

# RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX,

West Sussex, RH11



**Detached  
Tudor  
Property**

FOR

**Ms V**

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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0800 298 5424

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly, may we thank you for your instructions; we have now undertaken a Building Survey (formerly known as a Structural Survey) of the aforementioned property.

The Building Survey takes the following format; there is an introductory section (which you are currently reading), which includes a synopsis of the building, and a summary of our findings.

We then go through a detailed examination of the property starting with the external areas working from the top of the property down, followed by the internal areas and the buildings services. We conclude with the section for your Legal Advisor and also attach some general information on the property market.

We are aware that a report of this size is somewhat daunting and almost off-putting to the reader because of this. We would stress that the purchase of a property is usually one of the largest financial outlays made (particularly when you consider the interest you pay as well).

We recommend that you set aside time to read the report in full, consider the comments, make notes of any areas which you wish to discuss further and phone us.

We obviously expect you to read the entire report but we would suggest that you initially look at the summary, which refers to various sections in the report, which we recommend you read first so that you get a general feel for the way the report is written.

As part of our service we are more than happy to talk through the survey as many times as you wish until you are completely happy to make a decision. Ultimately, the decision to purchase the property is yours but we will do our best to offer advice to make the decision as easy as possible.

# **REPORT FORMAT**

To help you understand our Report we utilise various techniques and different styles and types of text, these are as follows:

## **GENERAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

*This has been given in the survey where it is considered it will aid understanding of the issues, or be of interest. This is shown in "italics" for clarity.*

## **TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED**

Throughout the Report, we have endeavoured to define any technical terms used. This is shown in "Courier New" typeface for clarity.

## **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS**



We utilise photographs and sketches to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area. The sketches are not 100% technically accurate; we certainly would not expect you to carry out work based upon the sketches alone.

## **ORIENTATION**

Any reference to left or right is taken from the front of the property, including observations to the rear, which you may not be able to physically see from the front of the property.

## **ACTION REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have used the term **ACTION REQUIRED** where we believe that there are items that you should carry out action upon or negotiate upon prior to purchasing the property.

Where a problem is identified, we will do our best to offer a solution. However, with most building issues, there are usually many ways to resolve them dependent upon cost, time available and the length of time you wish the repair/replacement to last.

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **SITUATION AND DESCRIPTION**

This is a detached two storey timber frame Listed building which has surrounding gardens including a parking area to the front, a well to the rear and an outbuilding and pond (which has not formed part of the survey).

With regards to the date, the Listing by English Heritage is as follows:

#### **Grade II Listing**

Circa 1600 timber-framed building of 2 1/2 bays probably originally an open hall.

Two storeys. The south front has the lower storey timber-framed with brick filled panels and the upper storey is of pointed tile hanging.

Two wooden casements.

Old tiled roof hipped at east end and with brick chimney stack to west end.

A brick near the front door reads XXXX but this probably refers to refurbishment.

To the rear is a short 2-storey wing with exposed timber-framing and tile-hung gable.

There is a queen strut roof to the central truss and a queen post roof at the chimney end.

The rafters are very irregular and are smoke blackened.

Listing XXXX

Source: English Heritage

If the age of the property interests you then as you get to know and understand this type of construction better you will understand that a property such as this has many different ages. The listing puts it as circa 1600. We have set out below some of the things that were going during this time.

### **Putting Life into Perspective!**

*Some of the things that were happening around the time the property was built:*

1603	Elizabeth I dies in Richmond palace
1605	Gunpowder Plot
1625	James I dies. Charles I becomes king.
1642	Civil war between king and parliament begins.
1649	King Charles I is beheaded
1653	Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector of England
1660	Monarchy reinstated - Charles II becomes king
1666	The Great Fire of London
1681	Oil powered street lights are put up in London

As you may or may not appreciate a building that was built in this era will not perform to modern day standards and should be considered a characteristic of the property. You need to accept there is much care and attention and maintenance needed to the property.



## EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Front elevation



Rear elevation

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# **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

## **Ground Floor**

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Dining room to the front right hand side
- 2) Lounge to the front left hand side
- 3) Kitchen to the rear
- 4) Further storage rooms to the rear

## **First Floor**

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- 1) Master bedroom to the front left hand side
- 2) Storage room to the rear left hand side
- 3) Bedroom on the right hand side with a door into the eaves of the property
- 4) Bedroom to the rear with a sloping ceiling
- 5) Bathroom to the rear

## **Outside Areas**

The gardens including a parking area to the front, a well to the rear and an outbuilding and pond (which has not formed part of the survey). Our focus has been on the main property.



## **INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

The following photos are of the internal of the property to help you recall what it looked like and the general ambience (or lack of). We have not necessarily taken photographs of each and every room.

### **Ground Floor**



Lounge



Dining room



Kitchen



Corridor



Storage room to the rear



Outbuilding rooms on ground floor  
with boiler in

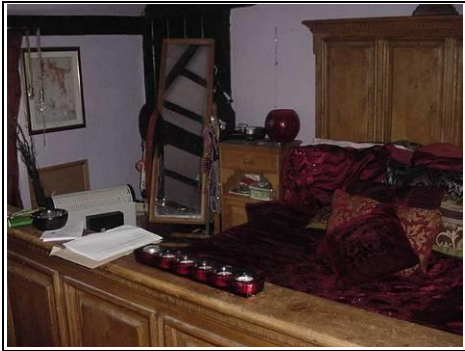
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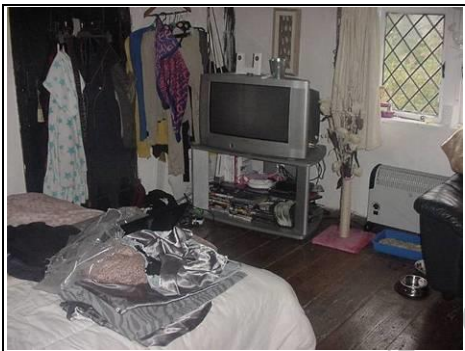
## First Floor



Master bedroom to front



Bedroom down steps



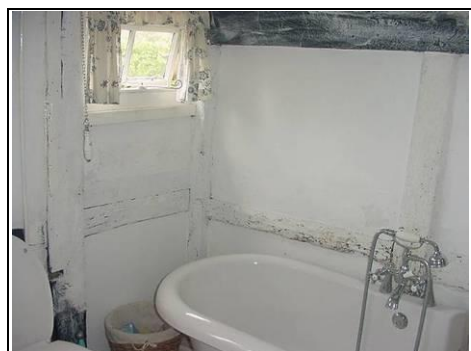
Front right hand bedroom



Storage area off front right hand bedroom



Storage room left hand side



Bathroom

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## **SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION**

### **External**

Chimneys:	Two modernish brick chimneys
Main Roof:	Pitched peg tiled roof
Gutters and Downpipes:	Cast iron and plastic
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic
Walls:	Boxed timber frame, infill panels are a mixture of wattle and daub, brickwork and modern plasters and cement renders
Foundations:	Likely to be none, built directly off the ground
Fascias and Soffits:	Painted timber
Windows and Doors:	Casement single glazed windows – a variety of different styles

### **Internal**

Ceilings:	Lath and plaster (assumed)
Walls:	Internal walls: Traditional studwork walls (assumed) Perimeter walls: A mixture of lime plaster and modern plaster and cements
Floors:	Ground Floor: Beaten earth and a tile on earth
	First Floor: Embedded timbers and joists (assumed)

### **Services**

We are advised that the property has a mains water supply, mains drainage, and electricity (assumed). The electrics are located in the kitchen. The boiler is an oil boiler located in the boiler room on the right hand side.

The above terms are explained in full in the main body of the Report.

We have used the term ‘assumed’ as we have not opened up the structure.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Summaries are not ideal as they try to précis often quite complex subjects into a few paragraphs. This is particularly so in a summary about someone's future home when we are trying to second-guess what their priorities are, so it is important the Report is read in full.

It is inevitable with a report on a building of this nature that some of the issues we have focussed in on you may dismiss as irrelevant and some of the areas that we have decided are part of the 'character' of this property you may think are very important. We have taken in the region of 300 photographs during the course of this survey and many pages of notes, so if an issue has not been discussed that you are interested in or concerned about, please phone and talk to us before you purchase the property (or indeed commit to purchasing the property), as we will more than likely have noted it and be able to comment upon it; if we have not we will happily go back.

We have divided the Executive Summary into 'The Good', 'The Bad' and 'The Ugly', to help distinguish what in our mind are the main issues.

### **The Good**

*Survey reports often are full of only the faults and general 'doom and gloom', so we thought we would start with some positive comments on the property!*

- 1) The property has potential albeit that it will be a long project and a learning curve (as we mentioned the 80/20 rule).
- 2) The property sits in its own land and is in a nice setting.

We are sure you can think of other things to add to this list.



## **The Bad**

*Problems / issues raised in the 'bad' section are usually solvable, but often need negotiation upon. However, a large number of them may sometimes put us off the property.*

### **1) Roof needs repair**

The roof needs repair and general overhaul. The roof is a peg roof which has been repaired over the years and is allowing some dampness into the main roof, which is often the case with this type of roof. There are some specific issues that need your attention.

#### **1.1 Rotting pegs / nails to the tiles**

Where the old oak pegs have rotted away, and in some cases they have been replaced with ferrous nails, these have rotted or rusted.



Peg tiles

#### **1.2 Cracked and missing tiles**

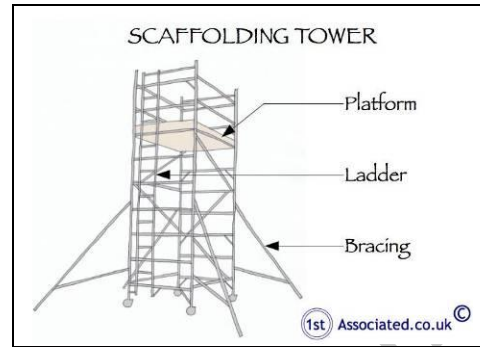
More immediately and to get you through the winter of 2011 you need to replace all the cracked and missing tiles with similar. You also need to get a supply of hand made clay peg tiles for future use.

We would also recommend that you purchase a tower scaffold to allow easier safe access to high level areas.



Close up of peg tile

As mentioned, we would recommend clearing all the roofs of stored items and insulation and lighting the roof (you advised us that you had a good contact in the electrical business!). We would also recommend adding roof boarding, partly as a semi-protective measure but it also makes it far easier to work in the roof and also identifies area where leaks are coming through.



Tower scaffold

1.3 Next spring/summer we would recommend an elevation by elevation check of the peg tiles where dampness can be seen to be coming through.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to live in the property to establish exactly where the dampness is getting in. To this end you need to clear all the roof voids (and light them with electric lights). We would recommend, subject to approval with the Conservation Officer, that a breathable protective underlayer is added. This will help reduce wind driven rain.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Assuming existing tiles can be re-used and you will be using your own scaffold to access the roofs we would expect costs initially to be in the region of a few thousand pounds with similar sums to be spread over the next five years, possibly longer as you work round improving the roof. Please obtain quotations.

Remember, we would always recommend that you consult the Conservation Officer before you carry out any work.

Please see the Roof Coverings Section of this Report.



