

Vigilant Surveys

DAMP AND MOULD INVESTIGATION

Victorian semi detached house, North London

Address withheld

Prepared for the client

Inspected October 2026

Specimen report

Rory Thorne, Damp & Compliance Surveyor · vigilantsurveys.co.uk

SPECIMEN REPORT

This is a real Vigilant Surveys damp and mould report, published with the written permission of the client it was written for. The name, the address, the postcode, the reference and the exact date of the inspection have been removed, along with four photographs that would identify the house: the front and rear elevations, the front looking up at the roofline, and a view out of a front window. Every reading, every finding, every recommendation and every cost figure is exactly as it was issued.

Summary in plain English

OVERALL RATING 6 OF 9

Damp from several sources. At the front, the render plinth bridging the slate damp proof course, with the ground built up to within 70mm of it. At the rear and the rear side wall, render in contact with the paving and rain splashing back off it, with water getting in at the top of the kitchen side wall where the render has come away. Moisture in the kitchen partition, from a source not established on the day, showing as efflorescence. A possible leak from the pipework to the front living room radiator, which needs testing. In the cellar, ground moisture through the walls with condensation on the cold surfaces.

There is damp on the ground floor, in the kitchen and at the front of the living room, and the cellar is damp, as unconverted cellars usually are. It is not rising damp: the house has a damp proof course, but it is being bypassed.

At the front, render and built up ground run past the damp proof course. At the rear and down the side of the kitchen, the render sits on the paving. Rain is getting in at the top of the kitchen side wall where the render has come away. The white powder on the kitchen walls is salt left behind as water dries out of the wall. A test of it showed it is not the kind that comes up from the ground. It does show that water is getting into the kitchen wall next to the living room, and the space under the living room floor is the first place to check. A leak from the pipes to the front living room radiator needs ruling out.

First, have the heating pressure tested. Then deal with the outside. Put in air drains along the front, the rear and down the side of the kitchen to lower the ground against the walls and stop rain splashing back, and cut back the render where it runs past the damp proof course. Clear the air bricks, and repair the render and lead at the kitchen. Once the walls have dried, the salts can be brushed off, the loose plaster made good and the walls redecorated. The cellar has no ventilation, so its damp air sits against cold walls; ventilating it lets that air out.

Confidence	Highly probable on the evidence
What would settle it	A pressure test of the central heating first. Then drilled samples with a salts test at the kitchen partition at 600mm, the base of the kitchen side wall and the living room wall beside the front radiator, measured against the controls of 8.8 and 12.3 %WME. A return visit to the cellar after heavy rain.

The overall rating is a judgement on the whole of the findings, not a meter reading. 1 is the lowest and 9 the highest. Green 1 to 3, amber 4 to 6, red 7 to 9.

1	Dry throughout. Nothing found.
2	Dry, with a minor defect worth putting right as good practice.
3	Dry, with a defect that could lead to damp if left.
4	Elevated moisture from a single identified cause, with no work to the structure needed.
5	Elevated moisture in more than one area, no damage, correctable with general maintenance.
6	An active damp problem with a clear cause, correctable with ordinary repairs.
7	Active damp causing damage to the building, or several causes acting together.
8	Widespread damp with significant damage, or a cause not yet identified.
9	Severe, spreading or causing structural damage. Needs attention before anything else.

Instruction and conditions

Instructed by	The client
Reason for the inspection	A focused damp survey of the ground floor and the cellar, inside and outside where needed, to establish the causes of the damp, the class of works needed to put it right, and an indicative cost for each.

Scope	Focused survey, one problem area. Focused survey of the ground floor and the cellar. Inspected inside: the kitchen, the living room and the cellar, with environmental readings at the foot of the staircase. Inspected outside: the front and rear elevations at ground floor level. The side elevation could not be inspected outside, because a neighbouring lean to structure is built against it. The upper floors were outside the scope. The property was empty. No opening up was carried out.
Date of inspection	October 2026
Weather at inspection	Dry
Rainfall in the previous 48 hours	None
External conditions	20.5°C, 62.9% RH, dew point 13.2°C
Access	Lockbox or key safe. The property was empty at the inspection

What the occupier reports

The property was empty at the inspection and there was no occupier to ask, so the history of the property could not be taken from an occupier. Where an answer below reads Not known, that is why.

The property was empty at the inspection, so no account of when the damp appeared or how the property has been used was available.

Pattern reported	Not known
How it presents	None recorded
Anything that changed it	None recorded
Washing dried indoors	Not known
Tumble dryer	Not known

The property

Type	Semi detached
Approximate age	1850 to 1918
Wall construction	Solid brick, assumed from the age of the house and the exposed brickwork at the front and not established by opening up
Ground floor	Mixed
Heating	Gas boiler with radiators, how it is used not known. The pressure gauge read 1 bar at the inspection

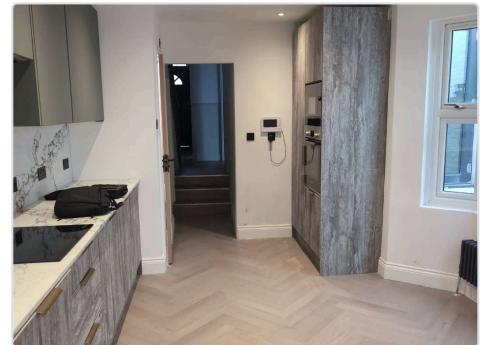


BOILER AND PRESSURE GAUGE

Room by room

This was a focused survey, covering the affected rooms and anything contributing to the cause. Other rooms were not surveyed. Moisture readings are comparative. %WME is not a moisture content, so readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Kitchen



