

# GLOSSARY OF SURVEY TERMS

## INTERNAL FEATURE DEFINITIONS

### CEILING AND WALLS

#### **Lath and Plaster Defined**

Laths are thin strips of timbers which are fixed to the structure. Wet plaster is applied to the laths, usually in several layers. The plaster forms a key as it is forced between the laths. This plaster, once dry, is given further coats and often a decorative finish.

#### **Plasterboard Defined**

The usual name for Gypsum plasterboard which is building board with a core of aerated gypsum, usually enclosed between two sheets of heavy paper, used as a dry lining.

#### **Dry Lining Defined (Old Properties)**

This technique is usually used on solid walls particularly where dampness is occurring. In older properties, where the internal wall is not flush, battens would be added and then lath and plaster. In more modern properties, the walls may be lined with plasterboard on battens or plaster dabs.

#### **Dry Lining Defined (Modern Properties)**

Within modern properties, dry lining is a technique used on what are known as non-traditional housing such as timber frame and proprietary systems. This will consist of timber battens which are lined with a plasterboard.

#### **Dry Lining Defined**

This term comes from the fact that plasterboard is dry and used as an inner lining within the property. Prior to this a wet plaster was used and required drying out periods which slowed the construction process down. Therefore almost universally in modern properties dry lining is used both as a ceiling material and sometimes to internally line the walls.

#### **Blown Plaster Defined**

This is where the plaster has come away from its base leaving a hollow area.

#### **Studwork Defined**

Usually a timber frame, clad in either lath and plaster or plasterboard and used to divide areas. Studwork can be structural, i.e. load bearing, or alternatively non-structural depending upon its construction. Within more modern properties, a proprietary metal system or a honeycomb cardboard may also be found. Modern Building Regulation requirements also require minimal sound transfer and this is usually adhered to by the incorporation of insulation.

### FLOORS

#### **Suspended Timber Floor Construction Defined**

A suspended timber floor usually consists of timbers spanning the ground floor, supported on piers (usually brickwork), vented via air bricks within the walls.

#### **Beam and Block Flooring Construction Defined**

This form of construction uses concrete beams to span the floor in between which blocks are fitted. The floor was not opened up. The floor void was not accessed.

#### **Chipboard Flooring/Boarding Construction Defined**

This is formed from small particles of timber which are bonded together into a board normally 2' x 4' which are then fitted over or secured to the joists forming a floor vented via air bricks within the walls.

#### **Floating Floor Construction Defined**

This type of flooring is relatively modern (last 20 years). It consists of a chipboard flooring (chipboard is formed from small particles of timber which are bonded together into a board), on a vapour barrier on a solid

insulation board on a damp proof membrane onto a concrete floor slab. The floor was not opened up. The floor void was not accessed.

### **Joist and Floorboard Construction Defined**

These are usually at first floor level consisting of a joist supported from the external walls, either built in or, in more modern times, sitting upon joist hangers, sometimes taking additional support from internal walls, with floorboards fixed down upon it.

## **DOORS**

### **Hollow Core Doors Defined**

This is a modern door which uses hardboard as its outer surface and a cardboard latticework as its inner surface. It is very common on modern properties and relatively cheap, but they do damage easily.

# EXTERNAL FEATURE DEFINITIONS

The definitions below are for features found on the outside of a building.

## CHIMNEYS AND ROOFS

### **Party Structures Defined - Party Wall Act Etc. 1996**

A structure which both parties enjoy the use of or benefit from. An example of this would be where both parties gain support from a wall or utilise a chimney or chimneys.

*Any work to party structures, such as party walls or party chimney stacks, require agreement under the Party Wall Act. We would be more than happy to offer you help and advice in this matter.*

### **Tile on Edge Defined**

A tile sitting sideways, bedded in cement mortar which has been utilised as a flashing. Due to the cement mortar it is bedded in being brittle and prone to cracking, this is not an ideal material. We would always recommend the use of lead flashings.

### **Flaunchings Defined**

A low, wide cement mortar fillet surrounding the flue terminal on top of the chimney stack to throw off rainwater.

### **Flashings Defined**

Flashings prevent dampness from entering the property, usually at junctions where materials change. Such a junction is the one between the chimney and the roof.

### **Spalling Defined**

Spalling occurs to brick or stone when water penetrates the surface and via freezing and thawing starts to cause deterioration to the surface. This in turn allows further water penetration and the surface breaks up further. This ultimately can lead to water damage or structural damage to the area.

### **Re-Pointing Defined**

Re-pointing is carried out where the existing mortar has failed and broken away to stop damp penetration and further deterioration. The mortar should be raked out to approximately 20mm and then replaced with a mortar of a similar type, therefore, stopping damp occurring.

