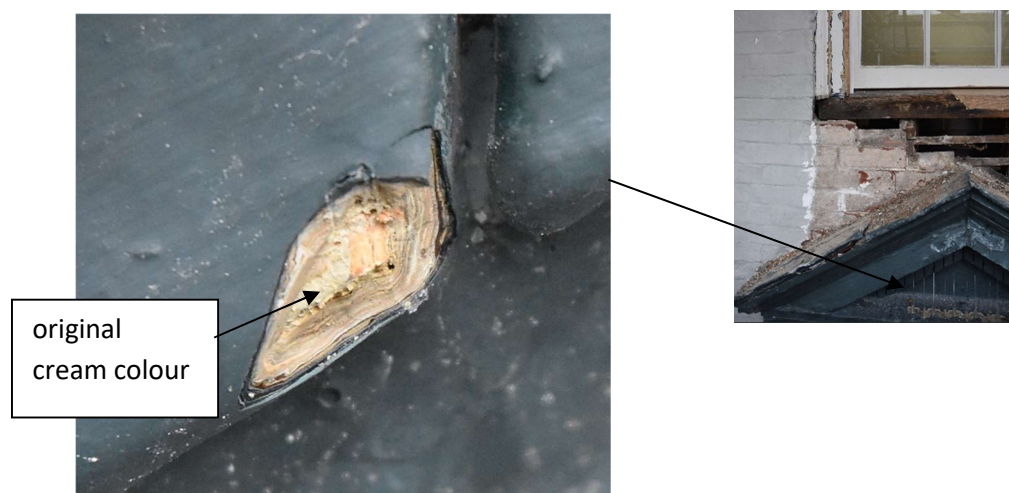
Original eighteenth-century finish

The building was faced with mathematical tiles, which were fired with a dark red slip coat, but these tiles must have been painted soon after the building was completed, as no obvious layer of dirt can be seen between the terracotta and the first paint [Sample B4, p.10].

The first paint on the walls was a cream-coloured oil paint based on lead white tinted with yellow ochre and a small amount of carbon black. This was used on the main wall surfaces as well as on window sills and on the plinth.

A very similar cream colour was also used for the wood of the windows. It was found on the easternmost dormer, and on the sash window frame. It was a slightly paler shade of cream compared to the walls, but the difference in colour would not be obvious to the naked eye.

No evidence was found for treatment of the doors themselves, but the doorcase for the front door at ground floor level [Sample B24, p.12], and the pedimented doorcase situated on the balcony were painted the same cream colour as the walls and windows.



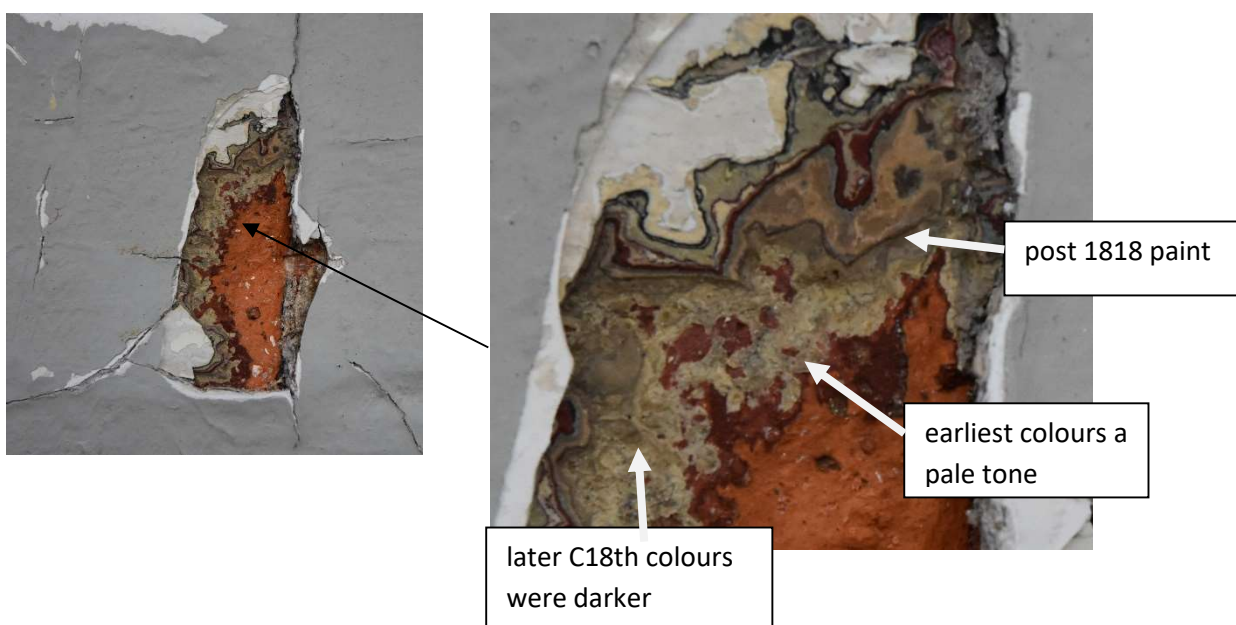
The porch columns have been vigorously stripped, and very little early paint has survived, but one paint sample did have remains of a red/brown oil paint with a varnish finish [Sample B21, p.12]. It is not possible to be certain that this is eighteenth century paint, but it is certainly an early finish, and the columns are clearly still a dark colour in the 1860s photograph.

No evidence was found for the treatment of the iron railings around the porch. All trace of early paint has been lost, and the ironwork may have been taken off site at some point, and chemically stripped.

No pre-nineteenth century paint was found on the surviving gutters gutter fixings, and the rainwater goods may have been replaced after 1818. Only one hopper was examined, and this had fewer layers than the gutters

Paint finishes up to 1818

The windows were painted more often than the walls, so it was not possible to tie schemes together precisely, but the general trend was a repeat of the original decoration, with the shade of paint becoming darker in tone. Towards the end of the century, the paints that were being used were a buff or dark stone colour.



1818 DECORATION

When the Ballroom was built, the walls of the whole Hotel on this elevation were painted with the same stone-coloured limewash [Sample C6, p.13]. These layers were only found in a few samples from the older part of the building, and they must have later been washed off, but they can be seen in Sample B4 [p.10].

The windows, the cornice and door cases were painted with a pale stone-coloured oil paint.

Change to oil paint

A second limewash followed the first and then there was a return to oil paints. The first oil paint that was used was a distinctive bluish grey colour [Sample C6, p.13]. Some blue pigment [Prussian blue] was added to the mixture, so the cool tone was intended. This grey was used for the flat walls and for the plinth at the base.

The windows, door cases and cornice were painted an off-white.

MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

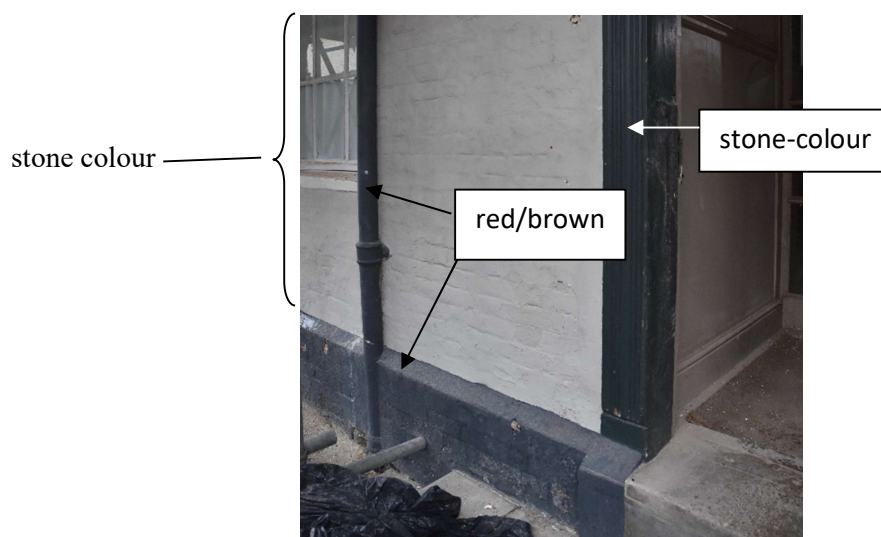
The bluish grey used for the walls was not repeated, and the next time that the Hotel was painted, there was a return to warm, stone-coloured oil paints.

