

JOB REF: SDR

SPECIFIC DEFECTS REPORT

Relating to Damp Walls

1920s Property in Devon



FOR

Mr A Client

Prepared by:

INDEPENDENT CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Marketing by:

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0800 298 5424

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION

SYNOPSIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

INSPECTION

SURVEY FINDINGS

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

LIMITATIONS

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION

We have been instructed by Mr A Client to prepare a report relating to dampness.

We have carried out a visual inspection of the property.

The instructions have been carried out under our standard terms and conditions which are available on our website and have been forwarded to you prior to our confirmation of instruction.

SYNOPSIS

We were advised that you recently purchased the property and that you had concerns about dampness within the property which we believe were highlighted in your Homebuyers Report, carried out by Another Surveyors. You more recently instructed Dampness Company Limited to carry out a quotation regarding the dampness. They identified dampness to the walls to the majority of the ground floor which aroused your concern further and resulted in our instruction.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summaries are always “dangerous” as they try and encapsulate relatively complex problems in a few precise and succinct words. Having said that here is our executive summary and recommendations.

Unfortunately this is not a simple problem. There are several issues which we believe have contributed to the cause of the dampness. It is also important to consider the overall economics of carrying out our recommendations, based upon your personal circumstances and how long you intend to stay at the property.

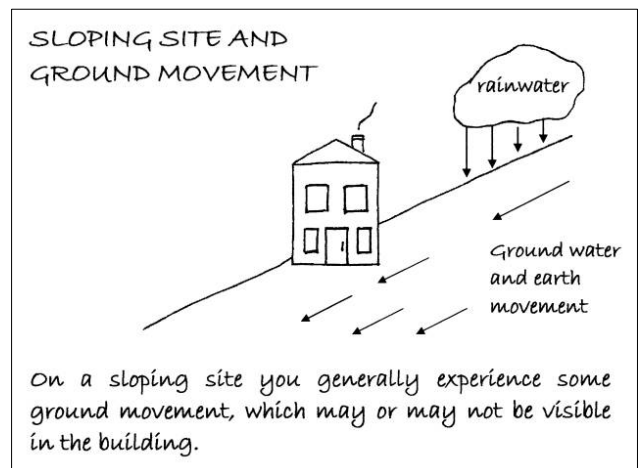
CAUSE:

We believe that there are several issues which combine to cause the dampness to the property.

The Property sits on a Sloping Site

The property sits on a sloping site and as such rainwater travels from the top of the site/land to the bottom of the site/land. The property is presently in the way of this transfer of water from the top to the bottom with no defined route for the rainwater.

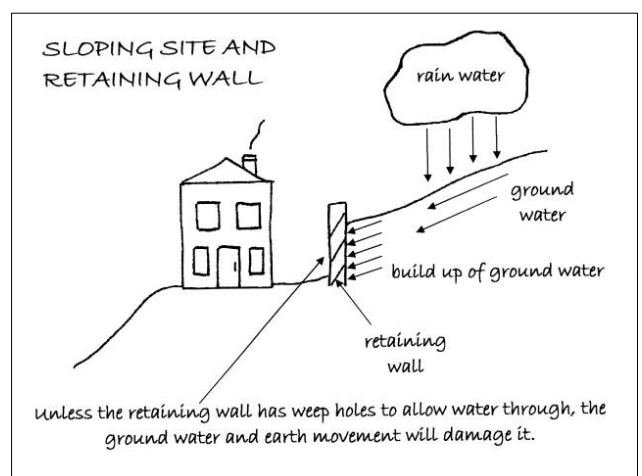
Action Required: Provide a defined route for the surface water.



Retaining Wall and Field Water

There is a retaining wall holding back the adjoining field which would benefit from having some weep holes cut into it or cleared if they are already there, to help direct water which is coming from the field.

Action Required: Clear weep holes to provide a defined route for the water to discharge.



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Contact the farmer who owns the field to ascertain whether there are land drains within it.

Seasonal Weather Conditions and the recent wet weather

We believe that there is a seasonal problem with regard to the increased rainfall which we had during the autumn, winter and spring months and this year we believe there may have been a higher than average rainfall (although we haven't checked this from talking to the previous owner with regard to their 20 odd years of occupation, they advised that they rarely came across similar problems). The rain water is passing through the adjoining field and through the sub strata on its way to the nearby river and tracking along the easiest route (as this is what water does), the easiest route is likely to be alongside your drains and also around your foundations. We would refer you to the flood maps available from the Environmental Agency web site (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>).

