



# DowlingDodd

Chartered Surveyors

## BUILDING SURVEY

Property Address:

Example Composite Cottage  
Made Up Road  
Truro  
TR1 2SQ



Report Prepared By:

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### Client Name & Address:

Mr & Mrs H Buyer

The Old Home  
Moving From Lane  
Truro  
TR1 2SQ

### Date of Inspection:

11<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Date of Report

14<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Weather

During the course of my inspection the weather was fine, dry, bright and warm.

## SCOPE OF INSTRUCTIONS

This is a report on the construction and condition of the above mid terraced two storey cottage following my survey carried out in accordance with your instructions and as confirmed in our letter to you of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010, together with terms and conditions, copies of which are annexed to this Report.

This report is for the private and confidential use of our clients, Mr & Mrs H Buyer for whom the report is undertaken and should not be reproduced in whole or part or relied upon by third parties for any use without the express written authority of DowlingDodd Chartered Surveyors.

I have provided two copies of this report, as many clients find it useful to forward a copy on to their legal adviser.

## LIMITATIONS OF INSPECTION

The cottage is currently occupied and fully furnished with closely fitted carpets and floor coverings laid throughout. The Vendor was present for a short time although during most of my Survey I was unaccompanied.

My inspection covered all those parts of the building that could be seen either from ground level internally and externally.

I used binoculars to examine roof slopes and I also used ladders to gain access to the rear valleys and roof sections and roof spaces. A damp test meter was used internally.

Many parts of a building such as foundations and sub-floor areas are concealed during the course of construction and these are not disturbed. It follows that for practical reasons I have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure that were covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I am therefore unable to report that any such part of the building is free from defect.

Where a property is occupied and fully furnished and has floors covered, this clearly limits the inspection possible particularly of floor surfaces. Tests were taken at random with a moisture meter through some floor areas and fitted carpets that could not be lifted. If you are able to arrange for furnishings to be moved and all floors exposed at a later time I will be more than happy to make a return inspection of such areas.

As far as services are concerned, my inspection was limited to a superficial one and in the absence of any specific tests no warranty can be given as to their condition, design or efficiency.

The suitability of the main supply and acceptability of installations connected to them is something on which the water and electricity authorities have the final word.

Underground pipework serving the drainage system where buried obviously cannot be inspected and commented upon.

I have used digital photographs to illustrate my comments in the report and in some cases these photographs have been digitally enhanced for clarity and some of the pictures are taken using a wide angled lens, which may cause some distortion of images.

In the report I may refer to approximate time scales for repair work. For your guidance and for avoidance of doubt, my definition of these terms is as follows:

<b>Short Term</b>		<b>Within one/two years</b>
<b>Medium Term</b>	-	<b>Two to five years</b>
<b>Long Term</b>	-	<b>Five to ten years +</b>

In drafting this report my comments have been limited to more material matters and in particular I have not listed individual items such as a slightly loose door or window fittings or minor decorative blemishes which have no structural significance.

## 2 DESCRIPTION

### TYPE AND AGE

Example Cottage is a building which probably has origins back at least to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and at one stage, I understand, formed part of the Basset Estate, The Bassets being the major landholder in the area.

For ease of reference, I am going to describe the main entrance as having a westerly aspect.

The original parts of the building comprised what is now the small sitting room/snug and part of the dining room and rooms above. These areas form what was originally a relatively modest cottage.

The kitchen and breakfast room to the north may have been built at around the same time, although probably as attached outbuildings.

The property then appears to have been extended in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, although whether these extensions were carried out at the same time, I have been unable to establish.

These comprise what are now the entrance hall and main lounge with rooms above, and also the extension to the dining room and bedroom above.

The present owners, I believe, acquired the property in the early 1990's and in 1994, demolished the south-western reception room and room above and completely re-built this part of the building.

The reason for this, I understand, was that the concrete blocks from which this part of the building was constructed, were starting to crumble and deteriorate. Around this time, they also re-slatted most of the roof slopes and replaced some guttering and external joinery.

Most recently in the last 4/5 years, as a result of a Concrete Screening Test Report revealing defects in the early concrete parts of the building, appropriate remedial repair work was carried out by way of removing and replacing defective concrete as I will explain later.

In the past, the property has been used as a small farm, although most of the land has now been sold off separately, a range of old farm buildings remain along the northern side of the house.

### COUNCIL TAX BAND

For Council Tax purposes the property is placed in Band F. The Billing Authority is Cornwall; Reference No: 12259549532000.

### ACCOMMODATION

#### Ground Floor

Porch, lounge, kitchen/dining room.

#### First Floor:

Landing, 3 bedrooms, bathroom and WC.

## EXTERNAL

In total the ground including the small paddock to the rear I estimate extends to just less than 1 acre.

The site slopes in a southerly direction with a parking area on the northern side and gardens to the south, west and east.

There is a two storey stone built barn; a newly constructed garage; an old outside WC and a timber shed within the paddock.

## ROADS

The access road is made and adopted by the Local Authority.

## TENURE

Freehold, this should be confirmed by your conveyancer.

## 3 LOCATION

### LOCATION

The cottage lies about a mile inland from the North Cornish Coast in a rural area, although there is a working farm immediately to the north.

There are no residential amenities in the immediate area, although Camborne, the nearest main town, is within some 12 miles distance or so and easy access is afforded onto the main A30 trunk road at the Camborne West interchange some two miles or so distance, Truro the county town and administrative centre of Cornwall is about 2 miles away.

Godrevy lies to the west, one of the prime surfing beaches in Cornwall and many spectacular cliff top walks are also to be enjoyed nearby.

## 4 EXTERNAL CONSTRUCTION AND CONDITION

### CHIMNEYS

To the south eastern side of the building is a quite substantial rendered chimney stack although the top five courses are of pointed brickwork.

It has one clay pot without a cowl and lead flashings appear to be provided at the base of the chimney to create a weatherproof seal where it breaks through the roof slope.

I recommend that a rain cap be fitted to the chimney pot to stop any rainwater running down into the flue.