This coincided with the first time that 'GEORGE HOTEL' was painted across the façade using a red for the letters and green for the shading [Sample B10, p.11].

The red was a pure red ochre, the green a mixture of Prussian blue and chrome yellow.



Coinciding with painting 'GEORGE HOTEL' was the decision to now paint the plinths a dark reddish brown.

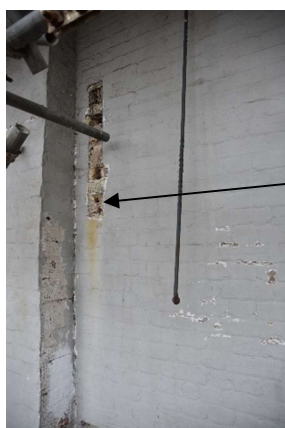


The same red/brown was also used for the rainwater goods [Sample C11, p.14].

LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY

The scheme was repeated the next three times that the building was painted: a stone colour for the walls and joinery, red and green for the letters, and red/brown for the plinths and rainwater goods. The shade of stone colour was initially quite dark in tone, with one of the schemes being almost a light brown but the last ones were a pinkish colour. By now the paints used for the walls were also being used for the woodwork of the windows, door cases and cornices.

Where a fitting has been removed from the Ballroom wall, the pinkish colour of one of the last of the nineteenth-century schemes has been revealed



Circa 1900?

It was probably around the turn of the century that there was a change, and the letters 'GEORGE HOTEL' were painted twice with black paint, and then once with dark brown. The plinths continued to be painted brown but now the shade was a dark umber colour.

FIRST HALF OF TWENTIETH CENTURY [1930s?]

There was a change: on two occasions there was a departure from the normal decoration, and brown was used extensively over the whole Hotel. Perhaps this coincided with the change of ownership to Trust House Forte. Brown was used for the sash windows, dormer windows [B1, p.9], window sills, door cases, cornices and rainwater goods. It was also used for the walls up to shoulder level [Sample C26, p.15]. Above that the walls were painted an off-white



Painted off-white

Painted brown

AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

There was a long period when the windows were painted black, and there is evidence that the doors were also painted black. At least six lots of black paint were found in some samples.

The plinths were painted with the same black, but the rest of the walls and the cornices were painted a cream colour.

On just one occasion during this period a dark green was used for windows doors and plinths.

SINCE 2004?

A return to white windows and off-white for the walls.

Black plinths.

Dark green doors

LION STREET

It was difficult to work out what was happening on this elevation. Samples were only taken from ground level.

Building at far north end



The wall at this end of the building was being painted with reddish brown oil paints [Sample A13, p.17]. These paints were difficult to date, as they were based on iron oxides, but there were so many that they must go well back into the nineteenth century. They were presumably being painted to imitate brick or tile. No trace of the stone colours used on the High Street façade were found.

Building with moulded cornice



The moulded cornice was painted the same as the cornices on the High Street, i.e. with cream coloured, and stone coloured oil paints.

Only twentieth-century paints were found on the wall itself and the samples show that the surface of the bricks has thick dirt on it, so these bricks may have remained unpainted until recently.

Building at north end with rendered facade



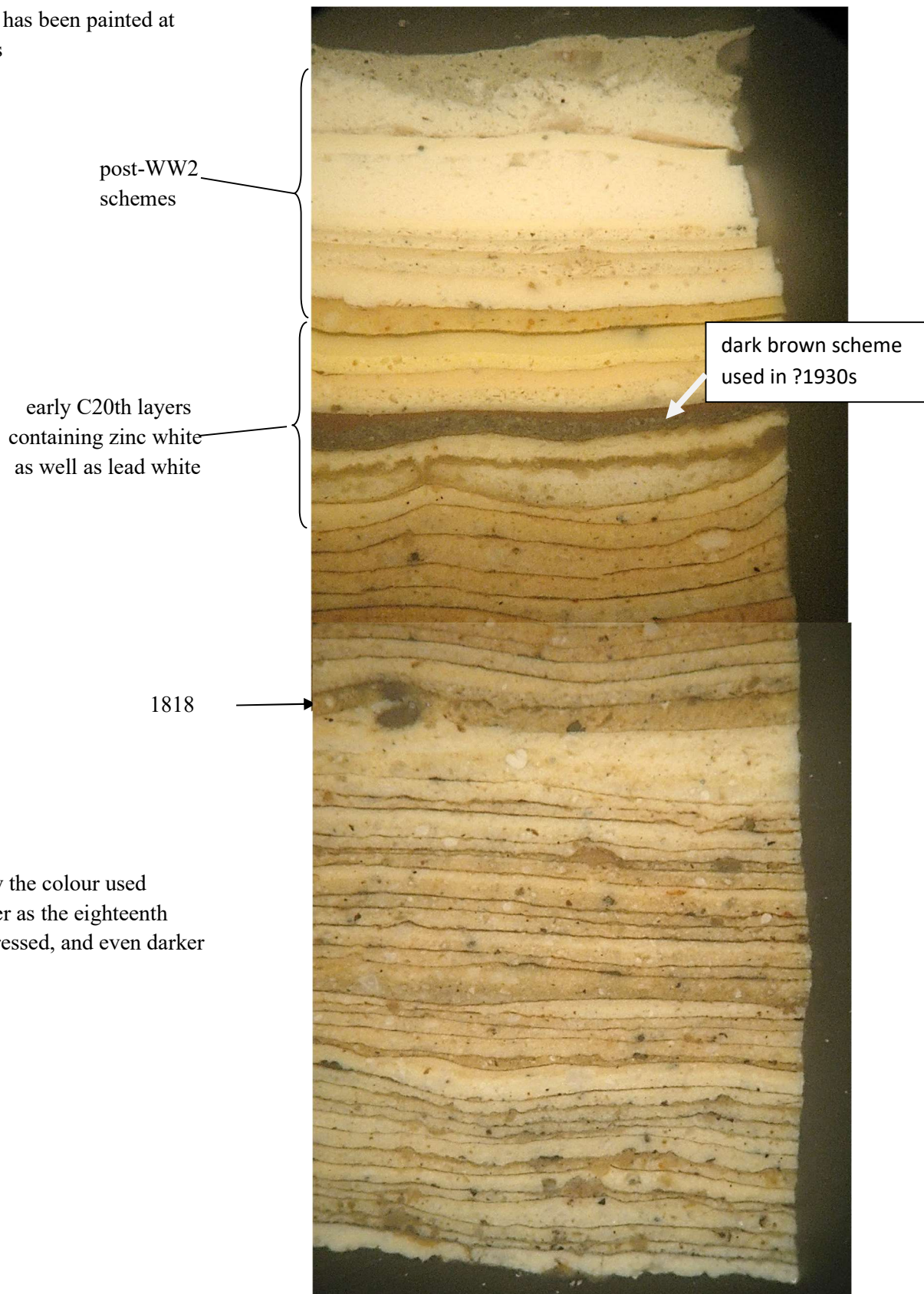
Only twentieth-century paints were found in samples taken from the rendered walls, but in one sample from the side of the door architrave we can see layers of limewash sandwiched between layers of oil paint used for the door, and the facade of this part of the building must have been limewashed through the nineteenth century.

SAMPLE B1

Easternmost dormer window – facing High Street

Some of the later C20th layers are missing, otherwise the sequence is complete from C18th to the present day

