

1. INFORMATION

- 1.1 Name and Address of Client** - M....
- 1.2 Address of Property** -
- 1.3 Local Taxes** - To be confirmed by the Notaire.
- 1.4 Date of Inspection** - 26th September 2002
- 1.5 Weather** - It was bright, sunny and dry at the time of my inspection after a period of mixed weather including some severe rain.
- 1.6 Limits of Inspection** - As you will appreciate, some parts of the property presented considerable difficulty and potential hazard in regard to access and the advice provided in this report relates to accessible areas.
- 1.7 Tenure** - Details to be provided by the Notaire.
- 1.8 Tenancies** - The property was substantially vacant at the time of my inspection apart from some of the outbuildings apparently being used for storage purposes and your legal advisors will no doubt confirm full vacant possession on completion of your purchase.

2. DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Description of Property** - In its present form, the property comprises a modest agricultural dwelling including an assortment of agricultural buildings standing in this relatively isolated location partway between St Pavie and Lome just off the D92.

The residential portion of the property is principally divided into two halves with a large shower room and WC located to the rear of what I assume to have originally been pair of semi-detached, single storey, artisan dwellings which have been opened into a single property that has more recently been the subject of some partial renovation and improvement.

The residential portion of the property is attached to an open barn with wooden stairs rising to a first floor roof void above the living accommodation and it is presumed that this will convert to additional living accommodation, which I assume will incorporate the open barn itself with some modification.

Clearly such upgrading together with the change of use of any of the agricultural buildings into residential accommodation will require the consent of the Marie but, in discussions with the vendor's daughter and her brother who would appear to occupy neighbouring property, an application would seem likely to be favourably received, subject to certain fundamental requirements in regard to the manner in which the appearance of the property might be changed and the location of windows etc.

The range of more readily usable outbuildings, beyond the barn already mentioned, includes a single storey stone building with a corrugated metal roof which bridges the gap between the open barn and what would appear to be a cattle house of similar stone construction but under a corrugated asbestos roof which would appear to have been fairly recently renewed.

Beyond this, there are a number of totally dilapidated structures in an assortment of stone and timber which would appear to constitute open barns, stores and, possibly, a pig pen and the whole stands on a regularly shaped plot, bounded by the roadway on the northerly side to the front and a shared access driveway to the easterly side. The dimensions of this were noted by pegs and, again, you will no doubt have satisfied yourself as to the area of land involved.

In passing I would comment that some of the damage, which I noted at the property, would be entirely consistent with what I have noted in many parts of northern France and has been shown to have been caused during the Second World War. On visiting the adjacent town similar damage was noted on many of the houses. As I say, this is conjecture but worthy of note.

2.2 Accommodation - The residential part of the property principally extends to two rooms accessed via an external door with an independent doorway to the second room and to the rear, backing to the road frontage, there is a shower room and WC.

2.3 Outbuildings/Parking - As detailed under the description above, there is a large open barn with high doors opening to the road frontage, this effectively extending over two storeys, adjoining which there is a single storey brick building with, effectively, three or four bays and what would appear to be an interesting, if shallow, roof structure beneath the corrugated metal roof.

Finally there is what I assume to be some form of modest cattle shed, this being effectively one and a half storeys high under an asbestos monopitched roof, which affords some loft storage space. The remainder of the buildings comprises an assortment of dilapidated timber barns and stores under a variety of roofing, which would substantially be beyond the scope of constructive advice.

2.4 Age of Property - A carved keystone on the road frontage of the open barn would indicate that this part of the property at least dates from 1892. It is not clear as to how the residential part relates to same from an age standpoint although the configuration of the walls and chimneystacks would seem to indicate that this is older.

2.5 Orientation - The property has an approximately southerly aspect to the front, which is away from the road that is therefore on the northerly side.

2.6 Location/Amenities - This is an area where I assume you will have satisfied yourself and would frankly be beyond the scope of my advice.

2.7 Summary of Construction - Dealing initially with main dwelling this is of cut block construction rising to a double pitch roof, sloping front and rear this in turn being finished with what would appear to be asbestos artificial slates, a material quite commonly used in the area and rising to a ridge.

The lower rear portion of the house, on the road frontage, which incorporates the shower room and the 'cave' with water pumping and filtration equipment seems to have been annexed to the back of the house and is of rendered stone construction, the roof line having been extended down and over this part.

