Insight 1 Unit 3: Image Set
How does a building work?

A building has to withstand much physical punishment during its lifetime in use and through lack of maintenance. The effects of the weather can also play a large part in the destruction of its architecture and detail by breaking down the materials from which it was built. This requires an understanding of how it was constructed and what has since happened through changes it has experienced.

The Insight Unit relates to the www.understandingconservation.org Unit3: Investigation, materials and technology to offer pointers as to how such investigations might be structured and what needs to be covered.

1: Stanley Mills


2: Exeter. Wear patterns through heavy pedestrian use over a lengthy period of time

3: St Nicholas Church, Aberdeen. Archaeological excavations

4: Edinburgh. Installation of infrastructure, preceded by archaeological investigations

5: Lincoln. Masonry soiling: in part by pollution and interaction with the materials


6: Oxford. Stone deterioration
of base course below different material

7: Exeter. Severe deterioration of squared blocks of stone masonry caused by weathering


8: Tynemouth. Lost of original
facework through spalling brickwork

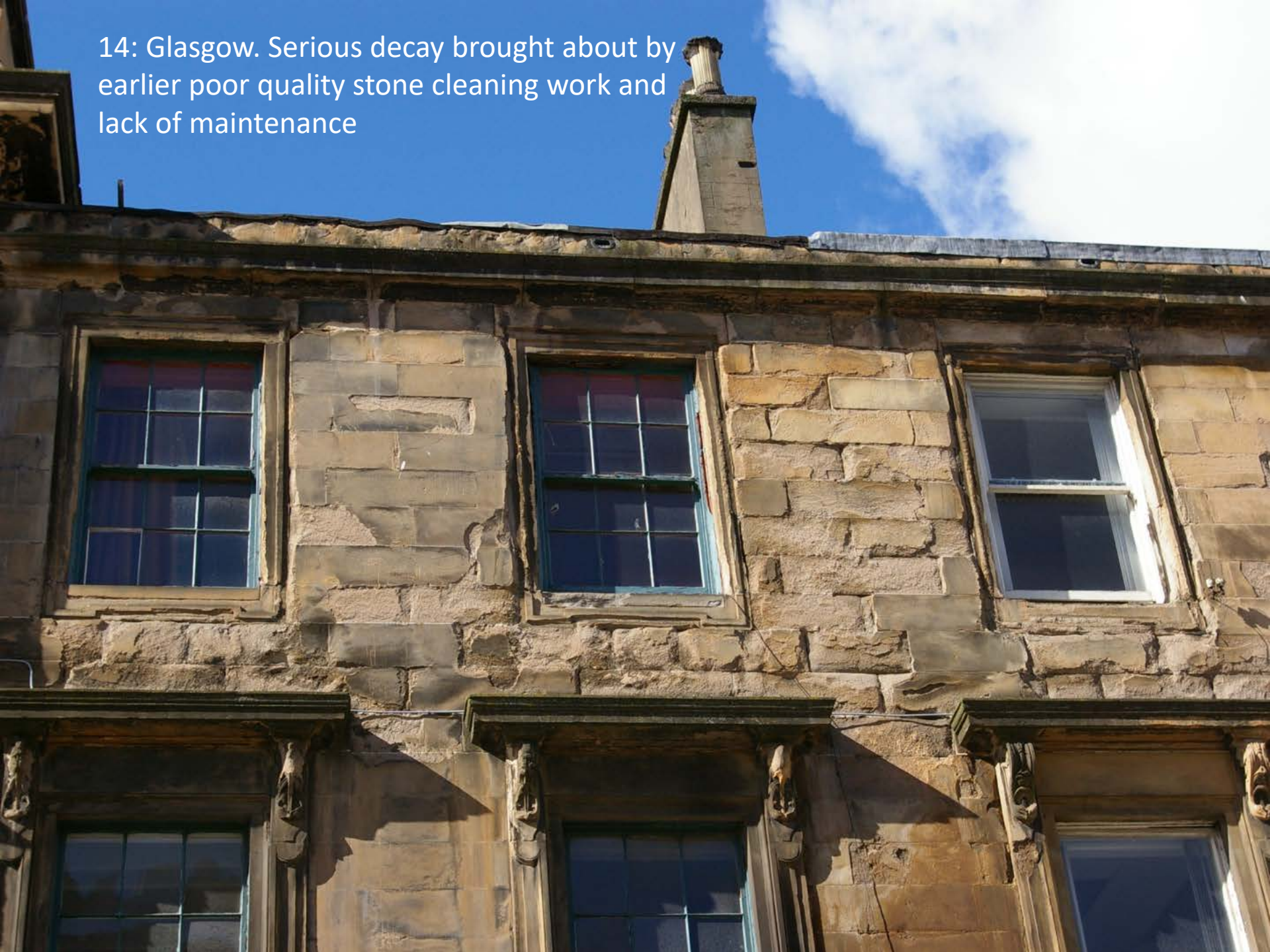
9: Barnard Castle. Structural movement as a result of ground movement