This window has been painted at least 53 times



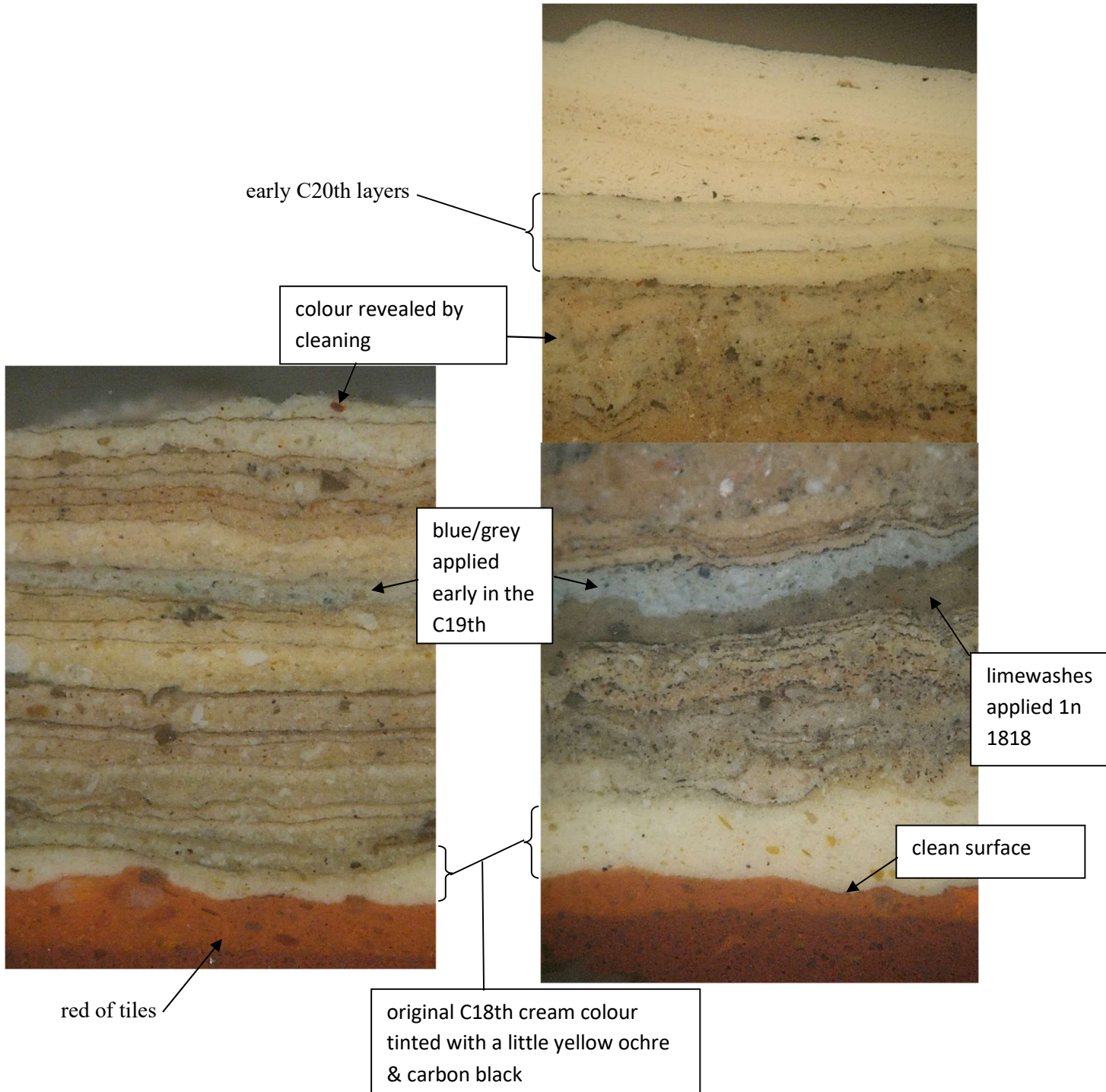
Showing how the colour used became darker as the eighteenth century progressed, and even darker after 1818

SAMPLE B3

Wall at 1st floor level – recent layers cleaned off

SAMPLE B4

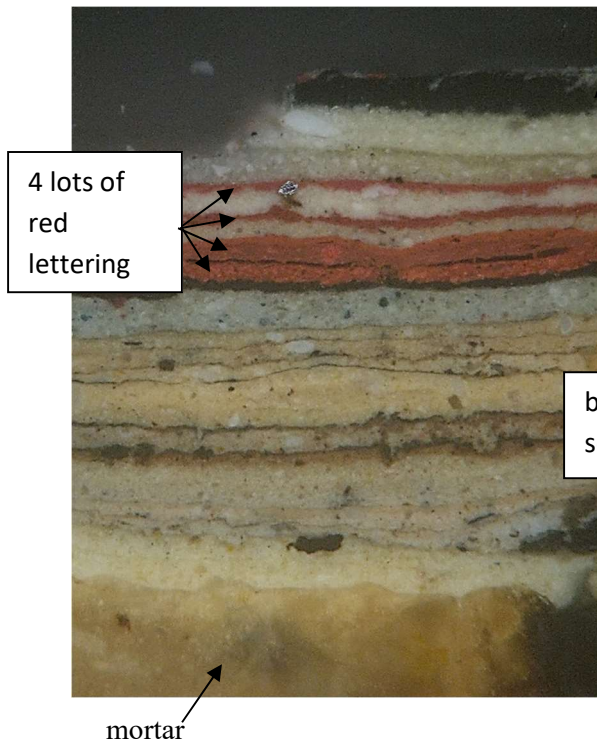
Wall at first floor level – all layers



The original cream-coloured oil paint sits on a clean tile surface, and must have been applied soon after building was completed.

SAMPLE B10

Red lettering of word 'Hotel'



4 lots of red lettering

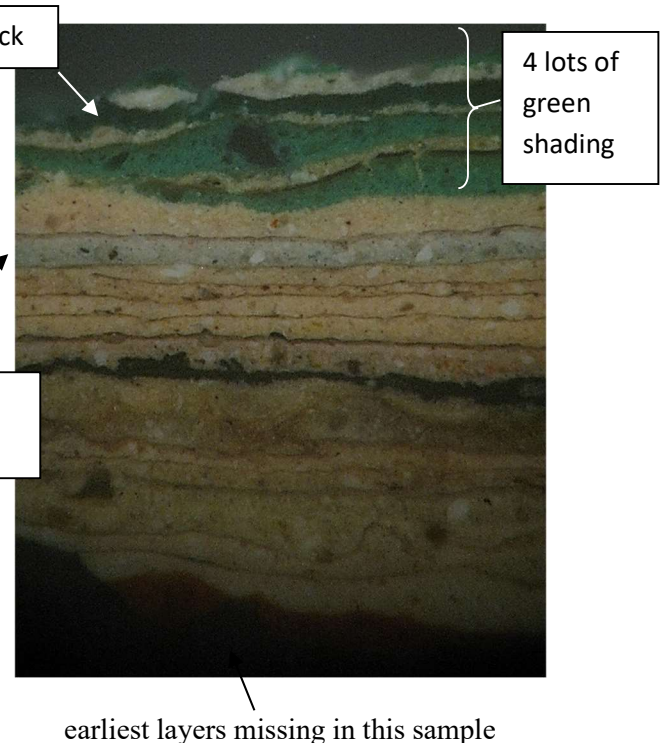
late C19th black

blue/grey applied soon after 1818

mortar

SAMPLE B11

Green shading of word 'Hotel'



4 lots of green shading

earliest layers missing in this sample

SAMPLE B16

Sash window – top floor

Showing that the window was painted a cream colour or stone colour, until the mid C20th



most recent layers not present

late C20th black schemes

1930s? brown scheme

early C20th layers contain zinc white

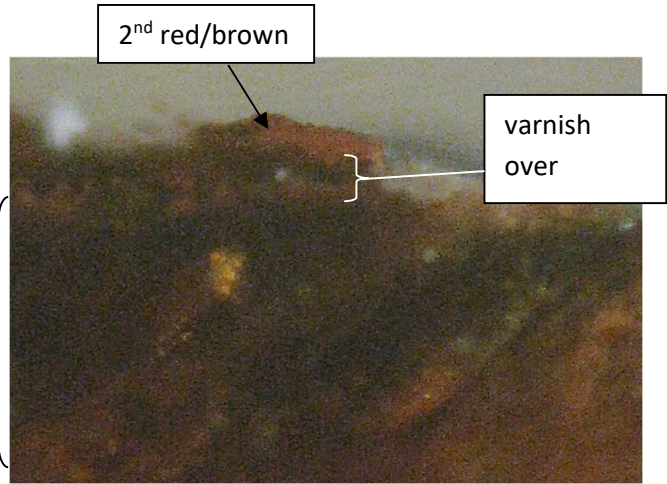
C18th & C19th layers

SAMPLE B21

Porch column

traces of original brown have survived the paint stripping

wood



SAMPLE B24

Door case of front door

late C20th/C21st blacks applied after paint stripping

remains of early stone-coloured paints



SAMPLE B29

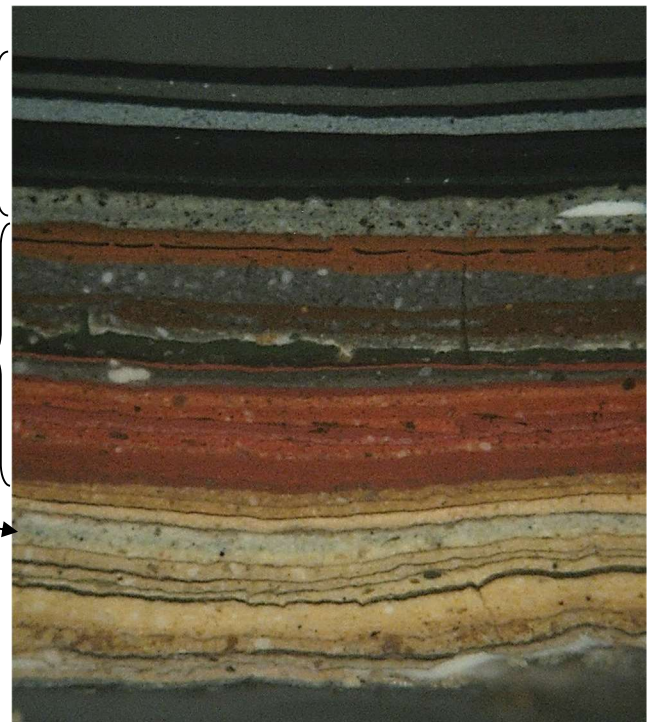
Plinth to left of front door

Showing that the practice of painting the plinth a dark colour started after 1818

