

PARK GATES

OLD TOWN GARDENS, SWINDON

Samples were taken from four iron gates by Colin Mullins.

- Gate A** Godard Road - Late C19th pedestrian gate
- A1 Gate
 - A2 Pilaster

- Gate B** Quarry Road N/E Entrance to Gardens – Late C19th wrought iron gates
- B1 Gate
 - B2 Pilaster

- Gate C** Wesleycot Road – After 1905
- C1 Gate

- Gate D** Quarry Road – pedestrian gate
- D1 Gate

Examination procedure The samples were examined under low magnification and then the pieces were mounted in cold-setting polyester resin to be cut and polished as cross-sections. Material from the coloured layers was dispersed on glass slides and the pigments identified using a polarising light microscope. A chemical test for lead was carried out on a representative section.

RESULTS

The earliest paint layers were found on Gates A and B. Some, but not all of those early layers were also found on pedestrian Gate D, and it was probably installed around the same time.

Gates A and B appear to have regularly been painted at the same time and with the same paints. Gate D shares some of those paint schemes, but seems to have sometimes been painted as a separate item.

Earliest decoration

The iron was primed with a red iron oxide primer. This was followed by a grey undercoat of lead white and carbon black and then a top coat of dark red/brown based on pure iron oxide pigment, such as Venetian red [see Sample A1, p.3].

Red/brown was a common choice of colour for urban ironwork in the late nineteenth century. It became a fashionable choice in the 1860s and in the last quarter of the century it was used extensively for street railings and also for park railings and gates. It continued to be widely used up to the First World War. It is rarely found used after circa 1920.

Red/brown was the first paint scheme on Gates A, B and D.

Later decorations

- 2 A second lot of red/brown was applied over the first without the use of an undercoat.
- 3 The third time that the gates were decorated, there was a change to dark green. The earlier browns were covered with a dark grey undercoat and then the green was brushed over the top. This was found in samples from Gates A and B [see Sample B2, p.4].
- 4 The fourth scheme which was only found in samples from Gate B is unusual. There was a return to red, but this time it was a much brighter red, not a red/brown. A red undercoat was applied first mixed from red iron oxide and a small amount of red lead, and finally a thick crimson glaze, or varnish. was applied over the top [See Sample B2, p.4].

Based on the number of lead-based paint scheme which followed this was probably applied around the turn of the century.

- 5 A second varnished red scheme followed the first, but over a darker undercoat. This was found in Samples from both Gate A and Gate B.

The equivalent layer in the samples from Gate D was a black scheme [Sample D1, p.5].

- 6 At some point in the first half of the twentieth century the gates stopped being painted red/brown, and from this point on they were always now painted green.

The first green scheme was a dark green over a light green undercoat.

- 7 It must have been in the inter-war years that there was a change to brighter greens. The first of these green was mixed from Prussian blue and chrome yellow, and applied over a grey undercoat still based on traditional lead white. This was found in samples from Gates A and B. Gate D was also now being painted green, but different types of paint were used.

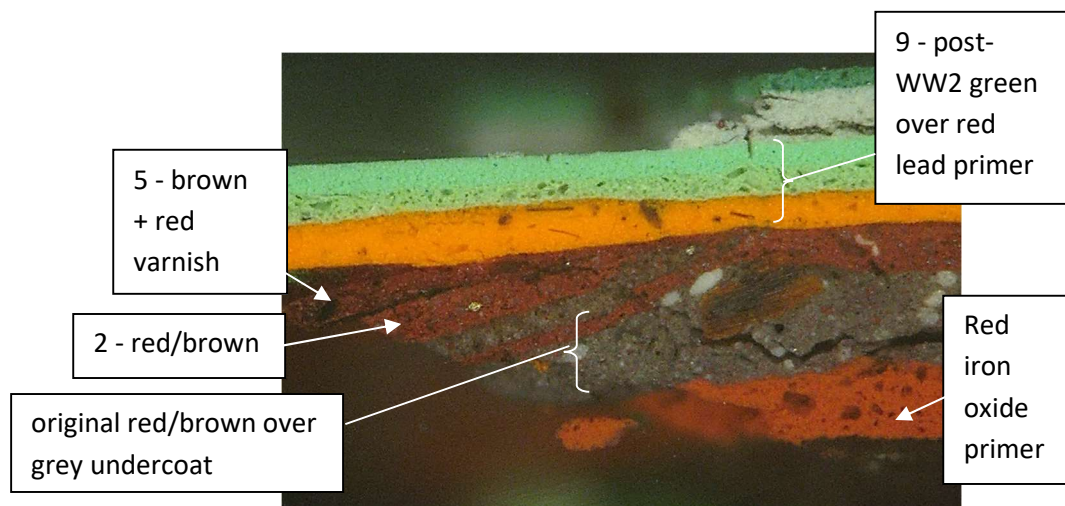
- 8 Wesleycot Gate installed. A red lead primer was used, followed by a light green not used on any of the other gates [Sample C1, p.5]. The undercoat for this green contains zinc white, a pigment widely used for commercial oil paints in the first half of the twentieth century.