The adjoining farm buildings are constructed principally in random stone, which has been poorly formed and pointed in, the whole being finished with a thin render coat that has degraded and washed away. The roof covering to the outbuildings is in a combination of slate, corrugated metal and corrugated asbestos. The remaining outbuildings are principally of timber construction and in varying states of disrepair.

3. EXTERNAL CONDITION

3.1 Chimneys/Flues - A single chimneystack rises above the Westerly end of the property. This being of block construction and rendered rising to a corbelled upper course and it has been flashed to the roof in sand and cement. The associated fireplace within the property has been covered in although the flue would seem to exhaust the solid fuel stove in the kitchen area.

At the opposite end of the house there is a matching stack, which rises through the common wall with the open barn although this has been sealed off within the property and now seems to be redundant. You will possibly have noted that a large portion of the blockwork has been taken out of one side of this stack and the whole would require to be substantially rebuilt if you are contemplating opening the fireplace and reusing same.

The westerly stack seems to have been reformed and rendered over which not only will the easterly one require attention to the blockwork but the upper brickwork will require to be totally repointed. Both flue must be checked for free exhaust and swept prior to use.

3.2 Roof - The main structure has a double pitch roof sloping off front and rear which is covered with what would appear to be concrete asbestos artificial slates on hangers and I would seem clear that this has been stripped and recovered in fairly recent times. You may well have a view in regard to concrete asbestos as an appropriate building material and I can only add that, at the present time advice is that if it is not damaged you can

cause far more problems by removing it and, in the main, this roof appears to be substantial.

The 'slates' have, however, been laid directly onto the battens without the benefit of any underlying felt which may be a consideration when you convert the roof void to residential accommodation.

As noted earlier, this roof has been swept out over the lower rear portion of the property on the road frontage and it would seem that the whole has been well formed with proper flashings and soakers where it abuts the stacks and the flank walling to the barn.

It is disappointing that along the lower edge of this part of the roof, the whole has been poorly finished with minimal jetting to ensure that surface water is thrown clear of the rear wall and the rafter ends are also exposed. I would suggest that you give serious consideration to some form of fascia to support guttering to preserve the fabric of the building.

3.3 Rainwater Goods - The area to the road frontage has been covered under the previous heading and you will note that on the opposite roof slope a metal trap has been formed which is designed to stop surface water running over the edge of the roof slope and to catch it in some form of downpipe. To this end it has to be said that the present form is unsatisfactory and a proper downpipe should be installed discharging to a soakaway or some form of water storage point.

3.3 Walls/DPC - As noted, the main portion of this part of the property is principally of block construction, although it does incorporate some poorly formed stonework on the road frontage and the Westerly end has in fact been rendered with a rubbed up sand and cement finish.

Whilst the road elevation, which is principally the stone work with some inset blocking is extensively pointed under the degrading render, I am not quite sure what you are going to be able to do about the damp in this area beyond, perhaps tanking the internal wall as a horizontal damp proof course will be almost impossible to install.

This elevation is also showing that it has had some movement to the north westerly corner of the property and whilst I found no evidence that this is currently an ongoing situation, the way the base has washed out may in the longer term require some form of underpinning to stabilise the corner. I would certainly look to properly forming the adjoining ditch, maybe even incorporating some form of culverting along the line of the wall to obviate ongoing 'wash out' of the subsoil.

On the basis of a detailed, albeit relatively brief inspection, I am only able to make assessments of what I was able to see at the time of my visit and to this end, you may be able to take some comfort from the fact that there is no evidence of serious ongoing movement since the flank wall was rendered.

At the Westerly end of the property there is a lean too structure, similarly formed in block and slate partially rendered. This has been partially rendered but was again found to be in generally poor condition and the adjoining leanto should be removed at an early date as it is beyond reasonable repair.

I found no evidence of any form of damp proof course within the residential part of the property and, in view of the general form of the building construction; I am of the opinion that some form of tanking on the internal walls is likely to prove the most effective means of dealing with the obvious damp problems but this will be covered in greater detail under the relevant heading.

3.5 External Joinery - This is limited to the front elevation and principally constitutes shutters, which would best be described as past there best. The joinery generally, including windows and doors is in need of replacement or at the very least a comprehensive overhaul as it has been allowed to deteriorate due to a general lack of decoration.