## 2) Inappropriate repairs / work

There have been various inappropriate repairs for this age, type and style of property that need, where possible, to be undone and re-repaired. It is important that you have a full understanding of the property before you carry out the major repairs. An example of a misguided work would be the inserted damp proof course that can be seen.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We have set out specific items within this section of the report and also within the main body of the report.

## 3) Lack of maintenance

Generally we could see the property has had a lack of maintenance which has caused deterioration throughout the property that needs to be resolved.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Specific items and issues are set out within the main body of the report.

## 4) Allow the property to breathe

As mentioned a property of this age needs to be able to breathe and this is how it dissipates the dampness in the structure. Remember a property of this age needs to have an element of dampness to function properly. It certainly does not need a damp proof course. Please see article on our website: [1stassociated.co.uk/damp-proof-olderproperties.asp](http://1stassociated.co.uk/damp-proof-olderproperties.asp) "How do older properties keep dry without a damp proof course?"



Lime washed timbers – this is how the timbers would have originally been

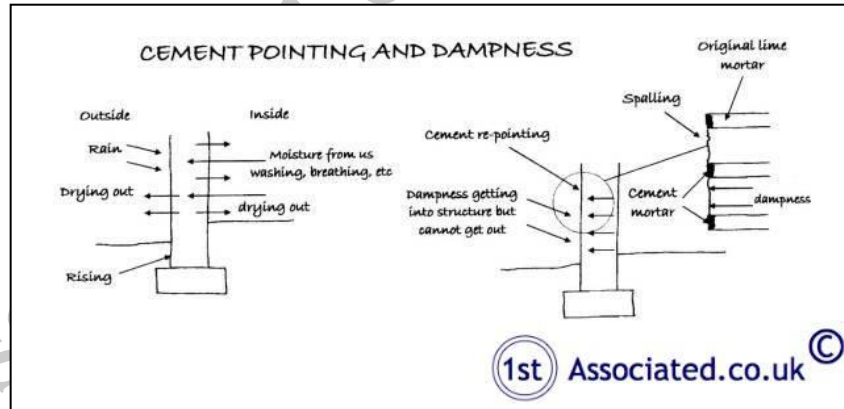
In a timber framed building such as this of this age, it is important that the building works as a Gortex breathable type structure rather than a raincoat, which resists the dampness. As such you need to remove the cement from the building and replace it with lime mortar gradually.



The chimney needs some work generally from repointing. You also need to check to see if it has been repointed in a cement mortar or lime mortar. It looks from ground level to be cement mortar.

We would also recommend a lime coat or similar for the external of the building and you may also wish to look at how to treat the timbers rather than the black and white look which has become traditional (which was introduced by the Victorians). You may wish to lime wash the timbers as well for protection.

Whatever way you do it, you need to do it in a manner that is going to protect the timber and the infill panels and allow them to breathe. This needs to be carried out to both the inside and outside of the property.



Cement pointing

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Gradually remove all the cement from the property (to some extent it will fall out itself in this age of property, being helped with a stiff brush) and repointing in an appropriate lime mortar. Again, this needs to be agreed with the Conservation Officer.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** Over a period of five years many thousands of pounds, but this can be a gradual process starting with the worst areas, such as the brick plinths underneath the timber frame.

From our discussions we feel you understand and appreciate that in a property of this age it will never be as dry as a modern property, which would not be acceptable to most people.

Please see the External Walls Section of this Report.



Brick plinth underneath the timber frame

#### 5) Discouraging woodworm

As with any property of this age which has a timber frame it will have an element of woodworm. We can see that some of the woodworm is old and no longer active and we can see some areas where the woodworm is active. We cannot see any areas of the timber frame that we would term as being beyond repair and where there is structurally significant damage. There are areas that are affected by woodworm and the process of eliminating them should be as follows:



Internal spine beam with newish frass



External timbers with woodworm which no longer looks to be active

5.1 We feel the best way of eliminating dampness is to make the environment not appropriate for woodworm which means you need to reduce the levels of dampness in the property, which in turn will reduce their activity and eventually they will die (you may literally be able to hear the woodworm at night and they tend to be most active during their breathing season in the spring). Please see the article in the Appendices of the report on woodworm treatment.

5.2 If the general improvement in the environment is not working then there are various ano-traps that are used (similar to fly traps with sticky plastic tape). We would resist using chemical poison sprays if at all possible unless the mortgage company insists upon it.

5.3 In an ideal world sections of timber frame should be cut out and replaced and we feel that in due course you would have to do this however initially we feel this property is about priorities and you need to make it wind and watertight.

5.4 The main timbers that we have focused upon are what is known as the primary timbers which are the main carcass of the structure. We found most deterioration in the sole plate, which is at the base of the property, where we anticipate some repair work.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If at all possible save the timber but if necessary you may have to cut new sections of timber in place, particularly to the sole plate.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** In the region of £5,000 to £10,000 over the next few years; please obtain quotations. The only way in our experience to be 100% certain of the strength of a primary timber frame is to have sonic testing carried out.

Frass defined

The chewed up sawdust that the beetle leaves behind. A light coloured dust and a light coloured hole indicates this is relatively recent. Obviously if it is a darker coloured frass, or darker coloured hole, it means it is older and the woodworm may have gone.

Please see the Timber Defects Section of this Report.

## 6) Dampness in the property

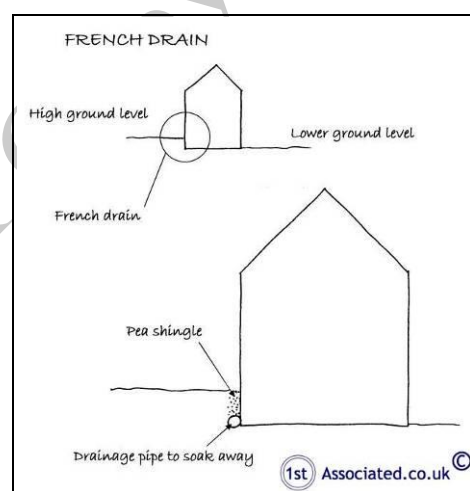
As discussed, you will have dampness in the property to the floors and to the walls over and above that which you would have in a modern property. We do feel a good way of managing this dampness is to have the ground levels lowered and a French drain added around the property. This was once very common in older properties and have included a sketch below of a modern French drain.



Lots of rising damp – paint coming off, we believe this to be a plastic based paint

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that a French Drain is added around the property to lower the ground level which will lower the dampness.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report and the Appendices..



French drain

It is important in this age of property to get rid of any moisture as quickly as possible.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that extract fans with humidity thermostats are added to the kitchen and the bathroom area as soon as possible.

**ANTICIPATED COST:** A few hundred pounds; please obtain quotations.

Please see the Dampness Section of this Report.



## 7) **Services**

From our visual inspection we would say that generally the services need upgrading. We are aware that you are having your own services check carried out. We have assumed you have made your own assessment based upon this, but if this is not the case we would be more than happy to comment on our visual findings.

We would make the general comments:

### 7.1 **Electrics**

Whilst not the worst installation we have seen it certainly wouldn't meet Institute of Electrical Engineers standards. From what we can see it is very basic, you need more socket points throughout the property.

We would always take the opportunity where you have access to a good electrical contractor to have as much electrical work carried out as possible.

Please see the Electricity Section of this Report.

### 7.2 **Heating**

You currently have an oil heating system to the radiators. There are relatively modern double convection radiators and whether it meets British thermal units we will leave again for your contact to calculate and work out. We would tend to go with this type of structure above the British Thermal Units recommendations (or whatever the modern equivalent is).

Please see the Plumbing and Heating Section of this Report.

### 7.3 **Drainage and Sewerage**

The owners were not aware whether this property was on main drains or to a sewerage system. In older properties we have come across problems with the sewerage system which can be very expensive to repair or replace.



**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your legal adviser to check and confirm if the property is on the main drains or not. If not they need to advise us as we need to carry out an inspection of the septic tank.

Please see the Drainage Section of the Report

### **The Ugly**

*We normally put here things that we feel will be difficult to resolve and will need serious consideration.*

A property of this age, type and style will have many characteristics to it that you simply cannot change. You need to be sure that you are happy to live in an older type of property with these limitations.

You need to appreciate that once you have carried out the initial works, which in themselves will take a long period of time (around five years), you will then need to carry out maintenance as well. There really is always something to do on an older property.

Your responsibility in taking on an older property is that you are a custodian for the building for only a relatively short period of time in its history and as such whilst it is your home you do need to abide by the various Listed building rules, which in our opinion are best dealt with by knowing when to ask for help from the Local Conservation Officer and other specialists (and we do not mean a builder who is trying to sell you something).

## **Valuers Comments**

We would specifically refer to the valuers comments and say:

### **1) Chimney**

The property has two brick chimneys, both of which will add weight to a timber frame structure. There will be a certain amount of settlement and differential movement in them, particularly in a property such as this which has suffered from a general lack of maintenance.

Both the chimneys as you look at them would benefit from repointing and partial re-building. This is something that can be carried out over time.

We have spoken specifically with the valuer with regard to his comments and he advises that they related to the right hand chimney; we assume this is as you face the property from the front. We would comment that repairs to this are well within the bounds of what we have already discussed.

### **2) Timber repairs**

There are as we would expect timber repairs needed. Whilst these are above average we don't consider them to be a major problem as long as work is commenced and completed within the next few years and the property is then maintained.

### **3) Movement**

With any property of this age there is bound to be some movement as it is built directly off the ground and therefore is affected by seasonal movement. There is also a well to the rear and various trees and vegetation. We would recommend that these are cut back (but not removed or killed off altogether) and we would also recommend that a French Drain is added around the property to lower the ground level which will lower the dampness. Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

The valuer “says there is evidence of movement which is obviously in the form of a crack and bulging walls, together with leaning chimney stack. This appears significant and likely to be progressive.”

We have now contacted the surveyor S. Rudkin BSc, FRICS (RICS No: 52735) on 01536 534098 and had discussions with him. We are happy that our comments cover this item, however if you wish your mortgage company to specifically contact us we would be more than happy to answer any questions they have.

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## **Other Items**

Moving on to more general information.

### **Services**

Whilst we have carried out a visual inspection of the services within the property we also need to advise you of the following:

#### **Electrics**

For the electrics we would recommend an NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor or equivalent carries out an inspection, test and report to Institute of Electrical Engineers standards (IEE).

#### **Heating**

We would recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.

#### **Drainage**

We would recommend a close camera TV report.

#### **Water supply**

There is danger in older properties of having a lead water supply; we would recommend that you speak to the water company to ask them if they have carried out such replacement, as you will be re-piping much of the water used in the building it gives an ideal opportunity to also check for any remaining lead pipes.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We are aware you are having part of the services checked independently but it is worth having the other services checked as well as they can be expensive.

## **Maintenance**

There has generally been a lack of maintenance on the property and what money has been spent looks to have been spent on the interior. We would recommend that you go on a Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings weekend course on looking after and maintaining older properties. Even if you do not intend to carry out the work yourself it does give you a far better idea of what work should be carried out. The SPAB are considered to be experts in this area and can make a very pleasant weekend.

## **DIY/Handyman Type Work**

There are numerous items that we would class as DIY or handyman type work (providing you have the skills and the knowledge), they can range from basic redecoration (in appropriate paint) to carrying out some of the more specialist work if you feel confident. We have detailed these and other issues within the main body of the report.

## **Purchase Price**

We have not been asked to comment upon the purchase price in this instance, we have however referred you to sources of general information on the housing market within the Information on the Property Market Section, which can be found in the Appendices at the end of the Report.