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	20.5°C, 63.6% RH
Dew point	13.4°C
Coldest surface measured	17.8°C at Rear external wall
Surface against dew point	4.4°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 17.8°C, air 20.5°C, 63.6% RH.
Heating	Radiator. Nothing seen at it.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows, Trickle vents
Trickle vents	Present and open

Mechanical extract	Cooker hood ducted, operational, discharging unknown
Door undercut	Not applicable

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	not established
Control reading	8.8 %WME. Internal partition wall to the WC

EXTERNAL SIDE WALL, EXTERNAL WALL



	Left	Left of centre	Centre	Right of centre	Right
200mm below ceiling	7.9	10	11.9	11.5	39
1200mm	10.4	x	11.5	14	15.1
600mm	13.3	11.2	10	14	15
Skirting, 100mm	17	15	18.4	14	20

19 readings, 7.9 to 39 %WME, 1 could not be reached

INTERNAL PARTITION WALL TO THE LIVING ROOM, INTERNAL WALL, ADJOINING LIVING ROOM



	Left	Centre	Right
200mm below ceiling	9.2	10.5	9
1200mm	10	25	11.9
600mm	41	32	30.3
Skirting, 100mm	7.3	14.3	9.1

12 readings, 7.3 to 41 %WME

OBSERVED

Visible mould	None
Other observations	Salting efflorescence, Peeling paint, Blown or hollow plaster



METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION



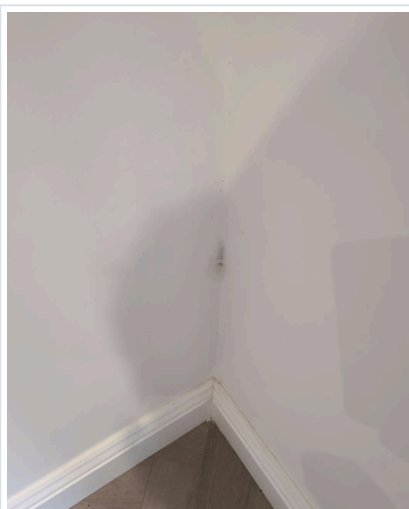
DEFECT
Side external wall



DEFECT
Side external wall



DEFECT
Side external wall



DEFECT
Side corner of external wall



DEFECT
Internal partition wall to living room



DEFECT
Internal partition wall to living room

Living room



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	21.9°C, 59.9% RH
Dew point	13.8°C
Coldest surface measured	18.4°C at Rear external wall
Surface against dew point	4.6°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	COLD SPOTS Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 18.4°C, air 21.9°C, 59.9% RH.
Heating	Radiator. Nothing seen at it.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows, Trickle vents
Trickle vents	Present and open
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 6mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	Suspended timber, assumed from From the construction and not established by opening up
Control reading	12.3 %WME. Beside the right hand French door
Wall	49.9 %WME Left of the front wall radiator against a control of 12.3
Wall	24.4 %WME Right of the front wall radiator against a control of 12.3
Wall	39.2 %WME External wall left of the front window, at skirting level against a control of 12.3
Wall	17 %WME Side wall, in patches below 900mm against a control of 12.3

Wall	18 %WME Side wall, in patches below 900mm against a control of 12.3
------	--

EXTERNAL RETURN WALL, LEFT OF THE FRONT WINDOW, EXTERNAL WALL

	Left	Centre	Right
200mm below ceiling	9.2	10.7	9.2
1200mm	11.6	9.6	10.2
600mm	12.9	11.5	36.6
Skirting, 100mm	6	6.1	10.4
12 readings, 6 to 36.6 %WME			

COLD SPOT AND ELEVATED READINGS IN THE FRONT CORNER

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Corner of the front wall beside the bay, at low level
Observed	Peeling paint
Pinless on it	304 PINLESS Front corner beside the bay, at low level.

OBSERVED

Visible mould	None
Other observations	None



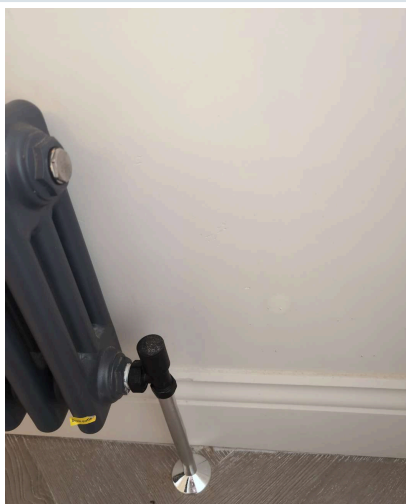
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



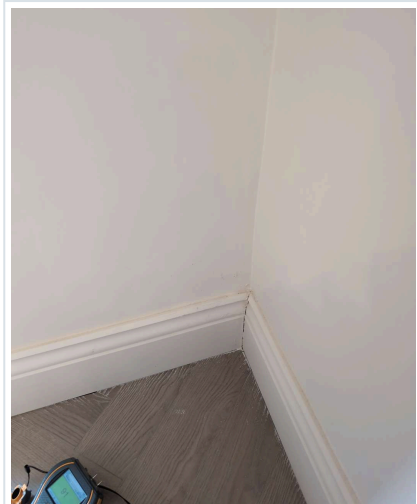
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