Action Required: Monitor the height of the well / sump pump. Also ask the previous owner to return and show them the problems which you are encountering to see if they are similar to what they may have encountered.

The Well

The well that you showed us within your garage appears to be relatively new. Based upon the brick work it looks to have possibly been constructed in the last 40 years. We also noted with interest the pipe work set within the well. It may also be a sump or storage area for water draining from the adjoining fields or it may just be a repaired original well.



The Well

Action Required: Speak to the local farmer to see if he has a recollection of the well. Also check local web sites to see if any residents are aware of it, if you wish to publicise the matter.

Render bridging the Damp Proof Course

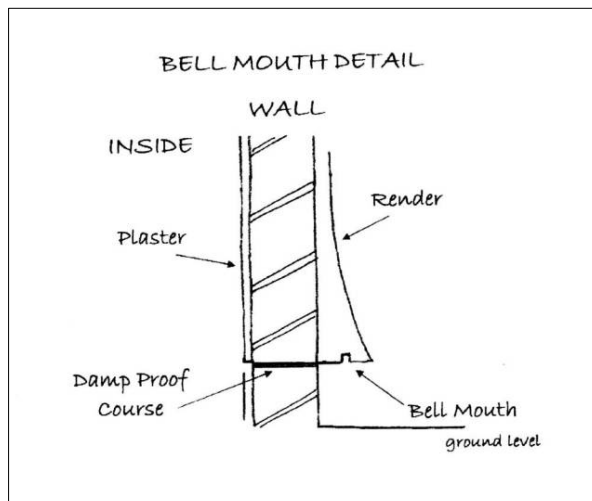
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Assuming that the wall construction does have a satisfactory damp proof course, the render on the outside of the property is currently bridging the damp proof course. As well as the detailing to the base of it (meaning that any rain water discharges against the base of the property), this is in addition to what we would term as “the pressurised water” coming from the adjoining field. The combination of the two, we believe is leading to the rising damp that is just visible internally and detectable.



Action Required: Add a Bell Mouth

EFFECT:

Visual Effect

In one respect the visual effect of the additional water together with the various other points which we have mentioned are relatively minor. The electronic damp meter readings however paint a different picture of dampness throughout the property.



Wall paper coming away from the wall being one of the visual signs of dampness

What cannot be seen

Our greater concern would be as to what cannot be seen. This is how the water is affecting the property underneath i.e. the foundations, floor slab and drainage system as well as the dampness in the walls.

Recommendations:

In addition to the “action required” which we have highlighted at the beginning of the executive summary:

Auger Sample / Bore Hole Testing

We would recommend auger sample / borehole testing and exposure of foundations. This is both to establish the type of foundations and the condition.

Anticipated Costs: £100 - £200 approximately

Closed Circuit TV Camera for inspection of the drains

We would recommend that you establish exactly where your existing drains are, and their condition for several reasons. In this type of soil drains can be affected by general movements of the sub soil causing them to leak. We also need to establish that they are actually draining away rather than entering the ground. It would also be a good idea to establish where the drains run, and whether their condition is satisfactory or whether they are lined or repaired as necessary to make them satisfactory. We would then recommend the addition of a French drain.

Anticipated Costs: £300 approximately (depending upon length of drain)

Other Costs:

Weep Holes to Boundary Wall

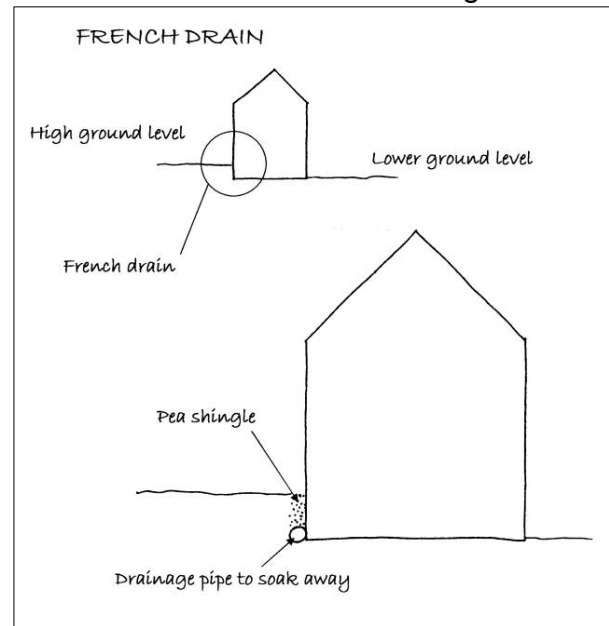
We have already recommended that weep holes are made or opened up to the rear boundary wall and also a defined path for the travelling water needs to be added to the pavement.