The pointing to the brickwork is becoming a little worn and weathered and indeed on the south eastern side you can clearly see where one or two bricks are beginning to perish.

The render is also a little cracked and in fact a section of render on the north eastern side has fallen away. The render itself has been carried down to the surface of the tiles and therefore it is hard to judge the extent of leadwork.

Where render is carried down to the surface of the tiles in this manner it does increase the risk of water tracking up between the tiles and the render as a result of capillary action.

I recommend that some re-pointing now be carried out to the chimney and if individual bricks are found to be perished beyond repair then they should be replaced. A rain cap as I have said should be fitted and I also recommend that you consider having the render renewed and forming a proper bell cast at the base of the chimney over the leadwork. This should help ensure the chimney remains waterproof as possible to reduce the risk of dampness becoming a problem later.

You should note however that specialist access equipment will be needed and this could add to the cost.



## ROOFS

The roof coverings, have in the main, all been renewed in the early 1990s. The area over the utility and rear entrance, however, were not replaced.

All of the roof slopes are clad with natural slate, which is one of the most durable roofing materials and is made of thin layers of rock bonded together.

The longevity of a natural slate roof depends on a number of factors, including the quality of the slates that were used, the skill in which they were cut and laid, and the exposure of the building to the elements.

Slates themselves are held in place by nails through pre-drilled holes in their top edge and fixed onto timber battens laid across the roof surface. The first course of slates are laid and then the courses are built up towards the ridge or hip lines, ensuring there is a proper lap to create a weatherproof surface. The hip and ridges are then finished off with clay tiles, bedded in sand and cement mortar and the verges around the edge of the roofs are also pointed with sand and cement.

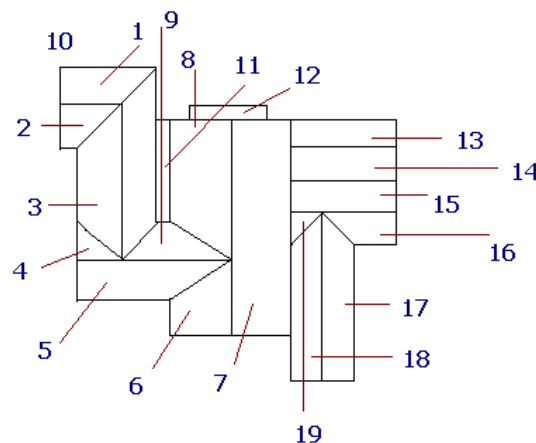
Prior to the roof being slated, the carcass of the roof was covered over with a layer of roofing felt. This serves a number of purposes. Firstly, it helps equalise air pressure externally and internally, consequently reducing the risk of slates lifting in strong winds. Its other function is to act as a second line of defence in the event of any water being blown under the slates.

Water is channelled down the roofing felt which should then be lapped into the gutters and taken away through the rainwater system.

What frequently happens after 15 or 20 years is that where the roofing felt is exposed and lapped into the gutters, it tends to perish. This means that in the event of water blowing back under the slates, instead of running into the gutters, it can drip behind fascia boards and lead to rot and decay and penetrate the top of the walls and eventually leading to dampness within the building.

This detail cannot be seen from ground level, but I would suggest that roofing felt is now starting to perish and in the immediate term, the bottom layer of roofing felt will need to be renewed.

I shall describe the individual roof slopes below and for ease of reference and in addition to photographs, the annotated sketch plan identifies individual slopes.



- 1) This is the west facing roof slope over the re-built section of the building. The slope is true, straight and uniform, with no indication of deflection or distortion. Hip and ridge tiles are reasonably well bedded, with proper hip irons provided at the bottom of the hip to stop tiles slipping. No evidence of slippage or significant damage was noted to the slates. The southern verge is pointed with sand and cement on top of the slate which is attached to the barge board; this sand and cement is adequately adhered at the present moment.



- 2) This is the east facing roof slope over the newly built section. Again the roof slope was true, straight and uniform, with no evidence of significant slippage or damage noted to the slates. Verges are adequately pointed with sand and cement and the valley at the junction of 2 and 3 is formed with lead with three lengths of lead sheeting to take up expansion or contraction that may occur and reduce the likelihood of lead splitting. The valley was clear and free of debris.



- 3) This is the south-facing roof slope. The surface of the roof was true, straight and uniform, no sign of any slippage or significant damage to slates, ridge tiles adequately bedded.



- 4) The west facing roof slope was true, straight and uniform, no significant slippage of slates was noted. Verges are pointed with sand and cement and in satisfactory repair. The lead valley between slopes 3 and 4 is in satisfactory condition and clear of debris, and joints are provided to take up expansion and contraction of the leadwork.



- 5) Again this slope is true, straight and uniform with no evidence of any significant damage or slippage to the slates. Verges pointed in sand and cement and in satisfactory condition. Slight rise in ridge tile corresponding to original roof line.



- 6) As with other slopes natural slate covered. The slope is uniform, true and straight, ridge tiles true and straight and adequately bedded. Verges pointed with sand and cement in satisfactory condition. No sign of slippage or deflection to the slates or roof surface. Valley clear of debris and joints are provided to the leadwork to take up expansion and contraction.



- 7) North-facing roof slope, again true, straight and uniform with no evidence of deflection or distortion, nor any significant damage to slates. Pointed verges in satisfactory repair.





- 8) No vantage point could be gained from ground level where this roof slope could be viewed. Condition of slates therefore cannot be judged, verges pointed in sand and cement in satisfactory repair. If you wish to confirm the condition of this roof slope then you will need to arrange for access equipment to be made available. I would then be happy to return and inspect.
- 9) West-facing roof slope clad with natural slate, no sign of significant slippage. Valley abutment with roof slope 8 could not be viewed, valley abutment with roof slope 10 appears satisfactory, with joints provided to the lead and visible sections of the valley were clear of debris.





- 10) North-facing roof slope over re-built section, again roof slope true, straight and uniform, hip and ridge tiles adequately bedded, no evidence of any significant slippage or damage to the slates.



- 11) This is a small section of flat bituminous felt roof, although unfortunately no vantage points could be gained at ground level whereby it could be inspected. If access equipment is made available I would be happy to revisit.