late C20th & C21st blacks

late C19th/early C20th browns

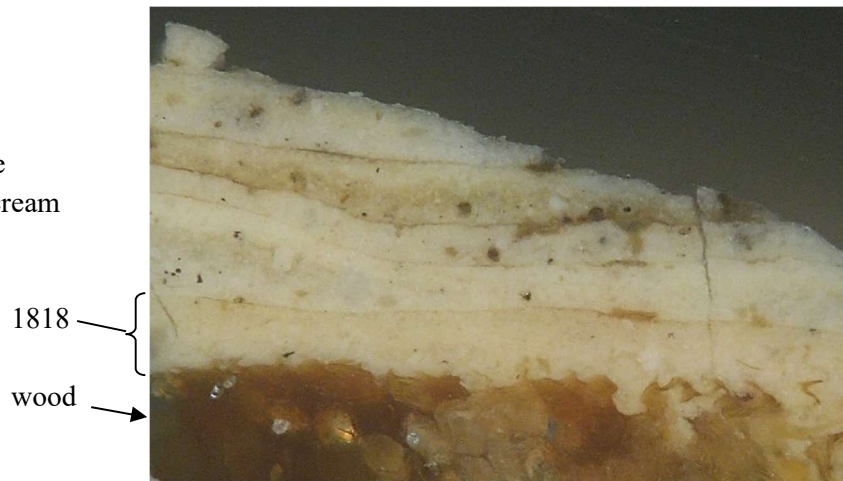
blue/grey applied soon after 1818



SAMPLE C3

Bow window of Ballroom

Later layers stripped off, but the fragment shows a sequence of cream colours used in early days



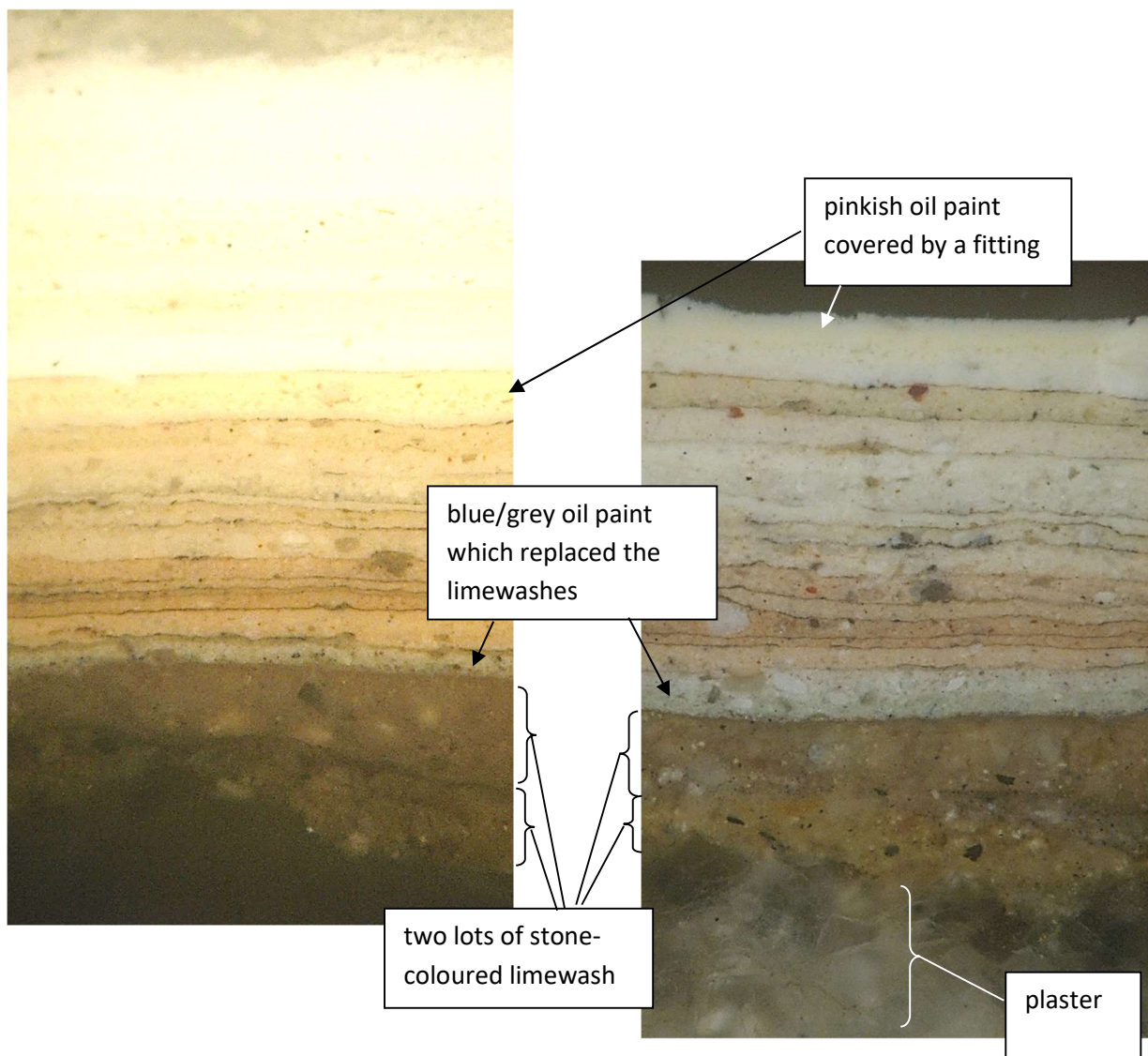
SAMPLE C5

Wall of Ballroom

SAMPLE C6

Wall where fitting removed

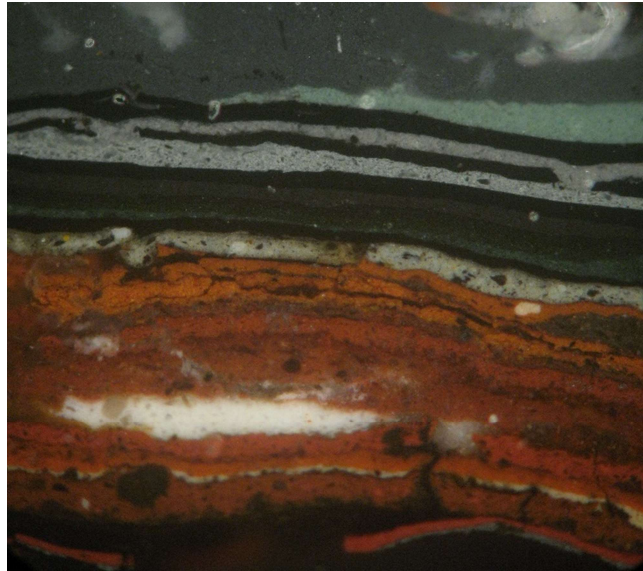
Samples showing the early limewash schemes applied after 1818



