

# LUROT BRAND



# MEWS NEWS

SPRING 2012





**MEWS MUSES**

# LEINSTER MEWS

Smoke curled from every chimney in the mews when I turned home after a winter work day over half a century ago, a cheering sight with its promise of warm hearths waiting. When horses were replaced by autos, chauffeurs often lived above the garages and these fireplaces served to cook their meals as well as heat their dwellings. Today ours is the only mews that has need of a chimney sweep, smokeless fuel notwithstanding.

Long before motorways, I would turn off the Bayswater Road by J. M. Barrie's home, past the long-departed Dutch Barn stable/garage - Halepi's

is there today, still the best restaurant in London - on to Leinster Terrace with shops to serve every household need. Past Baxter the fishmonger, Lowery's butchers, an Express Dairy, the ironmonger, further along Toby's Bakery and Cox's greengrocer, Taylor's tobacconist and the newsagent/post office - later run by the Patels - Cantwell's grocery and Unwin's, the selling-out shop.

The mews entrance was across from Louis Faber's hairdressers; he had a model head/hairdo in the window which never changed from the day we moved in until his demise and the

shop closure. Louis, like my husband, Francis Kelly, and later my sons and grandson, was a dedicated member of the Serpentine Swimming Club. Early morning dips excited him far more than innovative window displays.

Between the Leinster Arms and Hong Kong House was the mews entrance. The blue and white sign read: *LEINSTER MEWS* - and underneath *LATE CLEVELAND MEWS*

My dearest and oldest mews friend, Dame Thora Hird, always smiled at the phrase, saying it sounded as if someone/thing had died.

"Some day I want to write a book

## WE MOVED INTO A COLD AND DESOLATE MEWS HOUSE ON A WINTRY DAY IN THE EARLY SIXTIES; A FOOT OF SNOW WAS ON THE ROOF AND THICK ICE COVERED THE COBBLESTONES.



*Drawing by Francis Kelly*

*Leinster Mews 1955*

© City of Westminster Archives Center

about the mews," she'd say, "I'm going to call it "Late Cleveland Mews".

Under the arch and into Leinster Mews with the view of the elegant spire, all that remains of the church. Christ Church was too badly shaken during the blitz and was demolished after our arrival, but the steeple still soars gracefully skyward.

It was from Thora I first heard the wartime tale about the steeple top – that the wheel of a damaged fighter plane limping towards the Northolt airstrip had knocked it off. The top has been replaced; a change in stone is visible but not displeasing. Neither her

daughter, Janette, nor I are sure of the veracity of this mews lore, but it makes a good story!

We moved into a cold and desolate mews house on a wintry day in the early Sixties; a foot of snow was on the roof and thick ice covered the cobblestones. The abandoned car blocking our front door was easily slid away by my husband and a couple of chaps from Spring's Garage at the end of the mews.

The water pipe source into the mews had fractured in the freeze; we were obliged to queue with our containers and buckets at the top street where a standpipe had been set. There I met Jimmy Scott, Thora's husband, who stood in front of me in the queue.

"You'll be wanting a plastic bucket like this," he suggested, "The ironmonger across the road sells them – or we'll loan you one. Best save that metal one for the ashes." I was mews-ignorant and the suggestions from this kind neighbour proved useful and correct. They say lasting friendships can be formed in queues; so it has proved with the Kellys and Scotts, now onto a third generation.

When the Scotts moved in to their mews, the front wall bulged dangerously outward as a result of the direct bomb hit which had destroyed four mews houses across the cobblestones. The garage was painted a bright red, the same colour as one at the top of the mews. Their landlord, Dodgy Bill, leased it from The Church Commissioners, who still owned all the properties, and then rented it to the Scotts. He proved one of those petty crooks who prevailed in the war years. Still into suspect deals, it emerged that he had stolen the paint, the same red as phone booths and pillar boxes, from the Post Office.