- 9 The gates appear to have been partly sanded down, then given a priming coat of red lead, before being painted light green once more. The green contains titanium dioxide white, and so this work is likely to have been done no earlier than the 1950s/early 60s.

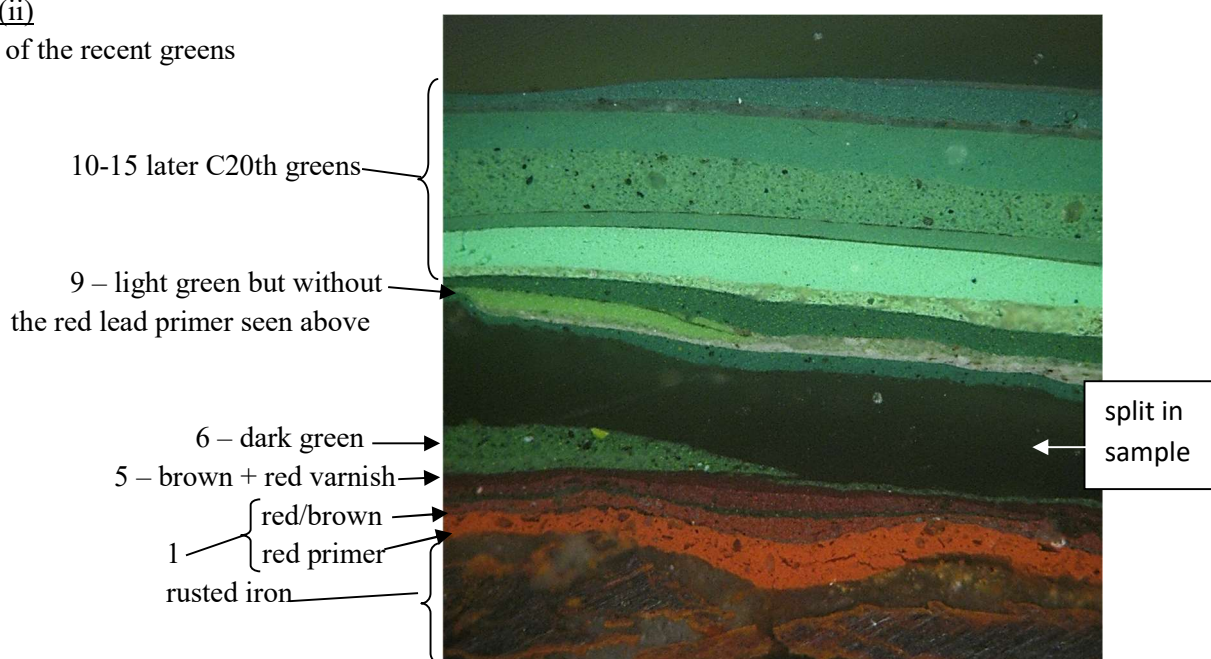
- 10-15 Six lots of mid and dark green, finishing with the one seen today.