10: Bath. Design alterations with an addition to the original structure, combined with lack of maintenance

11: Glasgow. Application of non-breathable paint to stonework, coupled with water penetration from the parapet leading to the loss of the applied surface, making it more difficult and expensive to deal with

12: South Queensferry. Growth occurring in stonework joints below a broken gutter resulting in water saturation of the wall

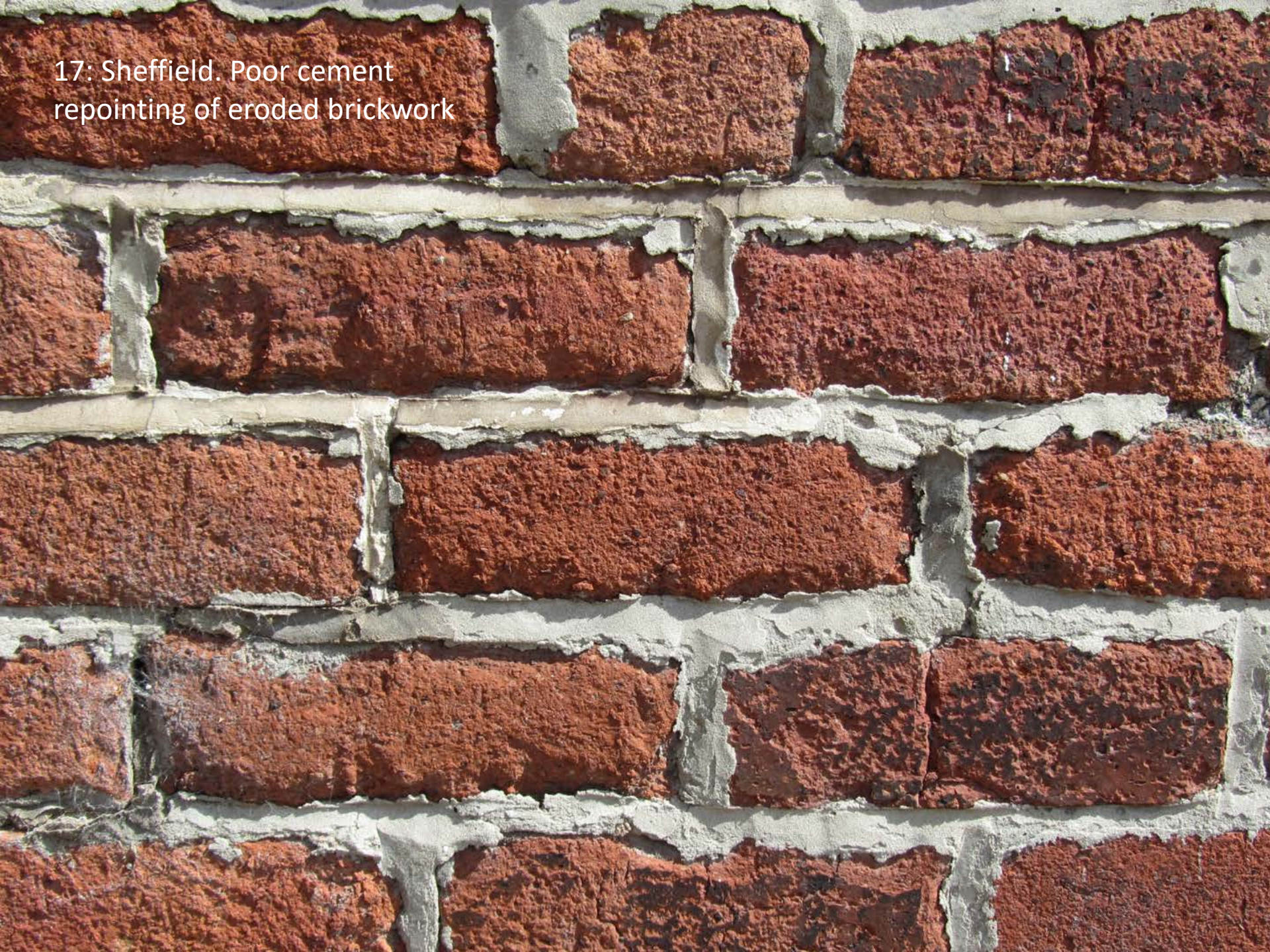

13: Exeter. Surface growth can damage masonry and obscure any underlying defects



14: Glasgow. Serious decay brought about by earlier poor quality stone cleaning work and lack of maintenance

