

**RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SURVEY
OF
Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39**



**FOR
Mr B**

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ASSOCIATED OFFICES NATIONWIDE**

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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 house 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 house 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" type face for clarity.

PHOTOGRAPHS



We utilise photographs to illustrate issues or features. In some photographs a pencil has been used to highlight a specific area (with this property we have taken approximately one hundred photographs in total and we have enclosed a sample of these within the report).

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 substantial two storey semi detached Victorian/Edwardian built property, which has had various extensions and alterations over the years, as have most properties of this age. We believe it was built in the 1890s.

We are advised that permission has recently been granted to alter the entrance of the property that presently bypasses various other properties.

The Vendor advised that he has been in residence for 20 or so years and is aware that the property needs work carrying out to it, as we are sure you are.

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Left Hand Side Front Elevation



Right Hand Side Front Elevation



Rear Elevation



Left Hand Elevation



Left Hand Elevation



Adjoining property over looking the garden.



As we understand it this is the location of the proposed new entrance from the adjoining road (view from the roof top).

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

Ground Floor

The ground floor accommodation consists of:

- Entrance Lobby, opening into an Entrance Hall which links to a Front Reception Room
- Kitchen
- Cloakroom
- Work Shop to the rear
- Dance Studio

First Floor

The first floor accommodation consists of:

- Four Bedrooms, one currently being used as a Study
- Family Bathroom

INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS

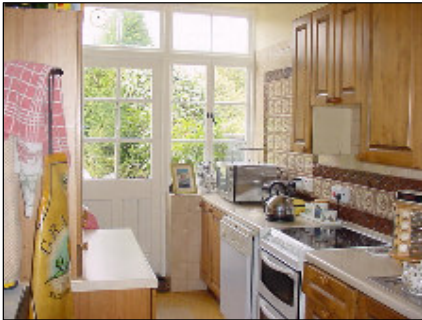
Please note that some of the photos may have been taken with a concave lens, to enable us to show you as much of the room as possible, which does make the photos slightly blurred.



Lounge



Dining Area and half Landing of stairs.



The Kitchen



The Dance Studio

SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION

EXTERNAL

Chimneys:	Three rendered chimneys
Main Roof:	A hipped roof, clad with concrete tiles and a Valley Gutter to the front
Rainwater Goods:	A mixture of Cast Iron and Plastic
Walls:	Painted Render
External Joinery:	Painted timber windows with fascias and soffits

INTERNAL

Ceilings:	A mixture of Lath and Plaster and Plasterboard
Walls:	A mixture of solid and studwork
Floors:	Ground Floor: A suspended timber floor to the front with a concrete floor to the rear (assumed) First Floor: Joist and floorboard construction (assumed)

OUTSIDE

A reasonable sized garden, although probably the original gardens were once bigger. There is off road parking for several cars on an un-made shingle driveway.

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 dangerous 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.

Firstly, we would comment that the scope of the amount of work here means that we have to talk more generally than perhaps we normally would. For example it is pointless (in our opinion) us listing each and every window that needs redecorating and some repair work and replacement of the rusting hinges (one of the windows nearly fell out in our hands) when we would class the windows as all 'saveable'.

We have focused on what we consider to be the main risks involved with this property, such as the render work and the deterioration of the structure beneath, for example to the lintels, which will have been timber originally, and the structure as a whole, which is likely to have been brick with timber binders, which could present far bigger issues and is not what we would term 'controllable' costs.

Having said all of that, here are our comments:-

Generally we found the property to be what we would term 'risky' as it is impossible to say, without further investigation, what condition the structure is in beneath the render. But, providing you are prepared to consider this as a long term investment, if indeed 'investment' is the right term for this, these problems will not be insurmountable, although they may be costly.

We would draw your attention specifically to the following areas:

1) High Level Issues

This considers the roof area, the chimneys, the associated flashings, gutters and downpipes.

We found that the chimneys will need some general work and there is a crack to the middle chimney that will need repair. There is what we would term an 'overhaul' needed to the roof, although this is fairly minimal, and there is some repair work needed to the valley gutters and ridges.

With regard to the roof structure we found what looks to be asbestos within the roof, although it is not, as far as we could see by torchlight, deteriorating and therefore does not need to be removed immediately.

Within the house as a whole and within the roof structure we found woodworm. We did not find what we would term as 'structurally significant' damage from what we could see, but we would comment that you may well find some throughout the property as a whole.

ACTION REQUIRED: In the short term you need to resolve the dampness that is getting into both your property and your neighbours property. This is likely to require replacement of some of the gutterings and possibly repositioning, together with either redecoration with minor repairs as a holding job on the chimneys, which should get you through to next year.

ANTICIPATED COST: A few hundred pounds for a holding job and many thousands for a longer term solution. The main risk, as far as we could see, is that the woodworm may be active and that wet rot/dry rot could be found in part of the roof structure where the dampness currently is.



The rainwater goods require some work and attention such as clearing out the grass ...



and replacing the rusting cast iron gutters and re-fixing the joints,



repairing the valley gutter properly and



re-rendering the chimneys and redecoration to make them watertight.

Please see the Chimneys Section, the Roof Coverings Section, the Roof Structure Section and the Timber Defects Sections of this Report.

2) Render

As you will have noticed the render to the external of the property is in a poor condition. Our major concern is not so much the render itself, as this can be replaced, but the damage that has been done to the structure beneath.

The only areas where we have been able to see the structure is within the roof space and this, together with our general knowledge of this age of construction would lead us to believe that the property is brick built with timber binders throughout and timber lintels. These both rot and this is where your costs are likely to be in the replacement and repair of the timberwork. Of course the render will cost a fair amount to replace and we would also suggest that some of the detailing is improved, for example above the windows and to the base of the property to reduce future deterioration.



We could show lots of photos of the deteriorating render and the cracking

ACTION REQUIRED: We would expect the majority of the property to require re-rendering together with associated repairs beneath. You will have what we would term a domino affect, in that when you start one area this will then lead on to other areas of repair etc. etc. This also can often have pound's signs rolling in the eyes of any builder you use, so care should be taken to specify the work correctly, but more about this in the render section.

ANTICIPATED COST: We always feel it is better to be wrong on the high side rather than the low side. We would suggest that the work is carried out in three sections starting with the end gable and then either the front or the rear elevation. This way when you take the render off the end gable you learn about any future problems you are likely to incur. Using this method we would expect costs to be in the region of £10,000 - £30,000. Sorry to have such a wide split with our costs estimate, but for example one rotten lintel or bearer could add one or two thousand pounds to the cost of the works.

Please see the External Walls Section of this Report.

3) Woodworm

Woodworm was noted in the roof and also in the floor area. We have already spoken about it briefly within the high level section of this summary. We would comment that the woodworm we saw was not what we would term as 'structurally significant', however we are aware, and have indeed dealt today with an old client that in our opinion had been conned into having woodworm treatment on woodworm attack that was neither active or in danger of causing any problems.



The worst area of woodworm that we could find.