3.6 Windows - I feel this has been substantially covered under the previous heading and you may well feel that, with the modification and improvements you are considering, a replacement to bring the whole in line with your plans may well prove the sensible way forward.

3.7 Decorations - There is little which can sensibly be said in this regard.

3.8 Garage/Outbuildings - I have already briefly covered the small annexed store to the southwesterly corner of the property. Again it is block construction with a mono pitch timber roof extending out to a lower timber roof, severely attacked by termites. This is little more than a block work store, although it does have a small loft area and the whole might make some form of boiler house dependent on your plans. The adjacent leanto should be removed.

To the rear of the property there is a small 'cave' set within the structure and is on a line with the shower room as described. The problems associated with the fabric of this area have already been covered.

This area, apart from offering limited storage also houses the tank and electric pump, for the well, which is, I understand, located at the rear of the open barn under the circular over. There is also a filtration system within the cave and, whilst I am assured that the whole functions properly, this cannot be confirmed and would certainly be beyond the scope of any advice which I might be able to provide.

To the easterly side of the property there is the large open barn area with suspended mezzanine floor which is accessed via the wooden staircase that also gives access to the roof void of the house. The mezzanine floor, although originally substantially formed is very much showing its years and should, in my view be treated with great caution.

This area also accesses the opening to the roof void of the single storey stone building under the corrugated steel roof. Only a limited view of this area was possible at the time of my visit but the timber structure of the roof seemed to be much in line with both the main barn and the house. It seems likely therefore that, if you consider modifying this structure, the roof may prove an interesting feature.

The roof to the barn itself, whilst more mature, appears to be finished with proper slate and the whole structure seemed in surprisingly good order, apart from the attack by wood boring insect which is prevalent throughout the property.

There is a double entrance out to the road with an inset small access door also. This area is of stone construction as is the rear part, and a number of fractures indicate movement over the years although it is impossible to advise as to whether this is an ongoing situation. The joinery to the barn by way of doors, steps and flooring is very much showing its age due to a general lack of maintenance with early attention being required to the flashings generally. Clearly a comprehensive programme of renovation is required but it would be sensible to first establish your plans in regard to the modification of the buildings as a whole.

This brings us to what would appear to be the stone built shed under the corrugated metal roof, which I have already touched on. There is storage over which appear to be accessed from the barn as described and I would reiterate that the roof structure looked interesting from my limited inspection.

The part of the building has clearly been subject to structural movement and it may well be the pivotal point of movement differential between the two more substantially formed ends of the building. Clearly, some comprehensive work will be required to modify this into the residential part of the building although with some modification, it might prove to be an interesting single storey feature rising into a vaulted roof. Again, a severe attack by wood boring insect is a considerable factor.

The cowshed, which sits at the easterly end of the main buildings, running at right angles to the whole, is of stone construction under a corrugated concrete asbestos monopitch roof, providing loft storage over the biers.

This would appear to have been partially rebuilt at lower levels and, as with the previously described central section of the property there has been a good deal of structural movement although at the time of my inspection this does not seem to have radically affected the stability of the building at the present time.

A comprehensive overhaul is, however, urgently required with regard to the structural timbers in particular as these are deflecting and prejudicing the integrity of some of the

stonework. It is not entirely clear how this part of the property might reasonably be incorporated into the whole. The corrugated asbestos roof is, again, an area for you to note, particularly as this is by no means as satisfactory as the asbestos 'slates' covering the main house.

I am afraid that the remainder of the buildings would be beyond the scope of my report except to point out that the condition of some of them must be deemed hazardous in the extreme.

- 3.9 Site** - The site extends out to the corner post, which I understand you have been shown to provide you with a rectangular plot in respect of which I assume you will have satisfied yourself. There will, of course, be a fairly substantial liability to fence.
- 3.10 Drains** - There is a septic tank at the front westerly corner, which I am assured by both the lady and gentleman who were in attendance at the time of my visit is in full working order although you will appreciate that it is impossible to confirm same. I would, however, recommend that you ensure the outfalls from this system have a right to discharge where they are laid.