## **Every Business Transaction has a Risk**

Every business transaction has a risk, only you can assess whether that risk is acceptable to you and your circumstances. You should now read the main body of the Report paying particular attention to any “**ACTION REQUIRED**” points.

## **Estimates of Costs**

Where we have offered an estimate of building costs please remember we are not experts in this area. We always recommend you obtain quotations for the large jobs before purchasing the property (preferably three quotes). The cost of building work has many variables such as the cost of labour and estimates can of course vary from area to area when giving a general indication of costs. For unskilled labour we currently use between £75 and £100 per day (the higher costs in the city areas) and for tradesmen we use between £100 and £200 per day for an accredited, qualified, skilled tradesman. Other variations include the quality of materials used and how the work is carried out, for example off ladders or from scaffold.

If you obtain builders estimates that vary widely, we would advise the work is probably difficult or open to various interpretations and we would recommend a specification is prepared. It would usually be best to have work supervised if it is complex, both of which we can do if so required.



## **SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION**



The Summary Upon Reflection is a second summary so to speak, which is carried out when we are doing the second or third draft a few days after the initial survey when we have had time to reflect upon our thoughts on the property. We would add the following in this instance:

From our one off inspection it is not possible to be certain whether this property has progressive structural movement or not. We would therefore recommend that the existing owners place an insurance claim as detailed by the valuation surveyor and then this claim is transferred on to the new owners. We would as part of the claim insist that the present insurance company carry out monitoring for one year as recommended by the Building Research Establishment.

As a general comment for any work required we would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations for any work from a qualified, time served tradesperson or a competent registered building contractor prior to legal completion.

We would ask that you read the Report and contact us on any issues that you require further clarification on.

# **MORE ABOUT THE REPORT FORMAT**

Just a few more comments about the Report format before you read the actual main body of the Report.

## **TENURE – FREEHOLD (OR AS GOOD AS)**

We have assumed that the property is to be sold Freehold or Long leasehold, with no unusual or onerous clauses and that vacant possession will be available on completion. Your Legal Advisor should confirm that this is the case.

## **ESTATE AGENTS – FRIEND OR FOE?**

It is important to remember that the estate agents are acting for the seller (usually known as the vendor) and not the purchaser and are therefore eager to sell the property (no sale – no fee!). We as your employed Independent Chartered Surveyor represent your interests only.

## **SOLICITOR/LEGAL ADVISOR**

To carry out your legal work you can use a solicitor or a legal advisor. We have used both terms within the report.

## **TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT/LIMITATIONS**

This report is being carried out under our terms of engagement for Residential Building Surveys, as agreed to and signed by yourselves. If you have not seen and signed a copy of our terms of engagement please phone immediately.

## **OUR AIM IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SATISFACTION**

Our aim is for you to be completely happy with the service we provide, and we will try and help you in whatever way possible with your property purchase - just phone us.

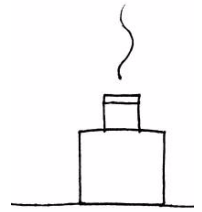
## **THE DETAILED PART OF THE REPORT FOLLOWS, WORKING FROM THE TOP OF THE PROPERTY DOWNWARDS**

From our investigations the property is Grade II Listed  
(your Legal Advisor should confirm this and make their own enquiries)  
and as such it will require various permissions  
to be obtained before work is carried out, over and above that  
normally required and possibly the use of appropriate materials  
for the age, type and style of property.



## **EXTERNAL**

### **CHIMNEY STACKS**



#### **Chimney Stacks**

*Chimneys developed originally from open fires placed within buildings. From this, the chimney has developed to its present day format where it is used as an aesthetic feature and focal point rather than purely just to heat the room.*

There are two chimneys to this property they are located one to the left hand side and one to the right hand side (all directions given as you face the front of the property).

#### **Chimney One – located to the front left hand side**

This chimney is brick finished with a tile on edge flashing. It would benefit from repointing and possibly re-building. The original structure is likely to be have been built without a chimney which is why the Listed building details identify the blackened timbers as the smoke would have risen into the roof. It may well therefore act as a separate structure to the main building, depending upon how it was built and how it was tied into the main structure.



Chimney one



Close up of chimney one



Chimney one – wrongly repointed  
in a cement mortar

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We feel the best way forward is to have a close look at the chimney from the top (using the tower scaffold that we have recommended you buy).

**ANTICIPATED COST:** We would set aside the sum of £750 to £1,500 to carry out repairs/rebuilding work. Please obtain quotations. Ultimately you will need to repoint the chimney in a lime mortar.

### **Chimney Two – located to the right hand side**

This chimney is brick finished with a lead flashing and one chimney pot. From what we could see from ground level, although our view was limited, it is in average condition for its age, type and style.



Chimney two

#### Flashings Defined

Flashings prevent dampness from entering the property, usually at junctions where materials change. Such a junction is the one between the chimney and the roof.

#### Tile on Edge Defined

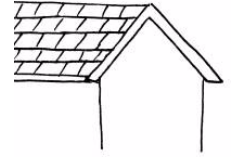
A tile put on edge, bedded into cement to act as a flashings.

Finally, we have made our best assumptions on the overall condition of the chimney stacks from the parts we could see. The inspection was made from ground level within the boundaries of the property (unless otherwise stated) using a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. A closer inspection may reveal latent defects.

Please also see Chimney Breasts, Flues and Fireplaces Section of this Report.



# **ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERLAYERS**



*The Roof Coverings and Underlayers section considers the condition of the outer covering of the roof. Such coverings usually endure the extremes of climate and temperatures. They are susceptible to deterioration, which ultimately leads to water penetration.*

*The underlayer's function is to minimise wind and water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:*

We will consider the main high level roof as follows:

## **Main Roof**

The main roof is pitched and has hand made and machine cut tiles. There is some dampness visible, as we would expect with this age of roof. Often it is created by wind driven rain or more recently we have seen it caused by condensation due to high insulation levels.



Mixture of hand made tiles  
and machine cut tiles

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

## **Flashings**

We can see some cement flashings. They may well be lime mortar judging from the colour. We would normally recommend a lead flashing but you do need to take guidance from your Conservation Officer with the local council on this as to what was authentic and it may be a lime mortar in this case.

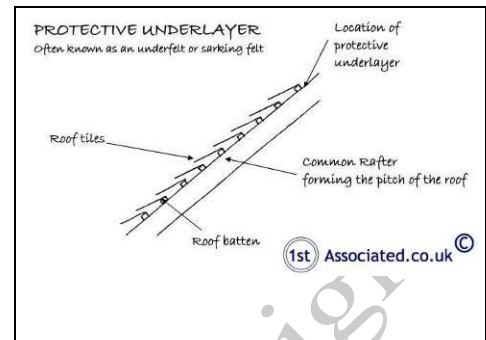


Cement flashings rather than  
lead flashings



## **Protective Underlayer (Often known as the sarking felt or underfelt)**

*From the 1940s onwards felts were used underneath tiles/slates to stop wind damage and water penetration, these in more recent years have been replaced with plastic equivalents. These are commonly known as underfelts but now the name is not really appropriate, as felt is not the only material used.*



When we inspected the loft space we found there was no underfelt. It is therefore possible that during periods of heavy and prolonged driving rain some water penetration could take place through the roof coverings. At the time of our inspection this was not occurring.



No protective underlayer  
(no sarking felt)

We would add that if you look at the adjacent photo you will see that a protective underlayer, often known as a sarking felt has been added indicating that this roof is likely to have been re-roofed in part since the 1940's/1950's. We much prefer a modern breathable protective underlayer.



Protective underlayer poking out  
from underneath the tiles.

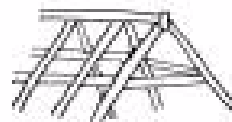
Finally, all the roofs were inspected from ground level with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera.

Unfortunately we were only able to see approximately eighty percent of the main roof from ground level via our ladder or via any other vantage point that we managed to gain. We have made our best conclusions based upon what we could see, however a closer inspection may reveal other defects.

For further comments with regard to ventilation please see the Roof Structure and Loft Section.

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## **ROOF STRUCTURE AND LOFT**



### **(ALSO KNOWN AS ROOF SPACE OR ATTIC SPACE)**

*The roof structure or framework must be built in a manner which is able to give adequate strength to carry its own weight together with that of the roof covering discussed in the previous section and any superimposed loads such as snow, wind, foot traffic etc.*

#### **Main Roof**

##### **Roof Access**

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the landing. There is no loft ladder, electric light or secured floorboards. We recommend that these be added, as it will make the loft space safer and easier to use. We would also recommend that all the items that are stored in the roof are removed, including the insulation.

The loft (perimeter) has been viewed by torch light, which has limited our viewing slightly.

##### **Roof Structure**

The roof within the Listed Building conservation information is stated as being a Queen Strut roof and a Queen Post roof at the chimney end. They must have had a far better view than we did due to the stored items. We also noticed that it said the timbers were irregular, we would say there is a vast mixture of different timbers in the roof, many of the original ones have been replaced. It also says that the timbers are smoke blackened, indicating that there was a fire lit at ground level and the smoke went into the roof rather than via a chimney, which makes this property to have been built pre-chimneys.

## **Roof Timbers**

We have inspected the roof structure for:

- Serious active woodworm
- Structurally significant defects to the timbers
- Structurally significant dry rot
- Structurally significant wet rot



General view of roof

Our examination was limited by the general configuration of the roof, the insulation and a lot of stored items. We generally found that the property has woodworm, whether it is active or redundant we are not absolutely sure. Given what we have seen in the rest of the building we expect some of it to be active, although we did not physically see any in the roof.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to empty this roof of all stored items and the insulation. We recommend that you fully light the roof and ideally put some floor boarding down to allow easier access.

## **Ventilation**

It should be remembered that once these various improvements have been made you must still ensure the roof is ventilated or condensation can occur.

## **Insulation**

Please see the Thermal Efficiency Section of this Report.

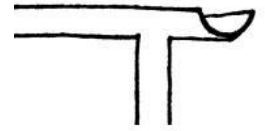
## **Electrical Cables**

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found in the roof. In this case there was insufficient quantity to comment.

Please see our further comments in the Services Section of this Report.

Finally, we would ask you to note that this is a general inspection of the roof, i.e. we have not examined every single piece of timber. We have offered a general overview of the condition and structural integrity of the area.

# GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



*The function of the gutters and downpipes is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.*

*Defective gutters and downpipes are a common cause of dampness that can, in turn, lead to the development of rot in timbers. Regular inspection and adequate maintenance are therefore essential if serious problems are to be avoided.*

## Gutters and Downpipes

The gutters and downpipes are predominantly plastic, although we believe there is some cast iron remaining. As we showed you the plastic does not have the same strength and integrity as you find with a metal gutter. We suggest these gutters and downpipes are ultimately replaced with metal ones, again subject to the Conservation Officer's approval. However, your first task is to ensure that these gutters are working well and making sure water is being discharged from the property without it being discharged down the property.



Plastic guttering

You need to make this a priority before the winter of 2011, making sure that the gutters and downpipes are working properly and most importantly, discharging away from the building. We are a great fan of water butts as they obviously allow you to use the water on your garden but also they are a good way of ensuring that water gets away from the building. We have even seen a system of several water butts that works very well.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always recommend that the gutters and downpipes are cleaned out, the joints are checked and the alignment checked to ensure that the gutters fall towards the downpipes.