The main risk areas are that the woodworm that we have seen on the structural timbers has affected the laths in the plasterwork, which in turn could result in new ceilings being required or that it has affected under the floor area to the front of the property, as this is an ideal breeding ground for it, i.e. damp.

ACTION REQUIRED: This is more a suck it and see situation, due to the sheer amount of insulation in the roof we were unable to establish the true condition of the ceilings and unfortunately we were also unable to gain access under the floor area.

ANTICIPATED COST: Anything from a few hundred pounds upwards.

Please see the Timber Defects Section of this Report.

Action Plan

This Year

We would suggest the following action plan.

This year, before the summer is out you should make the roof watertight. The way we would advise carrying out this work to the property is to have repairs/replacement to the gutters and downpipes fairly immediately, definitely before the summer, we can literally see grass growing out of some of the guttering and hopperheads.

We also suggest that the gable end render is removed, repair works carried out and re-rendered, to give you an idea of the condition that the front and rear are likely to be in and also allow you to budget cost for them. At the same time any obvious openings in the render etc. should be filled to the front and rear elevation. This may look a mess for a year, but in the long term we feel it will benefit you.

We also suggest that you examine the property when it is empty of furniture for any active woodworm by lifting floorboards and lifting the insulation in the roof.

Within Three Years

We would re-render the front and rear of the property, redecorate and repair the external joinery, of course the sooner this work is carried out the better, but we are aware that budgets may not allow this.

High Level Work

Re-rendering and re-pointing the chimneys is also needed as, due to their exposed location, dampness was found to be getting in through some of these.

DIY/Handyman Type Work

There are numerous other items that we would class as DIY or handyman type work such as general internal and external redecoration, repairs to the doors and possibly even some of the repairs to the windows. These problems are slightly more than you would normally have to take on for this age, style and type of property. We have detailed these and other issues within the main body of the report.

The above issues are explained in full 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.

It is very difficult to advise how to negotiate upon this property as the estate agent will advise that it has been priced to allow for repair work. However, we do not see how the estate agent could possibly envisage the amount of work that this report identifies.

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, we are currently using between £75 per day for unskilled labour up to £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 probably be best to supervise the work 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 with our thoughts a few days after the initial survey. We would add the following:-

There is a fair amount of work here to be carried out; most of it we do not believe is what we would term DIY work, particularly the render and the associated repair work that is needed. There will also be re-wiring work and new heating and plumbing installations. Providing you systematically work through the property we do not see why in five/ten years time you should not have brought this property back to as 'new'.

You must, however, first buy it at the right price. We suggest you argue for a lower price based upon our findings, indicating the property is below a standard you would normally expect. There is also an element of risk that you will have to take on and this should be reflected in the purchase price of the property.

Ways of reducing your risk are if you can get the home owner to open up part of the render to the gable and open up part of the ceiling where dampness is getting in, in the rear bedroom, this would allow us to look to see how bad the dampness is and also to check in more detail for active woodworm. If you wish we can organise this work (once written permission is given from the owner). Please telephone our office to discuss this further.

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. If you so wish we can prepare specifications and obtain quotations for the work, whatever you do don't allow the estate agent to organise the quotes as he will utilise people he regularly uses who know they have to keep in with him/her to get further work and therefore are very keen to please the estate agent, as opposed to you the real client and at the end of the day it doesn't take long to organise.

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

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.

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 house purchase - just phone us.

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



The Garden

EXTERNAL

CHIMNEY STACKS AND ROOF LIGHTS

Chimneys

There are three chimneys to this property. One to the front valley gutter area on the party wall and two to the rear of the property.

Front Valley Gutter Party Wall Chimney

This chimney is render finished with a lead flashing and three chimney pots. Paint is flaking away and there are some hollow/blown areas of render, as well as the paint peeling off.

ACTION REQUIRED: Carry out render repairs and redecorate, the sooner this is carried out the better.

The only other point to make with regard to the chimney is the straps that have been used for the aerial. We have found in the past that these cause damage to the render as they produce pressure points on the chimney. You may wish to secure it in a different manner. The photo is as viewed from ground level, fortunately we were able to get onto the roof via the roof light and were able to inspect the chimney closely.



Rear Middle Chimney near the Roof Light

This is a rendered finished chimney with a lead flashing and has three chimney pots. This is the worst of the chimneys and will require a fair amount of re-rendering. There is a crack visible in the chimney and it goes without saying that it will need redecoration as well.

ACTION REQUIRED: A worse case scenario would be some rebuilding work, however we think it is likely just to be re-rendering and redecoration.

ANTICIPATED COSTS: It is very difficult to anticipate costs on chimneys as the actual access to them is usually the most costly as often it has to be carried out off scaffold. Our best estimate, bearing this in mind, would be £500 - £1,000 assuming this is carried out with other work.

Rear Chimney – Left Hand Side

It was slightly difficult to see this chimney as we had to view it from ground level and literally hanging onto the ridge of the roof. It has two chimney pots and looked in reasonable condition, although again we could not see the flaunchings.

ACTION REQUIRED: Likely to need minor re-rendering work and redecoration. The flaunchings need to be checked, as they do on all the chimneys, and repaired as necessary.



The two rear chimneys.



Looking more closely at the rear chimney, as this area is where the dampness is getting into the bedroom. You can see moss on the tiles indicating that water is sitting on the roof. There is a relatively small flashing and also the guttering has come away and is at 45 degrees in the photo. All of these, we believe, contribute towards the dampness in this area.

Flaunchings Defined - Also known as Haunchings

A low, wide cement mortar fillet surrounding the flue terminal on top of the chimney stack to throw off rainwater.

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.

General Comment on Flashings

The flashings around the chimneys seem to be fairly minimal, almost as if whoever was doing it was trying to save lead. We know lead is expensive but we think these 'savings' may be the cause of some of the dampness coming in that we found in the chimney within the first floor level.

Roof Lights

The property has the older style of purpose made roof light, which was generally made up on site, this one has the benefit of a glazed panel. It seems inevitable with roof lights that they will sooner or later leak. We suggest this one is redecorated at least.

During our question and answer session the owner told of an instance where the roof light was literally blown off by the prevailing westerly wind, so make sure the bolts are secured down on the roof light.

Roof Light to Rear Workshop

We have dealt with this within the Roof Coverings Section of this Report.

Earlier we have used the term party wall in relation to the front valley gutter chimney.

Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996

A structure which both parties enjoy the use of or benefit from. An example of this would be where both parties gain support from a wall or utilise a chimney or chimneys.

Any work to party structures, such as party walls or party chimney stacks, require agreement under the Party Wall Act. We would be more than happy to offer you help and advice in this matter.

Finally, the chimney stacks and roof lights have been inspected from ground level within the boundaries of the property and from the public highway/rights of way with the aid of a x16 zoom lens on a digital camera. Therefore our observations are limited.

From our observation points, not all elevations of the chimneys could be seen. We have, therefore, made our best assumptions from the parts of the chimneys that are visible.