Flat roofs are made of three layers of mineralised felt laid onto timber decking, the joints being sealed with hot tar. The surface of the roof should be covered either with reflective chippings or reflective paint surface to prevent rapid expansion and contraction occurring, which can result in the felt splitting.

Flat roofs do have a limited life expectancy and can fail without notice; although internally there was no evidence of leaks, it is likely in the medium term at least replacement will be needed and you should budget for this.

- 12) This is a small pitched slate roof over entrance area. Proper lead flashings are formed at the abutment with the western wall of the building to create a weatherproof seal, although there is some slight evidence of cracking to the bell cast and patch repairs will be needed.



This roof is supported by a galvanised steel bracket fixed to the western wall of the building.



- 13) West-facing roof slope over the breakfast area clad with natural slate with clay roof tiles and lead details formed to its northern end where it abuts the flank wall of the main building. Damage to slates on the north-western corner will need to be repaired and felt where lapped into the gutters is starting to perish.



- 14) This roof surface and slates are in satisfactory condition, no sign of any slippage or damage and lead flashings formed at the abutment of the northern wall, some general deflection, however, noted to the roof surface where it follows the line of original timbers but are within acceptable tolerances.



Valley gutter between slopes 14 and 15 formed with bituminous felt run under slates. Some evidence of wear to the surface of the felt but internally there is no sign of any leaks. The valley is becoming quite congested towards the southern end and will need to be cleared. Being of bituminous felt, it is not going to have the same life expectancy as lead and replacement will be needed from time to time.



- 15) This is the west-facing roof slope over kitchen incorporating a Velux window. Slates in satisfactory condition, no sign of any significant slippage. Leadwork found at abutment with chimney breast in satisfactory repair. Again some slight deflection noted to the surface of the roof where follows original roofline.



- 16) East-facing roof slope over kitchen clad with natural slate, reasonably uniform with no sign of slippage or damage to the slates.



- 17) Natural slate roof over utility area, north-facing. This is an older slate roof which was not recovered at the same time as the other slopes. One or two cracked broken and slipped slates and some weathering noted to ridge tiles.



The valley abutment with roof slope 16 formed with lead. Joints provided to take up expansion, although pointing to the sides of the valley is starting to wear and come loose, re-pointing required.



The valley is becoming quite choked and congested, particularly bottom edge, the area will need to be cleared of debris; otherwise damp penetration is going to occur.



- 18) An older slate roof over the utility area, south-facing. One or two cracked broken slipped slates, roof slope generally uniform.



- 19) Older natural slate roof in satisfactory repair with valley at abutment with roof slope 18. Valley formed with lead, generally in satisfactory condition, however, becoming congested and choked towards its bottom edge. Further valley gutter then between roof slope 18 and the wall of the building lined with lead; again needs to be cleared and boards removed so that water can discharge freely, but internally at the moment no sign of any leaks.



The principal roof slopes I consider are in serviceable repair and should continue to function adequately for many years yet to come. Normal maintenance will, however, be needed from time to time. Any slates which become dislodged, split or damaged will obviously need to be replaced and repaired. Ridge tiles and verges are likely to need re-pointing in time and lead valleys obviously need to be kept clear of debris.

As I said earlier, the bottom layer of roofing felt will need renewal.

The flat felt roof could not be seen from ground level, but I would anticipate replacement sooner rather than later.

The older slate roofs I consider are serviceable and should continue to be so subject to routine maintenance and repair. The felt lined valley on the northern side will, however, perish and fail in time, in the short term it needs to be cleared, but in the longer term replacement will probably be required.

## RAINWATER GOODS

On the north eastern side of the original building there are plastic gutters and these discharge into a metal hopper and metal downpipe and ultimately lead onto the ground.

Some realignment of the gutters is needed and the metal elements are obviously going to require frequent maintenance and decoration.

The north eastern roof to the extension also has plastic gutters and these flow in a south easterly direction connecting into the same hopper and downpipe.

On the south western side of the building, there are plastic gutters to the roof over the original building and to the extension. These both discharge via plastic downpipes onto the ground. Water from these downpipes then runs around the side of the building.

The gutters to the porch and shower room are also of plastic and these again discharge onto the path. Rainwater running along this path is routed via a plastic pipe under the hedge and out onto the pathway.



The gutters and downpipes are functioning correctly at the moment but you will need to keep them clear of leaves and debris at all times particularly during the autumn and winter months to prevent over spillage occurring.

Ideally downpipes should always lead into trapped gullies and then into a system of soakaways. It is not unusual however, in a rural setting such as this to find downpipes discharging directly onto the ground.

As long as the ground is fleeted away from the building so that water does not lie up against the walls saturating the ground and increasing the risk of dampness, this arrangement I consider is acceptable in this instance.

Plastic gutters do need maintenance from time to time. You will find that eventually the rubber seals to the joints will perish, leaks will occur and these will need to be replaced in the course of your routine maintenance plan.

## WALLS

The walls to the original part of the building measure up to 800mm in thickness and have a render finish. They are principally I consider of cob although there are areas of stonework such as the western wall of the ground floor bedroom, photographs taken during the modernisation works showed exposed stonework in this area.

Whether the remaining walls are entirely of cob or as it was very common in this area are of cob built off a stone plinth could only be confirmed by removing plaster and render finishes.

Many old cottages of this type are built therefore with a "plinth" of stonework off the ground sometimes to first floor level.

The stone walls are built of two courses of stonework in parallel with a central cavity arrangement in between. This cavity is then filled with smaller stones and rubble and larger stones are then set at regular intervals across the entire thickness of the wall to bond the two sides together. The walls will then have been built up in this manner bedded on a lime or clay based mortar.

Cob is one of the oldest known building materials and is made up of clay based soil which is mixed with straw or animal hair to bind it together and the cob is then piled up on itself to form the walls and trimmed as it dries. Cob can be clearly seen to the northern gable within the roof void as I will describe later.

Dealing firstly with the eastern elevation; the walls here measure some 800mm in thickness. There are three openings at ground floor level and three at first floor level and the walls have a rough cast sand and cement render finish with slate sills.