## **Soil and Vent Pipe**

The property has plastic soil and vent pipes. There are some ugly soil and vent pipes to the rear of the property. Interestingly enough the soil and vent pipe is normally meant to discharge approximately one metre above the top of the roof. In this case it does not do, due to its position it would go over a window and this really is poor planning.



Plastic soil and vent pipe to the rear

You may be able to think of an appropriate way of hiding the soil and vent pipes if you so wish, such as boxing around them, again subject to the Conservation Officer's agreement.

Finally, gutters and downpipes and soil and vent pipes have been inspected from ground level. As it was not raining at the time of the inspection it is not possible to confirm 100 per cent that the rainwater installation is free from blockage, leakage etc. or that it is capable of coping with long periods of heavy rainfall. Our comments have therefore been based on our best assumptions.



## WALLS



*External walls need to perform a variety of functions. These include supporting upper floors and the roof structure, resisting dampness, providing adequate thermal and sound insulation, offering resistance to fire and being aesthetically presentable.*

The property is built from lots of different materials. There is a brick base to the property, a boxed timber frame with infill panels, vertical tiling and some shiplap boarding. Starting from the bottom and working our way up:

### Brickwork

The base of the property has brick walls. These are painted and form a plinth for the timber frame to sit upon. We have seen many various ways of detailing this plinth. The main problem with it is that water sits on it and rolls back to the timber sole plate that is at the base of the timber frame, which sits on this brick plinth. This is what you need to stop from happening. We have seen a very good lead detail, which is no doubt expensive and time consuming to fit.



Close up of base of wall

Initially before the winter of 2011 you need to make sure there is as little water as possible sitting on, or able to sit on, the plinth.

## **Timber Frame**

*The following paragraphs offer a brief general description of the fundamentals of timber framed construction to aid your understanding of this Report.*

*Timber framed construction was used in the vast majority of dwellings up to the 16th Century, providing a complete timber frame of walls, floors and roofs.*

*The original timber frame construction was crucks frame. This was formed from the splitting of timber trunks in two to form an upturned “v” from ground level. Timber frame construction was amended over the years, progressing to what is known as boxed timber frame construction.*

*Timber framed construction consists of a framework of timber members from ground level (known as the sole plate) through the walls to the roof timbers. The timber structure works in three dimensions and as a whole structure.*

*Originally, the structures were held together by wood fixings, such as pegs and joints. Later techniques and repairs used metal fixings.*

*The structure can fail for many reasons. Common reasons, amongst others, would be dry rot, wet rot, woodworm, the addition of an extension, the removal of supporting members, etc. Partial or total failure of an element of the structure can result in additional stresses and strain being placed upon other members, often resulting in visually the property sitting out of plumb or complete failure (collapse). The difficulty is establishing how close or far a property sitting out of plumb is from failure, together with how acceptable that is to the purchasers.*

The property has a timber frame which we will divide into the primary members which form the main structure and the secondary members which form infill panels.



This shows the spine beams  
in the lounge



External timber frame with brick  
infill panel

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to methodically work around the property repairing any damaged timbers. We suggest that you work elevation by elevation.

### **Infill Panels**

You have a variety of infill panels. We suspect there is some original wattle and daub present (by tapping it you can hear how hollow it is). We also suspect that some of the panels have been filled with modern plasterboard and we can see that some have had brickwork.

### **Vertical Tiling**

The property has decorative vertical tiling. In some areas this is in good condition, in other areas it needs rebuilding, for example on the left hand gable. Vertical tiles may be fixed directly to a wall or battens, or indeed counter battens. It is necessary to nail all tiles and it is also good practice to use an underfelt and lap the tiles to approximately two inches (30 mm).

We noted vertical tiles coming off to left hand side of building.



Vertical tiling



Vertical tiles coming off to left hand side of building

### **Shiplap boarding**

This shiplap boarding certainly has seen better days and needs tidying up, however you do need to focus mainly on getting the building wind and watertight before the winter of 2011.



Shiplap boarding deteriorating

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and/or randomly via a ladder. Where the window and door lintels are concealed by the timber frame structure and the infill panels/ vertical tiling / shiplap boarding / plasterwork we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age timber lintels, concrete lintels or metal lintels are common, which can be susceptible to deterioration that is unseen, particularly if in contact with dampness.

Our comments have been based upon how the timber frame structure and the infill panels/ vertical tiling / shiplap boarding / plasterwork has been finished. We have made various assumptions based upon what we could see and how we think timber frame structure and the infill panels/ vertical tiling / shiplap boarding / plasterwork would be if it were opened up for this age, style and type of construction. We are however aware that all is not always as it seems in the building industry and often short cuts are taken. Without opening up the structure we have no way of establishing this.

# **FOUNDATIONS**



*The foundations function is, if suitably designed and constructed, to transfer the weight of the property through the soil. As a general comment, many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or no foundations, as we think of them today, and typically a two-storey property would have one metre deep foundations.*

## **Foundations**

Given the age of the property it is likely that there is no foundation and the property was built directly off the ground.

## **Building Insurance Policy**

We have mentioned within the Executive Summary that it is important that the existing owners make an insurance claim, saying that movement has been identified by the valuation surveyor and that you wish the property to be monitored. It is then essential that you continue with the same insurance company and have this insurance claim passed on to you. This will then limit your future liability in a worst case scenario to the premium. This is very important and we would not purchase the property otherwise.

You should ensure that the Building Insurance Policy contains adequate provision against any possibility of damage arising through subsidence, landslip, heave etc.

It is your responsibility to check out prior to commitment to purchase that insurance is available on the property on the basis of the things we have reported in the survey. Much as we would like to we are unable to keep up with the changing insurance market and give you advice with regard to this. Please remember to talk about any cracks identified within the property. Often insurers will refer to progressive and non-progressive cracking. Unfortunately this is something we are unable to comment upon from a one-off inspection - the Building Research Establishment recommend a year of monitoring of any cracking.

We would always recommend that you remain with the existing insurance company of the property. We would refer you to our comments with regard to building insurance throughout this report.

We noted during our question and answer session that our question with regard to the property being monitored or reported with regard to structural movement did not get an answer.

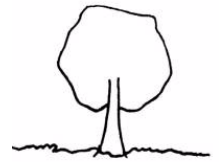
**ACTION REQUIRED:** Your solicitor needs to specifically request an answer to the question has the property been monitored for structural movement?

Finally, we have not excavated the foundations but we have drawn conclusions from our inspection and our general knowledge of this type, age and style of property.

As no excavation has been carried out we cannot be 100 percent certain as to how the foundation has been constructed and we can only offer our best assumptions and an educated guess, which we have duly done.



# TREES



*Trees within influencing distance of a property can affect the foundations by affecting the moisture content of the soil.*

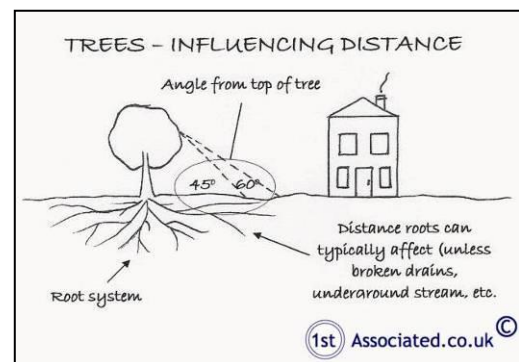
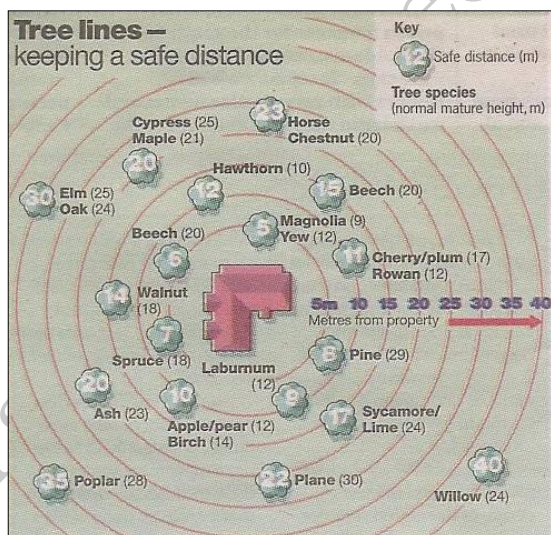
There are trees and vegetation growing close by the property. You need to cut all the ivy back and reduce the size of the trees but not remove them as this can cause problems with this age of property where it is built directly off the ground

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would recommend that the ivy is cut down.



Cut back all ivy

Finally, insurance requirements with regard to trees have varied over the years and in our opinion have got ever more onerous. We have seen the notifiable distance of a tree away from a property to have been reduced over the years and we reiterate our comments elsewhere within this report that you need to make enquires with regard to the insurability of your property in relation to trees and other features when you purchase the property.



Influencing Distance Defined

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property. It is not quite as simple as our sketch; it depends on the tree, its maturity, the soil type etc., etc.

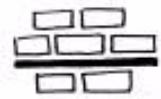
Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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## **DAMP PROOF COURSE**

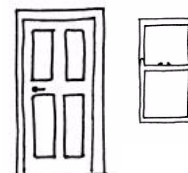
*The Building Act of 1878 required a damp proof course to be added to all newly built properties within the London area. It also required various other basic standards. These requirements were gradually taken up (or should that be grudgingly taken up) throughout London and then the country as a whole, although this took many years for it to become standard practice.*

This age of property will not have had a damp proof course originally. We were very disappointed to see that in some areas one looks to have been inserted; there is dampness throughout the property.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regard to how to reduce the dampness, but please note that you will never have a dry house.

Finally, sometimes it is difficult for us to identify if there is a damp proof course in a property. We have made our best assumptions based upon our general knowledge of the age, type and style of this property.

# **FASCIAS AND SOFFITS AND WINDOWS AND DOORS**



*This section covers fascias, soffits and bargeboards and windows and doors, and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.*

*Fascias and soffits offer protection to the rafter feet and also allow the securing of the guttering. Windows primary functions are to admit light and air, but they also have thermal and sound properties. The doors allow access and egress within the property.*

## **Fascias and Soffits**

We think there may be some fascia boards, but we think the majority of the property does not have any.



This gutter does not look to have a fascia board

## **Windows and Doors**

The property has casement single glazed windows in a variety of different styles and different ages. They all have the same thing in common that they need redecoration. The windows that we knife tested were in far better condition than we were expecting.

The windows are generally single glazed and therefore they will be draughty and cold in the winter months so you need good thick curtain and/or secondary glazing (like we mentioned). The ones that we have recently seen have been carried out by picture framers with glass in them and were a work of art.



Variety of windows – all in need of redecoration

Knife testing the window



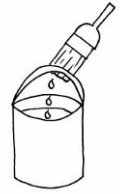
Metal bracket repair to a window



Front door within front lounge



## EXTERNAL DECORATIONS



*The external decorations act as a protective coat for the building from the elements. Where this protective covering has failed, such as with flaking paintwork, the elements will infiltrate the structure. This is of particular concern as water is one of the major factors in damage to any structure.*

If you wish to continue the black and white look of the building then you will have a lot of redecoration, as this ultimately acts as the raincoat.