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

ROOF COVERINGS AND UNDERFELTS

The roof coverings and underfelts 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 underfelts function is to prevent wind and minimise water damage. Dependent upon the age of your property this may or may not be present, please read on:

Main Roof

The main roof is pitched and clad with a concrete tile, this roof covering is far newer than the building as a whole and is likely to have been carried out in the 1960s or 1970s.

As a general comment on the roofs as a whole, as viewed from ground level and the front valley gutter area, the roof coverings are generally in reasonable condition and showed nothing out of character for their age and type.

Concrete tiles have been used for the past 40 or 50 years and are generally the cheapest alternative for roofing materials as they can be mass produced giving both a consistent size and quality.

Concrete tiles come in two forms; nibbed - this is where ridges on the back of the tiles allow fixing to the roof battens and the roof structure; and interlocking or "mechanical" fixings - this is where troughs or grooves in the tiles allow the fitting of the joining tiles together as well as the nibs previously mentioned. In this instance on this roof the tiles looked to be nibbed and nail fixed.

There is a very minor amount of moss growth growing on the slopes, this is not uncommon on concrete tiled roofs. This can, in extreme cases, impede the run-off of rainwater, lead to gutter blockages and cause water penetration, which in turn may lead to rot or other defects in nearby timbers. We suggest the roof is cleared of the moss periodically, in fact we would go so far as to say because this has not been done this is the reason why the gutters are blocked causing dampness.



ACTION REQUIRED: Clear the roofs and gutters of moss.

Nibbed Tiles Defined

A nibbed tile is one which has raised areas known as nibs, usually two in number, at the top of the tile to enable the tile to be fixed to the roof batten which, in turn, fixes to the roof structure.

Ventilation

Under current Building Regulations, it is a requirement to ventilate roofs to stop condensation, but this is not a retrospective requirement.

Valley Gutters

Valley gutters are generally considered to be weak areas on a roof. The valley gutter is used where a roof changes direction. In this case the valley gutters are formed in lead. The lead looks to be thinner than would normally be recommended for valley gutters (what is known as code 6 lead). The lead has split and the owner has carried out a repair to it, although in theory it is a jointly shared valley gutter. We spoke with the adjoining owners who advised that they had dampness coming into their property, we assume it was from this leak. Although, alternatively, when we did lift the tiles, as shown in the photo, there was no lead running under the first few courses, which is the detail we would recommend, as this stops water getting into the structure should it back up or should it snow.



ACTION REQUIRED: At some point in time (within the next few years) you will have to consider re-leading the valley gutter and taking it underneath the tiles to stop water finding its way in in this area. This should be a shared cost, from what we could see, with the adjoining owner.

Protective Membrane underneath the Roof Covering

When we inspected the roof space we found a Hessian/Bitumen sarking felt. This type of sarking felt has been used since the 1960s. We generally found it to be in reasonable condition.

We have randomly inspected the underfelt and our comments relate to its general condition.

Asbestos Cladding

To the left hand side of the valley gutter within the roof, a material that looks to be asbestos has been used; we are not experts in this area but we do come across it. It looked in reasonable condition at present but if it starts to deteriorate it has to be removed by a Local Authority approved contractor.

Rear Roof – to the Conservatory Workshop Area

This roof is pitched and clad with slates (manmade) with a boxed roof light. We were advised that originally it was all glazed but has been replaced in this manner over recent years.

From within the room below we could see that leaks are coming through. Fibreboard has been used to line the underside so we could not identify if the structure was damaged internally. From our external inspection we would expect some repair and replacement to be required.



We note also that one of the cast iron gutters has fallen onto the roof and cracked some of the glass. Part of this is Georgian wire polish plated, as it should be to stop any tiles etc. coming through the glass, but some of the glass looks to be normal glass (although it could be strengthened glass but we could not see the British Standards Kite mark). During the refurbishment all this roof glazing will have to be changed to strengthened glass.

The present owner advised us that you intended to use this area as a workshop area. As long as the goods that you are dealing with are non-perishable then it will be suitable!

We feel that you may spend a fair amount of time chasing around the various roof leaks before you get this area watertight.

The way we suggest you tackle this area is to first of all make the roof light watertight by taking it off completely this summer (you can also use the opening left to put a ladder through and fix the gutter back in place, if you are happy to do this), cover the area with polythene, or something to protect it against any summer rain and, depending upon its condition, have a new one made or have the old one repaired.

We noted a product known as Flashband has been used, this is a sticky backed lead, for want of a better term. This is probably hiding rot or leaking joints, which is why we have suggested that it may be easiest to remove the entire roof and replace it.

Joint where Rear Roof Meets Main Building

The other weak area is where the rear roof meets the main building. This looks to be lead, although we are not absolutely sure. We suggest this is checked when the roofing work is being carried out.



Entrance Porch Roof

This is a pitched tiled roof. Our main concern with this area is that it did not look to have a flashing, although there was some undulations to the render where the roof meets the main wall. If you look at the render there looks like there may even have been another structure in this area, as there is a horizontal band running across it.



With regards specifically to the roof we would expect some flashing work to be required.

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

ROOF STRUCTURE AND ROOF VOIDS **(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

The main roof is accessed via the loft hatch located on the landing. There is no loft ladder, there is an electric light (but it uses an extension lead and is not permanently fixed), although there is a roof light that helped considerably with visibility within the roof space. We were also pleased to see a few secured floorboarding. We recommend that a loft ladder and more secured floorboarding and permanent lighting is added, as it will make the roof space safer and easier to use.

The roof space has been viewed by torch light at the perimeters, which has limited our viewing slightly.

This roof structure is what is known as a cut timber roof. This is a roof which is purpose made and hand built on site and without the original design details and calculations we cannot comment categorically on the roof structure other than to say it is in line with what we typically see.

There are two good sized purlins running the length of the roof, these had various splits in them etc., but nothing unusual for this age of property.

Purlins Defined

The purlin is the horizontal timber member usually running from gable end to gable end and parallel with the walls which supports the jack or common rafters (the angled rafters forming the slope to the roof).



General view of the roof and the mass of insulation. You can see where the light from my torch is shining on the end wall, here you can see timbers in the wall, which is why this property will be a problem when taking the render off because some of these timbers will have rotted. To the left hand side you can see what we believe to be asbestos.



Close up of the timbers in the walls.



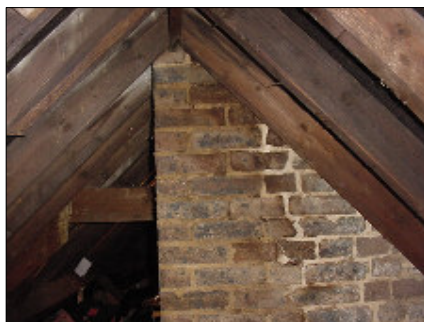
Another general view of the roof.



Close up of one of the purlins.



You can see the darker bits of timber, where there is some dampness getting in.



You can see the dampness here getting in from the middle chimney.



Here we tried to clear some of the insulation to have a look at the timbers, but there was a lot of it and it was not practicable to clear.