Usually at night 2 or 3 couples could be heard on the bombsite; the mews was around the corner from the American Service Club. Mews rumour was that the infamous Bill also 'ran some girls'.

In one of her books, Thora recounted how one of the evening ladies asked her husband, as he preceded her out of a black cab, "Are you being satisfied, darling?"

Thora descended from the same taxi assuring her, "He bloody well better be!"

"Oh, hello, Thora – I didn't see it was you," she smiled.

After J. Arthur Rank put Thora Hird under contract, she had frequent interviews and journalists calling. Jan told me of one morning her mother had completely forgotten an appointment with the Sunday Pictorial. Thora was standing on a stool in her work slacks and apron, hair in a snood, polishing the front door knocker when the reporter called.

"Is this where Thora Hird lives?"

"Hang on, deah", she said in her broadest Lancastrian accent.

She flew upstairs, curlers out, a bit of lippy, quickly donned a dress, high heels and came tripping down, "I'm sorry to keep you waiting," – in an entirely 'posher' tones...

Before our time, Leinster Mews once had a luxuriant grapevine. Wires were stretched across from roof to roof and the grape vines entwined. Delectable bunches swayed from No.1 and No.27 on down. They say the dwellers in



*Leinster Mews 2005*

No.10 made 13 bottles of wine one prolific year.

Alas, one particularly hot summer the vine seemed to stifle any air flow. Flies became intolerable, despite the cart which would come down and clear the stoops in front of the stables. Finally No.1 decided to poison the vine so the mews could feel some relief from the conditions. There are still remnants of the grape vine on a number of the mews fronts.

Admiring Jan's freshly painted mews front recently, I was reminded of her telling me about her father's first window boxes. Anything wooden was hard to come by after the war, but Jimmy was able to get hold of some munitions boxes with the rope handles on either side. They made deep and glorious window boxes which Thora so enjoyed watering and tending.

When she came home from school during the cooler months, Jan's first chore was to stop at the coal bin in the garage and bring up a filled scuttle.



*Leinster Mews 2011*

## **BEFORE OUR TIME OUR LEINSTER MEWS ONCE HAD A LUXURIANT GRAPEVINE. WIRES WERE STRETCHED ACROSS FROM ROOF TO ROOF AND THE GRAPE VINES ENTWINED.**

Now, as I pause at the renovated frontage, I recall her recounting that the last grain pipe in the mews was removed - the pipe through which feed was poured to the horses below, the odd bit of grain still attached.

As I look down the mews today, bespoke flower boxes with beautiful blossoms abound. Handsome pots of plants in a myriad of green tones,

wisteria vines and budding bushes grace many a mews front. There, at the end of the mews, ever breath-catching, the spire rises splendidly, sun-splashed glints winking down on Leinster Mews.

*Martha Gail Kelly  
Leinster Mews*

**NO PARKING ON SINGLE YELLOW LINE!**



**18TH JANUARY 2012  
NEAR OUR HYDE  
PARK OFFICE  
EARLIER THIS YEAR**

# MEALS IN THE MEWS

## Umu, Bruton Place



For the next in the series of "Meals in the Mews", we visited Umu, a Japanese restaurant in Mayfair that was also in the Sunday Times Top 100 restaurants in the UK. It is one of the most highly rated Japanese restaurants in London and offers the experience of traditional multi-course kaiseki-style dining as served in Kyoto.

### THE RESTAURANT

Is located at the end of this mixed use mews which houses such staples as The Guinea Grill as well as some very attractive mews houses with gables. Bruton Place is very unusual in that it is a mews street with homes, shops, offices, restaurants and an art gallery (I can't think of another that has them all). Finding the door to the restaurant was a challenge as it is flush with the front wall and it is only on closer inspection that you notice a button that, when pressed, slides the door open to allow entry. Once inside, the dark hues and soft fabrics are welcoming and give a hushed atmosphere to the room. Part of the kitchen is the Chef's table-cum-Sushi bar so you can eat while watching the chefs perform their art.



