Our guide to historic buildings and period properties



earthborn®
Beautifully different paint

Courtesy of Alnwick Farmhouse, Wall painted in Claypaint - Tuffet

Paint for historic buildings and period properties

At Earthborn, we're known for our high performance, breathable paints. Paint that is better for you, your home and the planet.

With their unique breathable properties and exceptional performance, our paints* are an ideal choice for listed buildings, period homes and heritage restoration projects.

From Georgian townhouses to rural cottages, many historic buildings were constructed long before modern building methods existed. Built using natural materials such as lime plaster, stone and solid brick, they were designed to breathe by allowing moisture to move freely through their walls.

Using impermeable modern coatings can trap this moisture, leading to damp, peeling paint and damage over time. Our interior and exterior breathable paints help maintain this natural balance, allowing moisture to escape, making them an essential choice for the long-term care of traditional buildings.

*All our paints offer some level of breathability; however, certain products are more suitable for traditional or heritage substrates. Please refer to individual product data sheets to select the best option for your project.

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.

Preserving the past

Owning or caring for a historic building comes with the responsibility of protecting its unique character and the materials that have allowed it to stand the test of time.



Throughout this booklet, we'll explore the importance of breathability, offer practical guidance for caring for historic buildings, and introduce the Earthborn products designed to work in harmony with traditional properties.

Why breathable paint?

Choosing breathable paints is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect a period property. By allowing moisture to escape naturally, they help preserve the building's fabric, reduce the risk of future damage and create healthier living environments, all while respecting the way traditional buildings were designed to perform.

Whether you're undertaking a full restoration, repairing original features or carrying out routine maintenance, the products you choose can have a lasting impact on the health of your building. Many older properties have been coated with modern, non-breathable paints that trap moisture within the walls, often leading to peeling finishes, damaged plaster, decaying timber and ongoing damp issues.

Built to *breathe*

We've all seen the damage caused when walls are sealed with non-breathable paints: peeling paint, blown plaster and render, rotting timbers and persistent condensation.

The reason is simple – moisture cannot remain trapped within a wall forever. It needs an escape route.

While many modern buildings rely on cavity walls and damp-proof courses to keep moisture at bay, retro-fitting these doesn't work for older buildings. Most historic properties were constructed using natural, breathable materials such as solid masonry, timber frames and lime-based mortars. These traditional building methods were designed to absorb and release moisture naturally, helping buildings remain healthy over time.



An increasing number of homeowners and heritage professionals are choosing Earthborn's Claypaint, combining the very best of traditional principles with modern paint technology.

Our high performance formula is designed to protect the fabric of historic buildings while creating healthier interiors and being kinder to the environment.

How do I know if a paint is *breathable?*

Different paints may be tested using different recognised standards. To make things simple, we've outlined the key terms below to help you understand how vapour-open a paint is and whether it's suitable for traditional buildings.

1

What is an Sd level?

Sd (Steam Diffusion) value measures how easily moisture vapour can move through a paint coating.

An Sd value of 1 or lower is considered breathable.
The lower the number, the more breathable the paint.

2

What is a V value?

Moisture Vapour Diffusion (V) describes how readily moisture vapour diffuses through paint. While presented differently, V and Sd both describe vapour diffusion performance, helping to indicate how resistant a coating is to moisture vapour movement.

3

What does MVTR mean?

Moisture Vapour Transmission Rate measures how much water vapour can pass through a paint surface over 24 hours.

The higher the figure, the more breathable the paint.

4

How to use these values

- **Sd and V describe vapour diffusion (how easily vapour moves through the coating).**
- **MVTR describes vapour transmission (how much vapour passes through over time).**

Look for a low Sd value alongside either Moisture Vapour Diffusion (V) or Moisture Vapour Transmission Rate (MVTR). Looking at one value doesn't give the full picture of breathability, a paint can perform well in one area but not the other. All three help you understand how vapour-open a paint is and whether it is suitable for traditional buildings, helping to prevent trapped moisture, flaking, blistering and dampness.

Remember!

Not all 'Breathable' paints are created equal.

Don't just rely on marketing buzzwords, always check the technical details behind the claim.