Woodworm

Woodworm was found, although it was not possible to identify whether it was active or not. What we saw was relatively minor considering the age of the property etc., but please see our comments in the Timber Defects Section of this Report.

ACTION REQUIRED: The risk you have here is that there may be woodworm hidden by the insulation; in fact we are certain there is woodworm hidden by the insulation. The question is whether this is to the extent where the timber will need replacing. This is why we have recommended that these areas be opened up.

Please refer to the Executive Summary for photos of the woodworm.

Timber Defects

We would ask you to note that a general inspection of the roof timbers has been made, we have not examined every single timber because some parts of the roof are inaccessible and it is simply not practical.

We have inspected the roof for active woodworm and structural defects to the timber and wet rot but our examination was impeded by the stored items and/or insulation, which covered the roof timbers. Therefore, it is feasible that there are problems in the roof, which are hidden. The only way to be 100 per cent sure is to have the roof cleared and checked.

Fire Walls

Firewalls help prevent the spread of fire through roofs and are a relatively recent Building Regulation requirement. In this instance the firewall is built in brick.

Insulation

You have lots of insulation, current Building Regulations recommend 200mm, you have at least this much. We literally had to wade through it in some areas. Care should be taken as it is very difficult to identify where the ceiling joists are if you stray off the boarded area.

Ventilation

Where there is a sarking felt and insulation to a roof cross ventilation is now recommended and required under the current Building Regulations. This is to stop condensation occurring within the roof, which can affect the timbers and also cause dampness. Due to the amount of insulation in this roof we think that you could get condensation if you are not careful.

Water Tank and Header Tank

The water tank is formed in cast iron and the header tank is formed in cast iron. They are newly lagged (there has certainly been no money spared when insulating this property!). We always recommend that you drain down tanks and clear them of any debris and other things etc., as you should remember that you clean your teeth with this water.

Electrical Wiring

We can often identify the age of an electrical installation by the age of wiring found in the roof. In this case the wiring noted was very old.

RAINWATER GOODS

Rainwater goods is the term given to the rainwater gutters and the rainwater downpipes. Their function is to carry rainwater from the roof to the ground keeping the main structure as dry as possible.

Defective rainwater goods 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.

You have a mixture of the original cast iron rainwater goods and plastic and they are in a poor state. The cast iron ones are rusting away, which is a real shame and one has even come away from its fixing and smashed into the workshop roof. Grass can be seen growing from some of them and the plastic rainwater goods do not look to have been aligned correctly in some places.



The question is where do you start with these. The first thing we feel you need to decide is whether you should have all cast iron or all plastic rainwater goods. There are arguments for both.

We have recently read research that shows when you look at the whole life costs of cast iron and plastic rainwater goods that cast iron is actually cheaper, although it is more expensive initially, but it does last longer. The article showed cast iron having a life expectancy of 60 years, more if it is cleaned and maintained at a typical cost per year of £2.26 and uPVC having a life expectancy of 15 years at a cost per year of £3.00. The figures were produced by English Heritage who are a fairly reliable source, which brings me back to the point we are trying to make, perhaps you should be replacing the plastic rainwater goods with cast iron as they are both in keeping with the age of the property and offer, in the long term, better value for money.

The main argument is against you having a mixture. We suggest you start off by clearing out the gutters and checking the joints and the alignments to ensure the gutters fall towards the downpipes, as best you can. You may be happy to do this as a DIY type job, or if you are not okay with heights you may wish to hire someone in.

As an aside, buy a tower scaffold

We always recommend that people buy or hire a tower scaffold if they have a lot of high level work, as this reduces the costs of anyone else doing the work as they will not have to have an access scaffold.

ACTION REQUIRED: Whichever way you choose to go, cast iron or plastic, the work has to be completed before the autumn of 2004.

Additionally we would term the rainwater goods as having an awkward layout. This type of layout inevitably leads sooner or later to blockages. Hopefully you can sort this out when you are replacing and repairing the rainwater goods.

Please refer to the Executive Summary for more photos.

Finally, gutters and downpipes have been inspected from ground level. We were not able to make a close inspection of the roof level rainwater goods (our ladders are not long enough) and therefore cannot be 100% certain of the type of material used or the condition. 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.

Rendered Walls

The property has mainly white painted rendered walls that are generally in poor condition. To put this in perspective these walls are at the worse end of what we see; however, all is not lost as long as you take a reasoned view over the work that is needed and work logically through it.

Render Defined

A sand and cement external coating applied in two or three coats or layers.



This elevation shows quite well where the deterioration has occurred to the render and also where there is likely to be deterioration in the structure itself (that is in the darker areas of the render).



A close up shot showing cracking etc. We think the cracking is probably in line with where the timber is underneath the structure. Without opening it up we cannot be certain of course.

Risk

There is a risk with taking on a rendered building in this condition and that is that there are so many elements of it hidden. In a property of this age part of the wall structure will probably have been of timber bearers and above the windows and doors are likely to be timber lintels or even metal lintels that will have been affected by the dampness.

As a surveyor we are always concerned when we see render-finished properties, as the render can hide a multitude of sins. We carried out a tap test on the render at low level (literally hitting the render with the back of a hammer to try to establish if there are any hollow areas to it) and we were, in this instance, fairly happy that it all did not literally fall off as we tapped it.

Detailing

A way of telling the quality of the render, we have found over the years is by the quality of the detailing. In this instance, as far as we could see, the render had no moulding forming drip details, for example, over the windows. There were drip details, but these were timber (these are used to throw the water away from the windows and prevent rotting). The other area to look at is at the base of the property, in this instance there is no bell-mouth, unfortunately both indicate that the quality of the rendering will be at the poor end of the scale.

Bell-Mouths Defined

A bell-mouth is a curve at the base of a wall which throws the water away from the structure therefore preventing dampness.

Step by Step, Stage by Stage

We have suggested in the Action Plan that you open up the gable end of the property in the summer of 2004 to get a better feel for what you are dealing with. We recommend the following:

ACTION REQUIRED: Employ a builder to remove the render only, take an accurate photographic record of the condition and ask for several builders to quote for repairing and re-rendering and redecoration of the elevation and also then to quote for the front and rear elevation.

It would be best if the quotations you obtain avoid day work rates, as these in our opinion, do not encourage the builders to work at their most productive because they are paid for every hour that they take. Equally a fixed price contract is not the way as this, in our opinion encourages builders to cut corners should they come across problems they were not expecting as the other alternative is to cut profits.

We would suggest a fixed price with an additional provisional sum to be spent at your discretion and only upon your specific approval.

With regard to the detailing we would prefer to see a bell-mouth at ground level and mastic sealants used wherever timber drip details are to the windows.

Dampness to the Base of the Walls

There is dampness to the base of the walls and there is likely to be further deterioration at this level.

Lintels

Where the window and door lintels are concealed by plasterwork and render, we cannot comment on their construction or condition. In buildings of this age they will have originally been timber and they may or may not have been replaced by concrete lintels or metal lintels over the years. All are susceptible to deterioration which is unseen particularly if in contact with dampness, as in this instance.

