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# TREVOR A. HARLING

DipConsHistEnv(RICS) I.C.O.B. C.S.R.T. A.Inst.S.S.E. M.I.W.Sc

**SPECIALIST INDEPENDENT SURVEYOR OF DAMP, STRUCTURAL TIMBER AND BUILDING FABRIC**

62 Greens Lane, Helmshore, Rossendale, Lancs BB4 4EX
Tel: 07799 436973
Email: trevor@harlingsurveyor.co.uk

PCA Property Care
Membership No. 5709

| NAME AND ADDRESS OF CLIENT | ADDRESS OF PROPERTY TO BE SURVEYED |
|---|---|
| MR. & MRS. JOHN COOLEY<br>16 SKIPTON ROAD<br>BARNOLDWICK<br>BB18 6PX | THE DOWER HOUSE<br>PARK ROAD<br>GISBURN<br>CLITHEROE<br>BB7 4HT |

## Survey/Inspection Report

**TYPE OF SURVEY/INSPECTION REQUESTED**

1. To inspect all the walls that are in contact with the ground for the presence of rising damp but not restricted to that of rising damp i.e. penetrating damp, water damage and condensation where accessible and unconcealed.

2. To inspect all the structural timbers throughout the property for fungal decay and/or active wood borer infestation or other significant defects where accessible and unconcealed.

3. To inspect for associated defects.

**DATE SURVEY UNDERTAKEN**

10th December 2015

**ORIENTATION**

From Park Road as facing the property front to rear left to right

**SURVEY REQUEST**

Survey charge: £345.00
Survey Request received from Mr. Philip Cottier of Sunderland Peacock & Associates on the 23rd November 2015

**ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS**

Arranged through MSW Hewetsons Estate Agents, Clitheroe

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY**

Grade II listed late 18th Century Ashlar sandstone built detached property with 2 No. two storey canted bay windows to the façade; other elevations are fully rough cast rendered.

The internal ground floors are of solid construction – their composition is unknown.

The property sits under a duo pitched and rear hip roof with a slate cladding.

The property was unoccupied and unfurnished at the time of the inspection.

## LIMITATIONS/RESTRICTIONS OF SURVEY

Limitations

The survey/inspection was limited to those areas/items indicated in the type of survey/inspection requested section only. No other areas/items were inspected or requested for inspection.

Under the terms of my insurance policy I cannot disturb fitted carpets/laminate flooring or break open fastened hatches as this does not come within the scope of the survey unless written permission has been obtained prior to the survey.

Restrictions – these are the areas/items that I could not access to inspect

1. Roof Timbers
   I was unable to inspect all the roof timbers and ceiling rafters from within the roof void due to the presence of deep insulation overlaying the ceilings restricting safe movement.

2. First Floor Structural Timbers
   I was unable to access and inspect closely all the timber floor surfaces due to fitted carpets and underlay. The underlay had adhered itself to the floors to some areas; the carpets were tearing whilst being lifted and some carpets were tack nailed down.

3. Ground Floor Damp Inspection – kitchen area
   I was unable to obtain moisture content readings from the walls concealed behind the kitchen base units; I could not remove the plinth boards.

## EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS

A visual inspection was undertaken to all the elevations and a number of defects were observed and they are listed below:

1. The rough cast render is directly in contact with the ground. The render appears to be cement rich and this would prevent any evaporation of moisture, in particular at low level; damp/moisture entering the wall structure would be forced higher to evaporate.
   The render may be 'drawing' moisture from the ground.

2. Ground/path levels to the left gable and rear are high in relation to the internal floor position.

3. High ground levels to the immediate left of the boiler room between the rear wall of the store area and greenhouse/boiler room dividing wall.

4. Planters to the rear main external wall to the right of the pantry are holding damp/wet soil against the rear elevation.

## EXTERNAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. I would recommend that the cement rich rough cast render coat is cut back from the ground to one metre and replaced like for like using a lime based render (NHL5) the replacement rough cast render ideally should be terminated 150mm above the ground levels to further allow evaporation of moisture at low level. The patina of the new rough cast render could be, if desired, toned down using a natural dye.

2. Ideally reduce ground levels where feasible or maintain them at their present levels; avoid any further increase in height. Consider if allowed, the removal of the planters to the rear elevation.

**INTERNAL OBSERVATIONS**

Structural Roof Timbers

Access to the roof void areas was gained from the first floor landing ceiling via a drop down loft ladder adjacent the master bedroom and through a ceiling hatch located adjacent the far right staircase.

The roof void area above the front bedrooms 1-3 from the left and the bathroom, landing and rear master bedroom were accessed via the loft type ladder. Where safe and unconcealed, the timbers were individually inspected for fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects. The roof over the bedrooms, bathroom and landing areas is a mix of traditional truss construction and square edged timbers; the 2 No. trusses are of oak.
Purlins to the front right hand section of the roof structure are of oak.

The roof timbers over the master bedroom area are of rough square edge timbers with hip timbers and purlins at 3rd centres. The individually inspected timbers were observed to be free from fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects to their exposed surfaces.