5

Be cautious of phrases such as:

- *Breathe-easy formula*
- *Fresh air technology*
- *Moisture friendly*



Without supporting technical data, these claims may be more marketing than performance based. A truly breathable paint should be backed by measurable results, not just clever wording! That's why you'll find all the key breathability information you need on our easy-to-use technical data sheets.

Wall painted in Claypaint - Crocky Road

Wall painted in Claypaint - Bobble Hat

Courtesy of Duredon Farm, Wall painted in Claypaint - Sunday Stroll

Choosing the *right* breathable paint

Whether you're decorating interior walls or exterior masonry, choosing the right breathable paint is key to achieving a long-lasting finish.

Choosing breathable paints is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect a period property. By allowing moisture to escape naturally, they help preserve the building's fabric, reduce the risk of future damage and create healthier living environments, all while respecting the way traditional buildings were designed to perform.

Interior walls & ceilings



Claypaint

A breathable interior emulsion

Claypaint is a highly breathable, ultra flat matt emulsion with excellent coverage, offering a modern, user-friendly alternative to traditional limewash.

Ideal for lime plaster, older properties and homes with damp issues, it helps reduce trapped moisture, mould and mildew, while its natural clay content helps regulate humidity for a healthier indoor environment. Suitable for both previously painted surfaces and standard gypsum plaster, Claypaint creates a seamless finish across both old and modern areas of the home.

- **Excellent coverage** (Up to 10m² per litre)
- **Virtually VOC free**
- **No hidden nasties**
- **No horrible smells**
- **Toy Safety approved**
- **EU Ecolabel approved**

- **Sd value:** 0.02m (Highly breathable)
- **MVTR:** 1115g/m² per day
- **Drying time:** 6-12 hours
- **Apply with:** A brush, roller or spray

Naturally hygroscopic

Unlike conventional paints, Claypaint is naturally hygroscopic, meaning it can absorb and release moisture vapour as humidity levels change. This helps balance moisture in the air, reducing condensation and creating a healthier, more comfortable environment.

This makes Claypaint particularly well suited to bathrooms, kitchens and other rooms where humidity levels regularly fluctuate.

Exterior



Silicate Masonry Paint

A breathable exterior paint

For exterior surfaces, our 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 chemical bond with the masonry surface, knitting into the fabric of the building, when paired with Silicate Primer. This results in a durable, weather resistant, yet fully breathable finish.

- **Excellent coverage** (5-7m^2 per litre)
- **Virtually VOC free**
- **Weather resistant, easy to clean**
- **Naturally helps resists algae & mould**
- **Non yellowing finish, that won't fade**

- **Sd value:** 0.01m (Highly breathable)
- **Moisture Vapour Diffusion (V):** 1515g/m^2 per day
- **Drying time:** 6-12 hours
- **Apply with:** A brush, roller or spray

*Must be used with one of our primers.



Performance

Our interior and exterior paints combine exceptional breathability with outstanding performance, delivering long-lasting finishes without compromising the health of your home.

Water based with only trace VOCs, they create beautiful homes while supporting a healthier indoor environment and contributing to a more sustainable approach to decorating. Exterior paints also provide excellent weather resistance, offering lasting protection against the elements.



Perfect on *Lime Plaster*

Lime plaster has been used in traditional buildings for centuries. Unlike modern gypsum plaster, it is naturally breathable and flexible, allowing moisture to move freely through walls and helping to protect the building fabric from trapped damp. This makes it particularly well suited to older, solid-wall properties.

Our Claypaint and Silicate Masonry Paint are specially formulated to work in harmony with lime plaster and lime-rendered walls. Their breathable, virtually VOC free formulations preserve the natural performance of the plaster while delivering a beautiful finish.

Unlike conventional vinyl emulsions, which can trap moisture by sealing the surface, our breathable paints allow walls to continue releasing moisture naturally, helping to reduce the risk of damp, peeling paint and damage to the building fabric.

Before painting Lime Plaster

A few simple steps should be taken before painting on to a lime surface:



Choose a breathable paint to ensure the surface can continue to release moisture naturally. Non-breathable finishes can trap moisture and damage the plaster over time.

