



*“safe pair of hands”
solving the causes of damp*



REPORT

For and on behalf of XXXX,
Property surveyed

XXXX,
London, XXXX

This report is for the sole use of XXXX for whom the survey was undertaken and can only be relied upon for 90 days from the survey date. Unless expressly stated otherwise in this report, nothing in this report confers or is intended to confer any rights on any third party pursuant to the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.



Dear XXXX,

Thank you for instructing us to carry out a damp and timber survey of the ground floor of XXXX. We understand that you own the flat. That your buyer's Homebuyers Report highlighted potential areas of damp. Please inform us if we have misunderstanding your instructions.

OVERALL OPINION

Overall the flat is beautiful with only very minor damp concerns, less than is normal for a London flat. Every property suffers from dampness to some degree. You will mitigate the risk of damp if you follow all our recommendations. The cost of following these recommendations is less than the average annual costs of maintaining a period property in London. This report is intended to be read in full. Observations and opinions must not be taken in isolation.

Like any building, especially a period property, you need to be aware of the risks of damp arising in the future and plan a programme of prevention and maintenance accordingly.

We recommend you spend time understanding our advice in this report, which we would be happy to discuss in person. We would also be delighted to revisit at any time for a modest survey update fee and likewise before you eventually decide to sell the property.

INDEPENDENCE AND METHODOLOGY

Our only income is through damp survey fees. Our motivation is integrity and practical, durable solutions. There is no conflict of interest as we are independent of contractors and never profit from remedial work. We use chemical analysis to identify damp within walls.

SURVEYOR'S DECLARATION

I confirm that I inspected XXXX on 7 March 2018 and that the property is not affected by rising damp.

Simon Hichens

*Simon Hichens, BSc (Chemistry), AISSE (Institute of Specialist Surveyors & Engineers)
PCA (Property Care Association - trained & certified), MARLA, MNAEA, PWC (consult/audit)
Senior Surveyor*

Report completed on 8 March 2018



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BUYING OR SELLING A PROPERTY

Buying or selling a property can be stressful, especially when a Homebuyer's surveyor reports that there are elevated damp meter readings, and recommends you instruct a damp specialist to look for damp and timber defects. If a buyer or seller is unsure of, or takes issue with this report, please call 0207 274 1278. We will happily discuss our findings in detail.



There tell-tale signs that a chemical damp proof course is already in place. The round ridges highlighted in the photo above, cover drill holes used to inject chemicals.

Chemical damp proof courses rarely address the cause of damp. In this case the cause of marginal dampness deep within the wall, is a blocked gully, which is inexpensive to fix.



ABOUT DAMP SURVEYS LTD

Damp Surveys Ltd is an independent specialist damp surveying company incorporated following the development of analytical technology employed to rapidly and accurately differentiate types of damp. Our confidence in our analytical equipment allows us to categorically state whether or not there is a risk of rising damp. If we are satisfied that there is minimal risk of rising damp, we can offer a warrantee subject to application and conditions.

Independence is key to understanding how we operate and why we provide a unique service quite different to any other company. Many contractors, looking for chemical damp work, offer low cost, or sometimes “free” surveys. We do not and never will benefit financially from any recommended remediation. We are motivated to recommend optimal treatment to protect the property now and into the future.

Your peace of mind is our goal, for you to be satisfied that the property will be properly protected against damp and for you to recommend us in person, or by social media. Please follow us on <https://twitter.com/DampSurveys>

THE PROPERTY

The property is a ground floor flat in handsome double fronted Victoria terraced house built around 1900. It comprises two bedrooms, an open plan reception with kitchen opening onto the rear garden and a bathroom. The walls are constructed of 9” solid brickwork. The floor to the front bedroom is suspended timber over a vented sub-floor void, the remainder is built on solid flooring.

The front door faces South. All references to location are taken as if standing on the road looking at the front door. The building has an elevation of 41M above sea level, in a low flood risk area of London.

Changes to the property’s original design

The property has been modified by conversion into flats. The layout of the timber floor has probably changed. Chemical damp proofing has been applied to the property.