Areas of inactive historic wood borer infestation damage was observed to a number of the large dimensioned timbers such as purlins and elements of the trusses mainly to the wane element. It was noted during the inspection that there is rainwater ingress staining to the wall structure that divides the second bedroom (from the left front) and the 3rd bedroom front (from the left). Water could be seen at low level running out from the wall, this may be a chimney breast as indicated in the report. Deep insulation over the ceiling rafters restricted safe movement and prevented close inspection.

Far Right Ceiling Hatch Access
Access to the roof void area above the far right front bedroom stairs and landing area.
The roof is of traditional construction - ridge double purlin and common spar.
All the accessible and unconcealed timbers were individually inspected for fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects. The individually inspected timbers were observed to be free from fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects.

There is inactive historic wood borer damage to the undersides of the purlin timbers and sporadically to the common spars, mainly to the wane element.

Ventilation was found to be poor to the roof void areas and a number of surface readings obtained from individual timbers displayed 17-21% moisture content.

First Floor Structural Timbers – See the restrictions section

Where the fitted carpets could be lifted without damage, they were lifted away from external walls to expose representative areas of floor boarding, in particular around toilets, basins and shower areas at various locations. The exposed floor boarding at the various locations was closely inspected for fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects. The exposed floor boarding and areas of timber block flooring were observed to be free from fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects.

*Please be aware:*
*The condition of structural and other timbers that are concealed from inspection cannot be commented upon or assumed, defects may be present and only observed upon exposure.*

Far Right Staircase Structure – First Floor to Ground

Where accessible and unconcealed, the exposed elements of the staircase structure were closely inspected for fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects. The exposed elements of the staircase structure were observed to be free from fungal decay, active wood borer infestation or other significant defects.

Structural Roof Timbers
Store and Washroom Area and Boiler Room Area

No access was available to the timbers above the store and washroom area.
We were only able to view the roof timbers of the boiler room due to their inaccessibility. Water staining is visible to the rear wall plate and spar feet and decay is suspected. Further inspection is required, likely from a tower scaffold.

Ground Floor Walls – Damp Inspection
An initial visual inspection was undertaken to all the accessible and unconcealed ground floor walls.
Damp staining and salt damaged plaster was observed at a number of sporadic locations throughout the ground floor areas.
Plaster to the store and washroom area had been taken down and was in contact with the solid floor, likely 'drawing' up moisture from a damp solid floor.

With the aid of an electronic moisture meter calibrated for masonry, wall plaster, patterns of readings were taken from all the accessible and unconcealed wall areas. The readings were taken at increments vertically up the walls from and including the skirting boards.

The readings obtained from the profiling techniques indicated that of rising damp at low level to most of the affected walls and sporadically located throughout the ground floor areas, further suggested by the sharp cut off between wet and dry at the head of the rise.

The affected areas are indicated on the floor plan provided.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Close inspection of the roofing timbers did not reveal any physical or visual evidence of active wood borer infestation; there is evidence of historic wood borer damage to the wane element of some large dimensioned timbers.

High/elevated moisture content readings were obtained from the surfaces of randomly selected timbers throughout the roof void areas enough to give a general picture of the overall moisture content of the timbers. A constantly high moisture content can lead to softening of the timber to a degree that would allow fungal decay to become established or that of wood borer infestation.

Ceiling of Roof Void (Main is Insulated)
Most types of quilt insulation allows moisture laden air to travel through but not dry warm air, thus a build-up of moisture laden air occurs, in particular during the winter months.

I could not justify recommending any preservative treatments be undertaken but would urge that consideration is given to ventilating the roof voids adequately to dilute/control the amount of moisture laden air within the roof voids. The replacement of the existing insulation by a more effective type of insulation that does not allow warm moisture laden air to freely rise into the roof void area should be considered.

Effective humidity controlled extraction fans installed to areas i.e. shower/bathroom that create moisture laden air can be very effective in discharging and controlling moisture laden air.

Where I was able to lift the floor coverings at first floor locations, no visual or physical evidence of the usual type of defects (wood borer and fungal decay) was observed. It was not a close inspection but did provide a limited overview of the likely overall condition of the first floor suspended timber floors.

I make no recommendations regarding preservative treatments.

The inspection of the ground floor walls for the presence of rising damp by electronic instrumental and visual means did reveal that of low level rising damp sporadically located throughout the ground floor areas. Dampness was found affecting the external wall areas and is likely exaggerated by the presence of the cement rich rough cast render to the external faces of the walls trapping moisture within the wall structure and preventing an evaporation of moisture at low level externally as the render has been taken down to and is in contact with the ground.

Internally there is a mix of wall plaster materials from traditional lime to cement rich render and gypsum type plasters. It was noted to the internal wall areas that where the floor levels increased in height to above those adjacent, the moisture content of the encompassing walls increased. This is likely due to the composition of the floor having no barrier to prevent moisture from the ground rising into the floor from the earth. Lateral damp issues were noted to the wall area that divides the sitting room from the dining room.