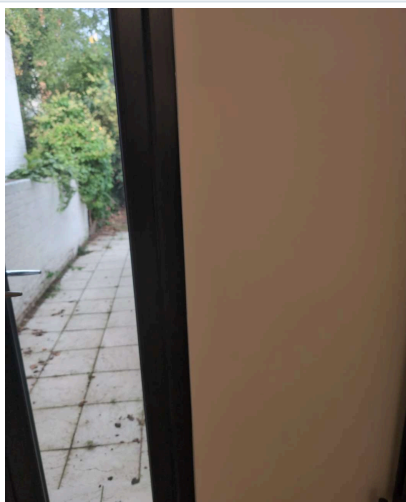
THERMAL



DEFECT



METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION



DEFECT
External wall left of front window



DEFECT
Salting signs behind front wall radiator

Cellar



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	21.8°C, 73.6% RH
Dew point	16.9°C
Coldest surface measured	12.9°C at Internal wall
Surface against dew point	4.0°C BELOW DEW POINT Condensation is occurring on this surface.
Thermal scan	COLD SPOTS Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 12.9°C, air 21.8°C, 73.6% RH.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	None
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 3mm

MOISTURE

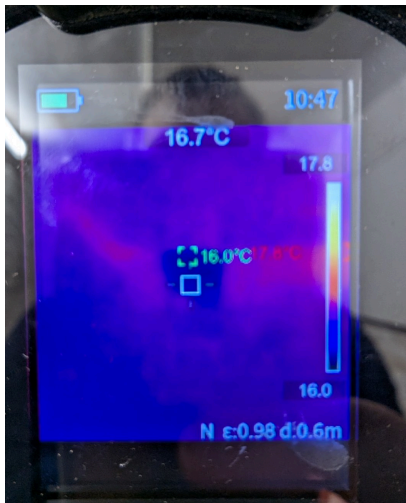
Floor in this room	Solid
Control reading	23.7 %WME. Internal wall by the consumer unit, the lowest wall reading found

COLD SPOT AT THE OLD COAL CHUTE

Surface	Wall
Whereabouts	Front wall, at the coal chute

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Light
Other observations	Salting efflorescence, Peeling paint, Staining



THERMAL



DEFECT



METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION



DEFECT

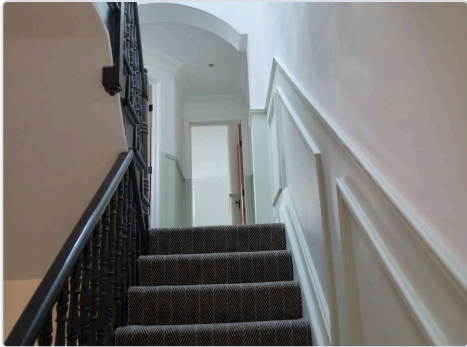


DEFECT



OTHER

Staircase (comparison only)



Temperature and humidity were recorded here as a comparison against the affected rooms. No moisture survey was carried out in this room, and none was required.

ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	22.1°C, 60.4% RH
Dew point	14.1°C
Coldest surface measured	19.9°C at Party wall
Surface against dew point	5.8°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.

THERMAL IMAGING

3 of the 4 rooms inspected were scanned with a thermal imaging camera under the conditions recorded above. cold bridging was identified at Living room, Cellar. no anomaly was found in Kitchen. Rooms not listed here were not scanned, and no thermal conclusion is drawn about them either way.

External inspection

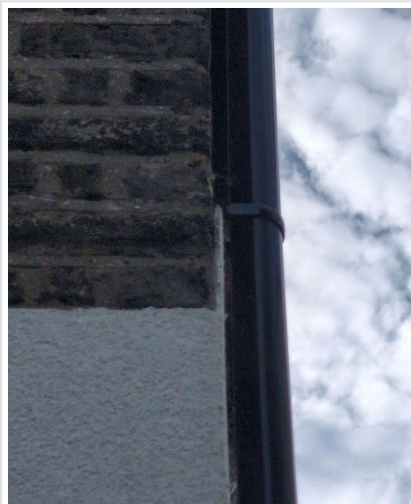
Recorded per elevation. Damp is directional.

Rear



Damp proof course	NOT VISIBLE The render runs down to the paving along the rear wall and the rear side wall, so the damp proof course line cannot be seen.
Surface against the wall	Paving, falling level
Rainwater goods	POOR

Pointing render	FAIR
Masonry	FAIR
Drainage gullies	POOR
Penetrations	FAIR
Airbricks	NOT VISIBLE
Vegetation	GOOD
Roof visible	FAIR