### THE SERVICE

The young Japanese waiter who looked after us gave the whole experience an even more authentic feel and he obviously knew what he was talking about (even if we did have a little difficulty understanding what he was saying at times).

### THE WINE/SAKE

With over 800 wines and 160 Sakes on the list, you certainly have a wide choice of both. Knowing virtually nothing about Sake, I found it interesting to discover that they can be every bit as sought after, rare and expensive as wine. The prices for both go from the reasonable to the incredibly expensive.

### THE FOOD

We both selected the multi-course "Kaiseki Tasting Menu" which introduced us to a plethora of new taste and texture sensations.

You can see the menu above and some

of you may have a much better idea what some of the ingredients were but, for me, the stand out dishes were:

1. The sake steamed abalone.
2. The sashimi - which was incredibly fresh and of the highest quality.
3. The Icelandic sea urchin with foie gras custard and umadashi jelly - a very strange sounding combination but absolutely delicious and the highlight of the evening.
4. For dessert the satsuma ice cream wrapped in mochi was fine but the accompanying sweetened frozen white ear mushrooms were an entirely new and unusual experience and, whilst I can't honestly say I liked it, I would have happily eaten quite a few more - a bit of a contradiction.

New culinary experiences are always wonderful but towards the end of the meal I must confess that I was hoping for something a little more familiar. A few days after our meal, I was chatting with a chef who runs a Michelin starred restaurant and has also eaten at Umu. He told me that if we go back, asking the waiter to recommend their signature dishes would probably be a better way to experience the best of Umu.

Whatever you choose to eat, it is worth a visit, if only to discover what authentic Kyoto cooking is without having to travel 6,000 miles.

*Oliver Lurot*



UMU

14 - 16 Bruton Place  
Mayfair, London W1J 6LX  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7499 8881  
[www.umurestaurant.com](http://www.umurestaurant.com)

# MEWS FILMSPOTTING

## ABOVE SUSPICION – SILENT SCREAM Monday 9th January 2012

Lexham Mews was featured in this episode of Above Suspicion, a three-part crime drama based on Lynda La Plante's novels. It features the career of La Plante's latest heroine DC Anna Travis.

*Missed it?* Go onto ITV Player: [www.itv.com/itvplayer](http://www.itv.com/itvplayer) and search for Above Suspicion, Silent Scream

## THE LONDON MARATHON 2012

Lurot Brand is very proud to sponsor Melissa Holdron, PA to the Managing Director at Lurot Brand and her fiancé, Luke Stevenson, who are both training very hard to run the London Marathon 2012 on the 22nd April 2012 for Trinity Hospice.

Last year Luke's mother was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer and sadly, following a brief but very brave battle, passed away peacefully six weeks later, having never had the strength to start treatment. It was the free expert medical care coupled with the beautiful surroundings of Trinity Hospice that resulted in such a peaceful end to her final weeks.



Trinity was founded in 1891 as England's first hospice providing end of life care. It is a registered charity that receives just 36% of their income from the NHS meaning they must raise more than £5 million each year to continue providing the specialist care that the community relies on. Running for Trinity is all about saying thank you to the teams of doctors, nurses and volunteers and

most importantly helping to secure the future of this amazing place.

Any donations to help us reach our target of £4,500 would be hugely appreciated. Donations can be made on our fundraising page <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/LukeandMel> or by cheque made payable to 'Trinity Hospice' and sent to Lurot Brand, 37-41 Sussex Place, London W2 2TH.

*Melissa Holdron*

# LUROT BRAND

SALES | LETTINGS | COMMERCIAL | MANAGEMENT

5 Kynance Place, SW7 4QS  
020 7590 9955

37-41 Sussex Place, W2 2TH  
020 7479 1999

57A Weymouth Street, WIG 8NW  
020 7479 1900

[www.lurotbrand.co.uk](http://www.lurotbrand.co.uk)

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