4. INTERNAL CONDITION

- 4.1 Roof Space** - As with all my comments under internal condition, the advice in regard to the roof void extends only to the main house and the outbuildings are specifically excluded except to the extent that the majority of defects on which I shall comment regarding the house certainly manifest to a greater or lesser degree as far as the outbuildings are concerned.

Access to the roof void is currently by way of the external stairway running up through the open barn and this must be treated with caution as it is far from stable and, as with much of the timber has been prone to attack by wood boring insect.

As previously noted, the roof has been stripped and recovered directly over the battens which are supported on rafters which bear onto somewhat aged and undersized purlins in addition to which there is cross bracing and the whole is again subject to a heavy attack by wood boring insect. The cross bracing may affect your plans for using the roof void and will have to be carefully considered to avoid prejudicing the integrity of the roof structure.

This has got a stone and tiled floor which is degrading in places but was substantially found to be in acceptable order and the form of construction is generally reasonably trouble free although, again, careful consideration must be given before opening through to provide access from ground floor level and it may well prove necessary to first provide a level of support by way of lower walling before contemplating opening through.

You will note that, where the lower roof has been swept out over the shower room and cave, it has been necessary to carry out some modification to what must have been the rear wall to the main house and some fairly light weight wood has been used to support the battens and tiling although to date this does not seem to have presented problems. I would, however, suggest that the loadings are, at best, marginal.

- 4.2 Ceilings** - The ceilings are formed directly under the roof void floor structure and were generally found to be in reasonable order although may be affected by such modifications as you may choose to carry out.
- 4.3 Walls/Partitions** - It was evident at the time of my inspection that there has been some form of outwards movement in the front wall which has moved away from the central internal partition wall. Clearly this has been repair in the past but has moved again subsequent to that and I feel it would be prudent to provide some form of tie in this area to lock these two areas together.

My concern in this regard is that this might, in part, be related to some form of roof spread and this would one again emphasise the need to plan carefully before making any modifications to the roof structure. The alternative might be to place ties from the front to the internal rear wall in possibly two more points, after tying in the front wall to the partition, as this would effectively lock the whole together and allow a bit more flexibility within the roof void.

As has been touched on at a number of points within the body and will be covered in more detail under the relevant heading, rising dampness was prevalent throughout the interior of the property both on the inside of external walls and to the internal partition walls which must be attended to as a fundamental matter before looking at what alterations you might be considering.

4.4 Fireplaces/Chimney Breasts – There would appear to be original open fireplaces at either end of the property, the easterly end having been bricked up whilst the westerly has been boarded over. My advice has substantially been covered earlier.

4.5 Floors - The flooring is in a variety of finishes and this is an area where you will have to take a view. Dampness is again a factor although a horizontal bitumen damp proof membrane beneath whatever form of flooring you ultimately decide on will probably prove the most effective way forward.

4.6 Dampness - This has been touched on at a number of points within the body of this report and is clearly one of the most fundamental aspects, which you will have to deal with. There are a number of ways of dealing with this but I feel that you will be limited in the light of the form of building construction.

To this end therefore I would suggest some form of tanking is likely to form the most satisfactory approach to the problem, striking off the existing plaster to all internal wall surfaces to a height of not less than 1.20 mtrs and replastering with three coats of an appropriate sand and cement with an additive like Sika or similar to prove an appropriate water resistant barrier.

4.7 Timber Defects - It is obvious that the property has suffered from a very severe attack from wood boring insect and I found no evidence of any treatment having been carried out although this should be confirmed with the vendor. I would have expected this to have been covered within the transfer and is a matter to be taken up with the Notaire.

4.8 Internal Joinery - There is so little internal joinery that this is not an area where I would consider there is more to suggest than that you should take a view.

4.9 Windows - Again, I do not feel that there is much to be said in this regard.

4.10 Kitchen - There is currently no kitchen as such.

4.11 Sanitary - This is an area where I assume you will have satisfied yourself

4.12 Decorations - non-existent.

4.13 Cellars - Not applicable.

4.14 Thermal Insulation - non-existent

5. SERVICES

5.1 Electricity - Electricity rises to the distribution unit and it is my advice that this should be treated as potentially hazardous until formally tested and approved. Note the particular hazard of the electrical system in the shower room.

5.2 Gas - Non applicable.

5.3 Plumbing - As has been described, water is seemingly pumped from a well located beneath the road end of the open barn and whilst the associated plant appeared somewhat primitive, I can only say that I am assured, by the vendor's daughter, that this functions well. It would certainly be beyond the scope of my advice.