POINTING RENDER



RAINWATER GOODS



RAINWATER GOODS



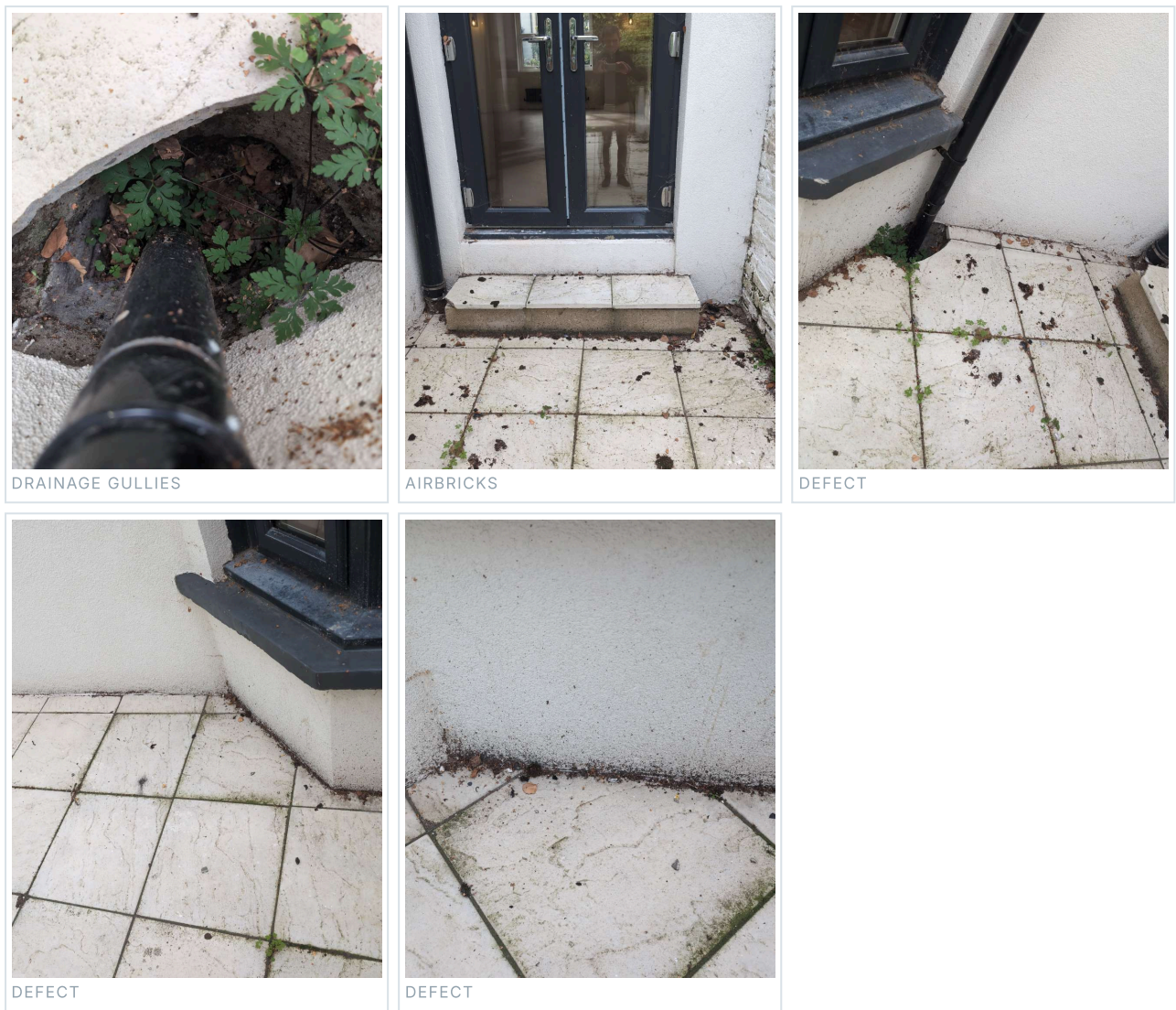
RAINWATER GOODS



RAINWATER GOODS



DRAINAGE GULLIES



Front



Ground to damp proof course	MARGINAL At its worst point, clear by approximately 70mm. Left of the front step
Surface against the wall	Concrete, falling level
Rainwater goods	POOR
Pointing render	FAIR
Masonry	GOOD

Drainage gullies	GOOD
Roof visible	FAIR
Penetrations	FAIR
Airbricks	POOR
Vegetation	FAIR

Photograph removed
for this specimen copy

RAINWATER GOODS



POINTING RENDER
Lose mortar bottom right or window



AIRBRICKS



AIRBRICKS



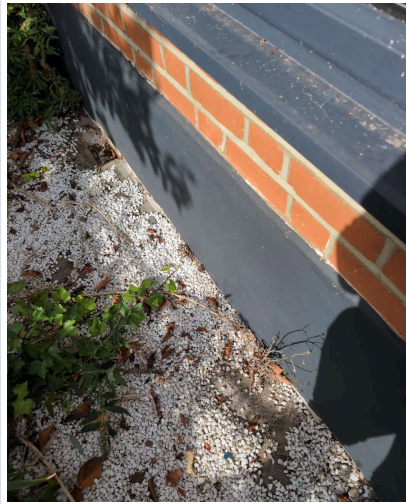
VEGETATION



DEFECT



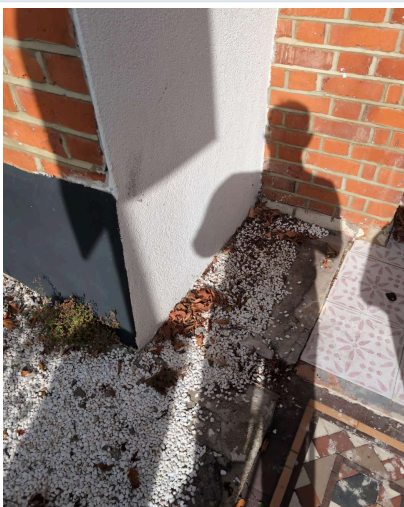
DEFECT



DEFECT



OTHER
DPC slate



DEFECT
Slate DPC In bottom right of this picture

What was considered, and what was ruled out

Every mechanism that could produce these readings is judged on the evidence, not selected at the start. What has been excluded matters as much as what has not.

MECHANISM	VERDICT	EVIDENCE
Bridging or construction defect	SUPPORTED	At the front, the render plinth runs down past the slate damp proof course into the ground, and the ground has been built up with concrete to within 70mm of the damp proof course. At the rear and along the rear side wall of the kitchen projection, the render sits in contact with the paving. Both bridge the damp proof course, and both hard surfaces throw rain back onto the base of the wall. The kitchen external side wall reads 14 to 20 %WME at skirting level against a control of 8.8.
Penetrating damp, wind driven rain	SUPPORTED	The kitchen external side wall reads 39 %WME just below the ceiling at its right hand end, and is raised at every height below it. Outside, the render has come away from the brickwork at the top of that wall, and the lead to the kitchen bay roof has gaps where it meets the render.
Penetrating damp, building defect	CANNOT BE EXCLUDED	The living room side wall reads 17 to 18 %WME in patches below 900mm, and a neighbouring lean to structure is built against the side of the house outside, so that wall could not be inspected. At the front, the cement flashing where the canopy roof meets the wall is degraded and the canopy gutter is not fitted correctly, above the cold front corner of the living room.
Plumbing or drainage leak	CANNOT BE EXCLUDED	No leak was seen and no history was available, as the property was empty. But the living room readings are grouped around the front radiator, 49.9 %WME left of it and 24.4 right of it, with salts on the wall behind it and dry wall at skirting level along the rest of the return wall. The pipes come up through the floor beside it. At the rear, one downpipe terminates straight into the ground with no visible route away.
Salt contamination of plaster	SUPPORTED	Efflorescence at low level in the kitchen, salts behind the living room radiator and throughout the cellar brickwork. A sample of the kitchen deposits, tested after the inspection, did not show the salts associated with rising damp and was consistent with efflorescence: salts carried to the surface by water evaporating from the wall. So the salts show water passing through and drying out of the kitchen walls, not ground salts drawn up from below. An electrical meter can still read salts as moisture, so drilled samples are needed to separate the two.