SAMPLE A1
Godard Gate

Fragment (i)
with original scheme,

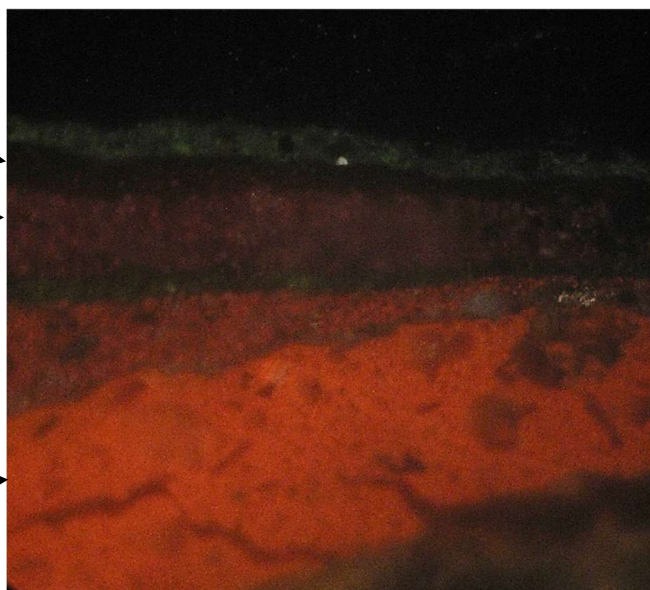
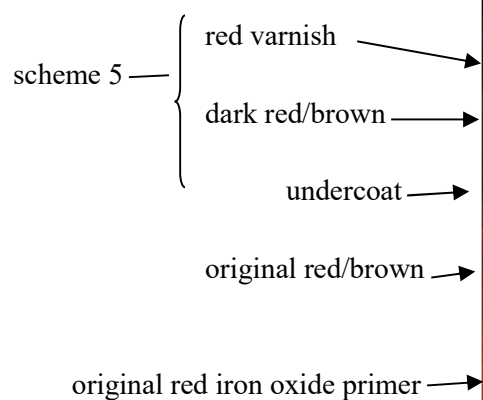


Fragment (ii)
with more of the recent greens



Detail of first layers

schemes 2-4 missing in this fragments



SAMPLE A2

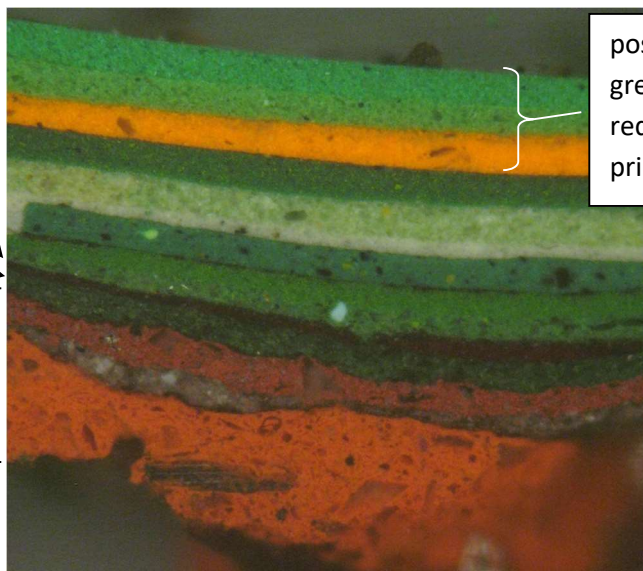
Godard Gate - pilaster

4 – brown + varnish

3 – dark green

original scheme

post-WW2
green on
red lead
primer

**SAMPLE B2**Fragment (i)

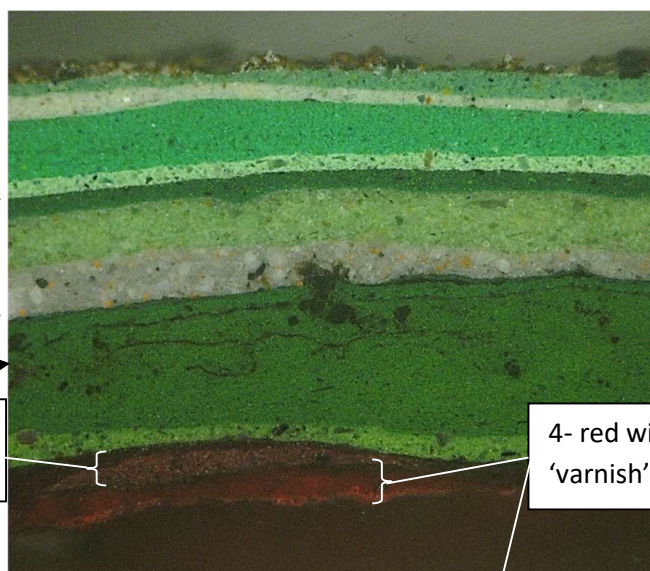
Upper layers

7 – last lead-based
paint

6

5 – brown with
red 'varnish'

4- red with red
'varnish'

Fragment (ii)