UNDERSTANDING DAMP

Excess damp found in properties is largely as a result of changes from the original design, location or use. Properties are built to absorb rain and evaporate moisture without excessive damp inside. Lifestyles have changed over the years, such as taking showers more often. The resultant raised humidity means most properties are at increased risks of condensation. Damp is not inherently dangerous. However, it can spoil decoration and encourage rot, mould and insect infestation. Rot is omnipresent and starts when wood cells rupture above 28% moisture content with a constant source of water. Brown rots, such as dry rot proliferates in unvented damp voids. Wood boring beetles are attracted to humid wood. Mould requires humidity on the surface of over 85% relative humidity (RH) to grow. Rising damp can spoil decorative surfaces. However, there is insufficient moisture to cause rot. Ground water contains nitrates, that inhibit mould growth. Rising damp needs a constant source of water, such as a high water-table within a meter of the ground. Stop the source of water and rising damp will dissipate. According to Thames Water, London's water-table is low, below the lowest tube-line. Rising damp results from the high relative force of attraction of silicone (found in sand, bricks, glass etc.), a phenomenon unhelpfully described as capillarity. The attractive force of silicone spreads water through connected pores in all directions. Plaster can be particularly absorbent. Water spreads downwards first through the additional force of gravity, until lower pores become saturated.

Condensation is caused by moist air condensing on cold surfaces, condensation starts when a wall's temperature falls below the "dew point". The dew point increases as humidity rises. There is often a line within a wall where the temperature is below the dew point, this is called the dew point line. Walls are designed to absorb and evaporate moisture daily. Damp is often cumulative. For example, condensation is more likely to form near a wall that is damp from penetrating rainwater. Likewise, rain will not evaporate as quickly if the wall surface is already humid through condensation. Furthermore, wet external walls are poor thermal insulators. North, North-Eastern and North-Western walls receive minimal warmth from the winter sun. Some damp only occurs infrequently, once every few years, resulting from persistent rain and wind. Damp detection depends on conditions during the survey.

OBSERVATIONS

Conditions during the survey

Occupancy	Unoccupied, part furnished
Weather	Dry
Weather past 24hrs	Dry
External humidity	62%HR
External temperature	11.4°C
Internal humidity	42%HR
Internal temperature	19.6°C
Lowest temperature of inside wall	16°C

External

- The chimneys (uncapped), flashing and roofs appeared to be functioning correctly.
- Rainwater goods looked to be in good order, except where noted, however it was not raining.
- The damp proof course (DPC) was obscured with impermeable render.
- The ventilation grills to the front were less than 150mm above the ground. Although there are concerns about insufficient sub-floor ventilation, there was no evidence of sub-floor damp or sub-floor rot.