Finally, the external walls have been inspected visually from ground level and randomly via a ladder within the boundaries of the property.

FOUNDATIONS

The foundations function, if suitably designed and constructed, is to transfer the dead or superimposed load through the soil so it can suitably carry the loads. Many properties prior to the 19th Century have little or not foundations, as we now think of them, with a minimum depth of around one metre filled with concrete.

Typically, with a Victorian/Edwardian property of this period, if we excavated around the foundations. In theory we would expect it to follow the Building Act of 1878 which required a minimum concrete foundation of 9 inches and an oversight layer of concrete 6 inches thick but in practice a stepped brick foundation maybe present. It is simply not possible to tell without excavation. We have however inspected the base of the render and have found cracking in some areas. This we think is more in relation to the defective render and then the deterioration to the structure beneath than the actual foundations. However, it is very difficult to tell due to the condition of this property.

Another area to look at is the roof to see if there has been any movement and this looked all in alignment, which is why we would go with our first comment that we believe the cracking to the render is in relation to movement within the structure itself, rather than the foundations. Nevertheless you are taking on a risk.

Building Insurance Policy

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

Finally, no examination has been made of any foundation to the building because to do so requires extensive excavation. We therefore cannot confirm 100 per cent the stability of the walls the foundations support but we have drawn conclusions from the surface evidence available at the time of the inspection and our general knowledge of this type of construction.

Likewise, we cannot comment upon how the foundations are constructed, we can only offer you our best assumptions, which we duly have done.

TREES

Damage to foundations and underground services can be caused by trees and shrubs. There are a number of these in the vicinity of the building. These looked predominantly to be conifers, although there were no signs of structural damage attributable to trees at the time of the inspection the possibility of future problems cannot be ruled out. Trees and shrubs should not be allowed to overgrow the property though total removal of trees or pruning should not be undertaken without specialist advice as this could also result in damage.

Please also refer to the External Areas Section.

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 the Country.

All modern properties should incorporate a damp proof course (DPC) and good building practice dictates that a differential of 150mm (6 inches) should be maintained between the damp proof course and ground levels. In this case, the property was probably built around the time that damp proof courses were being introduced. We cannot tell whether this has got one or not as the render covers it. However we did find dampness in the property indicating that if it has got a damp proof course it is not working or that it has been bridged by the render. This will all become apparent when the render is removed.

Your attention is drawn to the section of the report specifically dealing with dampness.

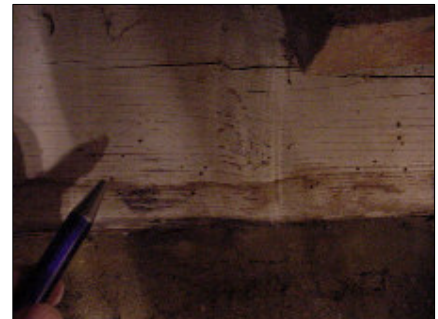
Finally, it is often not possible to inspect or even identify if there is a damp proof course in a wall, although sometimes the edge of the damp proofing can be seen. Very often the exact position is covered with mortar or render and is not visible. We have made our best assumptions based upon our findings during the course of this inspection.

AIRBRICKS

Air bricks are added into older properties to vent floors or cellars. Airbricks can be seen from the outside of the property, they are brick size with holes or vents within them and they are at low level normally one or two courses from the ground. These provide subfloor ventilation to discourage rot. They need to be positioned to allow a through put of air under the property.



There are some suspended timber ground floors to this property. This means there should be an air flow beneath them. We noted airbricks to the front of the property but these were minimal and the air flow is then blocked by the concrete floors further on in the property. We therefore think it is likely that there could be wet rot in the floors due to the general dampness in the structure as a whole.



To the floor to the rear that we were able to inspect we found woodworm although relatively minor; however the front of the property would have more ideal conditions for woodworm i.e. dampness.

ACTION REQUIRED: We have suggested earlier within this report that the floor be lifted and checked or you need to negotiate a reduction in the price to allow for the risk that you are taking on.

EXTERNAL JOINERY

The external joinery part of this section covers windows, doors, fascias and soffits and any detailing such as brick corbelling etc.

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. Another element of external joinery is the fascias and soffits. These offer protection to the rafter feet and also allow the securing of guttering.

Fascias and Soffits

Redecorate and repair.



Windows and Doors

Redecorate and repair. Some of the ironmongery will need replacing as well, for example the hinges are rusting.



Probably the worst timber condition is to the rear workshop area (see photo), which is a new add-on and therefore the quality of the timber is not as good.



ACTION REQUIRED: Ironically whilst the flaking paint to the fascias and soffits, doors and windows looks terrible the quality of the timber used originally is good and therefore has survived quite well. You will need to redecorate in the next year or so.

Cast Iron Columns

There are some supporting cast iron columns (or what we believe to be cast iron) to the left hand gable (outside the dance area). We noted some signs of rust in these areas.



Finally, a general and random selection and inspection of the fascias and soffits, windows and doors and any exposed timbers, has been made visually to give an over-view of the general condition. Please also see the Internal Joinery section.

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.

In this case, it really needs redecorating and repairing as soon as possible, please see our earlier comments.

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

The majority of the problems with this property internally are caused by external problems. We have not mentioned things that we would normally mention due to the general overall condition of this property.

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. The concept of internal finishes is relatively modern. Partitioning developed originally to separate the livestock from the human occupants. Finishes have developed from this very functional beginning to their decorative nature of today.