Historic or residual moisture	SUPPORTED	The efflorescence in the kitchen, and the tide line of staining at low level throughout the cellar, show damp has been present for some time. When the cellar held water could not be established.
Surface condensation	SUPPORTED	In the cellar only. At 21.8 degrees and 73.6 per cent the dew point was 16.9 degrees, and the coldest wall was 12.9 degrees, 4 degrees below it, so condensation was forming on the day. There is no ventilation and light black mould on the ceiling. On the ground floor every surface was 4.4 degrees or more above the dew point.
Rising damp	EXCLUDED	A slate damp proof course is present at the front. The readings do not follow the rising damp pattern of highest at the base and falling away upwards: the front return wall is dry at skirting level, the kitchen partition is drier at its base than at 600mm, and the elevated low level readings sit where the damp proof course is bridged or beside the radiator.
Interstitial condensation	EXCLUDED	The ground floor walls are of solid construction, with no cavity or lining in which condensation could form unseen.

Technical findings

This Victorian semi detached house was inspected in October 2026 from 0900 to 1135hrs. The day was dry, with no rain in the previous 48 hours, at 20.5 degrees and 62.9 per cent relative humidity outside. The property was empty. The survey covered the ground floor and the cellar, inside, and the front and rear outside. Readings were taken with a pin meter in %WME, a pinless meter in search mode, a thermal camera, a hygrometer and a surface thermometer. The side elevation could not be inspected outside, because a neighbouring lean to structure is built against it. No opening up was carried out.

The kitchen. The control on the partition to the WC reads 8.8 %WME. A moisture grid on the external side wall reads 14 to 20 at skirting level, 10 to 15 at 600mm and 1200mm, and 7.9 to 11.9 just below the ceiling, apart from the right hand end, which is raised at every height and reads 39 just below the ceiling. The partition to the living room reads 30.3 to 41 at 600mm, 25 at 1200mm in the centre, and only 7.3 to 14.3 at skirting level below. There are soft, fluffy white salt deposits at low level, which are efflorescence, with peeling paint and blown plaster. A sample of the deposits was tested after the inspection; it did not show the salts associated with rising damp, and was consistent with efflorescence. The decoration is recent and is already failing in these places. The coldest surface was the rear external wall at 17.8 degrees, 4.4 degrees above the dew point.

The living room. The control beside the French door reads 12.3 %WME. The elevated readings are grouped around the front radiator: 49.9 left of it and 24.4 right of it at 350mm, and 36.6 at 600mm on the return wall next to it, with salt deposits on the wall behind it. The rest of the front return wall is dry at skirting level and above. Left of the front window the wall reads 39.2 at skirting level. The thermal camera shows a cold patch at low level in the front corner, 17.8 degrees against 21.9 in the room, with peeling paint, and the pinless meter reads 304 there, well into its red band. The side wall reads 17 to 18 %WME, in the at risk band, in patches below 900mm, not consistent along the wall. The floor is raised, which with the air brick at the front points to a suspended timber floor; this was not confirmed.

The cellar. This is the old coal store, unconverted, with painted brick walls, a solid floor and the old coal chute in the front wall. No wall in the cellar reads dry: the lowest reading, 23.7 %WME, is on the internal wall by the consumer unit. Salts and staining show throughout the brickwork and mortar, and a horizontal tide line of staining runs at low level, which points to standing water or high ground moisture at some time. The front wall around the chute is stained, and the thermal camera picks the chute out as the coldest part of the cellar. There is light black mould on the ceiling around it. A group of drilled holes in the cellar wall appears to vent into the void beneath the living room floor. There is no other ventilation, and the door is undercut by about 3mm.

Outside, at the front. A slate damp proof course is visible at the corner of the bay. A painted render plinth to about 600mm runs down past it into the ground, so it bridges the damp proof course. The ground has been built up with concrete against the wall, with gravel over it, and at worst sits only 70mm below the damp proof course, left of the front step, where 150mm is the usual minimum. The air bricks sit at ground level, partly blocked by gravel and mortar. The canopy roof over the bay and front door meets the wall with an old cement fillet, degraded in places, and its gutter is not fitted correctly. There is loose mortar at the bottom right of the front window.

Outside, at the rear. Along the rear wall and the rear side wall of the kitchen projection, the render is taken straight down to the level paving and sits in contact with it, so the damp proof course line cannot be seen and rain splashes back off the paving onto the base of the wall. At the top of the kitchen side wall the render has come away from the brickwork. The lead to the kitchen bay roof has gaps where it meets the render and debris lying in it. One gully is blocked, and one downpipe terminates straight into the ground with no visible route away. A recently built step at the French doors may cover an air brick.