Internal measurements

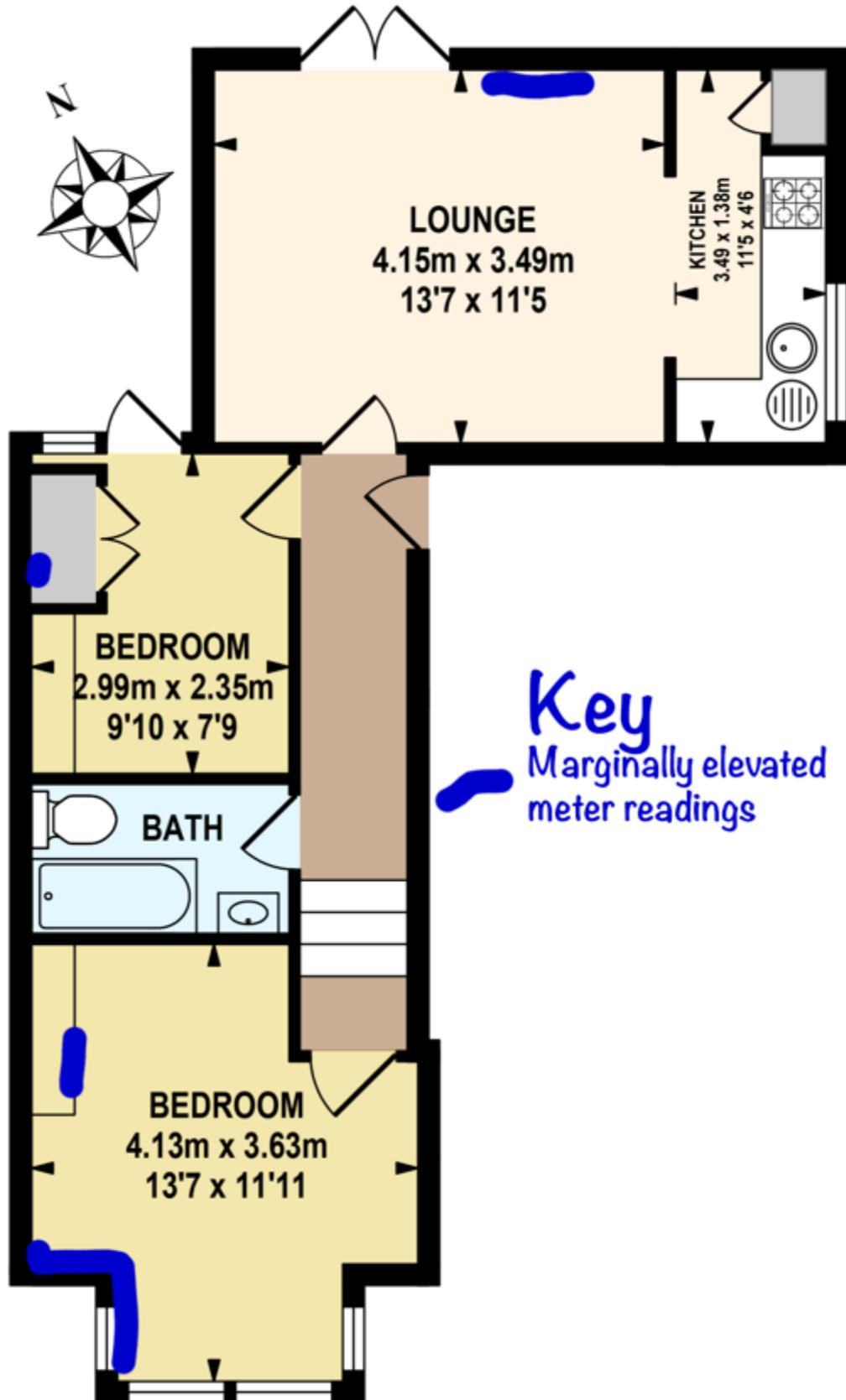
A Protimeter Surveymaster II was used to detect potential damp in “search mode” across all walls and up chimney breasts, and where elevated readings noted, the area was checked more accurately in “conductance” mode. Conductance mode measures the passage of electrolytes (mainly salts) in water, across two pins. The meter is designed for wood. A measurement in wood exceeding 18% Wood Moisture Equivalent (WME), needs further investigation, but rot doesn’t start until greater than 28% WME.

Surface timbers were sampled in conductance mode. No timber was found to be above 18%WME, except where noted. No rot was found except where noted.

Although meters are a useful tool for identifying areas of potential damp in masonry, the meters can give very misleading information, mainly because some substrates are very high in salts, such as the most common form of plaster, gypsum, made of calcium sulphate salt. Surveyors should only use damp meters as a qualitative tool, not quantitative, that is the reading should only be used to identify areas of high and low relative readings. The value itself is not important for readings taken from any material other than wood.

For masonry, damp meter readings in conductance mode above 25% WME, need further investigation, see floorplan for details.

FLOORPLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS

1 Cause of marginally elevated meter readings in front bedroom



The extra-sensitive search mode (left photo) identified a marginally higher meter reading in line with the blocked drain outside. The reading of 167 is “dry” and there was no spoiling to the paintwork. However, for the cost of a pair of “Marigold” gloves and a few minutes work, it would be worth clearing the drain (right-hand photo).

2 Sub-floor ventilation to front bedroom



Both vents to the left-hand bay, under the front bedroom have been blocked by paint. It would be better to unblock them by carefully drilling out the paint from the blocked holes. Ideally there should be a gap between the vent and the earth to stop rain bouncing or running in. This is less of an issue as there is protection from rain, by overhangs.

3 Kitchen



Similar to the front bedroom, there was a marginally higher damp meter reading in the kitchen which lined up with the fence. It is likely to be caused by a screw securing the fence to the wall. There was no spoiling of paintwork, so nothing to be concerned about.