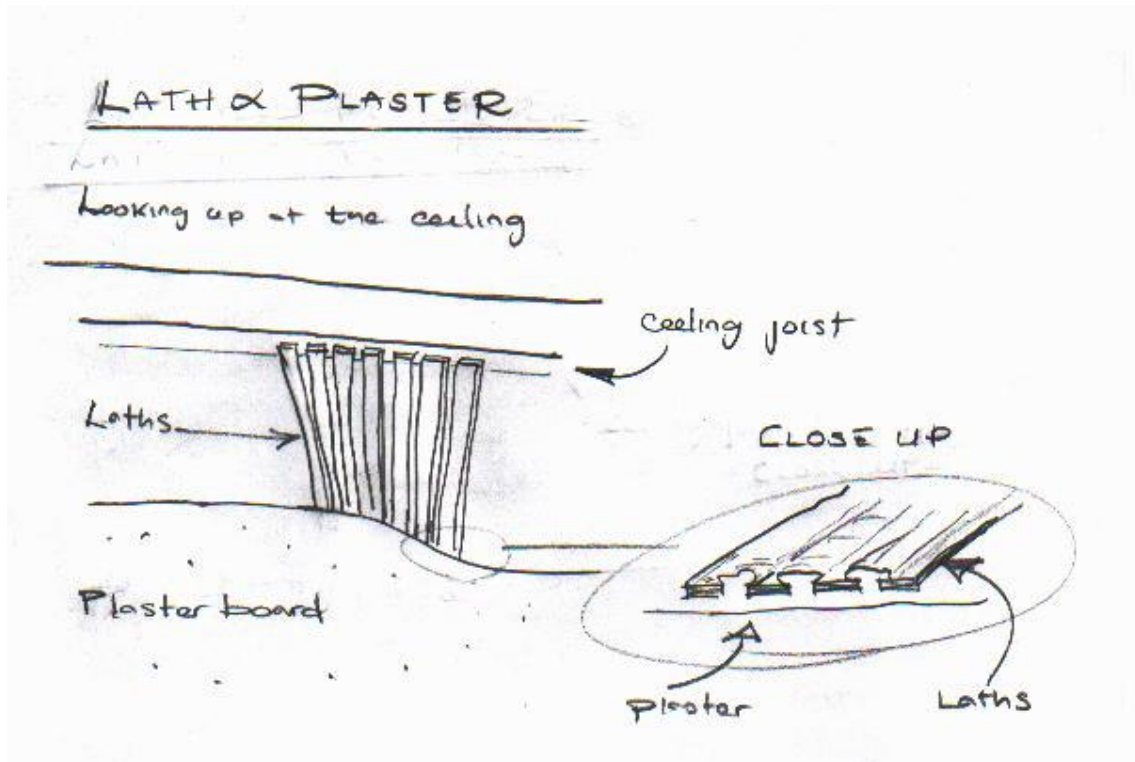
Ceilings

From within the roof space we could identify the ceilings as being formed in lath and plaster. In this age of property lath and plaster ceilings and any walls also constructed in this way should be considered as coming to the end of their natural life, particularly in areas where dampness has got into the structure.

Having said that, a great deal of thought should be given before any ceilings are taken down as it is a very messy job and a layer of plaster tacked over the original may well suffice.

That said, we did not see any ceilings in imminent danger of coming down. You will best be able to see their true condition when carrying out re-plastering work in the damp areas we have found, for example, in the rear left hand bedroom and to the chimneybreast.

ACTION REQUIRED: Once the cause of the dampness coming in has been eradicated we suggest you allow the areas to dry out, if they dry out successfully then we would leave them in place. You are likely to have areas of hollow and 'blown' plaster which are literally being held in place by the wallpaper.

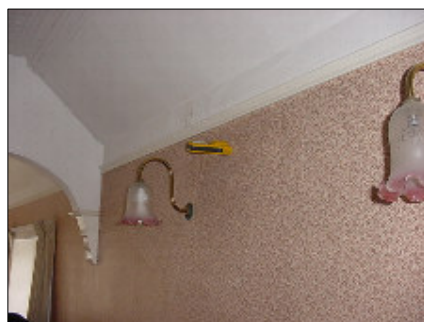


Lath and Plaster Defined

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.

Common defects with this type of plastering are that the laths are placed too close together or too far apart therefore the plaster cannot form a key. It can also deteriorate due to dampness within the structure, general vibrations, structural movement and age.

Without lifting all the roof insulation, we cannot be certain of its condition.



The yellow object is my damp meter, not that it was needed as dampness is visible. This is probably coming from a combination of leaking gutters, leaking render and possibly the chimney also is contributing to it.

Internal Walls and Partitions

You have a mixture of solid walls and studwork walls. Studwork tends to be where the newer alterations have taken place, for example to the bedrooms on the left hand side of the property, where the walls have been added by the present owner.

Studwork Defined

Usually a timber frame, clad in either lath and plaster or plasterboard and used to divide areas. Studwork can be structural, i.e. load bearing, or alternatively non-structural depending upon its construction. Within more modern properties, a proprietary metal system or a honeycomb cardboard may also be found. Modern Building Regulation requirements also require minimal sound transfer and this is usually adhered to by the incorporation of insulation.

Generally internal walls are finished with a plaster and decorated. Without the removal of the plaster or decorative finish we cannot be 100 per cent certain of the construction but we believe that in most rooms you will have areas of blown plaster, particularly around windows, chimneys and roof level.

Plasterwork from the pre-1930s was usually made of lime, sand and very little cement if any, and incorporated Ox, horse, cow or goat hair to strengthen the finish. Failure can arise for many reasons. As we have not opened up the ceiling, we cannot express an opinion as to how long the ceilings are likely to last. Even with destruction testing, i.e. opening up of the ceilings, it is very difficult to say. Such areas as kitchens and bathrooms or any areas where a relatively large amount of moisture is produced/condensation are more susceptible to the plaster failing.

The owner advised that reconfiguration was carried out to form the fourth bedroom in 1983 and this is why there are studwork walls in the property.

During our conversation with your next door neighbours (more about this at the end of the report) they commented that they had found the paintwork in some areas a nightmare and they showed us a red, what looked to be a lead based paint. We only noted this in the study of your proposed purchase, but please be aware that care should be taken when removing this.



This photo is taken inside next doors property. We spoke specifically to the owner of your proposed purchase about this who said that he had not come across any problems, but we did not within his own study that the paper was coming away and this red paint was beneath.

Finally, ceilings, walls and partitions have been inspected from floor level and no opening up has been undertaken. The type of materials employed cannot be ascertained fully without 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

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.

Right Hand Front Valley Gutter Chimney

This was found to follow through from the chimney into the bedroom and then the lounge below. Some dampness was found in it.

Rear Middle Chimney

We were unable to follow this through the structure but there was dampness found to be coming in in the roof space to this chimney.

Rear Left Hand Chimney

This is an externally built chimney and runs down through the workshop to the rear of the property. It was found to be damp.

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.

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.

No exposure was carried out due to the restrictions of fitted carpets, floor coverings etc. The comments are based upon our experience and knowledge of this type of construction.

Ground Floor

This is partly made up of a suspended timber floor to the front and a solid floor, assumed concrete, to the rear.

No floorboards were lifted.

Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined

A suspended timber floor usually consists of timbers spanning the ground floor, supported on piers (usually brickwork), vented via air bricks within the walls.

Wet Rot/Dry Rot/Woodworm to Ground Floor

It is very likely that there is wet rot to the timber portion of the ground floor as we obtained damp meter readings in the area and also there does not look to be adequate through ventilation. Where there is a damp area there may also be dry rot if the conditions are correct and from what we have seen throughout the rest of the property there may also be woodworm.

ACTION REQUIRED: If the present owner will allow it we suggest that a section of the floor is opened up and investigated prior to agreement to purchase.

The risk of not doing this is that timbers will have to be replaced. If the owner is not prepared to lift up the floors then you need to be financially compensated for the risk you are taking on.

First Floor

We assume that the first floor construction was joist and floorboard.

Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined

These are usually at first floor level consisting of a joist supported from the external walls, either built in or, in more modern times, sitting upon joist hangers, sometimes taking additional support from internal walls, with floorboards fixed down upon it.

No floorboards were lifted. The floor was not accessed.

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 as there are also other sources of dampness such as condensation, which may inadvertently by the inexperienced eye be considered to be lateral dampness or rising damp.