Allow the lime plaster or render to fully cure before decorating. As a general guide, allow at least one month of curing for every 5 mm of thickness, although this may take longer in cool or damp conditions. Your lime supplier or contractor will be able to advise on the appropriate curing time.

Check the surface is sound before painting. It should be fully cured, dry and free from loose, powdery or flaky material.

Select the correct product for your project, ensuring it is suitable for either interior or exterior use, and always follow the recommended preparation and application instructions.



Historic colour palettes

Discover a collection of carefully curated Earthborn colour palettes inspired by defining historical eras.

Whether you're restoring a period property or simply drawn to timeless interiors, let these palettes inspire your next project.

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

earthbornpaints.co.uk



Courtesy of The Park Hotel, Walls painted in White Clay

The *Georgian* Palette

1714 - 1837

Characterised by soft, muted tones, Georgian interiors conveyed elegance through their high ceilings, ornate architraves and light-filled rooms. Designed with balance, symmetry and proportion in mind, these grand spaces were complemented by a refined colour palette of soft sky blues, peachy tones, delicate greens and warm earthy neutrals.

Our Georgian-inspired palette captures this timeless aesthetic, combining soft whites, gentle pastels and understated earthy tones to create interiors that feel bright, spacious and effortlessly elegant. Pair with off-white woodwork to highlight elaborate mouldings, cornices and decorative ceiling plasterwork, bringing classic architectural details beautifully to life.



The *Victorian* Palette

1837 - 1901

Influenced by a variety of cultural, artistic and historical movements, Victorian interiors were defined by their extensive use of rich, vibrant colour. Characterised by dark, moody jewel tones, these spaces evoked a sense of luxury, sophistication and timeless elegance, while exuding warmth, richness and nobility.

Featuring deep burgundies, forest greens and dramatic blues, our Victorian-inspired palette is designed to help you make bold, confident choices and bring depth and style to your interiors.



The *Edwardian* Palette

1901 - 1910

Taking a step away from the rich, moody palettes of the Victorian era, Edwardian interiors embraced a lighter, brighter and more spacious feel, designed to maximise natural light. Characterised by soft creams, gentle greys, muted greens and warm neutrals, these calming shades created fresh, welcoming spaces that felt effortlessly elegant.

Inspired by this timeless style, our Edwardian palette celebrates light-filled interiors with a collection of soft, organic colours, from delicate greys and warm neutrals to fresh blues and greens, bringing warmth, tranquillity and understated sophistication to every room.



The *Art Deco* Palette

1919 - 1939

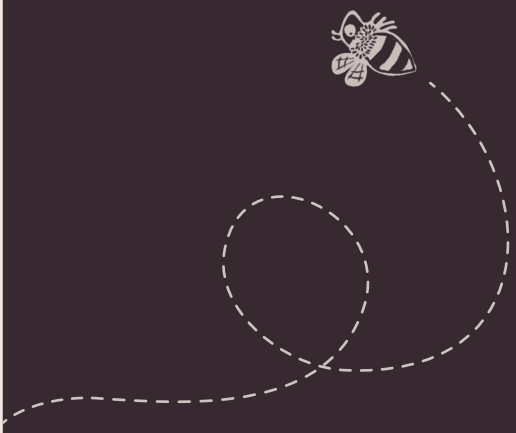
Embracing glamour, confidence and sophistication, the Art Deco era celebrated bold interiors inspired by the optimism and prosperity of the Roaring Twenties. Defined by sleek lines, geometric patterns and striking symmetry, homes often balanced rich jewel tones with warm neutrals to create luxurious, high-contrast spaces.

Deep teals, burnt oranges and elegant purples were paired with charcoal, black and metallic accents to enhance the era's unmistakable sense of drama. This carefully curated palette captures the timeless elegance of Art Deco, making it easy to bring its bold, refined character into your home.



Head to our website to order a free colour card, see our full range of colours or shop online whenever it suits you. Use our stockist locator to find your local stockist and shop in-store.

Want to know more about which products to use in a heritage setting, get in touch with our team, we're always happy to help.



This booklet, like all our printed materials, is printed on recycled materials using biodegradable ink.

So you can pop it in your recycling bin.

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