### **Capping Defined**

Capping is a practice used when chimneys are no longer in use to prevent moisture from entering the structure in the form of rainwater via the chimney. This usually involves the closing of the chimney with a tile or slab positioned across. It should include vents to allow air circulation.

### **Parapet Walls Defined**

These walls are usually above the roof line and often sit on the boundary of the property. Due to their position they are relatively exposed and suffer from deterioration due to the elements.

### **Blinding Defined**

This is where a mortar is used to bed the slate or tile.

### **Polycarbonate Defined**

Transparent, extremely tough plastic sheet, used for security glazing. It may also be an insulating light panel, double walled or triple walled, or 10 or 16mm thick. It is not a fire hazard as it has low ignitability and low flame spread, and releases little heat and little smoke if burnt. It can be coated to resist damage from ultraviolet.

### **Flashband Defined**

Flashband is a sticky backed felt which is best used for temporary repairs only.

### **Proprietary Flashings Defined**

These are typically supplied by the manufacturer of the roof covering and will be specially made to fit the

profile of the roof covering. Typically they are aluminium.

### **Cement Fillets/Cement Flashings**

This is where cement has been used to cover up or fill the junctions between two areas, for example between a roof and a wall to help prevent dampness. Cement is a brittle material and prone to cracking which in turn allows dampness into the structure. We would always recommend they are replaced with lead.

### **Torching Defined**

Usually lime mortar dabs (but can be moss) which the slates sit upon. These are used to reduce the wind traveling through the building therefore reducing the risk of wind damage.

### **Nail Sickness Defined**

The weakening of the fixing nails to slates or tiles due to the nails which fix them to the battens rusting. This is normally attributed to problems with slate roofs.

### **Lead Tingles or Lead Slaps Defined**

These are strips of lead usually about 25mm wide which are used to secure slates where they have slipped.

### **Turnerising Defined**

"Turnerising" is a process used usually when roofs have started to deteriorate or leak and it involves the covering of a roof with a mesh and coating in bitumen. It is almost impossible to economically save or re-use materials which have been treated in this manner.

### **Nibbed Clay Tiles Defined**

A nibbed tile is one which has raised areas known as nibs, usually two in number, at the top of the tile to enable the tile to be fixed to the roof batten which, in turn, fixes to the roof structure.

### **Blinding Defined**

This is where a mortar is used to bed the slate or tile.

### **Polycarbonate Defined**

Transparent, extremely tough plastic sheet, used for security glazing. It may also be an insulating light panel, double walled or triple walled, or 10 or 16mm thick. It is not a fire hazard as it has low ignitability and low flame spread, and releases little heat and little smoke if burnt. It can be coated to resist damage from ultraviolet.

### **Flashband Defined**

Flashband is a sticky backed felt which is best used for temporary repairs only.

### **Proprietary Flashings Defined**

These are typically supplied by the manufacturer of the roof covering and will be specially made to fit the profile of the roof covering. Typically they are aluminium.

### **Delamination Defined**

This occurs in sedimentary and metamorphic rocks such as slate which are built up of layers. It simply refers to the layers breaking down.

## **WITHIN THE ROOF SPACE**

### **Sarking Felt/Underfelt Defined**

This is the felt that sits between the roof covering and the timber battens and forms an additional protective layer to stop the wind lifting the roof and to stop the elements from penetrating the structure. This was first used in the late 1940's/early 1950's and is a requirement for current Building Regulations.

### **Close Boarding Defined**

These are timbers positioned on the common rafters which are butt jointed together. They add to the wind resistance and water-tightness of the roof together with the overall structural integrity of the roof. Usually this type of roof does not have an underfelt, this can lead to problems if the roof is not cross-battened as wet rot will occur to the underside of the timbers. This is very difficult to identify.

### **Feather Edge Boarding Defined**

These are timbers positioned on the common rafters which form the slope of the roof. These timbers are butted together but they are cut at an angle, or feather edged, to give a lip for the nibs of the tiles to sit upon.

### **Fire Walls Defined**

Fire walls help prevent the spread of fire through roofs and are a relatively recent Building Regulation requirement .

### **Purlins Defined**

The purlin is the horizontal timber member usually running from gable end to gable end and parallel with the walls which supports the jack or common rafters (the angled rafters forming the slope to the roof).

### **Ridge Board Defined**

The ridge board forms the apex of the roof and usually denotes that the roof was constructed on site and joins the jack rafters or common rafters together. These are the rafters that form the slope to the pitch of the roof.