What the pattern shows. The readings are not highest at the base of the walls and falling away upwards, which is what rising damp would show, and a slate damp proof course is present. At the front and rear the damp proof course is bridged by render and by hard surfaces built up against it, so moisture and splashback reach the wall above it. The high reading at the top of the kitchen side wall roughly corresponds to where the render has come away outside, which points to rain getting in from above. The kitchen partition is highest at 600mm with a drier base, which is not the rising damp pattern, and the salts test supports that: the deposits are efflorescence, not ground salts. Efflorescence forms where water evaporates from a wall and leaves its dissolved salts on the surface, so it shows water passing through and drying out of this wall. Where that water comes from was not established on the day; the partition sits beside the void beneath the living room floor, which appears to take its air from the damp cellar. In the living room, the readings around the front radiator with dry wall either side cannot be separated on the day between the bridged front wall and the radiator pipework, so a leak cannot be excluded. An electrical meter reads salts as moisture, so drilled samples are needed to show how much of each high reading is water.

Condensation on the day. On the ground floor the rooms were at 20.5 to 22.1 degrees and 59.9 to 63.6 per cent, and every surface was 4.4 degrees or more above the dew point. The vapour pressure inside ran from 1.53 to 1.61 kPa against 1.52 kPa outside, an excess of 0.02 to 0.09 kPa. As an indication from a single visit to an empty house, the air on the ground floor is no wetter than outside, so condensation is not a cause there. The cellar is different: 21.8 degrees and 73.6 per cent, a vapour pressure of 1.92 kPa, an excess of 0.41 kPa over outside, and a coldest wall of 12.9 degrees, 4 degrees below the dew point of 16.9, so condensation was forming on the cellar walls on the day.

Conclusion

On the evidence it is highly probable that the damp on the ground floor comes from several outside sources rather than one. At the front, the render plinth bridges the slate damp proof course and the ground has been built up to within 70mm of it. At the rear and along the rear side wall, the render sits on the paving. Rain is getting in at the top of the kitchen side wall where the render has come away. A leak from the pipework to the front living room radiator cannot be excluded and needs testing. It is not rising damp, and a new damp proof course is not the answer: one is already there, and it cannot work while it is bridged.

The worst wall, the kitchen partition, has no outside face. Its readings are highest at 600mm with a drier base, which is not rising damp, and the salts test confirms the white deposits are efflorescence rather than ground salts. Efflorescence is left behind as water dries out of a wall, so this wall is taking on moisture from somewhere, and the new decoration is failing where it comes out. The source was not established on the day. The void beneath the living room floor beside it, ventilated with damp cellar air, is the first place to look, by lifting a floorboard, with drilled samples to measure the moisture in the wall itself.

The cellar is an unconverted cellar below ground and will always take some moisture through its walls. With no ventilation, condensation forms on its cold walls. Ventilating it suits its use for storage. Using it as a room would need a waterproofing design by a specialist, which is a project in its own right.

The order matters. Pressure test the heating first. Then stop the water outside: install air drains along the front, rear and rear side walls to lower the ground and stop the splashback, cut back the render where it runs past the damp proof course, clear the air bricks, and repair the render and lead at the kitchen. Let the walls dry, take drilled samples, and only then brush off the salts, make good the blown plaster and redecorate. Doing this before the sources are stopped will see the damage return.

Recommendations

Vigilant Surveys carries out no remedial work and holds no contractor ties. No quantities or materials are specified, so these can be put to any contractor for pricing. Indicative costs are set out under Costings, straight after this section, with a note on their basis.

Urgent

Actively causing damage, getting worse, or preventing other work from succeeding.

Severe

A material cause of the problem. The property will not dry until it is dealt with.

Moderate

Contributes to the problem, or should be put right as good practice.

Monitor

No action indicated on the evidence so far. Keep it under observation, and act if it changes or if it has not improved once the work above is done.

Cosmetic

Appearance only. Not a necessary measure.

These are ordered by priority, not by date. We do not set timetables, because the right sequence depends on access, on the works programme and on what the further investigation finds.

1. Have the central heating system pressure tested, and the pipework to the front living room radiator checked where it comes up through the floor.

Suitable trade: A Gas Safe registered heating engineer.

URGENT The living room readings are grouped around this radiator, 49.9 %WME left of it and 24.4 right of it, with salts on the wall behind it and dry wall either side. The property was empty, so no history of the heating was available. A pressure test is quick, and should come before drilled samples so that a leak is not mistaken for anything else.

2. At the front, install an air drain along the base of the wall, so the ground sits at least 150mm below the slate damp proof course, and/or cut the render plinth back so it finishes above the damp proof course with a bellcast drip. The air drain is the preferred option.

Suitable trade: A groundworker or general builder for the air drain, with a rendering contractor for the plinth.

SEVERE The render plinth runs down past the damp proof course into the ground, and the concrete and gravel sit as little as 70mm below it, so moisture and rain splashing back off the hard surface pass straight up past it. The air drain is preferred because it lowers the ground level against the wall and stops rain splashing back onto it. Cutting back the plinth frees the damp proof course itself and lets its line be seen and checked. Doing both deals with each. The indicative cost covers the air drain along the front, about 4 metres. Cutting back the render plinth is not included; obtain a written quotation for it.

3. Clear the front air bricks, and where they sit at or below ground level fit periscope vents so they open above the new ground level.

Suitable trade: A general builder or bricklayer.

SEVERE The air bricks are at ground level and partly blocked by gravel and mortar. They ventilate the space under what appears to be a suspended timber floor. Blocked air bricks leave that space damp, which puts the floor timbers at risk and adds moisture to the base of the walls.

4. **Install an air drain along the base of the rear wall and the rear side wall of the kitchen projection, where the render meets the paving, and/or cut the render back so it finishes above the damp proof course with a bellcast drip. The air drain is the preferred option.**

Suitable trade: A groundworker or general builder for the air drain, with a rendering contractor for the bellcast.

