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Conservator of Wall Paintings and Polychrome Decoration

**14 St Austin's Lane, Harwich
Essex**



Harwich Architectural Survey: Paint Report

June 2020

14 St Austin's Lane, Harwich, Essex

Paint Report

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1: INTRODUCTION

This short report describes green paint in a first floor chamber at 14 St Austin's Lane, Harwich as part of the Lottery-funded Architectural Survey Project. Extensive remains of green paint survive on the C15th tiebeam. It would be worth paint sampling if the opportunity arises.

2: DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

This scheme is located on a C15th tiebeam in the first floor chamber (plates 1-3).

Green has a long history of use in interior decoration and its significance and meaning depends upon context and date. One of its more common associations is as a restful colour which would be appropriate for a bedchamber. It is undoubtedly important in colour hierarchy. It was used in Henry III Palaces (C13th) sometimes spangled with gold and a high quality late C14th example survives in the Byward Tower, Tower of London.

Below elite levels of society, green appears in 'smart' interior decoration in the early C16th. There is more green identified in interiors in the late C16th and even more in the C17th when it is still associated with status. It is most often found in the 'better' interiors of urban buildings and houses of the rural gentry. As a merchant's house in a port, 14 St Austin's Lane is a typical example. Like the green in the hall chamber of No 25 (The Alma) King's Head St, the evidence is fragmentary. There are no dating criteria to indicate the date but I suggest that the late C16th or the first half of the C17th is more likely. However, the use of green indicates that this first floor chamber was considered an important room in the late C16th/early C17th.

Dr Andrea Kirkham ACR, FSA
June 2020

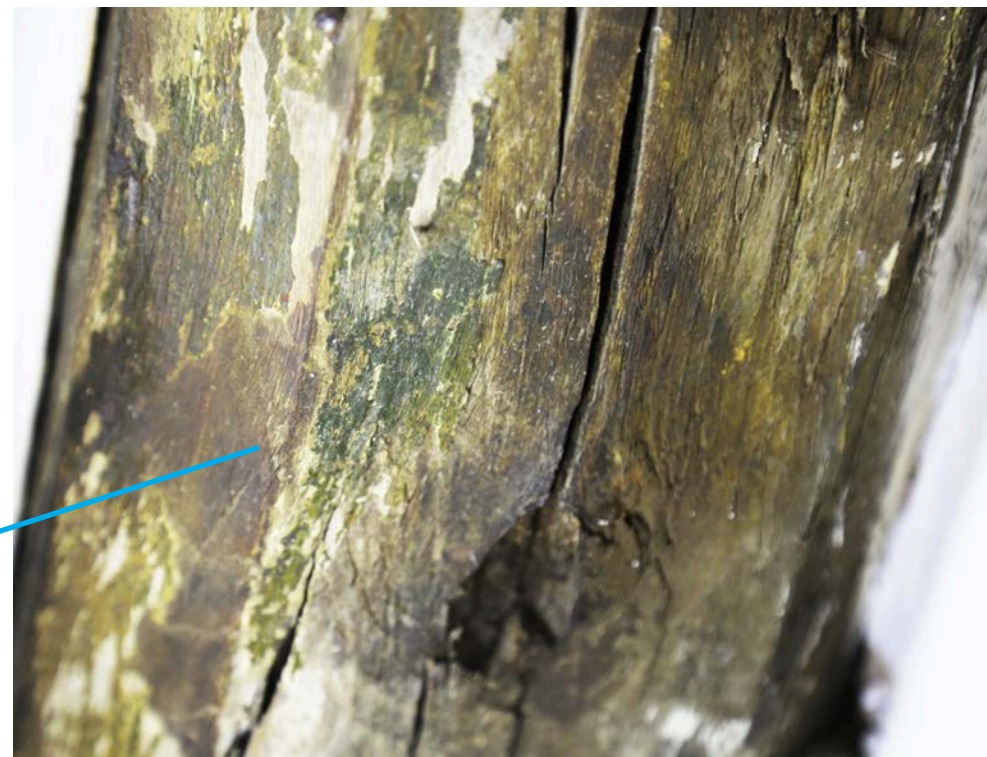


Plate 1

Top left: exterior of 14 St Austin's Lane, showing the location of the painted decoration in the first floor chamber

Plate 2

Left: detail of the medieval tiebeam with later green paint

Plate 3

*Above: detail of the green paint
(All photos © A Kirkham 2019)*