This elevation was true, straight and uniform; there is no sign of any significant bulging or movement which would give cause for concern.

There are however one or two areas where the render is hollow and has lost it's key.

This sand and cement render finish to the eastern elevation and indeed to the remaining stone and cob elevations is not original. A traditional finish with properties of this age and type would have been for lime based renders to have been used.

In many cases however this type of building has been re-rendered using sand and cement.

It is now widely accepted that traditional materials really should be used for old buildings particularly in terms of renders and mortars.

There are a number of practical reasons for this. Firstly, sand and cement mortars are much less flexible than lime based mortars and therefore more prone to cracking. They are also less porous than lime based mortars and as a result despite the fact that in many respects they can retard laterally penetrating dampness, any moisture which does penetrate behind the render cannot readily escape and the walls are therefore more susceptible to dampness in the longer term.

Lime based mortars however are more flexible and less prone to cracking and they are also more porous which although they do allow moisture to penetrate more readily, any moisture which does penetrate can much more readily evaporate.

It is also quite difficult in the longer term to ensure that sand and cement mortars retain their key and hollowness is invariably found as in this case.

I am not advocating the need to remove the render and re-plaster with lime render but in the longer term it is worth considering.

The southern elevation to the original building at ground floor level as measured between the hall and the lounge is of some 600mm in thickness but at first floor level it measures some 300mm in thickness and where it stands above the roof of the extension has a render finish.

The southern wall of the ground floor bedroom measures some 350mm in thickness and has a render finish.

This wall therefore is clearly of two different forms of construction at least; the area between the lounge and the hallway is of stone or cob, however the first floor section and the southern wall of the ground floor bedroom are I consider of blockwork.



The render finishes are reasonably uniform and there is no sign of any serious movement. There is some slight cracking however that has occurred above the bedroom window and the photographs which were shown me indicate that there was in fact a door in the position of the window originally and you can see where cracking has occurred where the doorway has been blocked up.

There is further slight cracking to the underside of the verge. This I do not consider is of any great significance but I suggest that the render crack be raked out and filled when you redecorate.



Again the old photographs show evidence of blockwork around what is now the doorway leading from the hallway into the lounge.

When I carried out my inspection of the roof void evidence of concrete blockwork to this southern gable was clearly apparent and it looks also that the roof pitch may have been lifted here slightly as below the exposed blockwork in the roof space is an area of rendered blockwork.



It is clear from the photographs that were shown to me that this wall pre-dates the extension which is why I concluded that it was an earlier alteration.

Whether it is of solid concrete block or cavity blockwork I simply cannot tell. The disadvantage of solid blockwork over cavity concrete blockwork is that it is more prone to laterally penetrating dampness due to the lack of any effective cavity. It also does not perform as well as cavity blockwork in terms of insulation and therefore at greater risk of condensation. Neither of these two shortcomings however was identified internally.

The most important and paramount matter to consider however is that as this wall as I suspect is of concrete blockwork, that it could well pre-date 1950.

Up until 1950 some concrete products manufactured locally could contain deleterious materials (Mundic). This is whereby the aggregate that was used to make the concrete was sourced from mine waste which contains minerals that can chemically react with the cement causing the cement to break down and the blocks to crumble.

The only way that it can be assessed whether or not pre 1950 concrete blocks contain such deleterious materials is to commission a Concrete Screening Test Report. This is whereby samples of the concrete are taken for examination by a Petrographer who will be able to indicate whether or not there is a risk of deleterious materials being present.

Before you purchase therefore unless it can be established that these walls are not of concrete blockwork or that they were built after 1950 then you must commission a Concrete Screening Test Report to comply with current RICS Guidance Notes.

The western wall of the ground floor bedroom is of some 500mm in thickness and is of stonework; photographs shown to me by the Vendor clearly indicate this although it has now been rendered with sand and cement. Again the walls here were true, straight and uniform there is only minor hairline render cracking that can be raked out and filled when you redecorate. However, I would have preferred to have seen this wall rendered with a lime based mortar.



The western elevation of the original section towards the northern end is again of stone or cob. This has a sand and cement render and once more I would have preferred to have seen lime based mortars used although the wall is true, straight and uniform with no indication of any significant cracking, movement or distortion.



The northern elevation of the original building measures up to 800mm in thickness. This again is of stone and cob and indeed cob was clearly seen within the roof void and externally the apex has a sand and cement render finish and is true, straight and uniform.



Within the garage this wall however has been lined with un-plastered concrete blockwork and from within the garage roof void I could look down the cavity between the blockwork and the original wall and cob can be clearly seen.



The more recent additions which comprise the porch, the lounge and bathroom are of some 300mm rendered cavity concrete blockwork. These date back to the 1980's.

Cavity concrete block walls are made by laying two courses of blockwork in parallel with a central cavity arrangement in between. This cavity serves to provide a degree of insulation and also prevents any moisture which may get through the outer leaf penetrating the main fabric of the building. The two leaves of concrete blockwork are tied together at regular intervals with metal wall ties.

The top of the concrete blockwork to the bathroom extension could be clearly seen in the cupboard leading off the landing.



The external elevations to this building were true, straight and uniform and free of any significant defects.



The lounge again is of some 300mm cavity concrete blockwork with sand and cement render finish. On its eastern elevation there is some slight cracking below the eastern window and fine cracking at the junction with this extension of the original building but all of this is within acceptable tolerances and can be raked out and filled when you redecorate.



Again the southern elevation was found to be true, straight and uniform with only very limited minor hairline cracking to the render.



The western elevation again is true, straight and uniform with only very limited hairline render cracking of a minor nature.



The walls to the porch are also of some 300mm rendered cavity concrete blockwork and these were in satisfactory condition.



The dormer on the western side is a fairly basic timber framed structure which has been clad with manmade tiles and proper lead flashings are formed where this dormer breaks through the western roof slope forming a weatherproof seal.



In terms of the openings around doors and windows their constructional detail is concealed due to plaster and render finishes. In relation to the original parts of the building these are quite likely of timber.