SEVERE Along both walls the render sits in contact with the level paving, so it bridges the damp proof course and the paving throws rain back onto the base of the wall. The air drain is preferred because it takes the paving away from the wall, lowering the ground level against it and stopping rain splashing back onto it. Cutting back the render frees the damp proof course itself. Doing both deals with each. The kitchen external side wall reads 14 to 20 %WME at skirting level against a control of 8.8. The indicative cost covers the air drain along the 8 to 10 metre run of the rear and rear side walls. Cutting back the render is not included; obtain a written quotation for it.

5. **Repair and refix the render where it has come away at the top of the kitchen side wall, so the junction with the brickwork above sheds water.**

Suitable trade: A rendering contractor.

SEVERE The kitchen side wall reads 39 %WME just below the ceiling at its right hand end, roughly corresponding to where the render has come away outside. Water getting in behind the render at the top runs down inside it.

6. **Renew the lead flashing to the kitchen bay roof where it meets the render, and clear the debris from it.**

Suitable trade: A roofer with leadwork experience.

SEVERE The lead has gaps where it meets the render and debris lying in it, which holds water against the junction. It sits on the same corner of the kitchen as the high reading near the ceiling.

7. **Confirm where the rear downpipe that terminates into the ground discharges, and clear the blocked gully. If the downpipe is not connected to a working drain or a suitably distant soakaway, redirect it.**

Suitable trade: A drainage contractor.

SEVERE Rainwater from the roof is going into the ground beside the kitchen with no proven route away, next to a wall that reads 14 to 20 %WME at skirting level. A blocked gully does the same. The cost of this depends on the extent found once the work is opened up. Obtain a written quotation.

8. **Replace the cement fillet where the front canopy roof meets the wall with a lead flashing, and refit the canopy gutter so it sits correctly under the roof edge.**

Suitable trade: A roofer with leadwork experience.

MODERATE The cement fillet is degraded in places and the gutter is not fitted correctly, so rain can reach the front wall at the canopy line. It sits above the cold front corner of the living room that reads 304 on the pinless meter.

9. **Repoint the loose mortar at the bottom right of the front window.**

Suitable trade: A bricklayer.

MODERATE Loose mortar at the window lets rain into the wall at the reveal, beside the front corner where elevated readings were found.

10. **Ventilate the cellar: provide air bricks or a vented cover at the old coal chute so air can move through it, increase the gap under the cellar door to around 10mm, and check that the chute is closed and weathertight at the front.**

Suitable trade: A general builder or bricklayer.

MODERATE The cellar has no ventilation, the air was at 73.6 per cent, and the coldest wall was 4 degrees below the dew point, so condensation forms on its walls and mould is growing on the ceiling. The staining around the chute suggests water entering at the front. The drilled holes in the cellar wall appear to vent the void beneath the living room floor, so that void is being ventilated with this damp cellar air.

11. **Clean the mould off the cellar ceiling with detergent and water or a mould and mildew cleaner, and dry thoroughly. Bleach is not needed; removing the growth is what matters.**

Suitable trade: The owner can do this.

MODERATE It keeps the mould in check while the ventilation is put right. The cold walls and damp air that feed it remain until then.

12. **Confirm that the kitchen cooker hood discharges to the outside.**

Suitable trade: The owner can check this, with a kitchen fitter if it needs changing.

MONITOR The hood is ducted and works, but where it discharges could not be seen. A hood that discharges into a void rather than outside returns the moisture from cooking to the house.

13. **Once the sources are stopped and the walls have had a drying period, brush the salt deposits off dry, make good the blown plaster in the kitchen and behind the front living room radiator, and redecorate with a breathable paint. Replaster with a system suited to salt contaminated masonry only where drilled samples show the plaster is still holding moisture.**

Suitable trade: A plasterer.

MODERATE The salts test showed the deposits are efflorescence, which forms as water dries out of a wall and stops once the wall is dry. They brush off and, unlike ground salts, do not keep drawing moisture from the air, so full replastering is not needed as a matter of course. The blown plaster has lost its key and needs making good. Doing this last means the work goes onto a dry wall and is not damaged again.

Costings

An indicative range for each recommendation that has one, in the order of the recommendations above. Read them with the note that follows.

RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	INDICATIVE COST
1. Have the central heating system pressure tested, and the pipework to the front living room radiator checked where it comes up through the floor.	Urgent	£140 to £400
2. At the front, install an air drain along the base of the wall, so the ground sits at least 150mm below the slate damp proof course, and/or cut the render plinth back so it finishes above the damp proof course with a bellcast drip. The air drain is the preferred option.	Severe	£600 to £1,120

3. Clear the front air bricks, and where they sit at or below ground level fit periscope vents so they open above the new ground level.	Severe	£200 to £420
4. Install an air drain along the base of the rear wall and the rear side wall of the kitchen projection, where the render meets the paving, and/or cut the render back so it finishes above the damp proof course with a bellcast drip. The air drain is the preferred option.	Severe	£1,200 to £2,800
5. Repair and refix the render where it has come away at the top of the kitchen side wall, so the junction with the brickwork above sheds water.	Severe	£230 to £350
6. Renew the lead flashing to the kitchen bay roof where it meets the render, and clear the debris from it.	Severe	£140 to £420
8. Replace the cement fillet where the front canopy roof meets the wall with a lead flashing, and refit the canopy gutter so it sits correctly under the roof edge.	Moderate	£440 to £1,050
9. Repoint the loose mortar at the bottom right of the front window.	Moderate	£140 to £210
10. Ventilate the cellar: provide air bricks or a vented cover at the old coal chute so air can move through it, increase the gap under the cellar door to around 10mm, and check that the chute is closed and weathertight at the front.	Moderate	£100 to £420
13. Once the sources are stopped and the walls have had a drying period, brush the salt deposits off dry, make good the blown plaster in the kitchen and behind the front living room radiator, and redecorate with a breathable paint. Replaster with a system suited to salt contaminated masonry only where drilled samples show the plaster is still holding moisture.	Moderate	£280 to £650

About the indicative costs in this report

The figures in the table above are indicative only. They are a guide to the likely order of cost, given so that you have something to work with, and they are not a quotation, an estimate or a tender. They reflect typical costs for work of this type at the date of this report and in this area. Prices move with time, with the contractor, with access, and with what is found once the work is opened up.

