



It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say 19 Pilmour Links in St Andrews has a location that most golf fans would give their eye teeth for.

You see, it isn't situated just anywhere in the home of golf – it's next to Granny Clark's Wynd. Golf fans will recognise that as the road jutting across the first and 18th holes of the Old Course.

Not bad if you fancy a quick round before you have your tea . . .

It was the perfect location for a couple who regularly travel around the world to play golf. But aside from their love of the sport, Greg and Nancy Incoll also found the historical aspect of the house remarkable. Built in 1826 for the Playfairs, a prominent St Andrews family, the Georgian house predates the Royal & Ancient Club House built in 1854.

Yet the house was closer to a rabbit warren than a holiday home when the Incolls discovered it in 2011. It had been let as student accommodation with the aesthetic

# GREEN GREEN GRASS

— of home —

*Greg and Nancy Incoll  
found the perfect base  
right by the Old Course at  
St Andrews, so they  
uprooted from Australia!*

and lack of mod cons to match. But they saw enormous potential just viewing it online from their home in Sydney.

Greg, who works in the property industry, envisioned a high-end golf lodge. They set off with G1 Architects in Glasgow to redo the rundown home, overseeing the refurbishment remotely from Australia. The distance, they admitted, could be challenging and at times nerve-racking.

His industry knowledge and Nancy's visual arts background guided what was an extensive project. For one, in keeping with student accommodation standards, it was freezing and run down. While they conserved the internal features and external façade, it was nearly gutted to reinstall flooring and roofing. Greg and Nancy prioritised the needs of premier golfers with the style and amenities to match.

"We wanted to make it somewhere that we feel at home in when we come over to stay," Greg says.



They partnered with Luma Interiors in Edinburgh who helped realise the couple's design principles. Comfort was key.

"Sometimes interior designers tend to design for what looks great in a magazine shoot without it having a kind of practical application," Nancy explains. "That sofa looks fantastic but have you actually ever sat on it?"

The result is a splendidly restored heritage home brought to the 21st Century with spectacular views, sumptuous finishes and amenities for the modern traveler. The architects transformed its seven bedrooms into four plush double ensembles with some clever use of space. Tucked underneath is a newly created basement with a golf bag store, wine cellar and cinema room.

"We probably tried to spend money in the right areas, the areas that we know people would like," Greg continues, listing underfloor heating, good quality bathrooms and high tech through the house in terms of security, music and televisions.

The renovation also complemented the home's special heritage features. A Georgian spiral staircase winds through the four-floor property set by a central window looking back across the Old Course and West Sands.

"It's a wonder nobody's fallen down the stairs by craning their necks and looking out of the window," Nancy laughs.



*No expense was spared when it came to quality tech.*







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The cosy library upstairs features a cast iron fireplace, one of five in the house. Another can be found facing the bathtub in the master bathroom.

“You can be sitting there reading a book,” says Nancy. “And you only have to turn your head just like that and you can see right across the golf course, both the first and the 18th, and right across the beach.”

The proximity to golf and the world class university proved irresistible. Greg, now 58, and Nancy, 51, set out on what she deemed a “middle age gap year” in 2012. They moved

in after a year of refurbishments and enrolled as masters students at the University of St Andrews – Greg in management and Nancy in museum and gallery studies.

It was his first time living outside of Sydney. Nancy, who was born in Glasgow and has friends and family in Scotland, relished the beautiful scenery and four distinct seasons. It was a welcome departure from Sydney’s weather (“Super hot and not hot,” she quips).

The Incolls traversed the country with a distinctly Australian nonchalant view of distance, from the Isle of Skye to the Hebrides and to the opposite side of the country at Dornoch with a stop at the infamous course at Royal Dornoch Golf Club.

In St Andrews, Greg recalls morning and evening walks with their Westies, Pablo and Claude, who relished zipping across the golf course chasing rabbits. After their studies of the day, Greg and Nancy played golf in their backyard up to five times a week. Their handicaps? Four and 11, respectively.

“It was good fun,” Greg says. “St Andrews is a wonderful town to live in. It’s just a place you love walking around. It has a buzz and a feel about it.”

“People are very friendly and quite well educated, both because of students and also international golfers. You can go almost anywhere and have a chat in a restaurant with people from all over the world.”

Moving allowed them to iron out the final finishes themselves. Although the orientation of the house couldn’t be flipped to face the



## LIVING

golf course as Nancy had hoped, the front view proved to be just as lovely. She completed her degree sitting at the desk in the master bedroom gazing over other Georgian stone buildings.

The location could even be surreal. Nancy remembers looking up from the kitchen sink once and spotting Adam Scott, the champion Australian golfer, walking up to the 18th fairway.

“The fact that you could just put your golf clubs literally on your back and walk out the backdoor and tee off on one of the most significant golf courses in the world – we never took that for granted, ever,” Nancy enthuses. “It was still special every time we did it.”



*“You could put your golf clubs on your back and walk out of the door and tee off – we never took that for granted.”*



“It’s a big house for us to just come over there every now and then and for a few of our friends to use,” adds Greg. “I think it’s likely we’ll buy an apartment in St Andrews just to come over and play golf and see friends. We’d quite happily retire there.”

Greg and Nancy have since been based in Sydney, but they haven’t seen the last of St Andrews by the sounds of it. After all, it seems to suit them to a tee . . .