



DAMP INSPECTION REPORT

On:
Flats 20 & 23 Great Cliff
Marine Parade
DAWLISH
EX7 9EX

30 January 2023



Croft Surveyors Ltd
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NJB/LL/80/10081

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INTRODUCTION

INSTRUCTIONS

In accordance with instructions received from Crown Property Management, 135 Reddenhill Road, Torquay TQ1 3NT, we inspected Flats 20 & 23 Great Cliff Dawlish to investigate reported problems with dampness affecting the walls.

DATE OF INSPECTION

The exterior and interior of the property were inspected on 30 January 2023. The weather on the day of inspection was dry and sunny, following a particularly wet winter.

INSPECTING SURVEYOR

The inspection was carried out by Nick Burrows BSc (Hons) MRICS of Croft Surveyors

HISTORY

As we understand it, the property was built in around 2005. The flats inspected are on the upper fourth-floor, beneath a mansard-style roof.

The flats have reportedly been largely weathertight until this winter when damp penetration has been seen to affect some areas of external walling at the front of the building. Some attempts to weatherproof the exterior have been made, with silicone sealant, but this is patently not proving effective.

OCCUPATION

At the time of our inspection both properties were occupied.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE INSPECTION

We were only able to inspect those parts of the structure which were accessible without removing furniture and fittings.

We inspected all those parts of the property, relevant to our instructions, which could be seen either from ground level externally or from within the property. We did not disturb any parts of the structure which were concealed during the course of construction, for example, foundations were not exposed, floorboards were not lifted, nor was plaster removed from the surfaces of the walls. It follows that for practical reasons we have not inspected all the masonry, timber and other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect.

This report does not constitute a full building survey and is limited to investigation of the patent and significant damp penetration and any consequential damage likely to have been caused to the premises.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs attached at **Appendix 1** and described in the Schedule are indicative only. They may not show every aspect of the defect identified and are to aid identification of the defect. Rely on the text.

OBSERVATIONS

INTERNAL INSPECTION

The flank walls to either side of Flat 20 are suffering from penetrating damp causing staining and deterioration in internal plasterboard dry-lining at their junctions with the front wall of the mansard roof. This is causing significant damage to plasterwork finishes, especially to the northern party wall.

The moisture detected at higher level indicates it is likely to be stemming from a defect in weatherproofing to the short parapets rising above the slate-covered roof slopes.

This problem also affects a third parapet wall rising above the southern party wall enclosing Flat 23, although to a much lesser degree.

In addition, the concrete floor of Flat 20 is very wet, at its junction with the front wall of the mansard alongside the northern party wall in the sitting room. This is causing staining and deterioration in the carpets and skirting boards.

Very slight water staining was seen beneath one of the Velux rooflight windows in Flat 20. This may be caused by condensation running off the glass or a sporadic minor leak caused by wind-driven rainfall, but appears unconnected to the main damp penetration issues identified.

Some black-spot mould growth is evident on plasterboard wall finishes to the rear wall, in the guest bedroom, but the plasterwork tested dry at the time of our inspection.

EXTERNAL INSPECTION

The external walls of the block are presumed to be of conventional cavity masonry construction, finished in cement render. The flank walls and party walls separating flats rise above the mansard-style roof at the front of the block to form low parapets with concrete copings.

The coping stones to the parapets have some open cracks in their mortar-pointed joints which will allow a little water to penetrate. There should be a damp proof course (DPC) beneath the coping stones, to protect against absorbed rainwater from soaking down through the masonry to affect internal walling, although without removing the coping stones this can't be verified.

Attempts have been made to improve weatherproofing including silicone sealant smeared across joints and an odd metal or PVC upstand fixed to the outside edge of the coping stone over the worst affected northern party wall to Flat 20.

The abutment of the roof slates and raised parapets are weathered with traditional lead-sheet flashings, dressed over lead-sheet soakers

interleaved between the slates. These appear in satisfactory visual order, although could theoretically incorporate defects in concealed areas.

The box gutter behind the front parapet to the northern side of Flat 20 is lined in a black single-ply PVC membrane. We noted that this was partially collapsed, causing it to hold water, and the soft and 'squidgy' feel to the base of the gutter suggests that supporting timber layboards have decayed and failed.