### **Common Rafters Defined**

The rafters form the slope to which the battens are secured and in turn the roof covering is also secured too.

### **Couple Roof Defined**

A traditional pitched roof with rafters and no tie beam, used for short spans up to 3m, assuming standard joist centres.

### **Close-Couple Roof Defined**

This is a traditional framed roof with common rafters joined at the wall-plate level with a tie beam, also used for ceiling joists, used for spans up to about four metres, assuming standard joist centres.

### **King Post Truss Defined**

A traditional timber roof truss with a vertical post from the apex to the centre of the bottom tie beam, suitable for spans up to about 11m, but like the queen-post truss not now used for new work in Britain.

### **Prefabricated Truss Defined**

This is a roof truss made in a factory using gang nails at the joints, it is then transported to the site and normally lifted into place. This type of construction has been used for about the past 30 to 40 years.

### **Wall Plates Defined**

Wall plates are the horizontal members normally timber, although they sometimes can be metal RSJ's, fixed to the top of the wall within the roof space. They hold the common rafters from the roof in place but can be susceptible to dampness.

### **Battens Defined**

A small section, normally of timber, to which sheet materials, slates and roof tiles are fixed.

### **Wind Bracing Defined**

These are timbers fixed across the roof structure to stop movement when it is windy.

## **GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES**

### **Surcharging Defined**

This term is usually used in relation to valley gutters and is where there is too much rain for the valley gutter to cope with.

## **WALLS**

### **Cornice Defined**

This is the top course of bricks where the house meets the roof.

**Efflorescence Defined**

This is where salts appear on the surface of the brickwork in a white dust or crystal formation

**Lime Mortar Defined**

mix used to bed bricks upon; its characteristics being that it flexes and moves with the structure. It was used up to the War years.

**Cement Mortar Defined**

sand cement mix used commonly in brick houses from about the First World War onwards and is relatively strong and brittle and therefore does not allow much movement.

**Re-Pointing Defined**

Re-pointing is carried out where the existing mortar has failed and broken away to stop damp penetration and further deterioration. The mortar should be raked out to approximately 20mm and then replaced with a mortar of a similar type, therefore, stopping damp occurring.

**Engineering Brick Defined**

A clay brick of high compressive strength and low absorption, eg Staffordshire blue bricks and some reds. Class A bricks are stronger than 70 N/mm<sup>2</sup> and have an absorption below 4.5%. Class B have a 50 N/mm<sup>2</sup> compressive strength and maximum 7% water absorption.

**Fletton Brick Defined**

A low cost pale red brick made from Oxford clay with traces of coal that burn during firing, saving energy. It is pressed like many clay bricks and can be sand faced, pigmented, or textured for use as facings.

**Bonding Timbers Defined**

These are timbers used in construction of walls usually using a lime mortar construction. Bonding timbers are used horizontally and add strength to the wall enabling additional lifts of brickwork.

**Render Defined**

A sand and cement external coating applied in two or three coats or layers.

**Bell-Mouths Defined**

A bell-mouth is a curve at the base of a wall which throws the water away from the structure therefore preventing dampness.

**Pier Defined**

This can be the load bearing brickwork in a wall between openings, or a short buttress on one or both sides of a wall, bonded to it for stability.

**Cavity Wall Ties Defined**

A fastener across a cavity wall to hold the two leaves together. Usually made of stainless or galvanised steel wire or strip, sometimes plastic, and has a twist or bend near the middle to form a drip so that water cannot pass. Wall ties are built into the brickwork bed joints as work proceeds and may have a large plastics washer to hold cavity insulation in place.

**Recessed Joint Defined**

A mortar joint set back about 6mm from the face of the wall, either a raked-out joint or one made by tooling. It is used for brickwork, and for stonework to prevent flushing, and is strongly shadowed.

**FOUNDATIONS****London Clay in General**

This property stands on London Clay as with the majority of properties in London. It is therefore more susceptible than most should drains leak or trees be allowed to overgrow etc. It is not unusual to have some settlement in London properties and from our inspection of the walls we have found nothing unusual.

**TREES****Influencing Distance Defined**

This is the distance in which a tree may be able to cause damage to the subject property.

## **EXTERNAL JOINERY**

### **Over Lights Defined**

This is a window above the door allowing light into the hallway area.

### **Secondary Glazing Defined**

This is where a secondary window has been added, usually to prevent draughts. We would also draw to your attention that these type of windows can be restrictive in the case of the emergency when, for example, a fire has occurred in the property.

### **Trickle Vents Defined**

Small vents to the windows to allow air movement inside the property to stop a build up of fumes or humidity.