Rising Damp

Rising damp depends upon three components, the porosity of the structure, the supply of water and the rate of evaporation from the wall surface. The water rising from the ground will tend to rise in the raw materials and will continue to do so due to capillary action to varying degrees of intensity and height. It may not be confined merely to walls but may also occur in floors and other parts of the structure such as internal partitions, particularly where they are in direct contact with the soil. Damage and deterioration can result. It is the extent of this damage and deterioration that we discuss below.

The readings obtained indicate that dampness is present in some of the external walls and also internal walls. We found the strongest readings to the front of the property and the left hand side internal walls. Having said that, the size of the skirtings meant that we were not able to get the readings we wished in some areas.

This is slightly different to the usual damp problems associated with rising damp and we believe these may be due to the condition of the render and possibly the general level of the soil externally.

ACTION REQUIRED: In the first instance we would suggest that soil is moved away from the property and that the render repairs and alterations are carried out as recommended. A summer season should then be allowed to pass allowing the property to vent and breathe and disperse the build up of dampness that has been set within the walls. We would then be happy to return, if dampness is still present in the walls only then should you look at putting in a damp proof course.

Effective testing was prevented in areas concealed by heavy furniture, fixtures such as kitchen fittings with back boards, and wall tiles etc.

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 material, inadequate rainwater goods or corroded downpipes.

Tests were taken with a moisture meter at random points to internal walls, floors and other surfaces. No evidence of any significant penetrating/lateral dampness was detected. Our readings were in line with what we would expect for this age of property, i.e. minor dampness with the exception of the rear and front bedroom where dampness was found that was coming through from the roof or the chimneys.

Condensation

We can see no obvious signs of condensation, however, it 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.

INTERNAL JOINERY

This section looks at the doors, the stairway and the skirting boards.

Doors

The property has very distinctive stripped paint doors. They fitted of a fashion, as do all old doors – we think these are the least of your problems! There is some DIY-type work required to the ironmongery.

Staircase

We were unable to examine the underside of the stair timbers due to it being lined with plaster, which precluded our inspection, so we cannot comment further upon the stair structure. We can, however, say that the lining plaster gives a resistance to the spread of fire if such circumstances were to occur.

Skirtings

The property has a painted timber skirting. We believe that the majority of this is original.

Kitchen

The kitchen units are fairly basic and suffer from some wear and tear. We have not tested any of the kitchen equipment.

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

TIMBER DEFECTS

This section considers dry rot, wet rot and woodworm.

What is Wet Rot or Dry Rot?

Wet and Dry rot are species of fungi that initially need moisture to allow their airborne spores to germinate. Dry Rot can grow rapidly when conditions are good and if water continues to enter a building unchecked, wetting internal wood. Wet Rot can also spread throughout the timber in a property over a short period of time.

Dry Rot

There is an outside possibility that dry rot is present under the floor, as conditions are correct and we would also comment that there is a possibility of it being around the valley gutter area, although we feel this is fairly unlikely in this instance from what we could see.

Wet Rot

Obviously there is some wet rot present in the windows, these are what we would term as 'saveable', however a greater concern would be the condition of the timbers under the floor area, which is why we have recommended the floor be opened up.

ACTION REQUIRED: Open up the ground floor.

Woodworm

Woodworm flight holes were noted in the roof space and also in the cellar area. Wood boring insect infestation is quite common in older properties and we would expect to find more in this property if we carried out a very detailed inspection, lifting floorboards, roof insulation and emptying out all cupboards etc. Our inspection of the property was limited as described elsewhere in the report and we would therefore make our best assumptions, which are, from what we saw, that there is woodworm in the property but it is not what we would term as causing any structurally significant damage. We are obviously unable to confirm that such parts as were covered, unexposed or inaccessible are free from defect.

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. If you see any further signs please contact us as we have recently been involved in a case where the owners were talked into having woodworm treatment that was quite unnecessary

INTERNAL DECORATIONS

You may wish to redecorate to your own personal taste. It is very difficult to advise on how frequently redecoration should take place. This very much depends upon the use and abuse the decoration gets, for example, within hallways this tends to be greater than for example within a spare bedroom.

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

CELLARS

There is a small cellar to the rear of the property near the kitchen door. It is presently in a dilapidated condition but could be cleaned up and re-used. It has a patio area above it and also partly goes under the half landing within the property. We could see that a concrete floor has been used in this area, so it is fairly modern. We also noted some cracking to the structure, this is because it is very different to the main structure and therefore has not been able to 'give' and 'move' in the same way due to the dampness which has resulted in the cracking. Additionally there is a small access area, if you go under this you can see timber joists running across the property. We found some woodworm in this area. Please see our earlier comments on woodworm.

THERMAL EFFICIENCY

It is very difficult to comment upon thermal efficiencies in a building of this age and type. For example, many requirements of present Building Regulations, which cover thermal efficiency would not be appropriate to this type of structure as they are designed for modern buildings, which are constructed to different standards.

We would, however, comment as follows:-

Roofs

The roof is jam packed with insulation, take care when walking in the roof. The tanks to the loft were insulated as were some of the pipes leading to it, where visible. It is condensation that could be the problem in this area if you are not careful as the roof is not vented.

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 do not close particularly well, but they can be improved when they are generally overhauled. You may wish to have added an insulation strip to them.

Services

The boiler is a floor mounted Potterton unit, which looks dated. We would suggest it is 30-odd years old. Modern boilers run more efficiently although it could equally be argued, from our findings, that modern boilers do not last half as long. The main problem you will have with this boiler is servicing with regard to plumbers that are skilled enough to service it and parts availability.

Service records should be obtained. It is essential for the services to be regularly maintained to run efficiently.

Summary

This property is average to possibly above average for what we typically see for this age, type and style. This is due to the sheer mass of roof insulation.

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

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

[HTTP//www.est.org.uk](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

or www.ecocentre.org.uk for an alternative technological view.

OTHER MATTERS

Security

No security system was noted. It is a personal decision as to whether you feel one is necessary. As a matter of policy we do not comment upon layout and design. We suggest you contact a member of NACOSS (National Approval Council for Security Services), obtainable through directory enquiries, or your local Police Force for advice on a security system.

Smoke Alarms

Some smoke detectors were noted. The current Building Regulations require that they are wired into the main power supply. Obviously in a property of this age, this is difficult as it would mean having surface mounted wires or cutting wiring into the plaster.

ACTION REQUIRED: We would recommend, for your own safety, that battery operated smoke detectors are installed in each room and should the opportunity present itself during redecoration, they are wired in to the electricity supply. We would also advise that if you wish to have any general advice the local fire authority is usually happy to give advice.

We would recommend Fire Angels, these are smoke alarms that are fitted within the light system, the batteries to them are recharged when the lights are switched on and they act as a fairly unobtrusive smoke alarm and of course have the benefit of the batteries never running out unless the room light is not used for a long period of time.

Asbestos

In this case asbestos appears to have been used in the roof (you can only be certain if it is tested) and it appear to be in sound condition and no immediate action is considered necessary. You should however note that work involving products containing asbestos is covered by Health and Safety legislation and you are recommended to seek the advice of the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer before proceeding with any such work.