CONCLUSIONS

The property is unusually dry for an unoccupied Victorian property on a cold day in London.

There is no evidence of rising damp, indeed the elevation and low flood risk suggests the property is far from a source of ground water, a necessary component of rising damp.

The dampness measured in the front bedroom and rear reception wall is mild, barely detectable with the most sensitive devices.

The cost of the works detailed in the recommendations are miniscule in the context of normal annual maintenance costs of a period property. You must follow our recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations address items highlighted on the Floorplan and Illustrations. In line with every property, we recommend ongoing observation, repair and a periodic programme of maintenance, including annual clearing of gutters, repainting, repointing and noting of perimeter ground level and water-table fluctuations. We are happy to return and update the survey.

We recommend you clear the blocked gully to the front and unblock the paint from sub-floor ventilation, also to the front.

LIMITATIONS

Damp Surveys Ltd reports are designed to provide you with an informed independent expert opinion as to the condition of the property together with any recommendations for further investigation or remedial work. We do not warrantee any findings in this report unless we enter into a separate warrantee agreement with you.

The survey was conducted during daylight hours. Damp will be more noticeable at night and when the weather is colder and more humid. Gutters are more likely to fail when full of leaves and during periods of prolonged rain and adverse wind. We make best endeavours but cannot guarantee being able to identify all forms of damp, rot and insect infestation affecting the property. The survey represents a snapshot in time. Damp is often progressive only becoming visible after the survey. We are happy to return and update our observations and advice at any time.

We carried out a careful and thorough inspection of as much of the property as was accessible. However, when it is not possible to make a full inspection, we make a professional judgement about the likelihood of a defect being present. In certain circumstances, this may lead to a recommendation for further action to open up an area for further investigation. We are unable to see the whole roof, all the guttering and some of the drains. We were unable to inspect woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible, and are therefore unable to report that such parts of the property are free from defect. There were no obvious signs of damp resulting from these limitations.

MORE INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

See the developing blogs on <https://dampsurveys.com> for generic recommendations and information. Please follow us on <https://twitter.com/DampSurveys>

APPENDIX - STANDARD TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Terms of Engagement

- 1) You may cancel this contract with Damp Surveys Ltd at any time 24 hours before the time and day of the pre-arranged inspection.
- 2) We may cancel this contract at any time including the day of the inspection if we determine after arriving on site, that it is unsafe or that we do not have sufficient skills to complete the exercise for you. In such a case, we will refund full payment less our travel expenses.
- 3) You are engaging Damp Surveys Ltd, to undertake an inspection of the property in question at a pre-arranged time and the production of a report in a timely fashion thereafter. We will carefully and thoroughly inspect both the inside and outside of the property but NOT any outbuildings unless specifically requested to do so in writing.
- 4) Before the inspection, but after the appointment has been made, we will undertake a desk top analysis of the property by checking various different websites and other information sources for details about the property and its location.
- 5) Terms of Payment – we only accept instructions after advance payment.
- 6) Liability – our report is provided for your use only and may only be relied upon for 90 days from the survey date. Unless expressly stated otherwise in this report, nothing in this report confers or is intended to confer any rights on any third party pursuant to the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.
- 7) We are unable to inspect parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible, including lofts, without written permission to do so, and are therefore unable to report that such parts are free from defect. We may express a professional opinion as to the likelihood of damp.
- 8) No disruptions will be made to the building's fabric save for a few pin sized holes, left by a measuring device. Access hatches and inspection chamber lids will only be lifted where it is easily possible to do so. Floor coverings and furniture cannot be moved, unless we have the prior written consent of the property owner. Floor voids will only be inspected if access panels permit. If there is a covered area you particularly wish us to investigate, please ensure that the owner of the property gives us prior written permission to uncover it.



9) We sometimes publish damp related images on websites to inform the public of damp, rot and the causes of damp and rot. We make every effort to ensure individual and corporate privacy is protected.

Insurance

For peace of mind, Damp Surveys Ltd have Public Liability insurance of £1,000,000 and Professional Indemnity insurance of £250,000 (annual aggregate) both through Hiscox.

Quotations

We recommend obtaining three quotes for any significant remedial work. We are happy to review your quotes, but always remain independent of contractors.