

Mews News

FROM MEWS EXPERTS - LUROT BRAND

smart people come to Lurot Brand...



PRETTY AS A PICTURE

Basking in warm summer sunshine, Lancaster Mews W2 is a typical, attractive, mews. Although it isn't entirely a residential street there are now far fewer businesses operating than there were a few decades ago.

On the inside pages of this Mews News read about some the famous names that had Lancaster Mews as their address.

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF - AFTER 15 YEARS

We visit an elderly client in Holland Park Mews W11 and are pleasantly surprised when he pulls out a thick file containing every canvass letter, magazine, flyer, and Mews News we have sent to his house in the last 15 years. It was gratifying to know that our efforts pay off eventually!

Together, we looked back at prices and we were able to tell him that his house would have sold for between £87 and £147 in 1860. He was relieved to learn that today's prices are somewhat higher.

THE STATE OF THE MARKET

It's a market that nobody really enjoys. Sellers getting used to the fact that prices moderated; buyers getting used to the fact that prices will not fall through the floor; agents having to mediate the 'expectation gap'.

In the lead up to last Christmas everybody was waiting. For what? A property crash? A rise in interest rates? For Christmas? Whatever was influencing sentiment the last three months of the year were characterised by a lack of sales volumes and a lack of commitment by buyers.

In January the sentiment in the market changed from 'glass half empty' to 'glass half full' and this augers well for the rest of 2005.

There are now fewer sellers in the market with unrealistic expectations of what their property is worth. We are still seeing the odd one come through that has been on the market with another agent for nine months or more at too strong a price, but they are the exceptions. Most owners have wised up to the facts and are setting prices accordingly.

Buyers have stopped waiting for a price crash and although still cautious in their decision making they are not putting in stupidly low bids in the hope of stealing a bargain.

Frustratingly for all concerned we have seen quite a number of instances recently where the potential to make a sale at over £1 million is held up by the final negotiation over £25,000 or less. Clearly £25,000 is a great deal of money, but in the overall scheme of things it represents but a small percentage of a seven figure deal. The stalemate of a stubborn seller and an intransigent buyer can only be broken by skilled negotiating and a little goodwill on both sides. We usually win for our clients but goodness it can be an exhausting business!

In lettings the market is steady with a reasonably good balance of rental property and tenants. Rents remain relatively firm and the majority of tenancies are renewed for a further term without the downward negotiations of last year.

Our view of the rest of the year is that prices will rise modestly, probably less than 10% and that the volume of transactions will be reasonable. Whatever the vagaries of the market, people still get married, divorced, have children, change jobs, and for all those, and many more reasons, property will continue to change hands. Prime central London is a highly desirable place to live and to invest in. Happily, mews houses are right at the pinnacle of the desirability scale which should give potential mews house sellers and landlords every reason to be confident in coming to the market.

MEWS TO RENT



HOLLAND PARK MEWS W11

A lovely, bright, newly refurbished mews house in a much sought-after location.
RECEPTION ROOM, OPEN-PLAN KITCHEN/DINING ROOM, 3 DOUBLE BEDROOMS,
2 BATHROOMS (1 EN-SUITE), EN-SUITE SHOWER ROOM, BALCONY, GARAGE.

£1,500 per week unfurnished

020 7479 1988

UP THE GARDEN PATH...

There's a worrying trend in the market at the moment. Recently we have seen instances where owners have been led up the garden path by certain estate agencies repeatedly overvaluing properties. The sequence of events is as follows.

We are called in to give our opinion of the value of a mews house - which we give with full knowledge of the market; comparable evidence; and taking into account the needs of the seller. The seller has also called in the other agent and when they report they put a much higher figure on the property. We know that this figure is ridiculously high but we also understand that it is being done in order to get the instruction to sell. The prospect of more money sways the seller to instruct the overvaluing agency.

We watch the property being advertised and then, sometimes only a couple of weeks later the asking price dramatically drops - to the level that we initially recommended. At that point the seller comes to us and says "OK, it appears you were right all along, please will you take the instruction?"

Our answer is usually 'Yes' but with the proviso that we are now handling what are in effect damaged goods because the value of the initial marketing at a sensible price has been squandered and we have an even harder task to complete.

The message to sellers is don't immediately jump at the prospect of a very high asking price. Always ask your estate agent to justify the figure that they give you - and remember that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true.

OOPS!