The internal plumbing appeared modern and again I can only advise that I am informed the whole functions well.

5.4 Central Heating - non-existent

6. MATTERS FOR LEGAL ADVISORS

- 6.1 Roads and Footpaths** - It is important to establish rights, liabilities and any potential commitments in regard to the highway and the access road to the property.
- 6.2 Rights of Way/Easements** - Again, I would expect this to be something checked and confirmed by the Notaire.
- 6.3 Road Agreements** - Not applicable.
- 6.4 Management Companies** - Not applicable.
- 6.5 Drains and Sewers** - The property is on a private septic tank although you should ensure rights to drain away via the outfalls.
- 6.6 Planning/Building Regulations** - I noted nothing, which I felt to have significance in this area, but would emphasise the necessity to obtain permissions before carrying out modification works to the property. In this regard you may well find the vendor's son who I believe to be a neighbour may well be able to offer advice.
- 6.7 Planning/Highway Proposals** - I noted nothing of significance but hopefully the Notaire will be able to advise in this regard.

7. GENERAL ADVICE

- 7.1 Schedule of Hazards** - I would stress that the following Schedules are for your convenience and must not be treated as definitive lists of works or other matters requiring attention/consideration. It is important that the report be considered as a whole and all points raised under 7.1 and 7.2 must be read in conjunction with the overall report.

1. Be aware of potential instability of westerly chimneystack and secure.
2. Check all fireplace flues for free exhaust and ensure adequate external ventilation to rooms using fireplaces.
3. Check and ensure stability of staircase and mezzanine flooring to the open barn and exercise great care in use of same.
4. Be aware of the considerable potential hazards associated with the timber outbuildings as described within the report.
5. Note my advice in regard to any proposed changes in the flooring to the roof void associated with interfloor access.
6. Note my advice in regard to any proposed modification to the cross bracing or alterations to the roof timbers of the house.
7. Note my advice in regard to tying in the front wall of the property.
8. Treat the electrics as potentially hazardous pending a formal electrical test and upgrade.
9. Carry out checks of the plumbing and upgrade as required including checking the plumping/filtration regarding the well water, which should be tested prior to use.
10. Ensure structural timbers to the main outbuildings have not had their structural integrity prejudiced with particular reference to the wall of the cow shed.

- 7.2 Schedule of Repairs** - I would draw your attention to the advice given at the commencement of paragraph 7.1, which is equally applicable to the following Schedule.

1. Properly reform the eaves to the front elevation of the main house and provide an adequate means of surface water disposal.
2. Provide a proper means of surface water disposal from the rear gutter system.
3. Upgrade rainwater goods generally in regard to the outbuildings.
4. Note comments in regard to the condition and deflections evident in the wall fronting the road at the northwesterly corner make good and monitor.
5. Consider the provision of culverting to the front ditch to avoid wash out of the sub soil from the foundations in the area of the shower room.
6. Stitch and pressure grout the cracking to the external walls as required.
7. Re-render the external walls as required.
8. Overhaul and renew external joinery as required to the main house and the outbuildings.

9. Properly prepare, undercoat and gloss external joinery.
10. Establish the situation regard the attack by wood boring insect and treat appropriately, proving an inhibitor to unaffected wood, cutting out an renewing areas which are beyond repair.
11. Consider the removal of the small leanto to the outside store at the southwesterly corner of the building.
12. Attend to flashing on the barn roof.
13. Give thought to future attention to the steel and asbestos roofing.
14. Once the outbuildings have been repaired give serious consideration to rendering up the exteriors to preserve the fabric of the building for the future.
15. Budget for fencing in the plot once it has been formally agreed.
16. Note comments in regard to the timbers supporting the swept lower roof.
17. Note my advice in regard to an appropriate form of damp proofing, seek supporting advice and carry out the works.
18. I repeat my advice in regard to treatment and future prevention in respect of attack by wood boring insect.

I trust that you find the foregoing report provides you with the information you were seeking, but hope that you will feel free to contact me with any queries or should there be other areas in respect of which you feel I may be able to assist. In the meantime, I remain

Yours sincerely,

Ian Graham FRICS
Chartered Surveyor