SAMPLE C11
Iron gutter fixing

C20th back schemes

C19th & early
C20th browns

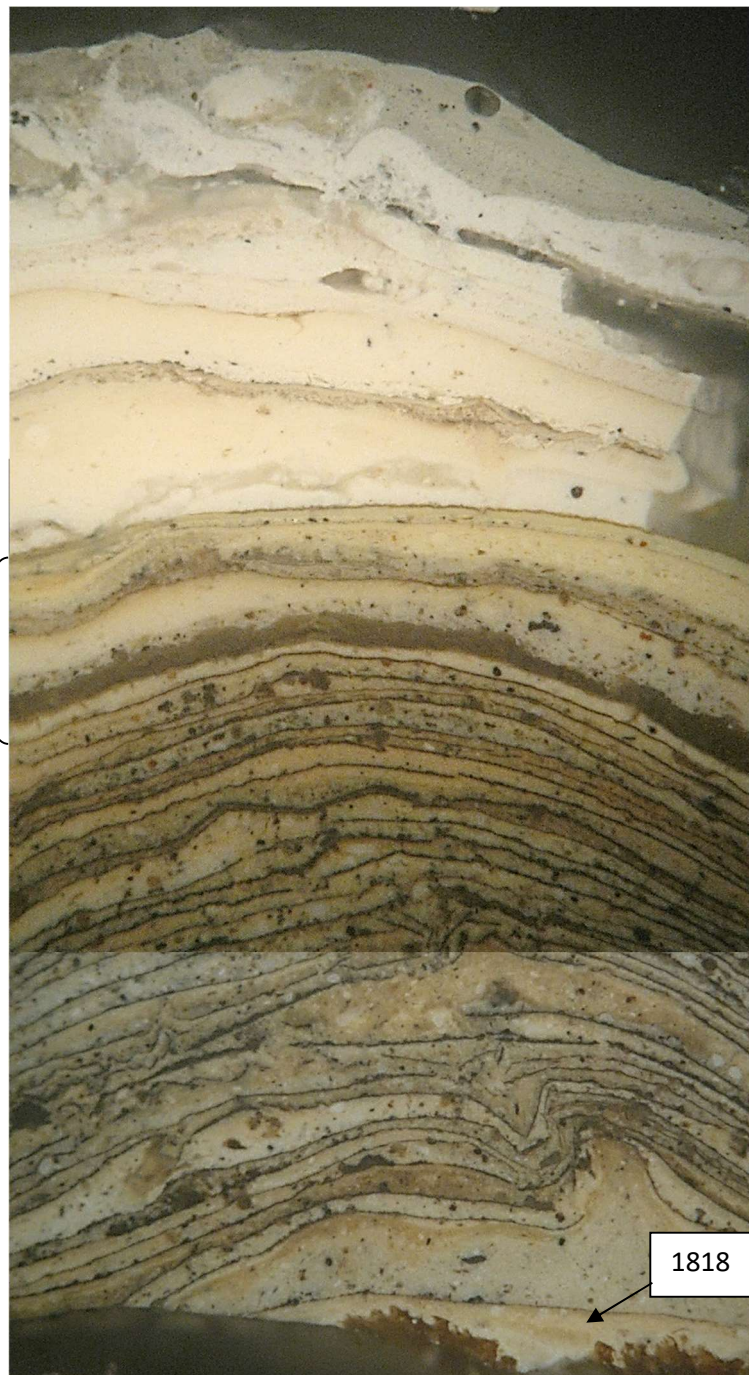


SAMPLE C12
Wooden cornice

The full sequence of paints
applied since
1818

Showing that the colour
was much darker in the
later C19th

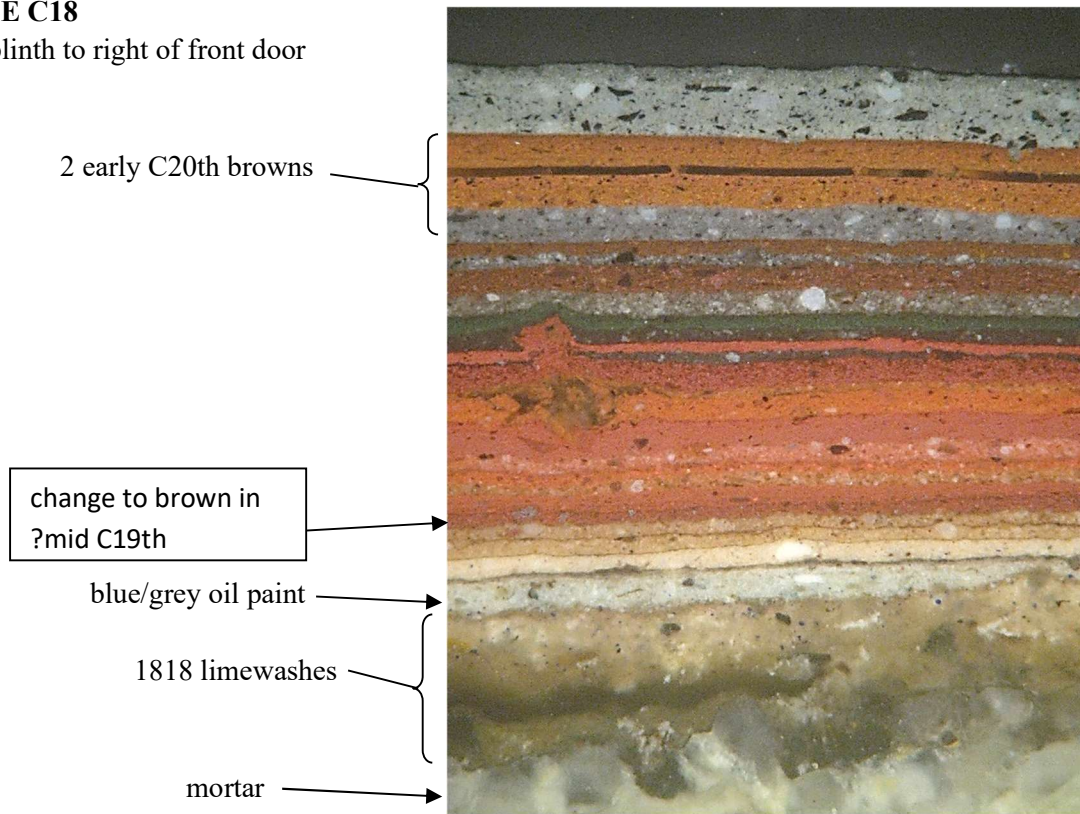
early C20th



1818

SAMPLE C18

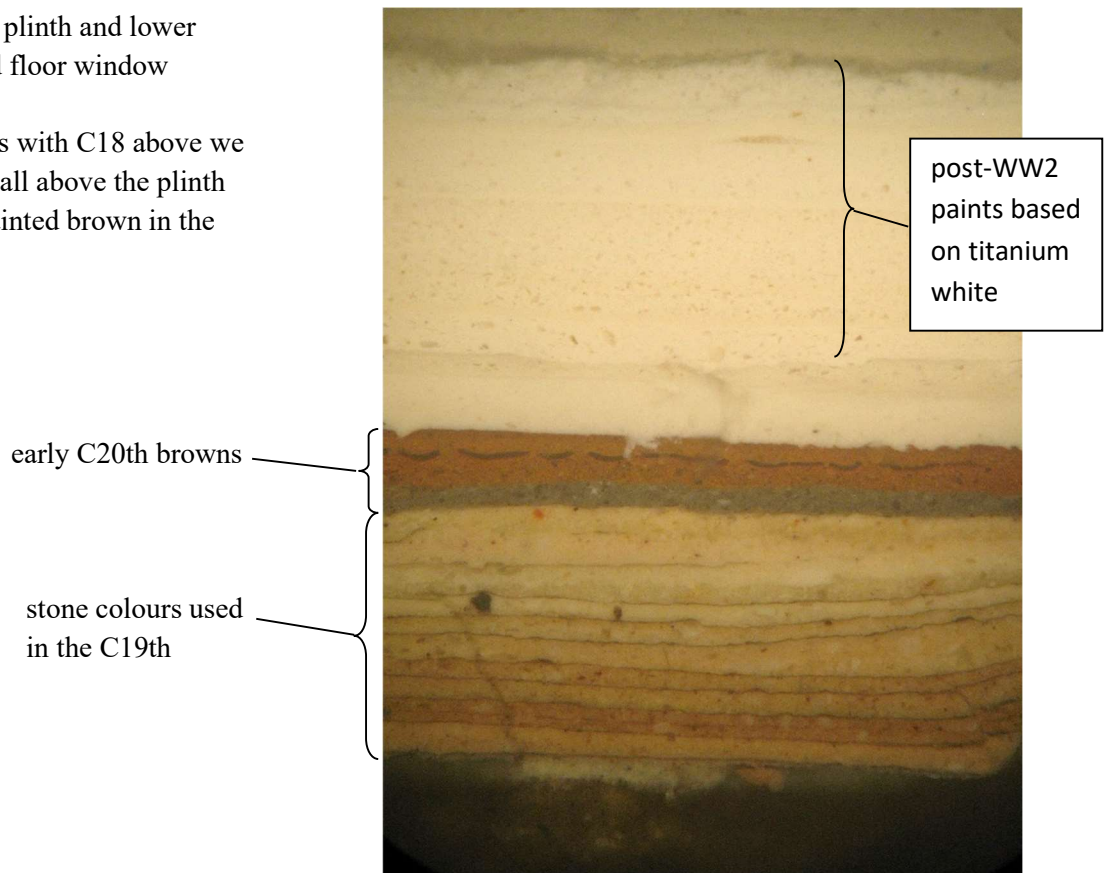
Fictive plinth to right of front door



SAMPLE C26

Wall between plinth and lower part of ground floor window

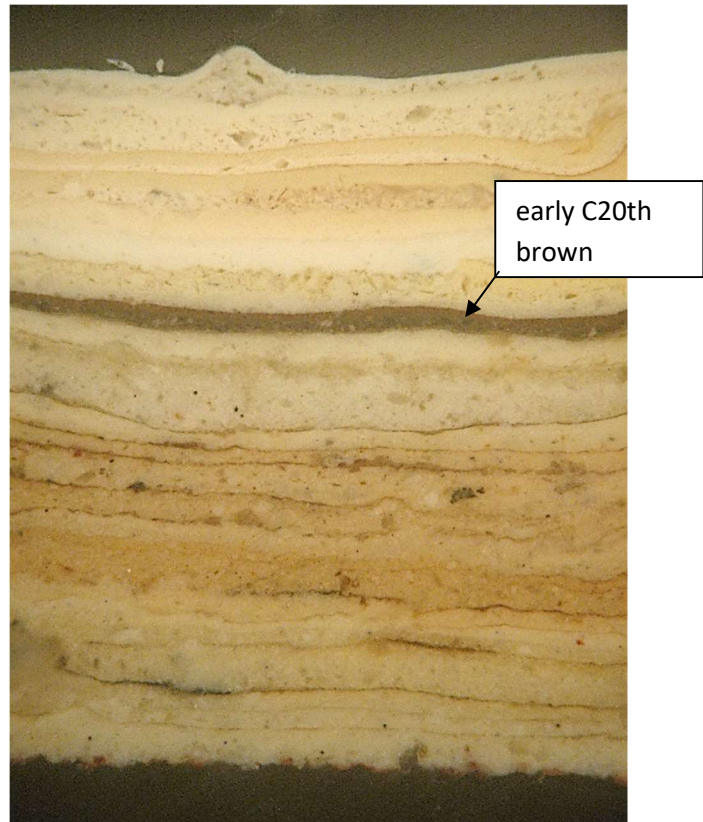
comparing this with C18 above we can see that wall above the plinth was briefly painted brown in the early C20th



SAMPLE A1

Lion Street, north – ground floor
'cornice'