Our lettings department took a husband to see over a lovely mews house that fulfilled every criteria he and his wife had specified. It was so perfect for them. His wife was flying in the next day and we knew she would love it. But on the way round, examining the photos on the mantelpiece he suddenly looked horrified. "Oh my goodness!" he exclaimed. "I think this place belongs to my ex-wife's new husband. We can't possibly take it."

Everybody was very disappointed but the mews world is very small and people tend to know each other. These things do happen.

SOPHIE'S KITCHEN

Our Sophie Mauleverer is now on maternity leave (congratulations to her and husband Barney on the arrival of Molly!) but has taken time out to write this delicious recipe.

Duck breasts in Honey Coriander Sauce (Serves 4)

- 4 large duck breasts (one per person)
- 2 table spoons of coriander seeds
- 4 tablespoons of runny honey
- 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- Half a pint of hot chicken stock
- Fresh coriander sprigs to garnish

Trim excess fat off the duck to neaten.
Score the skin in a criss-cross pattern

Put the dry coriander seeds in a non stick pan and heat gently until you can smell a spicy aroma and they start to darken. Then put them into a pestle and mortar and crush - really well.



Put the honey in a small saucepan with soy sauce, heat and bring to the boil slowly. Add the stock and crushed coriander seeds and cook at a low boil until reduced. This will take about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat. This part can be done a day in advance, in fact the coriander seeds will infuse into the sauce making it more delicious. When ready to serve, strain the sauce through a sieve into a clean pan and reheat gently.

Put duck breast skin side down in a frying pan over a moderate heat. Cook for ten minutes pressing the duck down flat with a spatula. Pour off excess fat from the pan and turn duck over and cook for a further seven minutes. Allow to rest for a few minutes.



Serve the duck sliced with the honey and coriander sauce poured over. Accompany with new potatoes or for the ultimate treat, on a bed of sweet potato mash along with crunchy greens.

Bon Appetit!



SEEN IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES...



We are regular advertisers in the Conde Nast publications, showcasing properties in the pages of Vogue, Tatler, House & Garden, and GQ Magazine.



LANCASTER MEWS - IN 1964

Journalist, author, and racecar driver, Denise McCluggage is a legend in the world of motor sport. As a driver she won trophies on three continents in rallying and racing. Chief among her victories: 1961 - First GT at Sebring (Ferrari 250 GT SWB Berlinetta); Copa de Damas in the Grand Prix of Venezuela (Porsche 550 RS); 1st in class in the 1964 Rallye de Monte Carlo (Ford Falcon). As a journalist she won the Ken W. Purdy Award for automotive journalism and the Dean Batchelor Life-Time Achievement Award. She is the author of a number of books including "The Centered Skier" and "By Brooks Too Broad for Leaping" (a collection of pieces from AutoWeek) and wrote the text to accompany Tom Burnside's photographs for "American Racing: Road Racing in the 50s and 60s." She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico and when we made contact with her recently was delighted to give Lurot Brand permission to quote from her article of 40 years ago about a "quaint row of aged stables off Bayswater Road".



"The like of it doesn't exist in the United States. We operate on a much grander scale and it seems that even things that start small soon get big. But London is big on small. Small cars. Small businessmen to deal with small cars. Tucked behind the street exterior of London houses, often hidden down an obscure turning, are the mews - once stables to the houses and now customarily quaint, geranium-planted, double-story houses on their own or still 'stables' to the cars of the big houses, or small service garages catering to the various needs of London motorists. Such is Lancaster Mews, a triangle-shaped alley-way just off Bayswater Road. The mews is guarded by a pub on one side and Molly Craig's betting office on the other. The entrance is often choked with trucks and cars, and, for that matter, so is the mews itself since, in keeping with the London laissez-faire attitude toward so many streets suitable for one way traffic, there is two-way traffic. Mews regulars get to be very good backer-uppers."

"Lancaster Mews supports an astounding variety of automotive businesses, although it is not 100% car inclined - there's a window-washing company and a contractor's office. Some of the garages are one-stall operations, some are spread out over five or six. There are coachworkers ranging from craftsmen of the highest quality to the less discriminating - and less expensive - panel bashers."

