Tudor Pigments

The pigment had to be ground to a very fine, pure powder and then mixed very thoroughly with linseed oil. Mixing was done with a muller (a large blob of glass which has been ground to a flat circle underneath) on a sheet of ground glass.

How did they make the colours?

Here are some examples:

Black	lamp black, soot
White	lead oxide (poisonous) made by putting lead strips into vinegar
Red	red ochre, earth, for a dull red, European organic reds made from beetles blood such as cochineal from South America
Pink	madder made from madder plants from Spain
Yellow	yellow ochre, earth, for a dull yellow, European
Blue	frit/smalt made from blue glass
Ultramarine	apis lazuli stone from Asia, the best from Afghanistan, most expensive pigment worth its own weight in gold
Green	malachite, stone from Germany, Hungary and Central America verdigris, artificially made from copper strips in acid, turns brown with age terre verte, earth from Italy
Brown	sienna, earth burnt sienna, darker brown mummy, acquired by Egyptian tomb robbers and then ground up

Making paint in school

Oil paint is too messy for primary schools so we recommend trying out egg tempera instead. First separate the egg; it is the yolk that you will need (to prove that it looses its yellow colour when dry, smear a bit onto white paper and leave it for a while). You will need to cut the eggsac open and pour out the yolk; including the eggsac in your paint will make it too lumpy. Paint making is best done in tall glass jars with a long-handled brush to minimise mess (this is particularly true if you are using soot!).