There are various other ways of treating the timber, such as lime washing it or using an oil. No doubt as your knowledge improves you will come to a decision on what is best for the property. Again you will always need to consult the Conservation Officer.

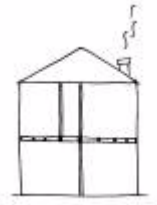


Black and white decoration

Finally, ideally external redecoration is recommended every four to five years dependent upon the original age of the paint, its exposure to the elements and the materials properties. Where painting takes place outside this maintenance cycle repairs should be expected. Ideally redecoration should be carried out during the better weather between mid-April and mid-September.

Please see our comments in the External Joinery section.

## INTERNAL



## CEILINGS, WALLS, PARTITIONS AND FINISHES

*In this section we look at the finish applied to the structural elements such as the plasterwork applied to the ceiling joists, walls or partitions, together with the construction of the internal walls and partitions.*

### Ceilings

From our visual inspection the ceilings are likely to have originally been lath and plaster. We can see that they have been infilled with many materials including plaster, with some of it finished and some unfinished.

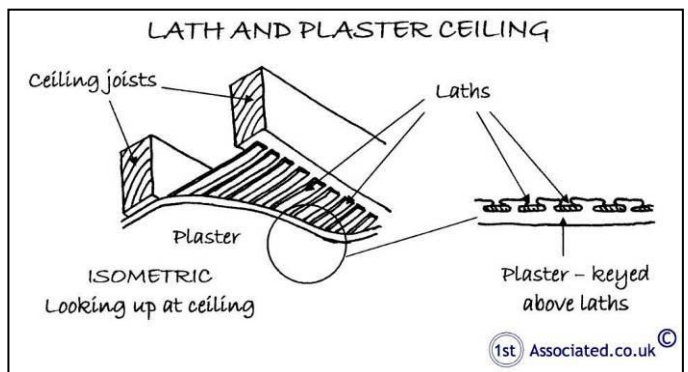


Infill to the ceiling

Whilst we have mentioned you initially need to make the property wind and watertight, ultimately you will need to carry our repairs to the various panels throughout the property. Some of the ceiling panels may also be a reed that is used in older properties.

#### Lath and Plaster Defined

Laths are thin strips of timbers which are fixed to the structure. Wet plaster is applied to the laths, usually in several layers. The plaster forms a key as it is forced between the laths. This plaster, once dry, is given further coats and often a decorative finish.



### Internal Walls and Partitions and Perimeter Walls

The internal walls range from internal panels, some of which we believe will be wattle and daub, some of which will be plaster; both lime plaster and gypsum plaster (old and modern). Some of the walls have the original horizontal boarded partitions and some of the walls had the timbers lime washed. There is also brick.





Internal panels



Boarded partitions



Lime washed timbers – this is how the timbers would have originally been



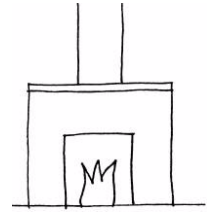
Within the corner of the rear right hand bedroom we can see brick on edge sometimes known as rat trap bond

In summary, do not be surprised what you find in the in fill panels. To some extent it should be different materials as this shows the history and development of the property and as discussed you do not really want to make this house into a museum but you do need to have sympathy for the older elements of the property.

Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken (unless permission has been obtained by yourselves). In some cases the materials employed cannot be ascertained without samples being taken and damage being caused.

We cannot comment upon the condition of the structure hidden behind plaster, dry lining, other applied finishes, heavy furniture, fittings and kitchen units with fitted back panels.

# **CHIMNEY BREASTS, FLUES AND FIREPLACES**



*With the advent of central heating fireplaces tend to be more a feature than an essential function in most properties.*

The chimney breasts are located to the left and right hand sides (all directions given as you face the front of the property). We can see that the left hand side forms the inglenook fireplace and to the right hand side forms the corner chimney in the dining room. Both are external brick chimneys and both have been added after the original property was built which is not unusual in this age of property.



Inglenook fireplace

At the time of the survey no chimneys were in use. Any chimneys that you do not propose to use should be capped and ventilated to prevent dampness.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that flues be cleaned and checked for obstruction prior to use to minimise the risk of hazardous fumes entering the building.



Chimney in dining room

Please also see the Chimney Stacks, Flues and Parapet Walls section of this Report.

# **FLOORS**



*Functionally floors should be capable of withstanding appropriate loading, preventing dampness, have thermal properties and durability. In addition to this upper floors should offer support for ceilings, resistance to fire and resistance to sound transfer.*

## **Ground Floor**

The floors to this property are beaten earth, possibly with a lime covering, with various types of tiles and stone laid directly onto the earth.



Beaten earth under the stair area



Brick tiles



Quarry tiles



Rustic stone

## **First Floor**

What most people do not realise when they are in on old property such as this is that often they would have been open without a first floor and it has been added in at a later date.

The floors are held in place by the timbers you can see forming the ceilings on the ground floor. The timbers were typically used horizontally as opposed to vertically, which is how we use them today.



Timbers supporting first floor

The timbers therefore given an element of deflection (springiness) when you walk upon them. This springiness is added to by the woodworm deterioration that we noted within this timber frame. This is another important reason why you need to reduce or get rid of completely the woodworm.

Finally, while some of the floors are covered with fitted carpets we were still able to see the floorboards. We noticed a mixture of different width of floor board and what is sometimes referred to as the coffin floorboards, which are relatively narrow boards.

The comments we have made are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction. We would emphasise that we have not opened up the floors in any way or lifted any floorboards.



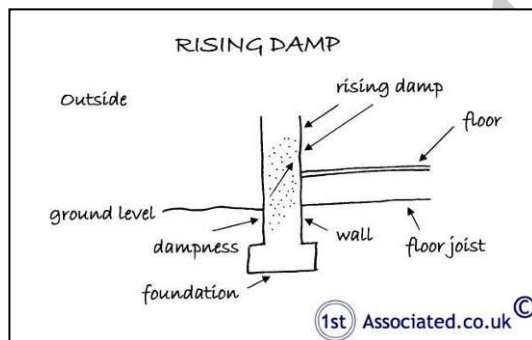


## **DAMPNESS**

*In this section we look at any problems that are being caused by dampness. It is therefore essential to diagnose the source of the dampness and to treat the actual cause and not the effect of the dampness.*

### **Rising Damp**

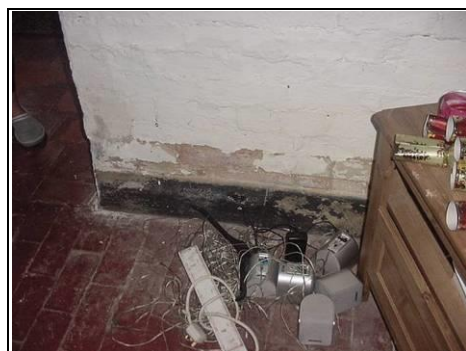
*Rising damp depends upon various components including the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation of the material, amongst other things. Rising damp can come from the ground, drawn by capillary action, to varying degrees of intensity and height into the materials above.*



As we would expect in a property of this age it has dampness.



Checking for rising damp



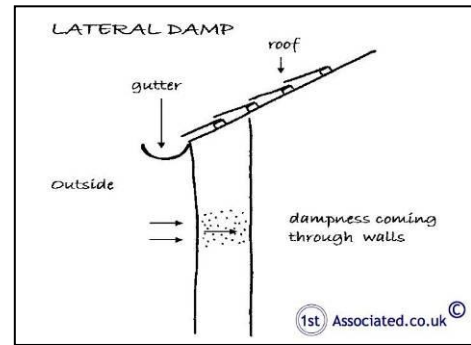
Lots of rising damp – paint coming off, we believe this to be a plastic based paint

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary with regard to how we recommend reducing dampness. You will not get rid of the dampness.

We mentioned about it being a plastic based paint which has to be removed to allow the wall to breathe.

## **Lateral or Penetrating Dampness**

*This is where water ingress occurs through the walls. This can be for various reasons such as poor pointing or wall materials or inadequate gutters and downpipes, such as poorly jointed gutters.*



There is some lateral dampness. It is mainly to the walls on the ground floor, the vertical tiling is protecting the upper floor to some extent. Again, repointing is needed and you need to get this building breathing to reduce the dampness but you will never get rid of all of it.

## **Condensation**

*This is where the humidity held within the air meets a cold surface causing condensation.*

It is important in this age of property to get rid of any moisture as quickly as possible. We would recommend that extract fans with humidity thermostats are added to the kitchen and the bathroom area as soon as possible.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

Condensation depends upon how you utilise the building. If you do your washing and then dry it in a room without opening a window you will, of course, get condensation. Common sense is needed and a balance between heating and ventilation of properties. Normally opening windows first thing in the morning resolves most condensation issues.

Finally, effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchen fittings with backboards, wall tiles and wall panelling. We have not carried out tests to BRE Digest 245, but only carried out a visual inspection.



## **INTERNAL JOINERY**



*This section looks at the doors, the stairway, the skirting boards and the kitchen to give a general overview of the internal joinery's condition.*

### **Doors**

The property has plank doors and we believe some ledge and brace doors. These are the original style of doors.



Plank door

### **Staircase**

We had a good view of the under side of the staircase. In this case it had steps of different sizes, as is sometimes the case on older steps.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We would always check the condition of the steps by having a close examination.

### **Kitchen**

The property has an average farmhouse style kitchen that is slightly dated but not out of keeping with the property. We have not tested any of the kitchen appliances.

Finally, it should be noted that not all joinery has been inspected. We have viewed a random sample and visually inspected these to give a general overview of the condition. Please also see the External Joinery/Detailing section.

# **TIMBER DEFECTS**



*This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm. Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi, both need moisture to develop and both can be very expensive to correct. We would also add that in our experience they are also often wrongly diagnosed.*

## **Dry Rot**

*Dry rot is also sometimes known by its Latin name *Serpula lacrymans*. Dry rot requires constant dampness together with a warmish atmosphere and can lead to extensive decay in timber.*

Given the conditions found within this property there is an outside chance that dry rot is present and we have not seen it. This is due to the dampness, as explained elsewhere within this report.

## **Wet Rot**

*Wet rot, also known by its Latin name *Contiophora puteana*, is far more common than dry rot. Wet rot darkens and softens the wood and is most commonly seen in window and doorframes, where it can relatively easily be remedied. Where wet rot affects the structural timbers in a property, which are those in the roof and the floor areas, it is more serious.*

Wet rot is present in the timber structure. You will have to put in place a programme of maintenance to repair it and replace it.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

## **Woodworm**



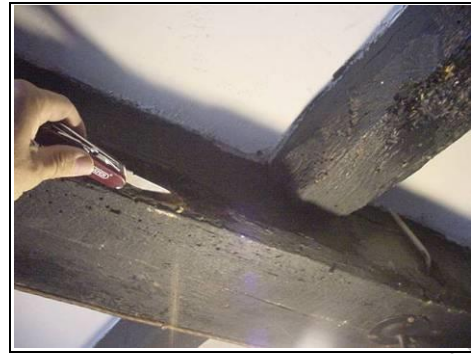
*Active woodworm can cause significant damage to timber. There are a variety of woodworm that cause different levels of damage with probably the worst of the most well known being the Death Watch Beetle. Many older properties have woodworm that is no longer active, this can often be considered as part of the overall character of the property.*

Woodworm was found both old and new, which we believe is active.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.



