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House damage at Newnham

P.C. Stevenson

The house owned and occupied by R. Spooner at 16 Ronneby Road, Newnham was examined on 18 May 1973.

The house stands on land sloping at 2-4° toward the west on Tertiary clay and weathered Tertiary dolerite gravel. The clay produced by the weathering of these rocks is subject to marked seasonal shrinkage changes.

The front and back walls of the house are cracked both by failure of bricks and movement along joints. The total movement is small, not more than 6 mm was visible in any one place. The direction of movement is not well defined, but cracks appear to open upward, suggesting a hogging strain. No ground disturbance even on concrete paths can be seen and the presence of any ground stress from landslip is discounted.

It would seem that inhomogeneities in the material under the foundations are producing differential movement as the clay-rich part of the ground shrinks and the remainder does not. Measures to maintain constant moisture conditions in the foundations would be helpful, but it appears unlikely that the situation will deteriorate markedly.

[25 May 1973]