Anticipated Costs: £100 - £200 approximately

Some of these items are DIY type projects if you are that way inclined / or have the time available.

French Drain

Once the test has been carried out, we would recommend the adding of a French drain to the rear of the property which then feeds into the drainage run. Please note appendices and our article on French Drains becoming French Ponds!



Location of new French gully. This looks to have been concreted over. Ironically a flower bed would have been more able to absorb the dampness



Location of new French gully. There looks to have been problems here in the past.

Further Investigations to the Wall

We believe that the render on the external of the property is bypassing the damp proof course (also known as bridging the damp proof course). Water is possibly coming in via a filled cavity. This of course is all assumption and we would therefore recommend opening up a section of the wall to establish (a) if there is a damp proof course present and (b) if the cavity is filled.

Anticipated Cost: Approximately in the region of £200 - £300 (for the Opening of the wall)

Finally we would say that this may be a seasonal problem, only occurring during extremes of weather, albeit that we do seem to be getting more extremes of weather (as I write it has been in the news that we are having the worst snow for 18 years!), we would say that it could be a characteristic of living in this age of property in this location, that you will get some dampness from time to time. As you are aware it appears relatively minor.

CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

External

Chimneys:	Rendered chimneys.
Main Roof:	Pitched and clad in slate.
Gutters and Downpipes:	Plastic.
Soil and Vent Pipe:	Plastic with some remaining cast iron.
Walls:	Painted render with a rough cast finish. Cavity construction identified within the roof space.
External Detailing:	Double glazed plastic windows with trickle vents.
Foundations:	Not inspected and known. We would take an educated guess that they are either a step brick foundation or concrete raft.

Internal

Ceilings:	Lath and Plaster (assumed)
Walls	Believed to be a mixture of the original lime plaster with either gypsum plaster replacement or a skim coat (assumed)
Floors: Ground Floor:	Solid underfoot. Assumed concrete
First Floor:	Joist and Floorboards (assumed)

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

Time Line – A brief history of the structure

This is taken from our discussions with you and based upon many assumptions together with a general knowledge of this type of property.

1927	Property originally constructed. Possibly originally had a timber floor based upon the air vent on the left hand side of the property.
1960's to 1980's	Adding of felt to the underside of the roof.
1980's / 1990's	Replacement of windows with double glazed units.
1988 / 2008	Previous owner advised that there were no major alterations carried out in their time of occupation and there was no adverse effect to the decoration or running water to the best of his recollection.

INSPECTION

We carried out a visual inspection of the exterior of the property and the ground floor rooms and roof space and have also had sight of the original Home Buyers Report by Another Surveyors and Estate Agents and we have also spoken with the surveyor who carried out the work. As an aside it is debateable whether a Homebuyer should have been recommended to you on this property. We would have recommended a Structural Survey (now known as a Building Survey). We also had sight of a damp proof report by Dampness Company Limited. We have not however contacted them.

We have had an informal telephone discussion with the previous owner of the property. We carried out basic range testing aided by yourself and electronic damp meter testing using a Protimeter and Gann Hydromette.

SURVEY FINDINGS

In addition to the items identified relating to the dampness in the walls there are other remedial items listed below which we have commented upon as we feel it would help you to maintain your property (please note that this is not an exhaustive list as we have not carried out a structural / building survey upon the property).

High Level Work

This is work which is likely to need scaffolding. Considering all of the work which you have to carry out at high level, it may well be worth you purchasing a tower scaffolding or some type of safe platform upon which your builders can work.

Chimneys, Flashings and Roofs

We believe that some of your chimneys may need repointing to stop the dampness getting into the property (known as falling dampness as opposed to rising damp). It is also worth checking the flashings and the roof slates at the same time.



Close up of the Flashing



Close up of the defective brickwork to the top of the chimney

Roofs to the Bay Windows

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The roofs to the bay windows should be checked.



Close up of the Bay Window Roof

Gutters

We would recommend that leaf protection is added to the gutters.