Woodworm



Woodworm with frass

Finally, when you move into the property, floor surfaces should be carefully examined for any signs of insect infestation when furniture and floor coverings are removed together with stored goods. Any signs that are found should be treated to prevent it spreading. However, you need to be aware that many damp and woodworm treatment companies have a vested interest in selling their products and therefore have fairly cleverly worded quotations where they do not state if the woodworm they have found is 'active'. You should ask them specifically if the woodworm is active or not.

We would also comment that any work carried out should have an insurance backed guarantee to ensure that if the company does not exist, or for whatever reason, the guarantee is still valid. More importantly it is essential to ensure that any work carried out is carried out correctly.

## **INTERNAL DECORATIONS**



*With paints it should be remembered that up to 1992 lead could be used within paint and prior to this most textured paints (commonly known as Artex) contained an element of asbestos up to 1984, so care should be taken if the paintwork looks old and dated.*

You may have some lead paint present. This can often be identified by its duller colour than a more modern paint. There are also paints available for historic buildings which you may wish to use when redecorating.

Finally, we would draw your attention to the fact that removal of existing decorative finishes may cause damage to the underlying plasterwork necessitating repairs and making good prior to redecoration.

## WELLS



*In older properties it is very common to have a well, either within the bounds of the property or a shared well.*

As with any good old property there is a well close to the rear of the property. We have in the past had experience of these causing structural problems with the property but the majority of cases that we see the well and the house live happily next to each other.



Well to the rear of the property

## THERMAL EFFICIENCY



*Up until the mid 1940s we did not really consider insulation in properties, for example it was only in the 1960s that we started putting insulation in the roof and then it was about 50mm, in the 1970s this was upgraded to 100mm. Then we started to think about double glazing and cavity wall insulation. Since then insulation standards have increased considerably and today we are looking at typically using insulation not only in the roof but also in the walls, floors and windows and more recently considerable work has been carried out on how efficient boilers are within properties. Care has to be taken that properties are not insulated disproportionately to the ventilation as this can cause condensation and you should be aware that you need to ventilate any property that is insulated.*

### HIPs

We understand that HIPs were suspended from 20th May 2010. Energy Performance Certificates are not that suitable for older properties and SPAB (Society of Protection of Ancient Buildings) are actively researching how older properties deal with energy efficiency and are looking for them to be dealt with in a different way to the vast majority of properties. In the meantime you will need to use some common sense with regard to thermal efficiency.

## **Roofs**

Whilst it is desirable to have the roof well insulated, as it is where the heat rises, you do initially need to empty the roof to establish the problems and resolve them with the roof structure. Then providing the roof is suitably ventilated you need to add back insulation.

We have seen used very successfully in this type of property a floor board for the roof that has an insulation underneath it. This then sits on the timbers and allows air movement, whilst still reducing the heat loss.

## **Walls**

The walls to this property are solid. It is very difficult to improve thermal efficiency in solid wall construction without major alterations. These will usually affect the external appearance or reduce the internal space – best left alone.

## **Windows**

The windows are single glazed and therefore will have poor thermal properties. You may wish to add secondary glazing where it is appropriate.

## **Services**

You have an oil boiler, service records should be obtained if at all possible. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently. You may ultimately wish to move towards a modern energy efficiency unit but they do cost several thousand pounds.

## **Summary**

Assuming the above is correct, this property is average for its age, type and style.

Further information can be obtained with regard to energy saving via the Internet on the following pages:

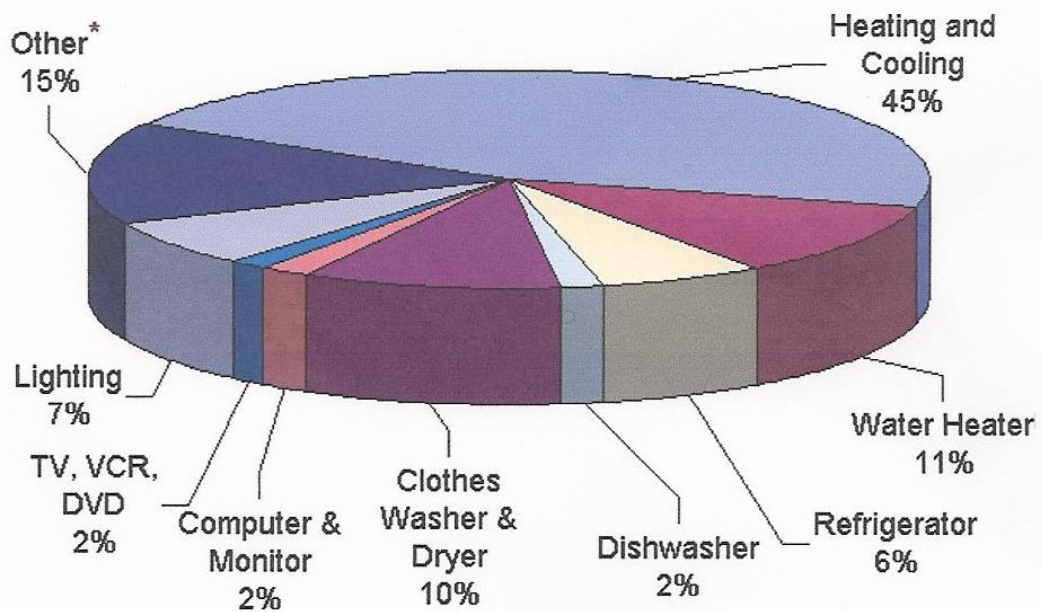
*HTTP//www.est.org.uk, which is by the Energy Saving Trust and includes a section on grant aid.*

*or alternatively [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk)*

*or [www.ecocentre.org.uk](http://www.ecocentre.org.uk) for an alternative technological view.*

Finally, we would advise that an energy rating is likely to be required for future house sales.

#### What does my energy bill pay for?



\*"Other" represents an array of household products, including stoves, ovens, microwaves, and small appliances. Individually, these products account for no more than about 2% of a household's energy bills.

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## OTHER MATTERS



*In this section we put any other matters that do not fit under our usual headings.*

### **Security**

We did note a security alarm box on the outside. We are not certain whether this still works. A good alarm system should not only help reduce break-ins but also your insurance. We are not experts in this field and therefore cannot comment further. Further information should be obtained from the vendor and the installer at a later date.



Alarm box

### **Fire / Smoke Alarms**

It is most important in a timber frame building as they burn very well to have a good smoke alarm system. We recommend as you are doing a general refurbishment to the property (meant in the best context of using the word) that you hard wire a fire alarm system into the main electrical system, thereby eliminating the need for battery operated units (where the batteries run out).

### **Insurance**

We would always recommend staying with the existing insurance company, and then if there are any problems you should not have the difficulty of negotiating with two insurance companies passing the blame between each other.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please see our comments in the Executive Summary.

### **Asbestos**

In a property of this age there may well be some asbestos. This was commonly used post war until it was banned only in the last ten or so years, although it is rumoured that it was still used after this point in time. We are not asbestos surveyors.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** If you wish to confirm you are 100 percent free of asbestos you need to have an asbestos survey carried out.

## **SERVICES**

This survey does not include any specialist reports on the electricity supply and circuits, heating or drainage, as they were not requested. The comments that follow are based upon a visual inspection carried out as part of the overall Building Survey.

Services and specialist installations have been visually inspected. It is impossible to examine every detail of these installations without partially dismantling the structure. Tests have not been applied. Conclusive tests can only be undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. The vendor/seller should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

## **ELECTRICITY**



*It is strange to think that electricity only started to be used in domestic properties at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with gas lighting still being the norm for a good many years after.*

Periodic inspections and testing of electrical installations is important to protect your property from damage and to ensure the safety of the occupants. Guidance published by the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) recommends that inspections and testing are undertaken at least every 10 years (we recommend every five years) and on change of occupancy. All electrical installation works undertaken after 1st January 2005 should be identified by an Electrical Installation Certificate.

### **Fuse Board**

The electric fuses and consumer units were located in the kitchen. The fuse board looked dated and not the best currently available.



Fuse board

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend upgrading the fuseboard as it is a very good way of making sure the property is safer as a whole, however we are aware that you have a good electrical contact and are having the services looked at separately.

### **Earth Test**

We carried out an earth test in the kitchen area to the socket point that is normally used for the kettle, this proved satisfactory.



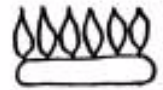
Earth test

**ACTION REQUIRED:** As the property is changing occupancy an IEE report should be carried out by a NICEIC registered and approved electrical contractor.

In addition to this your Legal Advisor is required to make full enquires with the owners to establish if any electrical installation work has been carried out and to provide suitable certification for any works carried out after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. Any comments made within this report or verbally do not change this requirement.

For basic general information on this matter please see the appendices at the end of this report.

## OIL



We are advised that the property has oil heating. The boiler is a Worcester Danesmoor 20/25. More efficient boilers are available. We were advised there was no oil left so we were unable switch the heating on. We have not seen the oil tank and our main focus of the report has been on the building. We are aware you are having a separate services test and inspection. You need to ensure that the boiler and the oil tank are inspected.

All appliances, pipework and flues should be subject to an annual service by a competent OFTEC registered engineer. Unless evidence can be provided to confirm that there has been annual servicing, we would recommend that you commission such a service prior to use to ensure safe and efficient operation.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** As a matter of course it is recommended that the entire gas installation is inspected and made good, as necessary, by an OFTEC registered engineer. Thereafter the installation should be serviced annually.

# PLUMBING AND HEATING



*In this section we do our best from a visual inspection to look at how the water is supplied to the property, how the supply is distributed around the property, how it is used to heat the property and how it is discharged from the property.*

## Water Supply

The controlling stopcock was not located. It is important that its presence is established in case of bursts or leaks. The stopcock and other controlling valves have not been inspected or tested for operational effectiveness.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Ask the owners again(!) as you did not find it when you were having the services looked at.

## Water Pressure

When the taps were run to carry out the drainage test we checked the pressure literally by putting a finger over the tap and this seemed average. The Water Board have to guarantee a certain pressure of water to ensure that things like boilers, particularly the instantaneous ones have a constant supply of pressured water (they would blow up if they didn't!).

## Cold Water Cistern

We have not found a water tank. We can only assume that the water is directly fed to the taps. The original idea behind a water tank was to help water pressure and to give an emergency supply of water.

## Hot Water Cylinder

There is a factory lagged insulated hot water cylinder located in the upstairs airing cupboard.



Hot water cylinder which is factory lagged

## **Plumbing**

The plumbing, where visible, comprises copper pipework. No significant leakage was noted on the surface, although most of the pipework is concealed in ducts and floors.



Surface mounted plumbing – plumbing could be better concealed

## **Heating**

The oil boiler was located in the oil shed, manufactured by Worcester.

Our limited inspection of the hot water and central heating system revealed no evidence to suggest any serious defects but we would nevertheless recommend that the system be tested and overhauled before exchange of contracts and that a regular maintenance contract be placed with an approved heating engineer.



Boiler

## **Ten Minute Heating Test**

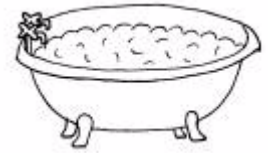
This was not carried out as we were advised there was no oil.

Finally, it should be noted that the supply pipe from the Water Company stopcock to the internal stop tap is the responsibility of the property owner.