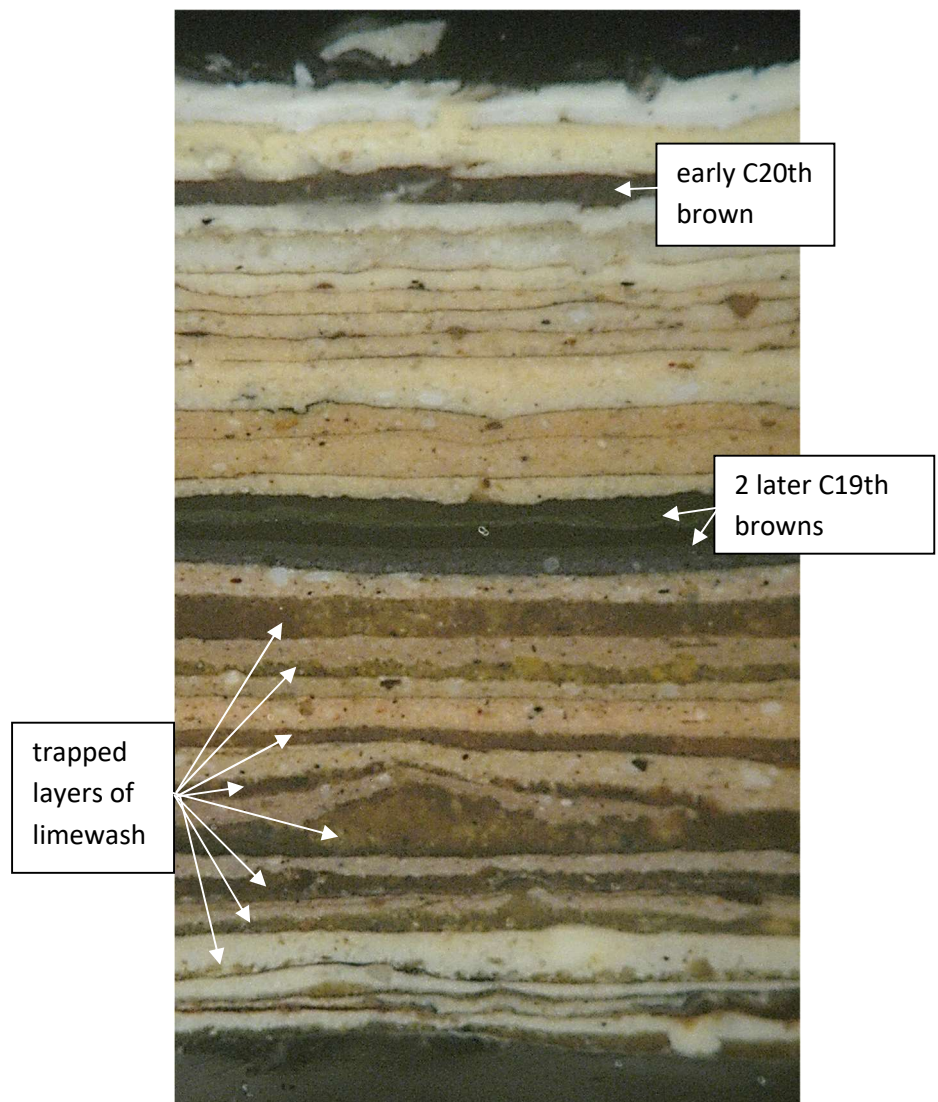
Showing that apart from once in the early C20th, the cornice has always been painted the same cream and pale stone colours as the front of the building

**SAMPLE A10**

Lion Street, south –
side of door
architrave

The door architrave has mostly been painted cream or stone-colour.

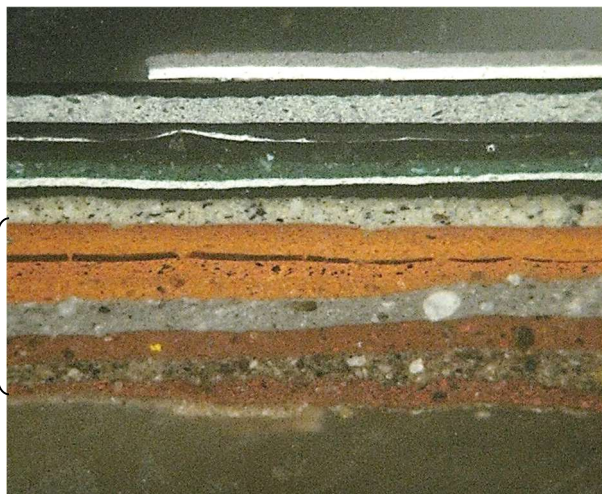
The oil paints used for the architrave have trapped layers of limewash used for the rendered walls in the earlier C19th



SAMPLE A9

Fictive plinth

Nineteenth-century layers are missing, and the sequence starts with early C20th brown schemes



SAMPLE A13

Lion Street, north – wall

same
browns as used on plinth
[see above]