They are exhibiting no evidence of non uniformity or problems but bear in mind that where timber lintels are present, should they be exposed to long term dampness, then rot and decay could occur.

The lintels to the more modern extensions are either going to be of galvanised steel or reinforced concrete but again no evidence of problems were noted despite the fact that they are concealed by plaster and render finishes.

#### DAMP PROOF COURSE/SUB FLOOR VENTILATION

The damp proof course is normally a horizontal barrier at the base of the walls which prevents moisture from the ground rising up through the walls as a result of capillary action.

The original building would not have been built with a damp proof course and I am going to talk in more detail about dampness under a separate heading later.

The extension which should have complied with current Building Regulation requirements will I assume have been constructed with a damp proof course although none could be seen due to plaster and render finishes.

Ground floors are all of solid concrete construction; therefore sub-floor ventilation is not a requirement.

## EXTERNAL JOINERY

On the south western side of the building there are six opening windows including those to the porch. They are double glazed with timber frames and they were opened and closed and were operating correctly and no binding or sticking was noted. Nor did I find any evidence of any serious rot or decay but obviously decorations are becoming a little worn and weathered and redecoration will be needed in the short time and frequent periods of redecoration will be necessary to ensure that the timber is preserved.

The windows have trickle vents towards their top and this allows natural ventilation within the building.

On the north eastern side, there are three timber doubled glazed windows which are side hung and painted. Again these were all opening and closing properly and are provided with trickle vents.

The paint finish, however, is a little bit more worn and weathered on this side; in some cases in fact the paint has peeled revealing bare wood underneath.

No rot or decay was found but it is essential that redecoration be carried out particularly to these windows on the north eastern side very soon otherwise inevitably rot will arise and as with the south western elevation, frequent redecoration will be necessary.

The front door on the south western side is single glazed painted timber door to the porch. This was in satisfactory repair with no evidence of rot or decay noted but redecoration will be needed soon.

On the north eastern side there are timber double glazed French doors leading off the dining area, again no evidence of rot or decay was found but redecoration will be needed soon.

I also noted that the seals to one of the double glazed units to the French doors has failed, misting is occurring between the two panes of glass and this will need to be replaced.

The fact that this seal has started to break down would suggest that others may also fail in the future.

The windows and doors to the extension I assume were approved by the Local Authority under the Building Control regime but this should be checked by your conveyancer.

In terms of the windows that have been replaced to the original part of the building, as I understand from the vendor these were fitted circa 2003 and your conveyancer will need to ensure that there is proper FENSA documentation in this respect and any guarantees which may exist should also be checked and assigned to you.

On the south western side of the building, fascia boards are of Upvc although they are of timber to the porch. No sign of rot was found but again careful ongoing maintenance will be required.

There are no fascias on the north eastern side of the building.

## EXTERNAL DECORATION

As I mentioned above, external joinery certainly will now need to be redecorated very soon to prevent rot and decay occurring and redecoration will be needed at regular intervals to ensure that the timber is maintained.

Colour washed elevations will need to be freshened in due course particularly on the north eastern side where they are starting to green slightly.

## GARAGES AND OUTBUILDINGS

There is no garage. There are no fixed outbuildings although there is a timber shed in the back yard. This is viewed as being a temporary structure only.

SITE

On the eastern side there is a small area of enclosed walled garden with small area of lawn and path leading to the front door and a metal gate leads directly onto the main road, and therefore it will always need to be used with care.



A pathway leads around the southern side of the building and the paving slabs and area of patio seem to have been recently laid with a small area of lawn.



There is then a further stone wall to the west and gravelled lane.



I am uncertain as to whether or not you have complete ownership of this lane or whether rights in favour of Third Parties exist.

Timbers gates then lead to quite an extensive area of lawned garden bounded on the southern side by a bank to a field and on the northern side by a low stone wall and hedging.



To the western end of this garden is a further area which is enclosed by hedging.



Obviously your Conveyancer will need to confirm the location, liability for maintenance and upkeep of all boundaries.

## 5 INTERNAL CONSTRUCTION AND CONDITION

### ROOF VOID

I gained access firstly to the roof void over the original part of the building by a trap hatch in one of the bedrooms.

The roof is of conventional design for a building of this age and type comprising 50mm x 100mm rafters and up to 650mm centres and these are tied with 40mm x 100mm timber ceiling joists.

The underside of the roof has not been felted, the battens are clearly visible and these measure some 25mm x 45mm onto which the tiles have been nailed.

The roof timbers are showing no signs of stress or distortion, bowing or cracking, and are functioning correctly carrying the weight of the roof down through the walls to the ground below.

The underside of the roof slope however has not been felted and therefore the underside of the tiles is clearly visible. No sign of any serious defects were noted but as I mentioned previously, the lack of any roofing felt does increase the risk in the longer term of water being blown back under the tiles should they start to curl more significantly.



I found evidence of an old infestation of wood boring beetle to some timbers in the roof space. This, however, does not seem to be active and I understand from the vendors that treatments have been carried out under a guarantee.

This guarantee should be checked and assigned to you by your legal adviser.

Insulation is laid on top of the ceilings in the form of fibre glass quilt. In places it is a little haphazard. I estimate that the average covering is somewhere in the region of 200mm which falls short of the current requirements and it is suggested that this be topped up to 270mm.

I was able to climb/crawl through to the north western party wall and this is I consider of plastered cob. The wall is in reasonable condition although the very top edges have been sealed with expanded foam at some stage in the past.



The south eastern party wall was also accessible; again this seems to be of cob incorporating the chimney breast. There is some slight fretting to the surface of the chimney breast and limited dampness but within acceptable tolerances and no more than I would have expected to find in a building of this age and type.



The cold water storage tank in this roof space needs to be better insulated to protect it from frost damage.



I was also able to gain a view of the underside of the valleys on the north eastern side and no sign of any staining or dampness was detected to the valley boards.





I then gained access to the roof void over the extension via a trap hatch in the rear bedroom. This again is of conventional construction comprising 50mm x 145mm rafters at approximately 400mm centres with a substantial 100mm x 220mm ridge beam supported to its south western end by timber frame work and to the north eastern end by timber posts.