CONCLUSION

In our opinion the damp affecting the flank and party walls of Flats 20 and 23 at higher level is not directly connected to the damp identified in the floor, although some moisture transfer between could potentially be occurring at lower level in the walls.

The manner in which the damp has presented following a particularly wet winter tends to suggest that it is caused by saturation of the masonry, as a result of deficient moisture protection externally.

Conjecturally, it is possible that the grey plastic or metal upstand that has been added to the parapet coping over Flat 20 is actually trapping wind-driven rainwater, exacerbating the problem.

If the roof flashings were defective, then we would expect the problem to have presented immediately after construction of the property instead. It would also seem unlikely to occur in three near-identical locations at once.

To address it requires proper investigation requiring scaffold access. The affected coping stones would ideally need removing and new damp proof courses installing beneath. Another possibly simpler option might be to instead cap all the parapet copings in traditional welted lead-sheet, which is guaranteed weathertight, and lasts many decades.

The damp affecting the floor of Flat 20 appears to be instead caused by a leak in the single-ply membrane lining to the parapet box gutter immediately in front. This will need stripping out and re-lining, along with replacing the decayed timber supporting lay-boards beneath. This will again require scaffold access and should therefore be combined with the recommended works to the parapet copings.

Of concern is that there are several matching parapet gutters at the front and rear of the building, all lined with slightly fragile single-ply membrane, and it is not impossible that others will begin to fail and leak over the coming years. It may prove more practical to replace failed linings with a liquid-applied waterproofing membrane, although only ones installed by manufacturer-approved contractors and accompanied by long guarantees should be considered.

The mould growth seen on plasterboard wall linings in the rear bedroom of Flat 20 is almost certainly caused by condensation, instead of a roof leak. This room appears rarely occupied, and not well ventilated, and some condensation is perhaps to be expected behind furniture on this cold corner of the building. Leaving the room door and window trickle vents open when the property is unoccupied may well alleviate this.

We trust that our report provides the information and advice you require. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We mention that our report has been prepared for you as our client, and we cannot accept responsibility for it to any third party who may become acquainted with its contents without our prior knowledge and consent in writing.

Signed



Surveyor's Name

**NICK BURROWS BSc (Hons) MRICS
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF CROFT SURVEYORS**

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APPENDIX 1

PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig.1 Damp damage in Flat 20

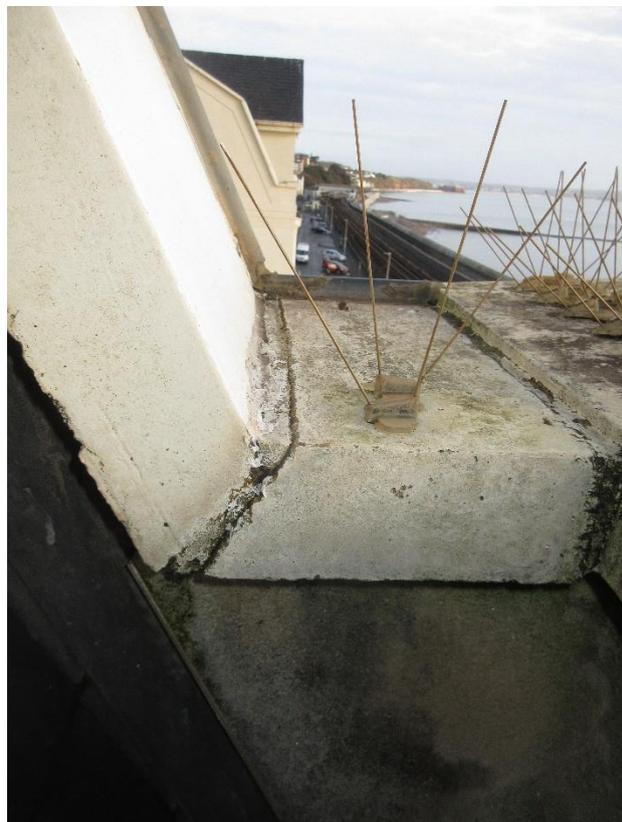


Fig.2 Parapet copings stones have cracks in joints into which water can penetrate, possibly exacerbated by the metal or PVC trim added.



Fig.3 Parapet box-gutter lining appears to be partially collapsed and leaking, saturating the concrete floor of the flat.