Leaves in a low level gutter

Walls

The Paintwork to the render acts as a protective rain coat. It is important therefore that the paintwork is kept in good condition. We noticed some hairline cracking which needs to be filled and repainted with an appropriate paint (by this we mean one which allows the render to breathe and dissipate any dampness)

We can see areas where the rendering has been repaired. Therefore you are likely to have the mixture of old lime based render and modern cement based render (we cannot be certain without samples being taken). Older render will need periodic repair.

Insulation

We discussed the pros and cons of adding insulation to an older property. One of the main concerns is that the cavity wall ties rust. We would recommend that this is tested before any work is carried out, although the one wall tie which we could see in the roof space, looked to be in a good condition considering its age.

There are all sorts of arguments as to whether a cavity should be filled with insulation as the lack of an air gap between the walls then reduces the

ability of the wall to dissipate any dampness which could come into it and interstitial condensation can occur aswell. We would however recommend the insulating of the roof, providing it is suitably ventilated.

Drains

It would be interesting to know where the drains to the front of the property run and also why there appears to be a high level of water in them, other than the explanation which we discussed in that there are traps in them, which is most unusual for rainwater.



Neither of the brick side or the concrete haunching of the manholes look to have been affected

SUMMARY UPON REFLECTION

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

Unfortunately further investigation needs to be carried out to ascertain the exact cause of the dampness however we feel that we have made reasonable assumptions based upon the visual evidence. We feel that without these further investigations a French Drain will probably suffice for most situations apart from the most extremes of weather. We have included within the Appendices detailed information regarding French drains to ensure they are installed correctly.

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.

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LIMITATIONS

Specific Defects Report

1. Conditions of Engagement

Please note: references to the masculine include, where appropriate, the feminine.

Subject to express agreement to the contrary (which in this particular case has been none) and any agreed amendments/additions (of which in this particular case there have been none), the terms on which the Surveyor will undertake the Specific Defects Report are set out below.

Based upon a visual inspection as defined below the Surveyor will advise the Client by means of a written report as to his opinion of the visible condition and state of repair of the specific problem or problems only. In this instance upon the dampness in the property.

2. The Inspection

a) Accessibility and Voids

The Surveyor will base this report on a visual inspection and accordingly its scope is limited. It does not include an inspection of those areas, which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible. Our visual inspection will relate to the specific defects shown to us only.

b) Floors

We have not opened up the floor structure. We have only carried out a visual inspection and any conclusions will be based upon our best assumptions. We can take core samples of the floor if so required at an additional fee.

c) Roofs

The surveyor did inspect the roof, albeit not for the purposes of reporting on the dampness.

d) Boundaries, Grounds and Outbuildings

A cursory inspection has been made of the boundaries, grounds and outbuildings.

e) Services

No services inspected.

f) Areas not inspected

The Surveyor will have only inspected those areas identified within the report. His report will be based upon possible or probable defects based upon what he has seen together with his knowledge of that type of structure. If you feel that any further areas need inspection then please advise us immediately.

g) Specific Defects Report

As this is a report upon a Specific Defect we do not offer any comment or guidance upon reactive maintenance and/or planned or routine maintenance items.

h) Whilst we have used reasonable skill and care in preparing this report, it should be appreciated that the Chartered Surveyors cannot offer any guarantee that the property will be free from future defects or that existing defects will not suffer from further deterioration;

3. Deleterious and Hazardous materials

- a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in the Report, the Surveyor will assume that no deleterious or hazardous materials or techniques have been used in the construction of the property. However the Surveyor will advise in the report if in his view there is a likelihood that high alumina cement (HAC) concrete has been used in the construction and that in such cases specific enquiries should be made or tests carried out by a specialist.

4. Contamination

The Surveyor will not comment upon the existence of contamination as this can only be established by appropriate specialists. Where, from his local knowledge or the inspection he considers that contamination might be a problem he should advise as to the importance of obtaining a report from an appropriate specialist.

5. Consents, Approvals and Searches

- a) The Surveyor will assume that the property is not subject to any unusual or especially onerous restrictions or covenants which apply to the structure or affect the reasonable enjoyment of the property.
- b) The Surveyor will assume that all bye-laws, Building Regulations and other consents required have been obtained.
- c) The Surveyor will assume that the property is unaffected by any matters which would be revealed by a Local Search and replies to the usual enquiries or by a Statutory Notice and that neither the property nor its condition its use or intended use is or will be unlawful.

6. Fees and Expenses

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The Client will pay the Surveyor the agreed fee for the Report and any expressly agreed disbursements in addition.