The underside of this roof slope has been felted with a modern breathable type roofing felt and this provides through ventilation within the roof void.

Insulation is again laid on top of the ceilings although this I consider is an average of 200mm and really should be topped up to 270mm.

I was able to see the north eastern timber frame gable wall and the internal face of the sheeting board and the posts supporting the ridge beam and no sign of defects were found.



Again this roof void over the north eastern extension, I consider is functioning correctly and there is no sign of stress, distortion or bowing to the timbers nor any evidence of beetle infestation.

## CEILINGS

The ceilings have obviously been replaced at some stage in the past with plasterboard which is the most common material we come across today for making ceilings. It comprises a sandwich of plaster between two layers of paper and the boards are simply nailed or screwed to the underside of the ceiling joists.

In the porch the ceilings follow the incline plane of the roof timbers and are satisfactory.

In the lounge, there are original exposed beams which comprise the floor joists supporting the floors within the original part of the building at upper level. The vendor, however, has attached battens and plasterboard between these boards. The plasterboard has a somewhat uneven finish but I understand from the vendor that this was his intention to give a worn and old effect.

In the kitchen the ceilings are again of plasterboard and once more there are exposed beams in between. These were in satisfactory condition.

At first floor level the ceilings follow the horizontal incline plane of roof timbers. In the bedrooms to the original part of the building they have a textured paint finish and there is inevitably some joint cracking which has occurred and blemishes in one or two areas which should be made good when you re-decorate.

I should point out, however that some textured paint finishes in the past have had asbestos fibres incorporated to give additional strength and therefore the health risks need to be considered.

Whilst in situ any risk again is very limited. If this is a textured paint finish which contains asbestos fibres, then specialist advice may have to be sought in carrying out any work in these areas.

## INTERNAL WALLS AND PARTITIONS

The only partition wall at ground floor level is between the lounge and the kitchen/diner. This comprises an original 600mm outside wall of the building with a plaster finish. Whether this is a stone or cob wall simply cannot be judged due to the plaster and render finishes. However, apart from minor blemishes, the wall is in satisfactory condition.

At first floor level the internal partition walls in the original part of the building are of some 75mm timber stud and plasterboard. These are also in satisfactory condition and functioning adequately although they are relatively thin and therefore may not perform particularly well in relation to sound insulation.

There is then a 600mm original outside wall between the original building and the extension. This tapers in thickness towards, the top, it has a plaster finish and apart from blemishes, is in satisfactory condition.

In the extension the partition walls are approximately 120mm in thickness and of timber stud work and plasterboard. These were in satisfactory repair with tiling provided in the bathroom.

The internal face of the main outside walls principally has a plastered finish apart from the timber frame section which is skim plaster onto plasterboard. There are no significant defects but blemishes can be made good when you redecorate.

I did note however that the north western wall of the lounge returning slightly to the north eastern wall at the bottom of the stairs has been panelled off and dry lined.

Why this is done I cannot tell but dry lining particularly in an older style building, I consider is always to be discouraged. The reason for this is that there is always a risk that behind the dry lining and panelling, dampness could be present and problems associated with dampness could be occurring but not come to light for some time.

Although there was no indication to suggest that there are problems behind this panelling, I recommend that you consider having this stripped off so the condition of the walls behind can be judged, any necessary remedial works carried out and the walls replastered.

## FIREPLACE, FLUES & CHIMNEY BREASTS

In the lounge there is an open stone fireplace with a slate hearth. The flue appears to have been lined at some stage in the past possibly when the chimney was rebuilt.



The fire was not lit during my visit therefore obviously I am unable to confirm how well it draws but there was no evidence of any significant staining to the surround which would suggest that the fireplace may smoke.

This flue however must now be professionally swept before the fireplace is used.

In the kitchen there is an oil fired Range with a pipe that breaks directly into the flue. This Range also provides hot water and runs a number of radiators.

It was not working during my inspection and should be fully serviced by a suitably qualified heating engineer who should also check that the flue is properly lined.

Around the lid to the hot plate there is a rope sealant which looks quite old and seems to be of an asbestos based material.

This is becoming loose and detached and it must now be replaced, specialist advice will need to be sought in relation to replacement and disposal of the old rope.



There would have been fireplaces at first floor level to the south eastern side of the building.

In the southern bedroom you can clearly see the position of the old fireplace which has been blocked up behind the bed.



It is more than likely that there would also have been an open fireplace in the bathroom on the south eastern wall but this has also been blocked up.

All old disused fireplaces should be opened, swept, capped and vented to avoid conditions where moisture and dampness in the flues could build up giving rise to condensation and timber decay.

## FLOORS

The ground floors are all of solid concrete construction. Solid concrete floors are normally formed by laying over a hardcore base onto the ground which helps spread the load of the floor evenly across the ground below. This hardcore base should be compacted and on top of this a concrete floor slab is cast which should incorporate a damp proof membrane and over this a final sand and cement screed is laid ready for carpeting or tiling.

Tiles have been laid in the porch and the kitchen/dining room and these were firm and level.

In the lounge, the floor has been carpeted. I was only able to lift a small corner to the south eastern side and this revealed a relatively modern concrete floor slab.



When I checked later through fitted carpets with my moisture meter, no indication of any dampness could be found.

Upper floors are all of suspended timber. The construction of suspended floors has changed very little over the years. Timber floor joists are set into the masonry walls of the building and then the floorboards are simply nailed or screwed onto these joists.

The upper floors are all carpeted therefore the actual condition of the boards cannot be judged.

I would suspect that over the years, boards may have been lifted for routine services and could well be split and damaged in some cases.

You often find that the beams are notched to run pipes or cables under the floors. This means that care and caution will need to be taken if ever fixing into the floors to make sure that no pipes and cables are damaged.

There is inevitably some deflection to the suspended timber floors in the original part of the building. This can perhaps best be seen looking through to the south eastern bedroom off the landing where it is quite obvious that the floor drops towards the middle.



This is quite common particularly in older properties due to the fact by modern day standards the floor joists will be undersized and spaced too far apart.