15: Glasgow. Lost architectural detail stripped off the columns as a result of poorly controlled stone cleaning

16: Newry. Poor application of later service cables

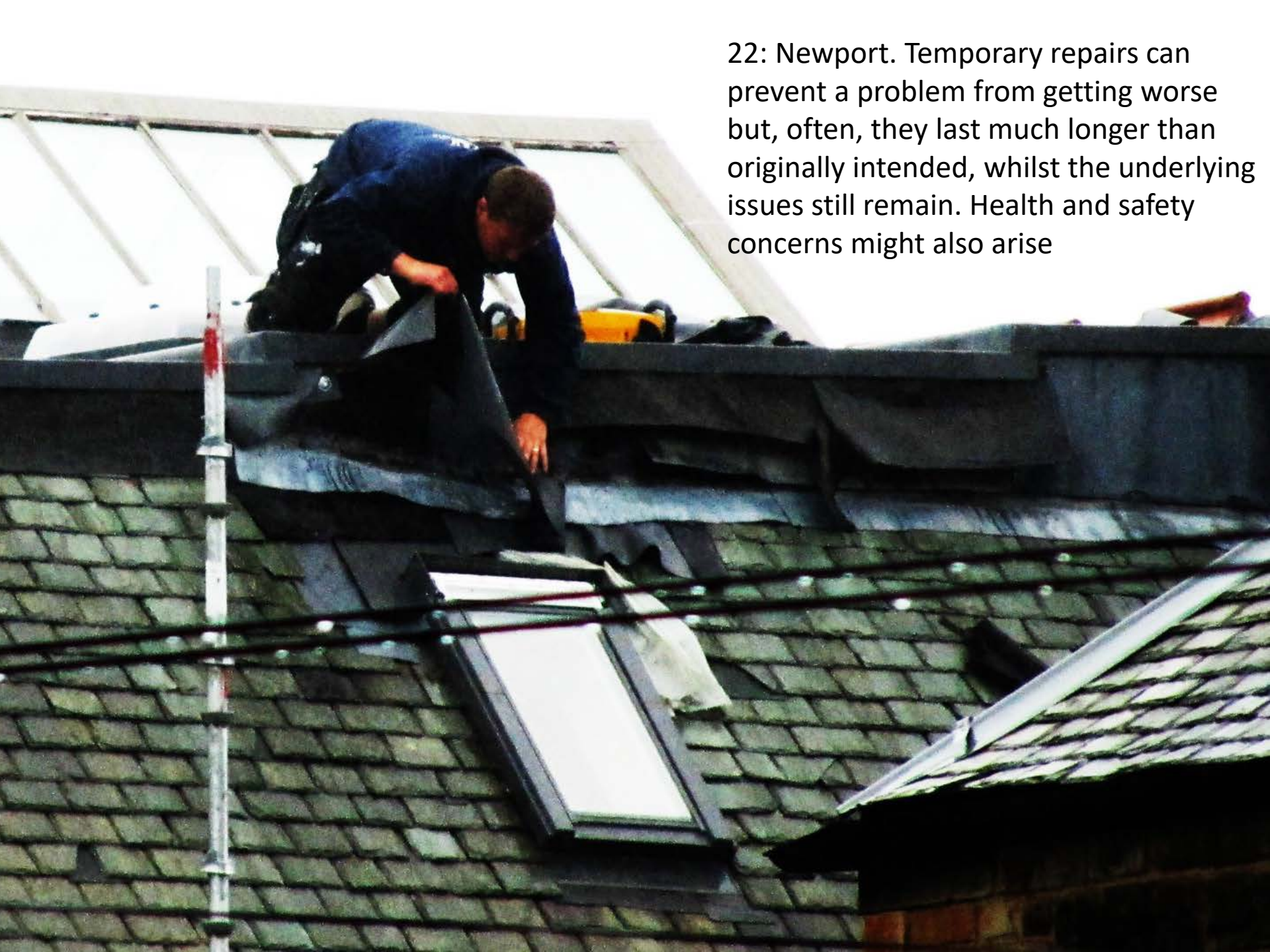

17: Sheffield. Poor cement
repointing of eroded brickwork


18: Kendal. Poor quality
cement mortar repointing of
masonry work

19: Lincoln. A lack of recognition of the quality of the original architectural details cut off from the building

20: Belfast. Heavy duty use has required the step treads to be refaced with new stone

21: Plymouth. Individuality can create disharmony



22: Newport. Temporary repairs can prevent a problem from getting worse but, often, they last much longer than originally intended, whilst the underlying issues still remain. Health and safety concerns might also arise

23: Aberdeen. Additional accommodation can change and significantly alter the appearance of an original building


24: Duddingston. The ghosting of an earlier building