"The Alfa man in town is Giulio Ramponi, once the elder Ascari's mechanic. He, and Enzo Ferrari are the only two left from that Alfa team. He also prepared Dick Seaman's Delage, which led to 'der Engländer' being signed by Mercedes. John Sprinzel, who started Speedwell occupies the top end of the mews and supplies speed equipment to the entire BMC line. The Car Hood Company, which Les Perrott started twelve years ago has outgrown the mews. He is moving and his stalls will be converted into houses - geranium boxes above, and garages below, probably all carefully painted with 'No Parking' signs for people to ignore."

MEWS TO RENT



PRINCE'S GATE MEWS SW7

A substantial, family house with well-planned accommodation of over 2,000 square feet.
RECEPTION ROOM, KITCHEN/DINING ROOM, UTILITY, 4/5 BEDROOMS,
2 BATHROOMS (1 EN-SUITE), EN-SUITE SHOWER ROOM, EN-SUITE DRESSING ROOM, GARAGE.

£1,600 per week unfurnished

020 7590 2524

Keep in Touch

The properties in Mews News are a tiny taster of what we have on offer. Keeping in touch with the properties we have for sale and rental is easy. If you have internet access MOST of our properties can be found at the Mews Experts website:

www.lurotbrand.co.uk

The site is updated daily. We are also able to email the Mews Update and our full colour details in .pdf (Acrobat) format.

Our printed Mews List is updated regularly and is supplemented by our Mews Update - both can be posted to you on request and contain details of ALL our properties.

PRESCOTT'S PENALTY WILL HIT HOMEOWNERS

Regular readers will know that we are less than enamoured by the government plans to force property sellers to create an expensive (probably £1000 for an average central London mews house) pack of information about their homes. The intention is that prospective buyers will be able to use the pack to make "informed buying choices". There is nothing wrong with that but in practice the pack will do little to deal with the real causes of stress and frustration in the home buying process. Despite vigorous opposition in the House of Lords - where it was branded 'Prescott's Penalty' - and years of campaigning by property industry experts, the government pushed through the Homes Bill and this has now received Royal Assent. The start date for packs is supposedly January 2007 but there are very few people outside of government who believe that the target date is achievable. The enormous bureaucratic machine being set up by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has a mammoth task ahead - not least in commissioning the computer system that will hold all the 'Home Condition Reports' - mini surveys - accompanying each pack. We all know how smooth and efficient government-created computer systems tend to be...

More worrying for sellers is the fact that the government has been deaf to calls for allowing marketing of a property to start before the pack is completely put together. There is likely to be an enforced delay of up to 14 days for sellers who can't get all the documents together in time. We think that this is unnecessary and unacceptable, especially for people who have found what they want to buy and are anxious to start selling their existing property straight away. The National Association of Estate Agents, and our own Nick Salmon's campaigning group, SPLINTA, are continuing to put pressure on the ODPM on this particular point.

Contrast the dogmatic know-it-all approach of the ODPM with that of the Land Registry. The LR has the task of bringing forward e-conveyancing, an exciting and highly worthwhile measure that will see the legal part of the house buying process put on-line, including the transfer of money to and from lenders and between parties to the transaction. It will introduce transparency to the process making it possible to see the progress of sales up and down the chain, if it exists and it will speed up the conveyancing process no end. Land Registry knows its business and is making huge efforts to engage with all the major stakeholders who will be affected by the scheme. It is evident that not only are they listening, they are reacting positively to comment and constructive criticism.

It is salutary to note that LR take the view that the scheme should be voluntary, that if it does what it should then people will want to use it. ODPM on the other hand are making the Pack compulsory for everyone, whether they are wanted or not. Perhaps they secretly recognise that their scheme is going to be neither practical, nor wanted.

Given Land Registry's pragmatic approach e-conveyancing should prove worthwhile from the outset - a scenario that is hard to envisage in relation to the Home Information Pack.

You can find out more about the anti-HIP's campaign by clicking the SPLINTA link on our website: www.lurotbrand.co.uk

“I want
something that needs doing up...”

“I don’t want
to have to do a thing to it...”

Here we show the range of mews properties being sold by Lurot Brand - The Mews Experts - that cater for both requirements and all shades in between.



MALVERN MEWS NW6

Currently divided as two flats totalling about 1,236 square feet on two floors. Needs to be reconfigured and, subject to the necessary permissions, the flats should be united to make one house.

Freehold £450,000

UNMODERNISED: *Might need or benefit from structural works; new plumbing; electrics; kitchen; bathroom etc etc.*



ENNISMORE GARDENS MEWS SW7

Locations don't come any better and this must be one of the last unmodernised houses in the mews. 2,003 square feet on two floors. Needs a total refurbishment.