5 C19th browns and a
dark green



Main building – High Street elevation

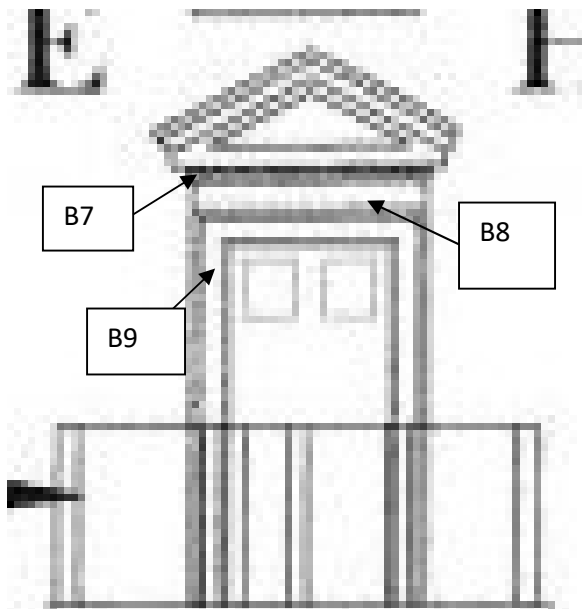
Dormer window, east end

- B1 moulding above window
- B2 remains of render on west side of dormer



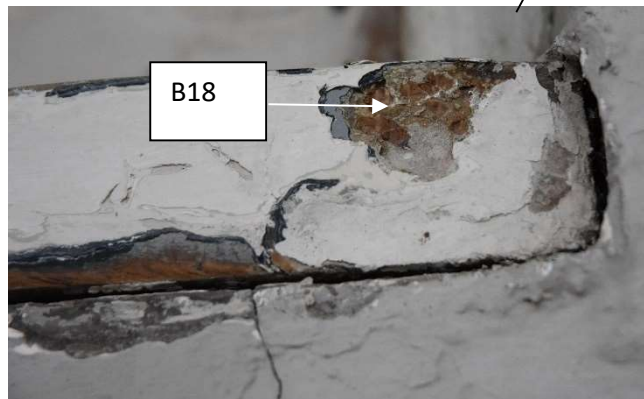
Second floor central window & door

- B3+17 cleaned area of wall
- B4 uncleaned area of wall
- B5 window frame
- B6 pediment
- B7 dentil below pediment
- B8 swag
- B9 door architrave

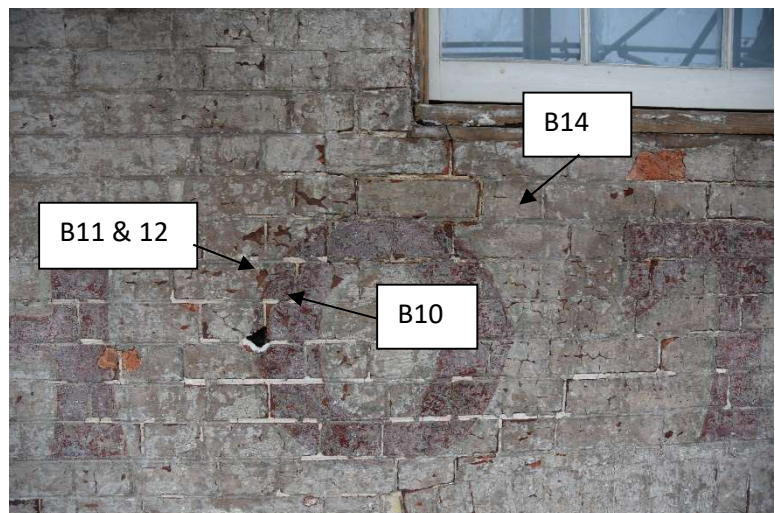


Second floor – far east window

- B16 window frame
- B18 sill



- 'HOTEL' sign
- B10 letter 'O' – red layers up to dark brown
- B11 letter 'O' – green layers
- B12 letter 'O' – layers over green
- B13 letter 'E' – uncleaned area [not shown]
- B14 cleaned background
- B15 uncleaned background, left of letters [not shown]

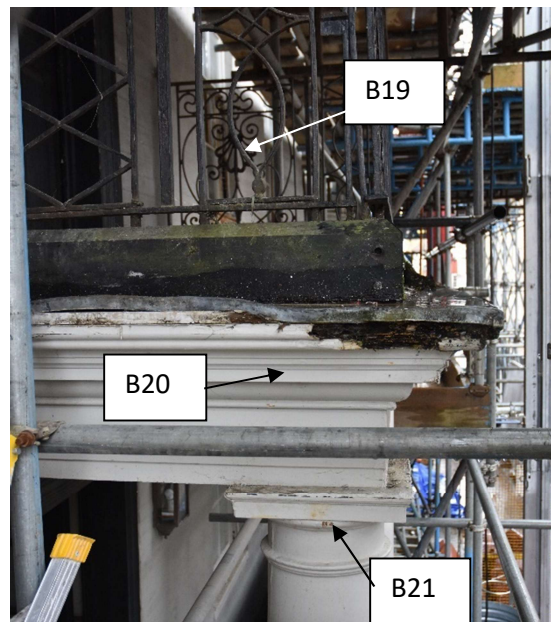


First floor level

- B22 Above window
B23 Between windows

Porch & Balcony

- B19 railings
B20 porch cornice
B21 column capital

Ground floor

- B24 door case
B25 door [not shown]
B26 wall to east of door
B27 plinth at east end [not shown]
B28 porch column
B29 plinth to left of door



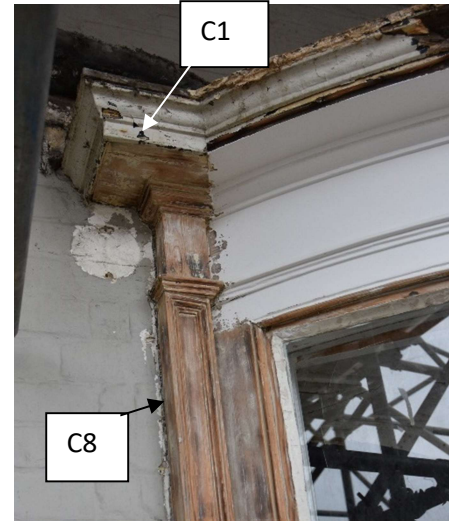
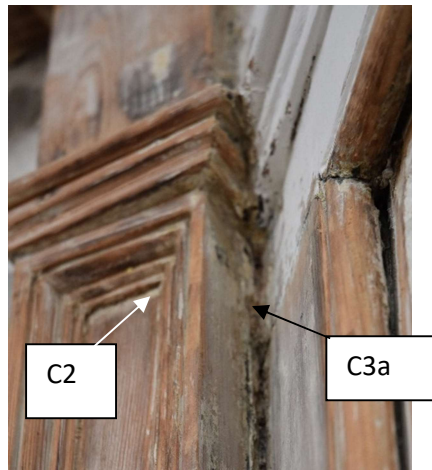
Ballroom Extension

First floor - East bay window

- C1 remains on top moulding
- C2 remains on pilaster
- C3a angle of pilaster and frame
- C8 angle of window and wall

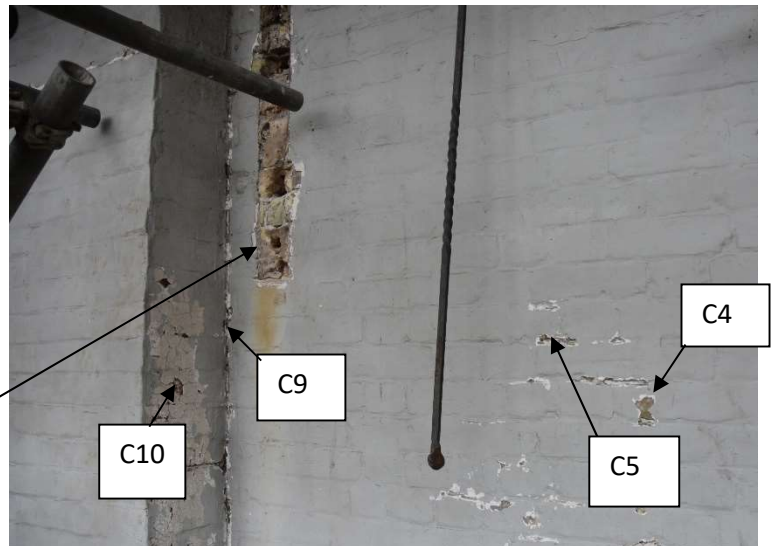
West bay window

- C3b same as C3a



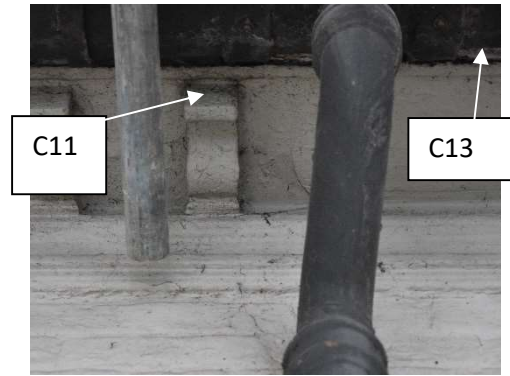
East end of Ballroom extension

- C4 layers on brick
- C5 layers on mortar
- C6 pink revealed where fitting removed
- C9 angle between buildings
- C10 return of main building



