

MEWS NEWS

SPRING 2015

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Extending upwards

*When it comes to extending,
up is the obvious way to go*

Windowless backs

Dramatic interiors in mews houses

Cobbles

*Disappeared from London's main
streets but still survive in many mews*

Produced by

LUROT BRAND

EST 1971

MEWS PROPERTY WINDOWLESS BACKS



We are passionate about mews and love sharing our experience and knowledge of mews so if you are thinking of creating a 'grand design' do call us. We can advise not only on the best use of light but also on what design will make the most commercial sense when you come to sell or let.

Architects are creating dramatic interiors in mews houses in response to one of their design quirks - they very rarely have windows at the back.



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Mews houses were built at the bottom of the garden of big houses for horses and servants. The aristocratic residents did not want to be overlooked by their menials, however, so the garden wall of the mews would be windowless.

Unaltered mews houses often feel a bit dark and oppressive at the back, but architects love a challenge and at Lurot Brand we have worked with many who have been developing clever ways of bringing light to all areas and creating dramatic and interesting spaces in the process.

A popular way of allowing light to flood in is to move the staircase to the back of the house and place a skylight over it. Glass stairs and bannisters allow the light to percolate through to the ground, and mirrors strategically placed behind double the light getting through.

If there is enough space, a ground-to-roof glass atrium with a skylight at the top not only allows light in but forms an impressive internal space. One such atrium has a waterfall on the back wall that is not only incredibly cool to look at but the noise of running water creates a peaceful vibe.

Some skylights are retractable to bring fresh air in as well.

Going open plan helps light circulate, but where walls are unavoidable installing strip windows just under the ceiling allows light to flow without compromising privacy.

The latest lighting technology can both light up those dark areas and create lighting schemes that can be changed at the press of a button on your smartphone.

Smart bulbs such as Philips' Hue or Elgato's Avea can be controlled by your iPhone to pump out any one of 16 million colours including a warm white, at any power level. They can even talk to each other to create exactly the right effect.

Using these new lights enables non-habitable rooms such as bathrooms, gyms and media rooms to be located at the 'dark' back half of the house, so the living rooms and bedrooms can benefit from the windows with their natural light and interesting views over the mews.



THE BEST MEWS EXPANDING UPWARDS

At Lurot Brand we can let you know what the likelihood of obtaining permission in a mews street will be based on our experience of dealing with planning departments and the large estates.

Mews houses are usually built out to the max, with the road out the front, the big house's garden wall at the back and the neighbours on either side. So when it comes to extending, up is the obvious way to go.

The good news is that getting planning permission for an extra floor or for converting the attic into a couple of bedrooms may be much easier than it would be for the big houses in the main street. Mews houses are rarely listed so internal changes need no consent, though they must of course comply with building regulations.

The planners like to maintain the character of a mews, which includes retaining original features like stable doors and the derricks that were sometimes installed to haul bales of hay up to the loft. This may well prevent adding a whole new storey on top, and the neighbours may object if they will be overlooked by them or lose light.

Some mews have retained their original roofline so completely they have been identified by the council as places that would lose their unspoilt character if permission was granted for any roof extensions, and planning applications will be automatically rejected. Ennismore Gardens Mews is one.

Where roof extensions are allowed, a mansard with a steep roof at the front and a flat roof at the top is the planners' preferred option.

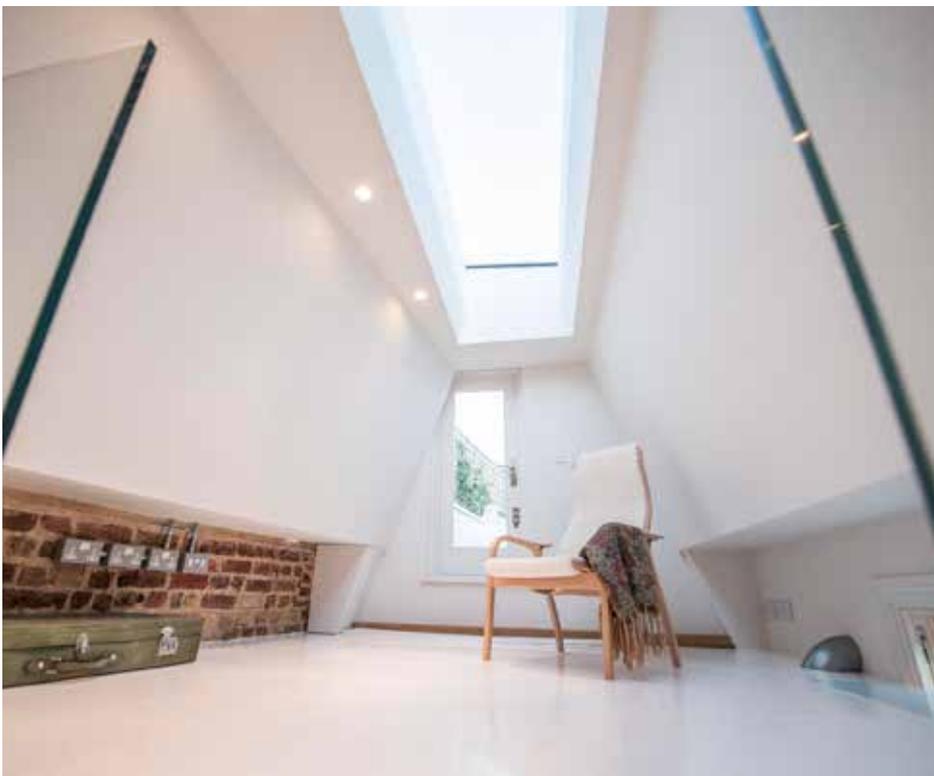
Dormer windows can be discretely placed behind the parapet where they won't be so obvious from the street.