As this is a building constructed using traditional techniques and materials, the introduction of modern damp proofing techniques and materials can cause more damage and accelerate deterioration of the fabric unseen behind dense renders.

INTERNAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Structural Roof Timbers

No recommendations regarding preservative treatments.

I would recommend that the roof voids are effectively ventilated.

I would recommend that the existing insulation is removed and replaced using a material that does not allow the passage of moisture laden air into the roof void.

First Floor Structural Timbers

No recommendations regarding preservative treatments.

I would recommend that consideration is given to the feasibility of installing humidity controlled extraction fans to the areas that produce warm moisture laden air to rapidly discharge warm moisture laden air from the building.

Damp Proof Course Installation

After consideration I could only advise that the only type of damp proof course I would install would be an electro osmosis type. This could either be installed from the outside once the rough cast render is removed or internally once the damp affected areas of plaster are removed along with the skirting boards to allow installation (only remove the visually damp and disrupted areas of wall plaster).

Re-plastering

Ideally, this should be undertaken using a natural lime product (likely NHL 3.5) depending on the strength of the background material, in particular to external wall areas. If not considered practical to use traditional lime plaster, consider/investigate the use of Limelite or Tilcon Hardwall incorporating a water proofer (i.e. Brunolene PS).

Where the floor level of one room is higher than the adjacent floor, a cementitious tanking render can be used on the wall face where the floor is lower to the height of the higher floor level to prevent lateral damp and decay to skirting boards.

It is likely that two osmosis systems will be required to provide effective protection and density of the anode numbers.

**The budget cost for this type of installation will be in the region of £55.00-£65.00 per linear metre installed.**

The area/extent of the installation is indicated on the floor plan provided.

Costings for the undertaking of lime plastering and the rough cast render will have to be obtained from an experienced lime plastering contractor.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC LIST

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Condition of central chimney stack – water staining in the roof void |
| 2. | External wall above the breakfast room - internal high level damp staining and blocked guttering |
| 3. | Lower roof abutting the breakfast room – internal high level damp staining |
| 4. | Truss and roof configuration – far left area |
| 5. | Truss and roof configuration – far left area |
| 6. | Roof configuration – middle area |
| 7. | Roof configuration -- middle area |
| 8. | Roof configuration – middle area |
| 9. | Insulation over ceiling rafters |
| 10. | Rainwater staining – chimney breast middle area |
| 11 | Rainwater ingress – chimney breast middle area |
| 12. | Roof configuration over the master bedroom |
| 13. | Roof configuration over the master bedroom |
| 14. | Far right roof void area |
| 15. | Historic inactive wood borer damage – rear mid purlin |
| 16. | Historic inactive wood borer damage – rear mid purlin |
| 17. | Exposed flooring – first floor |
| 18. | Exposed flooring – first floor |
| 19. | Exposed flooring – first floor |
| 20. | Exposed flooring – first floor |
| 21. | Exposed flooring – first floor |
| 22. | Damp staining below the chimney breast in the roof void |
| 23 | Damp staining – ground floor |
| 24. | Damp staining – ground floor |
| 25. | Damp staining – sitting room chimney breast |
| 26. | Damp staining – ground floor |
| 27. | Damp staining – ground floor |
| 28. | Damp staining and disruption to wall finishes |
| 29. | Damp staining and disruption to wall finishes |
| 30. | Damp staining and disruption to wall finishes |
| 31. | Planter to the rear elevation |

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Survey Address:
The Dower House, Gisburn

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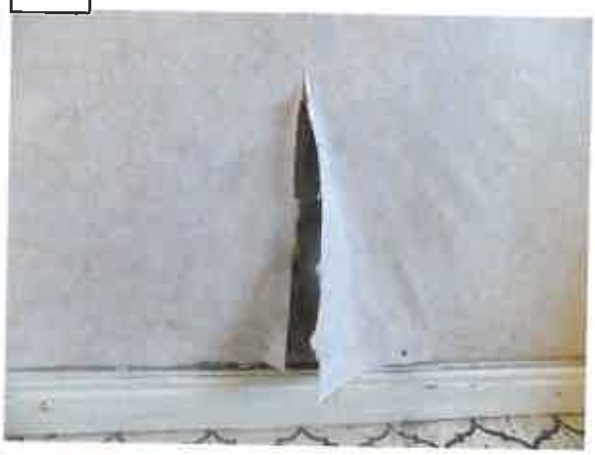

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Please feel free to contact me with any queries you may have regarding this report.

Trevor A. Harling

**DipConsHistEnv(RICS), I.C.I.O.B. C.S.R.T. A. Inst.S.S.E. M.I.W.Sc**
**Independent Specialist Surveyor**

**PARTY WALL ACT 1996 (terraced and semi detached properties only)**

Under the terms of the Party Wall Act 1996, if any work is indicated to the party wall, you are obliged to inform and seek permissions from neighbours to commence work on the party wall.

Information can be obtained from the Government website: www.gov.uk/party-wall-etc-act-1996-guidance

**GROUND FLOOR SKETCH PLAN – Not to Scale**
**The Dower House, Park Road, Gisburn**