We have no interest in what this work costs. Vigilant Surveys carries out no remedial work. In connection with this survey and the recommendations in it we hold no link of any kind to any contractor, remediation firm, damp proofing company, drainage company, materials supplier or any other external business, we recommend no one, and we receive no commission, referral fee, introduction fee, discount or benefit of any kind from anyone who may go on to carry out the work. The figures above are worth nothing to us, whichever way they go, and that is the point of them.

No allowance is included for VAT, for scaffolding or access equipment, for making good and redecoration, for work to other elements found once an area is opened up, or for any statutory consent or professional fee. Figures are given as ranges rather than single amounts for that reason.

Before committing to any work you should obtain written quotations from suitably qualified contractors against the recommendations as they are written. Those quotations, and not these figures, are the cost of the work.

These figures are stated as at October 2026, the date of the inspection to which this report relates.

Further investigation

WHAT	WHY	WHAT IT WOULD ESTABLISH	ACCESS
Drilled samples with a salts test at the kitchen partition at 600mm, the base of the kitchen side wall and the living room wall beside the front radiator, after the heating pressure test.	An electrical meter reads salts as moisture, and salts are present. Drilled samples measure the moisture in the masonry itself, and the salts test shows how much of each reading is salt. The controls of 8.8 and 12.3 %WME are the benchmark.	Which walls hold moisture now and which only hold salts, and so where replastering is needed and where the walls just need time to dry.	Invasive, consent required
Lift a floorboard near the front wall of the living room to inspect the space beneath the floor, and check whether the new step at the rear French doors covers an air brick.	The floor appears to be suspended timber, the front air bricks are partly blocked, and the void appears to take its air from the cellar through drilled holes in the cellar wall. The timbers, the moisture in the space beneath and the ventilation route could not be seen.	The floor construction, the condition of the timbers, and whether the space beneath has cross ventilation.	Invasive, consent required
A drainage check, by water test or CCTV, of the rear downpipe that terminates into the ground and the blocked gully.	Where the downpipe discharges could not be seen, and the kitchen wall beside it gives elevated readings at low level.	Whether the rainwater is reaching a working drain, or soaking into the ground against the wall.	Non destructive
Inspect the side elevation and the junction with the neighbouring lean to structure, with the neighbour's permission.	The living room side wall reads 17 to 18 %WME in patches below 900mm, and the outside of that wall could not be seen.	Whether the lean to is letting water into the side wall or stopping it drying out, and what repair is needed.	Non destructive
A return visit to the cellar after heavy rain. If the cellar is to be used as a room, a waterproofing design by a specialist.	The day was dry, so whether water enters the cellar in wet weather could not be seen. The tide line and the staining at the chute suggest it has.	Whether water enters the cellar and where, and what a conversion would need.	Non destructive

Limitations of this inspection

Opening up	None undertaken
Instruments used	Thermal imaging, Moisture meter, Hygrometer, Surface thermometer

Weather qualification	Dry at the time of inspection, with no rainfall in the previous 48 hours
Outside the scope of this report	Timber decay, which requires a CSRT qualified surveyor, Ventilation flow rates
Positions that could not be reached	External side wall, 1 position
Thermal imaging	Thermal imaging was not carried out in Staircase. No thermal conclusion is drawn about that room.

How to read the readings in this report

Moisture readings are comparative. They are taken with an electrical resistance meter and expressed as a wood moisture equivalent, %WME. On plaster and masonry this is a comparative indication, not a measurement of how much water the material contains. That is why readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Green, below 17 %WME
Dry

Amber, 17 to 19 %WME
At risk

Red, 20 %WME and above
Wet

Pinless readings are taken with the same meter in its search mode, pressed flat to the surface with no pins, on a scale of 0 to 999. They are comparative only, not a moisture content, and are shown in their own tables, never alongside the %WME readings. They read a short way below the surface. Metal under the surface, such as a plaster corner bead, pipework or fixings, gives a false high reading, and readings through carpet or other low density coverings, or on a textured finish, are not representative.

Green, below 170
Dry

Amber, 170 to 199
At risk

Red, 200 and above
Wet

A hatched square marked x in a moisture grid is a position that could not be reached, for example behind fitted furniture. It is not a dry reading.

Dew point is calculated, not measured, from the recorded air temperature and relative humidity using the Magnus approximation. Where a surface temperature has been measured, comparing the two shows whether condensation is occurring on that surface.

Where a moisture grid is shown, the readings are laid out on the surface they were taken from. The pattern is diagnostic. Moisture rising from the ground declines with height, a localised patch points to water entering at that point, and a band with an abrupt upper edge usually means plaster carried too low rather than groundwater.

Use of this report as an example

We publish anonymised examples of our work so that people can see what a Vigilant survey report actually contains before they book one. We do that only with the written agreement of the client the report was written for. The name, the property address and the postcode are removed,

along with any photograph that would identify the house. This copy is published on that basis.

Vigilant Surveys

Rory Thorne, Damp & Compliance Surveyor. Specimen report.

vigilantsurveys.co.uk · surveys@vigilantsurveys.co.uk · 07791 178870

Readings are comparative %WME. Green below 17, amber 17 to 19, red 20 and above.