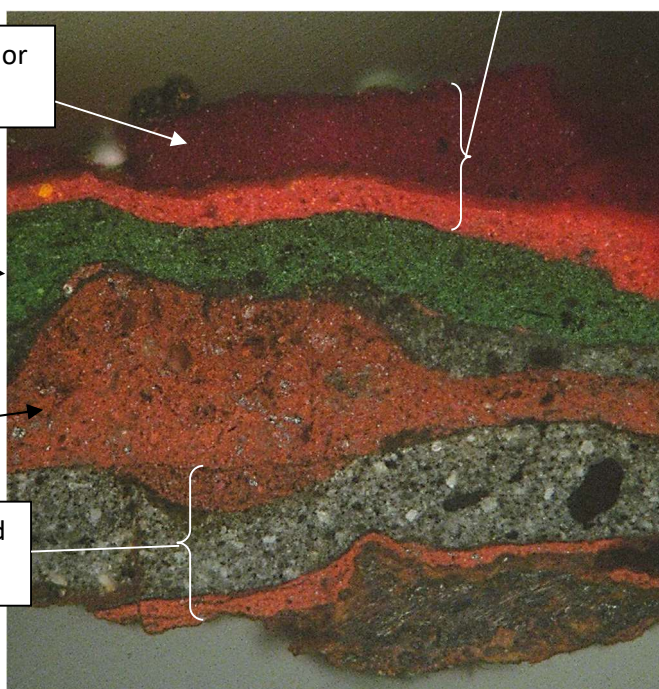
Lower layers

dark red 'varnish' or
gloss coat

3 – dark green

2 – 2nd red/brown

original red
brown



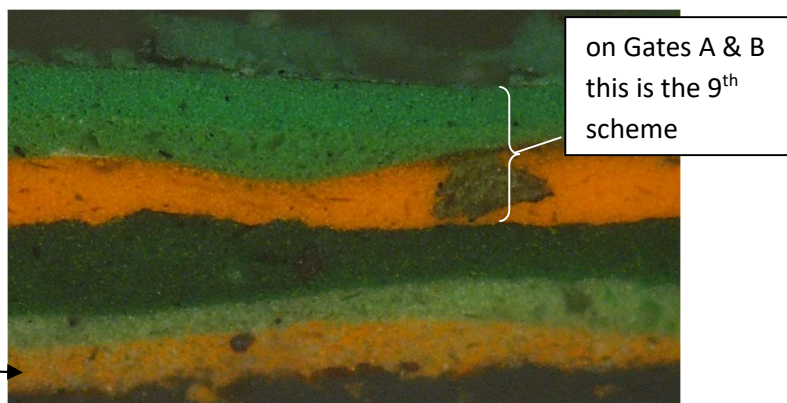
SAMPLE C1

Wesleycot Gate

This is a later gate and so schemes 1-7
seen on the other gates, are missing

when the gate was installed
it was painted dark green

red lead primer

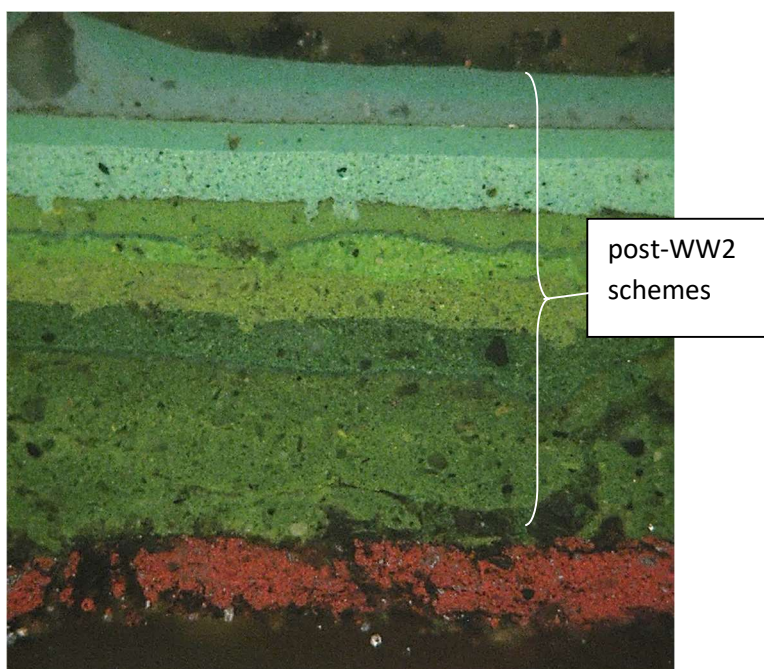
**SAMPLE D1**

Pedestrian gate

Fragment (i)

Early C20th schemes missing, but
the early red/brown is present

layers missing

Fragment (ii)

Showing two lots of early red/brown
as on Gates A & B

black found only on this
gate

two late C19th red/
browns