Insurance

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

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 should be requested to provide copies of any service records, test certificates and, ideally, the names and addresses of the installing contractors.

ELECTRICITY

The electric fuseboard and consumer unit are located at the far right hand end of the kitchen, these looked very dated as does some of the wiring that we saw within the roof space. We are advised that some of the wiring was extended, for want of a better term, when works were carried out to the property.

ACTION REQUIRED: In view of our findings it is recommended that a competent electrical contractor, preferably one registered with the NICEIC, be engaged to carry out a thorough inspection and test together with an assessment of the cost of works required to ensure compliance with current IEE standards. You are strongly advised to implement any recommended works.

GAS

The gas consumer units was located in the rear cellar area.

All gas appliances, pipework and flues should be the subject of an annual service by a competent engineer, i.e., a member of CORGI (the Council of Registered Gas Installers); works to gas appliances etc., by unqualified personnel is illegal. 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 a CORGI registered contractor. Thereafter the installation should be serviced annually.

PLUMBING AND HEATING

Water Supply

We are advised that the controlling stopcock was not located in the downstairs cloakroom/w.c. area. 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.

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.

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 reasonable.

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 and Hot Water Cylinder

It is fairly unusual to find these days a cold water cistern that is cast iron. We had a limited view of it and recommend that it is drained and cleared out. If during this you find rust in it then we suggest it is replaced with a plastic tank and at the same time you may as well replace the header tank, which is also cast iron. Ultimately they are prone to leaking.

ACTION REQUIRED: Replace tanks.

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.

Heating

As already mentioned the property has a floor mounted Potterton boiler, which is fairly old. We are slightly hesitant to suggest replacement of these with a wall mounted unit as, from our own experience, where we had a similar boiler for many years, this was replaced with a modern equivalent, which has broken down more times than the old boiler has done in just two years.

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.

Soil and Vent Pipe

There is a cast iron soil and vent pipe externally; it no doubt is rusting like the rest of the cast iron on the property. You will ultimately need to make a decision whether to replace it or not, but it is not one of your major concerns.

SANITARY FITTINGS

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 sanitary fittings appear dated and are generally worn; ideally you may wish to replace them. We have not seen a bathroom finished in cork for quite some time.

We would always recommend that any areas of high moisture level such as bathrooms and kitchens have an extractor fan fitted.

And finally, it is important to ensure that the tiling and seals are properly made and maintained at the junction between wall surfaces and baths, showers etc., as damp penetration can lead to the development of fungal decay in concealed areas. This may not become apparent until a major attack has developed necessitating extensive and costly repairs.

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 an hour in the bathroom, kitchen and cloakroom with no build up or back up.

Manholes

We were advised that there is one manhole to the rear of the property under various paving slabs; we lifted up several of these with no luck. It is very unusual not to find any manholes on a property of this size. In fact we would go so far as to say it is almost strange. We therefore think that some alterations may be required to the drainage as well. Given its age, assuming that it is original, you should expect some leaks on it. The only way to check these is with a close circuit TV camera report.

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

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

We have been unable to determine the ultimate means of rain/surface water disposal. In this instance it is likely to be via a soak-away, as we could not find any manholes at all around the property.

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 Rainwater Goods section.

OUTSIDE AREAS

GARAGES AND OUTBUILDINGS

An outbuilding was knocked down by the tree that is lying on the lawn. We are advised that the insurance claim has been settled with regard to this matter. The concrete base is all that remains.

EXTERNAL AREAS

Boundaries

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.

The property is surrounded by timber fencing to one side, which we would say is in an average to poor condition and could do with re-aligning and re-positioning in some areas.

The other boundary are Leylandii trees. This type of tree is very quick growing and can restrict light, possibly even leading to the devaluation of the subject property. Leylandii is presently very topical due to the nuisance which can be caused. The action group "Hedge Line" are actively partitioning central Government to provide legislation relating to these trees. However, at present, your rights are very limited if your trees are grown within the adjoining property's boundary.

We have been advised that approval has been given to gain new access into the property, which we feel will be a nice addition.

Neighbours

We knocked on your neighbour's door, they were very pleasant, inviting us in and explaining what they had been through when they had been refurbishing their property.

We later discovered, when having a general discussion with the owner of your proposed purchase that they had wished to buy the property but it was put on the market and taken off the market whilst they were on holiday. We do not think this comment was made in malice or as a potential bid increaser, it was just a general conversation point.

POINTS FOR YOUR LEGAL ADVISOR

If you wish to proceed with your purchase of the property a copy of this 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) 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 of the knowledge that any are about to be served.
- n) We strongly recommend that Envirosearch or a similar product is used by your Legal Advisor to establish whether this area falls into a flood plain, old landfill site etc., and brought to its logical conclusion. If your Legal Advisor is not aware of the system please ensure that they contact us and we will advise them about it.

LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA

From our investigations the property has not been identified as being Listed or in a Conservation Area.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm the above and carry out any searches he/she feels are necessary.

PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Planning and Building Control

From our discussions with Rother District Council we have been advised that Building Regulations were sought for a single storey extension, which was approved in 1985 but not built. A planning application was made in 1977 for approval to convert the property from a nursing home to a residential property, this has obviously since been accepted as the current owner has been in the property since 1981 and purchased it as such.

This was confirmed by Mrs West of the Planning Department on 30 March 2004 at 10.30am

Please Note:

No mention was made of the alternative access that the owner advised us of. Confirmation of its approval should be sought by your Legal Advisors.

Your Legal Advisor should confirm this and carry out any checks he/she feels necessary.

Finally, an extract from the book “Sold”!

“When you receive your full structural survey (now known as a Building Survey) or House Buyers Report, do remember that you have requested a list of the property’s faults so it is unlikely to make cheerful reading. Every property has its faults but what you are looking for are the serious ones. If your Report does reveal a serious problem that you had not anticipated when making your offer, the first thing to do is to decide whether you want to take on the repairs if an adjustment is made to the price. If you do, then get quotes for the work as quickly as possible and present your case in a fair manner. Most people are reasonable under such circumstances and will compromise but inevitably there are those who are sufficiently confident of their position to say take it or leave it. In a very active market, prices may have moved up sufficiently to cover the extra expenditure in theory and the vendor will not hasten to point this out but remember that he has probably got a vendor pressing him to proceed quickly and starting with a new purchaser will cause him delay”

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! Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0800 298 5424.

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

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 mild spring day with a minor shower or two at the time of the inspection. The weather did not hamper the survey.

We would add that some defects only become apparent upon physical occupation or are only present as a result of the extremes of weather (which are becoming a more frequent occurrence). As you are probably aware the year 2000 was the wettest year on record and 2003 the driest year on records, this may have adverse effects on lots of buildings in years to come.

NOT LOCAL

It should be noted that we are not local surveyors to this area and are carrying out the work without the benefits of local knowledge on such things as soil conditions, aeroplane flight paths, and common defects in materials used in the area etc.

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 roof space and obviously day to day household goods throughout the property. We have, however, done our best to work around these.

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

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

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 and 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

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

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.