Freehold £1.7 million



KYNANCE MEWS SW7

Another great location - and this one is in the best position in the mews. There's even views to Kensington Gardens from the first floor reception room. 1,340 square feet on two floors. The layout is fine but needs new bathrooms, kitchen etc etc.

Freehold £1.2 million

EXCELLENT: *Recently refurbished or just immaculate*



MONTPELIER MEWS SW7

An exceptional property with a striking, first floor reception room. 1,375 square feet.

950 year lease

£1.195 million

FAIR: *Habitat*



ROLAND WAY SW7

A delightful period house it is but the layout could be improved. The main house (i.e. not the mews) is a very nice property. Freehold £1.15 million



LEXHAM MEWS W8

This house was rebuilt for a self-contained flat which is upstairs is a very neat and could be modernised.

Freehold £1.5 million

le but would benefit from limited work and decoration.



in a private, barriered, cobbled mews. Perfectly habitable as
be improved and the attic floor properly incorporated into
a ladder-like staircase). 1,600+ square feet on three floors.



QUEEN'S MEWS W2

Well designed and with a stunning, galleried kitchen dining room this 1,443 square foot, three storey house has been let for a number of years and has some very zany paint colours. Modest redecoration would work wonders!

Freehold £825,000



the owner in 1987 and features a
already nicely modernised. The
well maintained 1980's style which



CAROLINE PLACE MEWS W2

A 30' x 16' reception room is a fair sized room but this house also has the largest shower room of almost any mews we have seen - and which really ought to be a bedroom... Decor a little dated but nothing offensive.

Freehold £850,000

te - with nothing left to do. Just bring your furniture and toothbrush...



CONDUIT MEWS W2

One of seventeen superb houses in a stunning development completed in 2002. Wonderful quality and terrific accommodation, all beautifully presented.

Freehold £1.2 million



PET SW7

Beau
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Free

GOOD: Not brand new or immaculate but ready to move in



LEXHAM GARDENS MEWS W8

Well arranged accommodation of 1,325 square feet located in a quiet cul-de-sac.

Freehold £895,000



WELLINGTON CLOSE W11

Built about 8 years ago with 1,476 square feet

Freehold £895,000



CORNWALL GARDENS WALK SW7

Situated in a delightful cobbled cul-de-sac off C three storey house extends to 1,568 square feet windows on three sides.

Freehold £1.050 million

culcate decoration
to...



et on two floors and



on four floors.



ornwall Gardens, this
et and benefits from

ERSHAM PLACE

7
tifully appointed and
ented mews house
nsively refurbished
work commenced in
. Extending to 1,605
re feet on three floors.

hold £P.O.A.

TURNPIKE TALES

In December 1793, The Times described the Uxbridge Road (Bayswater Road through Notting Hill Gate and Shepherd's Bush) as: "Almost impassable, notwithstanding the great revenue arising from the tolls."

Another contemporary description, by one John Middleton, observed:

"During the whole of the winter 1797-98 there was but one passable track on this road; that was less than six feet wide, and eight inches deep in fluid sludge. All the rest of the road was from a foot to eighteen inches deep in adhesive mud. This track was thronged with waggons, many of them drawn by ten horses and most of them having broad wheels, even to sixteen inches wide. These occupied almost the whole of this confined space. It was therefore with great difficulty, and some danger, that horsemen and light carriages could pass."

No wonder that in 1797 the Shrewsbury mail coach - described as a 'very fast coach as far as Birmingham' left St Martin's le Grand in the City at 8pm and was allowed two and a half hours to cover the eighteen and a half miles to Uxbridge, a speed of just 7.4 miles per hour.

From a hand typed paper by Arthur C. Jones (Turnpike Roads in and around Paddington) read to the Paddington Society in April 1961. Discovered in July 2004 tucked away in a second-hand bookshop in Letchworth, Hertfordshire.

Footnote: In 2003 according to Transport for London, average traffic speed in Central London was 10.6 miles per hour. That's an improvement of less than two miles per hour per century!



It is quite unusual to have all our Smart cars in one place at the same time so we snapped our lettings ladies outside the residence of our new neighbours, Mr and Mrs T. Blair.

Of course the team are as at home dealing with multi million pound town houses as they are with all mews houses.

LUROT BRAND - THE LONDON MEWS COMPANY LTD



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