

Introduction to the Royal Mews

The Royal Mews is built around a quadrangle some 50 metres square. It's covered with pink tarmac, with a number of cars, vans or horse boxes parked in the centre. The sides are defined by pale-brick buildings, two-storeys high, with shallow slate roofs. Each has a tall central arch, flanked by classical pillars. In these buildings are stables, equipment or 'tack' rooms, coach houses and offices.

There's also accommodation for the staff of the Mews – and other Royal Household staff – up on the first floor. It's a living, working community and the families of some of the staff have worked here for generations. Indeed, Her Majesty The Queen has described the Royal Mews as 'a small village which belongs to Buckingham Palace'.

Today it is the Crown Equerry who runs the Royal Mews, responsible for the staff, the horses and the cars - so pretty much all the ground transport that The Queen and other members of the Royal Family require.

Day to day, the Mews routine centres around the care and exercise of the horses and the availability of the cars. Horses exercise in Hyde Park, either under saddle or in harness pulling an exercise carriage. There is also a messenger coach which goes twice daily to Buckingham Palace and St. James'. On some days, two Landaus with the staff in livery and followed by a Semi State car depart to pick up an Ambassador or a High Commissioner to take them to Buckingham Palace for their audience with The Queen.

Originally a 'mews' was where hunting hawks and falcons were kept while they were 'mewing' – that is, shedding their feathers. By the sixteenth century, the Mews was being used to stable horses, but the name was retained.

The original King's Mews was built in the fourteenth century for Richard II and was at Charing Cross, on the site of the present

National Gallery. This Mews was designed by John Nash in the 1820s for George IV – uncle to the future Queen Victoria. He transformed what had been merely Buckingham House into the monarchy's primary royal palace in London – and this was its new grand royal stables and carriage house. It cost over £65,000 and the date of its completion, 1825, is marked on the weather cock above the main arch.