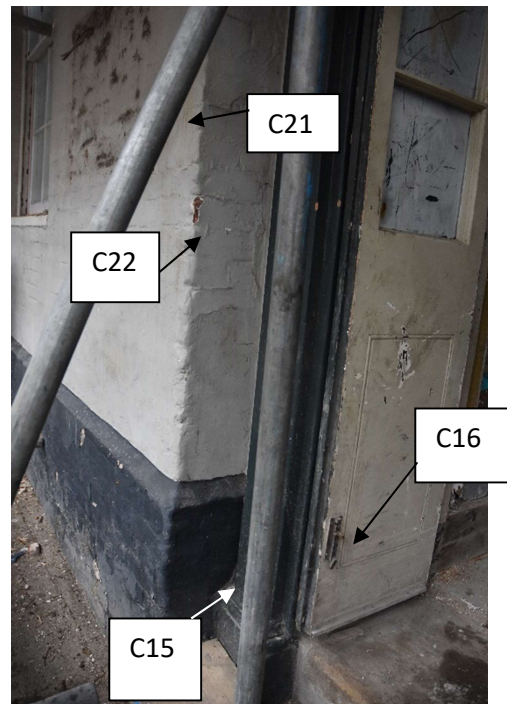
Cornice

- C11 iron gutter fitting [not shown]
- C12 modillion
- C13 gutter fascia board



Ground floor – east end of Ballroom

- C15 door case
- C16 door
- C21 13th brick above plinth
- C22 9th brick above plinth



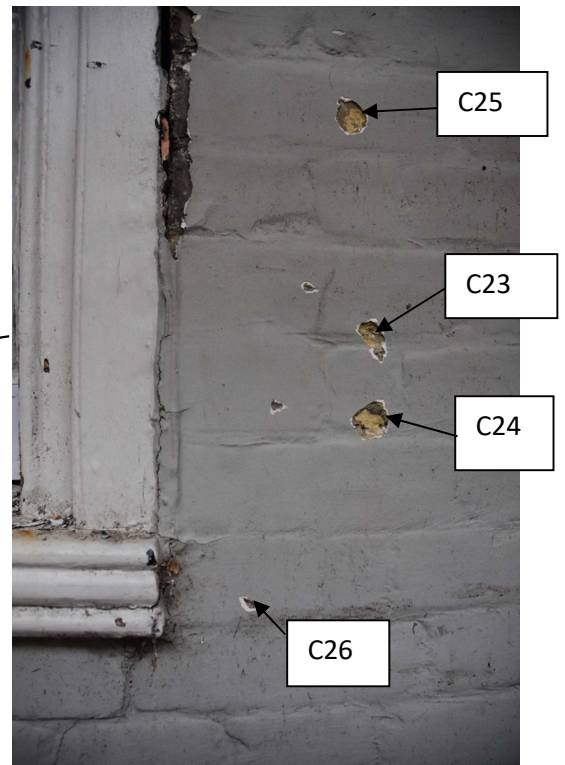
To west of Ballroom entrance door



- C18 fictive plinth on right
- C19 6th brick up from painted plinth
- C20 12th brick up from painted plinth

Wall to right of east window on Ballroom extension

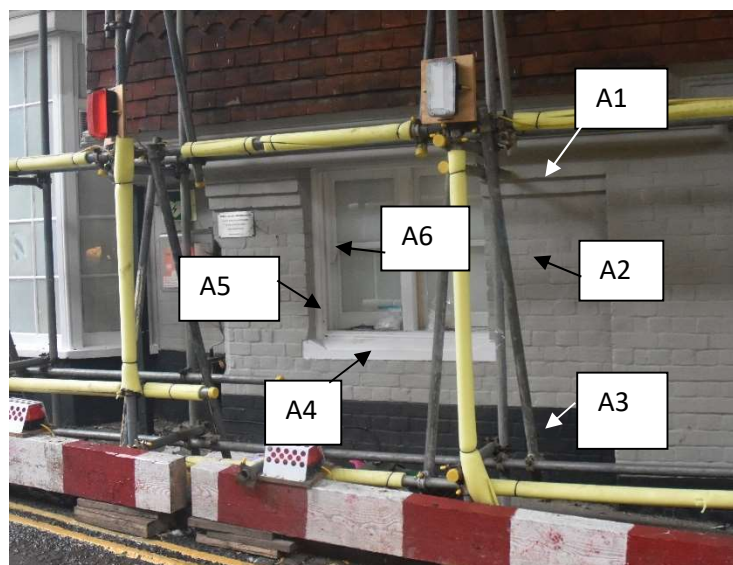
- C23 4th brick up from sill
- C24 3rd brick up from sill
- C25 6th brick up from sill
- C26 brick below sill level



LION STREET

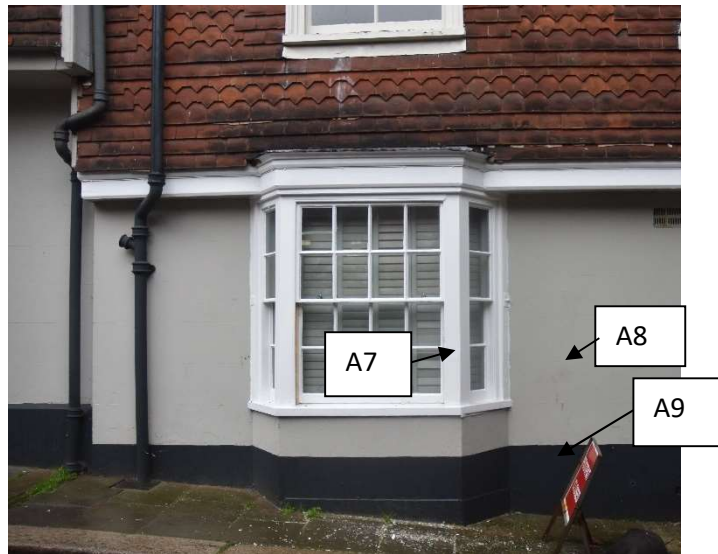
North end

- A1 moulded cornice
- A2 paint on tiles
- A3 fictive 'plinth'
- A4 window sill
- A5 window frame
- A6 window sash



Second bay window from north end

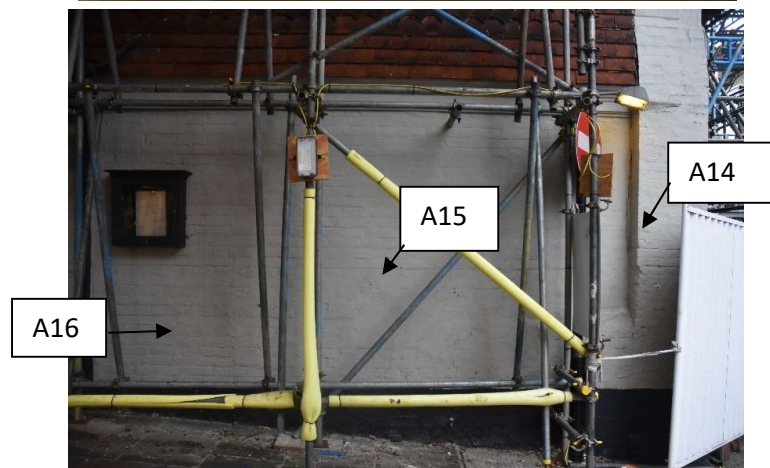
- A7 window frame
- A8 rendered wall
- A9 fictive plinth

Door at south end

- A10 architrave
- A11 door

North end of Lion Street elevation

- A14 projecting end of wall
- A15 paint on ?tiles
- A16 paint on ?bricks

Examination procedure

The fragments were mounted in cold-setting polyester resin, then cut and polished as cross-sections. The layers were compared under high magnification. Paint from key layers was dispersed on glass sliders and the pigments identified by polarised light microscopy. A chemical test for lead was carried out on representative cross-sections.