The planners prefer a traditional dormer window with a rolled lead cover but have approved some attractive modern dormers with glass on top to maximise the amount of light let in to the room.

One of the problems with loft extensions is that a fire escape will be necessary and the average mews house has no outside space for one. This may mean you will have to lose valuable living space for an internal fire escape.

Despite these constraints, architects get very creative in providing great new spaces up top. A small terrace can be a lovely suntrap and a place for growing a few flowers and herbs.



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FASHIONABLE COBBLES

Cobbles are coming back as a distinctive design element in public areas. Landscapers have rediscovered the many artistic layouts cobbles used to be laid in, such as circles, fans, diamonds and chains, and have woken up to what mews residents have known all the time - cobbles are practical, hard-wearing and one of the most attractive road surfaces you can get.

Nothing evokes the vanished world of horse-drawn carriages clip-clopping through the fog than cobblestones. Cobbles have disappeared from London's main streets but still survive in many mews.

Cobbles were the first really hard-wearing road surface, developed in Roman times. Smooth round stones

from beaches or rivers were embedded in sand, mortar or clay, depending on what was locally available. Cobbled roads did not become muddy or dusty, they did not develop ruts or crack in winter frosts, and could be easily repaired. A well-maintained cobbled road can last hundreds of years.

There were downsides, of course. The lumpy surface was very hard to walk on, and the smooth stones could be very slippery. The noise of the carts on a busy highway made conversation impossible.

These drawbacks were reduced by using roughly rectangular blocks of granite known as setts, often also called Belgian blocks for some reason - they don't come from Belgium.

A road made of setts is much flatter and the surface is rougher, so it is much easier and safer to walk on. Most of the 'cobbled' roads in London today are actually setts.

Nowadays our main roads are covered in acres of practical but boring asphalt,

but many mews still feature the lovely natural grey-black lumpy surface of setts, a gutter of larger setts forming a line down the middle to add structure.

Bathurst Mews, just to the north of Hyde Park, is one of the best places to admire cobbles as it is the home of many of the horses that use the park so you can often hear the clatter of the hooves as they head out for Rotten Row.

After nearly a century of disuse, setts and cobbles are making a comeback. Setts are increasingly being used in areas that are mainly used by pedestrians but also need to support the weight of delivery trucks.



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THE LATEST MEWS PROPERTIES FOR SALE



THE LATEST LETTINGS PROPERTIES





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ESSENTIAL READING FOR ANYONE MARKETING A MEWS HOUSE



Over the last twelve months...



Lurot Brand has sold and let **more than double** the number of Mews houses than any other London Estate agency this year.



Throughout 2014 the sales department achieved an average of **98%** of our asking prices.



We have sold **84%** of the houses we have brought to the market this year, many in competition with other estate agents.



Our domestic mews buyers have been outbidding our international buyers this year by a ratio of **three to one**.



74% of our current register of properties for let are owned by landlords who have used our services before and stay loyal to Lurot Brand.



The ratio of Mews to non-Mews properties we have for let is 60/40



It takes our lettings department an average of just 11 viewings to find the right tenant for our landlord's properties.



It takes our sales department an average of just 21 viewings to achieve the best price.



43 years specialising in selling and letting Mews houses has given us unrivalled experience, knowledge and a database second to none.

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If you have any interesting articles or facts on the wonderful world of the Mews or any pictures that you would like to share please send them to us at mewsnews@lurotbrand.co.uk.

www.lurotbrand.co.uk



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