We cannot comment on the condition of the water service pipe to the building. It should be appreciated that leaks can occur for some time before signs are apparent on the surface.



## **BATHROOM**



*In this section we consider the overall condition of the sanitary fittings such as the bathroom, the kitchen, the utility room and the cloakroom.*

The property has a three piece bathroom suite, consisting of a bath, wash hand basin and WC, which looks in average condition relatively speaking and is one of the newest additions to the property.

Finally, although we may have already mentioned it above we would reiterate that it is important to ensure that seals are properly made and maintained at the junctions between wall surfaces and baths and showers etc. We normally recommend that it is one of the first jobs that you carry out as part of your DIY on the property, as water getting behind sanitary fittings can lead to unseen deterioration that can be costly, inconvenient and difficult to repair.

## MAIN DRAINS



*The sanitary system, as we know it now, came into being some 100 years ago during the Victorian era and works so successfully today it is often taken for granted. It is only in recent years that re-investment has taken place to upgrade the original drainage systems.*

It is assumed that the foul drains from the property discharge into a public sewer; this should be confirmed by your Legal Advisor prior to exchange of contracts, who should also provide information in respect of any common or shared drains including liability for the maintenance and upkeep of the same.

The cold taps have been run for approximately quarter of an hour in the bathroom and kitchen. No build up or back up was noted.

### Inspection Chambers / Manholes

*For your information, inspection chambers / manholes are required to be provided in the current Building Regulations at each change of direction or where drainage runs join the main run.*

We are advised that there are manholes to the front and side of the property. We have not lifted the drains.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend that you have a closed circuit TV cameral report on drains of this. A CCTV report is also a good indication to see if there is any movement in the property as it affects the drains.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the condition of the property's foul drains can only be ascertained by the carrying out of a test; such a test has not been undertaken. Should there be leaks in the vicinity of the building then problems could occur, particularly with respect to the stability of the building's foundations. Drainage repairs are inevitably costly and may result in damage being caused to those areas of the property beneath, or adjacent to, which the drains have been run.

## **Rainwater/Surface Water Drainage**

*Whilst very innocent looking rainwater downpipes can cause lots of problems. If they discharge directly onto the ground they can affect the foundations and even if they are taken away to soak-aways they can attract nearby tree roots or again affect foundations.*

*Some rainwater drains are taken into the main drainage system, which is now illegal (as we simply do not have the capacity to cope with it), and can cause blockages to the main drains! Here we have done our best from a visual inspection to advise of any particular problems.*

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal. In this age of property it is likely to be into shared drains. These can be a problem during heavy rainfall and peak periods, such as the 9 o'clock rush to work.

Finally, rain/surface water drains have not been tested and their condition or effectiveness is not known. Similarly, the adequacy of soak-aways has not been established although you are advised that they tend to silt up and become less effective with time.

Please also see our comments within the Gutters and Downpipes section.

## OUTSIDE AREAS

### OUTBUILDINGS/ PARKING



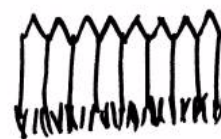
We have not inspected the outbuilding as our focus has been on the main report.

Likewise, we have not looked at the pond either or the boundaries of the garden.



Outbuilding

### EXTERNAL AREAS



#### Front Garden

A grassed area with some trees and bushes and an area given over to parking.



## **Rear Garden**

The rear garden again is laid mainly to lawn which was overgrown. There are bushes surrounding the property.



Rear garden



Pond at end of garden

**Boundaries:** The left hand boundary (all directions given as you face the property) is usually the responsibility of the subject property.

Finally, whilst we note the boundaries, these may not be the legal boundaries. Your Legal Advisor should make further enquiries on this point and advise you of your potential liability with regard to any shared structures, boundary walls and fences.

## **Neighbours**

### **Left Hand Neighbours**

Your left hand neighbour is the Quakers Meeting House that you advised us was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, buildings.

### **Right Hand Neighbours**

We have not spoken to them.

### **Rear Neighbours**

We have not spoken to them.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** We recommend you speak to your neighbours to ensure you can get on with them.

## **POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR**

If you wish to proceed with your purchase of the property a copy of this report should be forwarded to your Legal Advisor and the following points should be checked by him/her:

- a) Responsibility for boundaries.
- b) Rights for you to enter onto the adjacent property to maintain any structure situated near or on the boundary and any similar rights your neighbour may have to enter onto your property.
- c) Obtain any certificates, guarantees or approvals in relation to:
  - i) Timber treatments, wet or dry rot infestations.
  - ii) Rising damp treatments.
  - iii) Roof and similar renewals.
  - iv) Central heating installation.
  - v) Planning and Building Regulation Approvals.
  - vi) Removal of any walls in part or whole
  - vii) Removal of any chimneys in part or whole
  - viii) Any other matters pertinent to the property.
- d) Confirm that there are no defects in the legal Title in respect of the property and all rights associated therewith, e.g., access.
- e) Rights of Way e.g., access, easements and wayleaves.
- f) Liabilities in connection with shared services.
- g) Adjoining roads and services.
- h) Road Schemes/Road Widening.
- i) General development proposals in the locality.
- j) Conservation Area, Listed Building, Tree Preservation Orders or any other Designated Planning Area.



- k) Confirm from enquiries that no underground tunnels, wells, sewers, gases, mining, minerals, site reclamation/contamination etc., exist, have existed or are likely to exist beneath the curtilage of the site upon which the property stands and which could affect the quiet enjoyment, safety or stability of the property, outbuildings or surrounding areas.
- l) Our Report assumes that the site has not been put to contaminative use and no investigations have been made in this respect.
- m) Any outstanding Party Wall Notice or the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) Most Legal advisors will recommend an Envirosearch or a similar product is used by you to establish whether the area falls within a flood plain, old landfill site, radon area etc. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of Envirosearch or similar please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them of it. Any general findings should be brought to their logical conclusion by using appropriate specialist advisers.

However, with regard to Envirosearch or similar general reports please see our article link on the [www.1stAssociated.co.uk](http://www.1stAssociated.co.uk) Home Page.

- o) Any other matters brought to your attention within this report.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY ENQUIRIES**

Your Legal Advisor should carry out Local Authority searches to ascertain whether the property is a Listed Building and whether it is situated in a Conservation Area. They should also find out any information available with regard to Planning Applications and Building Control. We have not made any formal or informal Local Authority enquiries.

Finally, your Legal Advisor should carry out any additional enquiries they feel necessary and if they find anything unusual or onerous then we ask that they contact us immediately for our further comments.

It is our policy not to offer a conclusion to ensure that the Building Survey is read in full and the comments are taken in context.

If you would like any further advice on any of the issues discussed (or indeed any that have not been discussed!) then please do not hesitate to contact us on **0800 298 5424**.

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## **REFERENCES**

The repair and maintenance of houses  
*Published by Estates Gazette Limited*

Life expectancies of building components  
*Published by Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and  
Building Research Establishment*

Surveying buildings  
*By Malcolm Hollis published by Royal Institution of  
Chartered Surveyors Books.*

House Builders Bible  
*By Mark Brinkley, Published by Burlington Press*

# APPENDICES

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# **LIMITATIONS**

Our limitations are as the agreed Terms and Conditions of Engagement.

## **CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The report has been prepared in accordance with our Conditions of Engagement and should be regarded as a comment on the overall condition of the property and the quality of its structure and not as an inventory of every single defect. It relates to those parts of the property that were reasonably and safely accessible at the time of the inspection, but you should be aware that defects can subsequently develop particularly if you do not follow the recommendations.

## **ENGLISH LAW**

We would remind you that this report should not be published or reproduced in any way without the surveyor's expressed permission and is governed by English Law and any dispute arising there from shall be adjudicated upon only by the English Courts.

## **SOLE USE**

This report is for the sole use of the named Client and is confidential to the Client and his professional advisors. Any other persons rely on the Report at their own risk.

## **ONLY HUMAN!**

Although we are pointing out the obvious, our Surveyors obviously can't see through walls, floors, heavy furniture, fixed kitchen units etc. they have therefore made their best assumptions in these areas.

As this is a one off inspection, we cannot guarantee that there are no other defects than those mentioned in the report and also that defects can subsequently develop.



## **WEATHER**

It was a warm overcast summer's day at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

Our weather seems to be moving towards the extremities from relatively mid range. A few interesting facts in Britain over the years have been:

2000	Wettest year on record at the time
2003	Driest year on record at the time
2004	Wettest August on record at the time
2004	Boscastle was the worst flash flood on record at the time
2005	Third driest year on record at the time
2006	Warmest year recorded on record at the time
July 2006	Hottest July on record at the time
2006	Hottest autumn on record at the time
2007	Warmest spring on record at the time
2007	Wettest June on record at the time
April '06-April '07	Hottest 12 months on record at the time
2008	
2009	Third wettest August since 1956
2010	Heaviest snowfall in march since 1991
	Britain faces one of the coldest winters for 100 years

References                      BBC News [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

## **OCCUPIED PROPERTY**

The property was occupied at the time of our survey, which meant that there were various difficulties when carrying out the survey such as stored items within cupboards, the loft space and obviously day-to-day household goods throughout the property. We have, however, done our best to work around these.

## **INSPECTION LIMITED**

Unfortunately in this instance our inspection has been very limited due to the amount of stored items in the rooms in general, but specifically in the store rooms to the rear of the property which we could not get in. Also we had a very limited view of the roof due to the mass of stored items.



Some of the rooms were full of stored items particularly the rear store and the store rooms/cupboards off each bedroom

## **BUILDING INSURANCE**

We do not advise with regard to building insurance. You need to make your own enquiries. Some areas may have a premium, some buildings may have a premium and some insurers may be unwilling to insure at all in certain areas. You need to make your own enquires prior to committing to purchase the property. Please be aware the fact a building is currently insured does not mean it can be re insured.

We would comment that non-insurability of a building we feel will affect value. It is therefore essential to make your own enquiries with regard to insurance before committing to purchase the property and incurring fees.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** You need to contact an insurance company today to make enquiries with regard to insurance on this property.

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Our computer system sends two copies of our Terms and Conditions to the email address given to us when booking the survey; one has the terms attached and the other has links to the Terms and Conditions on our website (for a limited time). If you have not received these please phone your contact immediately.

# **THE ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS – PART P OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS**

Here is our quick guide to the Regulations, but please take further advice from a qualified and experienced electrician.

From 1st January 2005, people carrying out electrical work in homes and gardens in England and Wales must follow new rules in the building regulations. All significant electrical work carried out in the home will have to be undertaken by a registered installer or be approved and certified by the local authority's building control department. Failure to do so will be a legal offence and could result in a fine. Non-certified work could also put your household insurance policy at risk.

If you can't provide evidence that any electrical installation work complies with the new regulations, you could have problems when it comes to selling the property.

There will be two ways in which to prove compliance:

1. A certificate showing the work has been done by a Government-approved electrical installer - British Gas or NICEIC Electrical Contractor.
2. A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the building regulations.

Homeowners will still be able to do some minor electrical jobs themselves. To help you, we've put together this brief list of dos and don'ts.

## **Work You Cannot do Yourself**

- Complete new or rewiring jobs.
- Fuse box changes.
- Adding lighting points to an existing circuit in a 'special location' like the kitchen, bathroom or garden.
- Installing electrical earth connections to pipework and metalwork.
- Adding a new circuit.