Consequently there is some give, spring and non uniformity to the suspended timber floors in the original part of the building but no more than I would have expected to have found and within acceptable tolerances.

On the basis that the suspended timber floors are not excessively loaded, I consider they should continue to function adequately.

In the extension the floors as I would have expected are much more firm and level as the timber floor joists would be more substantial and closer together. In the rear bedroom, the floors are carpeted and in the bathroom they are painted timber, all in satisfactory condition.

## DAMPNESS

Before discussing dampness, it is useful to consider various likely sources of dampness particularly in older buildings.

Rising dampness is one with which people are most familiar and this is as a result of capillary action whereby ground moisture rises up through the walls due to the lack of any effective damp proof barrier.

Penetrating dampness can come from a number of sources such as defects with chimneys, flashings, roofs, rainwater goods and external joinery.

Penetrating dampness can also come via defects with external render, pointing and plaster finishes as well as high external ground levels.

Plumbing leaks from hot and cold water systems can result in dampness and condensation particularly in this part of the World is another source that needs to be considered.

I checked carefully throughout the building with the aid of a hand held moisture meter.

I identified in the roof void particularly to the south eastern chimney but this as I have said is no more than I would have expected and within acceptable tolerances although careful maintenance of the chimney will be required to ensure that dampness is kept to a minimum.

At first floor level the readings I obtained were acceptable and no evidence of any excessive dampness was found.

At ground floor level, again the readings I obtained were within acceptable limits, the only exception being slightly higher readings found in the cupboard to the side of the fireplace in the lounge.

This area is unventilated and there was little air circulating. There is no dampness evident to the naked eye. It was only with the aid of a meter that I obtained the slightly higher readings and I suggest that you either remove this cupboard or ensure that it is properly ventilated.

Clearly, because of the dry lining to the north western end of the lounge, I am unable to check the condition of the walls in this area. Whilst there is no indication of any problems, as I mentioned previously I still feel it would be prudent to strip this lining off and provide a plaster finish to the masonry walls behind.

It seems therefore that some form of damp proof treatment works have probably been carried out to the original building although whether this was by way of tanking or silicone injection I am unable to confirm.

You should make enquires of the vendor as to whether there are any guarantees in relation to damp proof treatment works and if so, these need to be carefully checked and assigned to you.

In the absence of any specific guarantees, bear in mind that should dampness occur later, the cost of remedial works would have to be met by you.

The external ground level on the north eastern side of the building to the extension is a little higher than internal ground level. Consequently I checked very carefully in this area and no indication of dampness was found and this would suggest that appropriate precautions were taken in the design and build of the property to prevent dampness occurring here.

Although the readings I have taken as I have said were acceptable, you must bear in mind that with an older property, it is never possible to completely eradicate dampness in the long term and where dampness exists, concealed timbers such as joist ends, timber lintels and wall plates in contact with damp walls can be at risk of rot and decay.

It is essential that external elevations to the timber frame section be kept in good condition at all times as clearly should dampness occur, this could result in rot and decay to the timber frame work.

In terms of ventilation, there is an externally vented extractor fan in the kitchen which will help take warm moist air out of the building and reduce the risk of condensation occurring.

There is also an externally vented extractor fan in the bathroom but I could not tell whether this vents externally. No external vent could be seen.

This point needs to be checked and if it is that the extractor fan leads directly into the roof space, then it should be routed externally.

## INTERNAL JOINERY

Joinery is very much compatible with the age and style of the property.

At ground floor level there is a part glazed timber door leading from the porch into the lounge and this may not be of toughened glass and consequently the glazing I suggest be replaced.

There are built in cupboards and shelves to the side of the fireplace and as I mentioned above, it would be sensible to consider having this cupboard vented.

The stairs from ground to first floor are reasonably firm and level but as with most old cottages they are quite steep and will need to be negotiated with care.



There is then a part glazed door leading into the kitchen and once more this may not be of toughened glass and therefore the glazing should be replaced.

The kitchen units themselves are hand built by the looks of it with granite work tops providing working space and storage and are of a reasonable standard although beginning to show some signs of wear.

There are no skirting boards at ground floor level.

At first floor level there are pine doors leading into the bedrooms and the bathroom and these open and close properly. An over stair cupboard in the small front bedroom and cupboards in the recess to the side of the chimney breast in the larger front bedroom and two pine cupboards and an airing cupboard in the rear bedroom and some timber panelling in the bathroom.

There are skirting boards provided in some areas and joinery at first floor level I consider is of a reasonable standard.

## INTERNAL DECORATIONS

Decorations are a little worn and faded and marked and redecoration is going to be needed in time to suit your own personal taste.

## TIMBER DEFECTS

I mentioned timber defects under various headings above but it is useful to consider them as a single topic.

Firstly, there is evidence of old infestation of wood boring beetle to some of the roof timbers and unless the vendor can provide guarantees which are properly bonded, then you should have all internal timbers treated under a bonded guarantee.

External joinery will need to be redecorated very soon otherwise rot and decay will occur although at the present moment, no significant rot was found.

Again I stress that it is important in an old property that dampness be kept at bay otherwise concealed timbers such as joist ends, timber lintels and wall plates in contact with damp walls could be at risk of rot.

## THERMAL INSULATION

There is fibre glass quilt laid on top of the ceilings in the roof space, however, this is less than the recommended current 270mm in thickness and I suggest that it be topped up.

Most of the windows are double glazed and this would obviously help reduce energy costs.

Although I cannot confirm, it is likely that the extension which is a relatively new structure will have been insulated.

You should be provided with an Energy Performance Certificate relating to this property which you can obtain from the Estate Agents. This will provide a current energy rating together with a potential energy rating that could be achieved subject to various improvements.

You will need to consider this document carefully as not all of the recommendations may in your opinion be economically viable.

## 6 SERVICES

### ELECTRICITY

Mains electricity is connected with a meter and consumer unit located in a cupboard in the porch. One of the consumer units is more modern, the other is an older style with miniature circuit breakers fitted.