7. Restrictions on Disclosures

- a) This report is for the sole use of the Client in connection with the property and is limited to the current brief. No responsibility is accepted by the Chartered Surveyors if used outside these terms.
- b) Should any disputes arise they will be dealt with and settled under English law;
- c) This report does not fall under the Third Parties Rights Act.

8. Safe Working Practices

The Surveyor will follow the guidance given in Surveying Safely issued by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

9. Weather

It was a cold winter's day with the odd light shower at the time of our visit, which limited our inspection.

APPENDIX 1

FRENCH DRAINS

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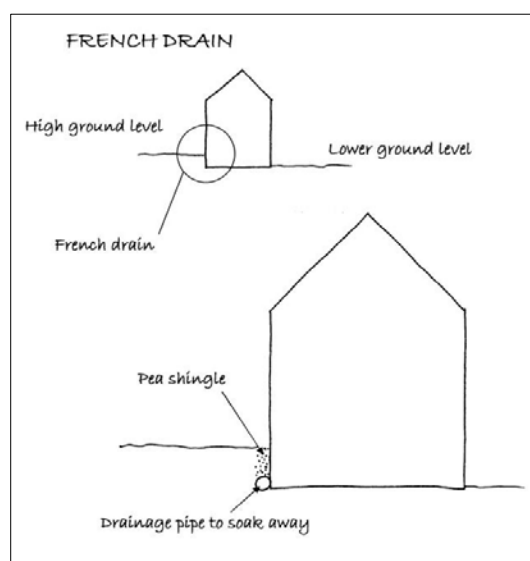
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Using a French Drain to resolve a Damp Problem

We are finding where we are asked to look at damp problems in general (i.e. damp walls and floors) that commonly it is due to the external ground level being higher than the internal ground level. It could also be that air bricks have been blocked, or simply paving slabs, decking or briquettes have been used to form a patio area which then discharges any rainwater against the building. Quite often the solution is to add a French drain. Whilst French drains are quite simple and are basically nothing more than trenches filled with gravel (although there is a little bit more to them as we will explain), they are almost a DIY job for most people and they are relatively easy to install and are for the most part low cost. You do however need some care and attention when installing them. You could install what we have heard referred to as the “French pond”!

What use is a French Drain?

A French drain is a trench of approximately 6” or 150mm wide (or the width of your spade), approximately twice the depth (i.e. 12” or 300mm). In most cases this will suffice however where there is a large amount of ground water, you may wish to make the trench wider and deeper. A French drain acts as an area where water soaks away quickly. We often recommend them close to the building and not next to the building as this helps to reduce the ground level and it will take any water that is directed at that area away (for example, as mentioned, where a patio has been placed which aims any rainwater to part of the wall). As mentioned, whilst a French drain is a DIY job it does need some understanding of how it works.



French Drains must be on a slope

The pipe that is at the base of a French drain should be perforated or as we did years ago for land drains, there should be gaps between each pipe which should be set onto a bed of firm ground and the pipes should be on a fall to the drain. Whilst you should be able to ensure that there is enough fall by sight, we always like the idea of rolling a marble from one end to the other! You will then need to place the pipes down and fill the trench with 0.5” (7.5mm) to 1” (15mm) sized gravel. You can leave it at that, or in addition you can cover this with sand and then turf over it. This is how a basic French drain is carried out.

The French Drain System which we would recommend

The French drain system which we would recommend would be as described although we would add to the base an inch or two of gravel onto which the perforated drainage pipe would rest (the drainage pipe should be 4” (100mm) to 6” (150mm). We would then wrap around that drainage pipe a filter fabric. This is to stop the holes in the perforated pipe from blocking up! We would then add gravel around this and further fill with gravel. In addition to this, we would add a silt trap. This is added in the run of the pipe and is very similar to a road gully (not that this is of much use if you don’t understand how a road gully works!). The silt trap is a rectangular box with a pipe opening at each end. The drain water passes into this. Any particles sink to the bottom of the box and then the water travels on to the other side of the box, enabling it to feed into a drain. These are usually made of glass reinforced polyester (it being available in this form since the mid 1980’s) and then normally reinforced with a steel frame for additional strength and bedded in concrete.

The French Pond!

French drains will over time clog up, which is why we recommend using a filter fabric however even with this, they will eventually clog up. Unfortunately there is no Dyno Rod equivalent and it is normally fine sand organic matter or clay which clogs up the French drain. In this case it will have to be dug up and the pipe work will require cleaning (or it may be quicker to just replace it) adding a filter fabric and refilling the gravel.