## INFORMATION ON THE PROPERTY MARKET

We used to include within our reports articles on the property market that we thought would be of interest and informative to you, however we were concerned that in some cases these did not offer the latest information. We have therefore decided to recommend various websites to you, however it is important to realise the vested interest the parties may have and the limits to the information.

[www.landreg.org.uk](http://www.landreg.org.uk)

This records the ownership of interests in registered land in England and Wales and issues a residential property price report quarterly, which is free of charge. The Land Registry is a Government body and records all transactions as far as we are aware, although critics of it would argue that the information is often many months out of date.

[www.rics.org.uk](http://www.rics.org.uk)

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors offer quarterly reports via their members. Although this has been criticised as being subjective and also limited, historically their predictions have been found to be reasonably accurate.

[www.halifax.co.uk](http://www.halifax.co.uk) and [www.nationwide.co.uk](http://www.nationwide.co.uk)

Surveys have been carried out by these two companies, one now a bank and the other a building society for many years. Information from these surveys is often carried in the national press. It should be remembered that the surveys only relate to mortgaged properties, of which it is generally considered represents only 75% of the market. It should also be remembered that the national coverage of the two companies differs and that they may be offering various incentives on different mortgages, which may taint the quality of information offered. That said they do try to adjust for this, the success or otherwise of this is hard to establish.

[www.hometrack.co.uk](http://www.hometrack.co.uk)

From what we can see this is an internet based company who say they offer independent property research (in fact they say they are the only independent company), although they also advise that they are part of a property related group that has bought and sold over 60 million pounds worth of residential property, which indicates that they may have a vested interest. They do also comment that they have carried out their own independent surveys and they have at least two Hometrack recommended estate agents in each postcode area. We would refer you to the 'About us' section within their website to understand better where their information is coming from. We would comment that we have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of information provided by the company.

[Motleyfool.co.uk](http://Motleyfool.co.uk)

We also like the Motley Fool website which is a general financial site and although it is selling financial services and other services they do tend to give a very readable view of the housing market.

<http://www.nethouseprices.com/>

This website offers information on land registry recorded property sales, by postcode or address.

[www.globrix.com](http://www.globrix.com)

This is a very good website for seeing the prices of properties for sale in a certain postcode area.

# **Woodworm treatment**



## **Woodworm, most good old houses will have some**

If you have an older property and you see holes or dots in your timber, the best thing is not to panic. The holes look almost like someone has been throwing darts in to a timber. It is more than likely that the holes are old and the woodworm has long since gone. Alternatively, in many decades of surveying, we would say that even where there is an outbreak of woodworm that is active (more about how rare this is in a minute) it takes an awful lot of woodworm holes to cause any structural problems. I kid you not, I have kicked enough timbers and put knives in enough timbers to establish their structural integrity over the years and there have been very few where the woodworm is causing structural damage.

We would always recommend having a report to establish whether you have active woodworm before you pay to treat woodworm that's been dead for a 100 years!

## **Specialist woodworm companies**

Before we go any further, let us talk about specialist woodworm companies and how they can afford to give you free surveys. This is because, you guessed it, the surveys aren't really free, they are a way of giving you a quote, very much like a builders quote is free. If all these companies went around giving free surveys, and gave independent impartial advice, they wouldn't be in business for that long. In our experience, the vast majority of properties may have woodworm holes but they don't have active woodworm and they certainly don't have woodworm that is active to the extent that it is causing structurally significant damage and if it did, which is very unlikely, the specialist woodworm company's surveyor would know if it was a structural problem.

The specialist woodworm treatment companies are there to treat woodworm, therefore they will normally produce a well worded large report advising you that, to be on the safe side, you will need to carry out woodworm treatment, which is ideal because that is what they do. You do need to think of these companies as chemical selling companies.

So, now let us tell you a bit about woodworm.

## **Types of woodworm you are likely to find**

### **Death watch beetle**

Apart from its terrifying name, you only need to be concerned if you have oak or willow within your property, which tends to be older properties. Interestingly, it is probably most commonly found in church roofs (if you do live in an old church roof please give us a call, as we would love to see your property and would give you a free survey, in exchange for a cup of tea!). The death watch beetle likes a moisture content of 16% plus on the timber (death watch beetles are quite fussy about the environment they live in), so if you reduce the moisture content in the area then it kills off the beetles, or they leave.



## Common furniture beetle (it may be a common furniture beetle but it is still fussy)



This is, as the name suggests, far more common. It affects most woods. This beetle also likes a moisture content of 16% plus. Again, reduce the moisture content and you will reduce the common furniture beetle. Interestingly enough, when we have found it in quite modern properties and wondered why, and have spoken to other surveyors, particularly older surveyors, it is generally thought that the woodworm is brought in on older pieces of furniture that has been acquired. Often this is put down at the base or top of the stairs when the furniture is brought in, so these are areas where we find the common furniture beetle. We were told by an older surveyor (or he would probably prefer to be known as

experienced) that much of it was brought in when timber boxes used to be used for house removal. The hole is normally one to two millimetres in diameter. We would emphasise that it is usually no longer active, as this is a flight hole.

## What is frass and why is it important?

One way of seeing if woodworm is active, because this is what we are looking for, is to see if there is any frass. Before you ask what frass is, this is simply the chewed up sawdust that the beetle leaves behind. Therefore, if it is relatively recent there should be some frass about. We simply tap the timber to see if there is any frass (this works particularly well in a roof in torchlight). We also need to examine the colour of the frass as well; a light coloured dust and a light coloured hole indicates this is relatively recent. Obviously if it is a darker coloured frass, or darker coloured hole, it means it is older and the woodworm may have gone.

Unfortunately, having undisturbed frass is not easy on floorboards and floor joists, etc, as the mere act of walking on the floorboards can create frass, but don't worry, in these areas there are other ways of discovering whether there is woodworm.

## The fussy woodworm

We would just reiterate that woodworm like damp conditions, therefore, if you reduce the dampness in an area you kill the woodworm. They are also really keen on sap wood, which is the juicy timber between the heart wood, which is at the centre of the tree, and the bark, though it has to be said that some of them like eating the dry wood veneers; it has been said by experts that they are probably attracted by eating the animal glue.

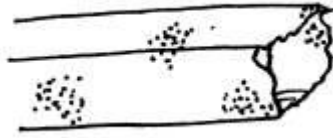
## The first cuckoo of spring, nice to hear, but is also a good time to see woodworm

The spring is the time of year when woodworm breed and lay their eggs. We have heard some people say it is in April/May and others say it is in July (which seems a late spring to us). It is at these times that you can see the woodworm. It is recommended that you put tissue over the woodworm holes to see if they force the way through the tissue (they are obviously alive if they do this). They also tend to congregate around areas, such as areas of natural light, i.e. roof windows, or the roof access if they are in the roof, or by windows and doors if they are in the floor.



Finally, one of the big mysteries: our older surveyor (we mean experienced) has seen woodworm holes through lead, which, to us, was either a very determined woodworm that we wouldn't like to come across, or something else; we are not sure what!

## **Woodworm treatment companies use poison to kill the beetles, or do they?**



Woodworm specialists do use a poison that they spray around on timber surfaces. This always intrigues us, as there are many surfaces that are hidden, or indeed not accessible, and obviously the woodworm is deep in the timber during most of its life, apart from in spring time, which is why it the best time to apply a poison spray if you are going to use it.

## **How do I treat woodworm if I don't use a poison spray?**

This is a question that we have been asking ourselves for years. There was at one time flypaper for beetles and we thought this was the perfect answer, but we don't seem to be able to get it any more. There is, of course, the ensuring that the areas are well ventilated and dryer than the 16% moisture content and you can also paint apply a poison to the surface of the timber. Probably the most satisfactory one in our mind is to ensure that moisture content has been reduced.

# **French Drain**

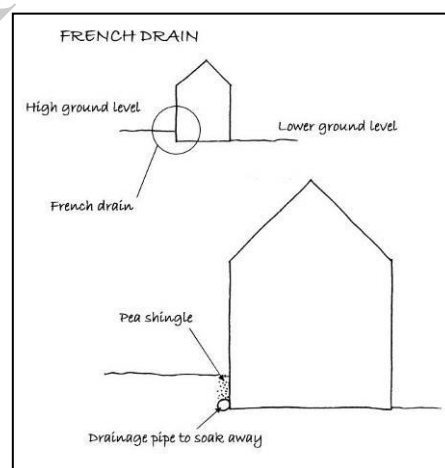
## **Using a French drain to resolve a dampness problem**

We are finding where we are asked to look at damp walls and damp floors or damp problems in general that commonly it is because the external ground level is higher than the internal ground level, or airbricks have been blocked, or simply paving slabs, decking or briquettes have been used to form a patio area. This then discharges any rainwater against the building. Quite often the solution is to add a French drain.

Whilst French drains are quite simple and are basically nothing more than trenches filled with gravel, although there is a bit more to them, as we will explain, they are almost a D.I.Y. job for most people and they are relatively easy to install and are low cost. However, you do need some care and attention, otherwise you can install what we have heard referred to, as the French pond.

## **What use is a French drain?**

A French drain is a trench, the width of approximately six inches or 300 millimetres wide, or the width of your spade, and is approximately twice the depth, i.e. 12 inches or 300 millimetres. In most cases this will suffice, however, where there is a great deal of ground water you may wish to make the trench wider and deeper.



The French drain acts as an area where water soaks away quickly. We often recommend them close to building, but not next to the building, as this helps reduce the ground level and/or take any water that is directed at that area away. For example, where a patio has been put in place which aims any rainwater at part of the wall. As mentioned, whilst a French drain is a D.I.Y. job, it does need some understanding of how it works.

## **French drains must be on a slope**

The piping that goes at the base of a French drain should be perforated or, as we did years ago for land drains, there should be gaps between each pipe. It should be set onto a bed of firm ground and the pipes should be on a fall to the drain. Whilst you

should be able to ensure there is enough fall by sight, we also like the idea of rolling a marble from one end to the other.

You will then need to put the pipes down, fill the trench with half an inch, to an inch, of good sized gravel. You can leave it at that, or in addition you can cover with sand and then turf over. This is how a basic French drain is carried out.

### **The French drain system that we would recommend**

This would be as described, although we would add to the base an inch or two of gravel on to which the perforated drainage pipe will rest. It will then wrap around that drainage pipe filter fabric. This is to stop the holes in the perforated pipe from blocking up. By the way, the drainage pipe should be four to six inches/100 millimetres to 250 millimetres. We would then fill with gravel. In addition to this, we would add a silt trap and this is added in the run of the pipe and is very similar to a road gully (not that's of much use if you don't understand how a road gully works). The silt trap is a rectangular box with a pipe opening at each end. The drained water passes onto this and any particles sink to the bottom of the box and then the water travels on to the other side of the box, enabling you to feed into a drain.

These are usually made of glass reinforced polyester and have been available in this form since the mid-1980's. They are normally reinforced with a steel frame for additional strength and re-bedded in concrete.

### **The French pond!**

French drains will, over time, clog up, which is why we recommend using a filter fabric. However, even with this they will eventually clog up. Unfortunately, there is no dingo-rod equivalent, as it is normally fine sand, organic matter or clay that has clogged up the French drain. So, it is a case of digging it up and cleaning the pipework (or it may be quicker to just replace it), adding a filter fabric and re-filling the gravel.