I am unaware when the system was last checked or tested and although I could see no sign of any obvious problems, it is always recommended that electrical installations be checked upon change of ownership.

I recommend therefore that prior to purchase, you ask an electrical contractor to carry out a brief inspection and to check the system and confirm whether or not it is safe and advise you if any updating is required.



### GAS

Mains gas is not available in this location.

### WATER

Mains water is connected with an internal stop cock under the kitchen sink.

The external stop cock I believe is on the pavement in front of the path that leads around the side of the adjoining building. Unfortunately the lid was completely seized and it could not be lifted.

What is not clear is whether this is actually a shared connection with you and the adjoining property. This point needs to be checked and confirmed and if it is shared, your conveyancer should check that proper legal arrangements are in hand.

Pipe work where visible is of copper and at the moment I could see no sign of any leaks.

## SANITARY FITTINGS

This comprises a white bathroom suite at first floor level with steel panel bath, wash hand basin and WC all of which were serviceable. There is an electric shower above the bath although this has not been tested. There was no proper shower screen, only a curtain.



## HEATING AND HOT WATER

Space heating comes from an external wall mounted oil fired boiler which I believe the vendors have had installed quite recently.



This is served by a plastic oil storage tank located within the back garden.



The boiler serves radiators as well as providing hot water and hot water is supplemented by means of a factory lagged copper cylinder with an immersion heater fitted in the airing cupboard in the back bedroom.



The system is now probably due for a service and therefore before you purchase, I recommend that you ask a qualified heating engineer to check and service the boiler or arrange for the owners to do this and then you should set in hand an annual maintenance agreement.

## DRAINAGE

Drainage is to the mains system. The soil vent pipe is located internally and is boxed in. There is no external outlet. I assume there is a non return valve behind the boxing.

There is only one inspection chamber in the rear yard. This was lifted and waste was run through the system and is discharging satisfactorily with no sign of any blockages.



It looks as if the drains then run in a north westerly direction through the property next door.

It is likely therefore that this is a section of private sewer before connecting to the mains and your conveyancer should check whether or not proper easements are in hand and establish any liability for maintenance and upkeep of any section of private sewer that runs through land outside your boundaries before connecting with the mains.

## ENVIRONMENTAL

Cornwall is an area where more than 1% of properties are affected by Radon Gas. Further advice can be obtained from the Health Protection Agency.

This is an area which historically has been associated with tin and copper mining and an archive metalliferous mining search must be obtained.

I have not investigated whether the site has or may have been put to contaminative uses in the past and your legal adviser should investigate the usual sources to ascertain whether the subject property is built on land which has a history of contaminative use before you enter into any legal commitment to purchase. My report is on the assumption that the land has not been put to contaminative use and would not be placed on a register of land which may have been put to contaminative use.

## SECURITY

There is no security system fitted.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

There are a number of healthy and safety issues that need to be considered.

- Ø Note comments that I have made in relation to the possible presence of asbestos based materials in the property such as to the original manmade roof tiles and textured paint finishes to some ceilings.
- Ø Internal glazing may not be of toughened glass and therefore should be replaced
- Ø The stairs leading from ground to first floor are fairly steep and narrow and will need to be negotiated with care.
- Ø Electrical installations and heating boilers can be a safety risk unless they are properly serviced and maintained.
- Ø There are smoke detectors in the lounge and at first floor level.
- Ø In terms of the means of escape, the escape from the first floor level is via the stairs and there are doors to the front and rear of the building.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Your conveyancer needs to confirm and check the following points:

1. Establish that the extension was constructed in accordance with the necessary Planning Consent and Building Regulation approval.
2. Obtain guarantees for windows
3. Obtain proper FENSA documentation in relation to any windows that were installed after 2002.
4. Confirm the location and liability for maintenance and upkeep of all boundaries.
5. Confirm details in relation to the pedestrian right of access around the adjoining building
6. Obtain any guarantees that may exist in relation to timber treatments
7. Obtain any guarantees which may be in existence in relation to damp and timber treatments
8. If the water supply is found to be shared, check that proper legal arrangements are in hand.
9. Check that proper necessary easements exist and establish liability for maintenance and upkeep of any section of private sewer that runs through land outside your boundaries before connecting with the mains.

## SUMMARY

This is what I consider to be a reasonably well maintained example of an older style terraced cottage and defects which I have identified and discussed in the main body of the report are very much typical of those that I would have expected.

Whilst matters that need to be attended to have been discussed in detail above, it is useful to consider some of the points in summary but in no particular order of importance.

1. Some weather proofing and repointing of the chimney stack will be required to ensure that it remains water right.
2. The roof coverings I consider are satisfactory but note comments I made in relation to the possibility of asbestos being present in the original tiles.
3. The abutments to the extension with which you are concerned about are satisfactory.
4. You will need to make sure that valleys and the lead gutters between the extension and the adjoining building are kept clear at all times.
5. Note comments that I made in relation to lime based renders to the original building although I am not advocating the need to re-render.
6. External finishes to the timber frame section will need to be kept in good condition at all times.
7. External joinery needs to be redecorated fairly soon otherwise rot and decay will occur.
8. Any sealed double glazed units which have failed should be replaced.
9. Top up insulation within the roof space.
10. If guarantees are not in place in relation to woodworm, then have all internal timbers treated under a bonded guarantee.
11. Provide additional insulation to the cold water tank in the roof space.
12. Blemishes to internal finishes to be made good when re decorating.
13. Remove the dry lining in the lounge so that the condition of the walls behind can be judged and any necessary remedial works carried out.
14. The flue should be professionally swept.
15. Note comments I made in the report in relation to dampness.
16. Ensure that the extractor fan in the bathroom vents externally.
17. Ask a suitably qualified electrical contractor to check the installation.
18. A qualified heating engineer should also be asked to check and service the boiler and arrange for an annual maintenance agreement to be set in hand.

You must obtain full estimates and reports for all the work I have recommended and seek further specialist advice where that has been suggested before you commit yourselves to purchase.

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SIGNATURE OF SURVEYOR

Julian Crosby FRICS  
DowlingDodd  
Chartered Surveyors

JC/ejh/sw/000.