

FALL 2016

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L O N D O N A N D M I D D L E S E X C O U N T Y

Old South's NEW CHARMER

+ TINY

PERFECT PLACES

DECADENT
MILKSHAKES

THE BEAUTY
OF GOLD

LIVING
LARGE
IN SUNNINGDALE

A shapely LANDMARK

STORY **MARY HATT** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

The evening stroll is a ritual in London's Old South.

Running into neighbours and seeing what's new on the street is part of the fun. This is how many young families set their sights on homes they'd love to buy, and it's how Rob and Shannon happened upon the secluded, shady property they now call home.

Treed lawns and gardens plus an original white frame house comprised two full lots, making it a special find. On their evening walks, Rob and Shannon would admire this tucked-away treasure, which had been in the same family for generations. Then in May 2012, the aging owner decided the time had come to sell. The young couple jumped at the chance. Their new property gave them what they'd dreamed of, in Rob's words, "a blank canvas in a mature neighbourhood."

To help them paint that canvas, the couple enlisted **Brad Skinner** of **Skinner & Skinner Architects**. "The first time I saw the property, a massive old maple tree in the rear portion begged to be an integral part of the design," Brad says of his inspiration for the shape of the Maibec wood-sided home with shed dormers (**Langford Lumber Home Building Centre** in Lucan). "The tree was just about in the right spot to create an L-shaped plan around it and carve out a fantastic space for the house and back yard." *Continued on page 25*



Rendering by Brad Skinner

The home makes a dramatic architectural statement, yet also provides a peaceful and secluded outdoor haven.



The spacious foyer, painted Benjamin Moore's Revere Pewter, is a hub for the home's various living spaces. Rustic walnut floors start at the front door and run throughout the main level. Many doorways in the home, including the one between the foyer and mudroom, feature transom windows for extra light. **OPPOSITE:** Artistic exterior elements such as Wiarston stone and shed dormers are a nod to vintage architecture throughout the neighbourhood.



LEFT: The maple tree that inspired the L-shaped floor plan. The house is equally stunning at night, enjoyed from several outdoor living spaces.

BELOW: The owners did not want their television to dominate the great room's living area, so they had it buried in the wood built-ins, to be raised at the click of the remote. The accent wall is painted Overcoat by Benjamin Moore. **OPPOSITE:** There is always room for the hearth for the family's six-year-old Schnauzer, Kirby. Extra high windows and skylights ensure the house is filled with light throughout the day.

The structural L would allow for many views of the expansive property through windows (**Dashwood Industries Inc.**) on both levels of the home. The shape would also form a practical division between living spaces on the main floor, as well as between bedroom wings upstairs.

Brad worked with Shannon and Rob for close to a year, weaving their wish list and ideas into a design that would not only meet the needs of their growing family but reflect their personal style. The lengthy process produced detailed blueprints and, after the original house was torn down, builder **Crown Homes of London** broke ground in the summer of 2014. One year later, the family of four moved into 6,000 square feet of living space.

The size of the home, however, belies its cosiness thanks to Brad's interesting architectural features, as well as design details – many of which were suggested by **Michelle O'Hagan** of Crown Homes. Visitors are welcomed in a spacious foyer at the front of the home, which provides views to backyard perennial gardens designed by **Richard Crossman** of **Parterre Landscape Design Associates**. A hallway from one side of the foyer leads to individual hideaway rooms for Rob and Shannon, as well as one of the home's outdoor living spaces and the pool (**Forest City Pool & Patio**). On the other side of the foyer is an open stairway to the upper and lower levels (**Roes Stair Company**),



and a broad hallway to the great room at the back of the house.

Walnut, matte-finish hardwood floors by **Great Floors** run throughout the main level, providing an airy yet practical surface for the young family. "The floor takes a good beating," Rob notes.

The high-ceilinged great room, painted Revere Pewter with trim in versatile off-white Soft Chamois, both from Benjamin Moore, includes the kitchen as well as living and dining areas. This part of the house was "created around our lifestyle," Rob says, adding that their wish was to achieve carefully-detailed functional spaces coexisting in a single, open-concept plan.

A wood-burning Rumford fireplace from **Elmira Stove Works** anchors the living

area where there is a view from one side of the L into the backyard. The family chose the fireplace design that originates with 18th century physicist Count Rumford, because the tall, shallow fireplace generates generous amounts of heat without sucking hot air back up the chimney along with the wood smoke.

An original piece of art, *Playing With Sticks* by **Vanessa Zita Vanderidder** of **Zita Art Studio**, adds to the drama of the timber frame mantel from **Valley View Timberworks Inc.** and the fireplace surround of blue-grey stone from a deep-level quarry in Owen Sound (supplied by **London Ferrell Brick & Stone** and installed by **J & R Masonry**). The same stone is featured in the stone piers of the home's exterior. *Continued on page 26*



OPPOSITE, TOP: Textural elements such as wood bar stools, the walnut floor and black iron-trimmed pendant lights balance bright white and sleek stainless in the kitchen. **BOTTOM:** Architect Brad Skinner, left, and Crown Homes' Merv Bell, right, enjoy a morning coffee with Rob.

THIS PAGE, BELOW: A large fire bowl and comfortable arm chairs create an inviting outdoor conversation spot just off the great room. **BOTTOM:** The dining room is all about casual gatherings with family and friends. **RIGHT:** The mudroom was sensibly fitted with plenty of hooks and cubbies to organize this on-the-go family.



Plumbing & Heating Ltd. A sizeable walk-in pantry, built-in wet bar, computer centre, and appliances by **London Major Appliances** finish off this stylish heart of the home.

The adjoining dining area includes a table and chairs from Austin & Taylor, as well as a fixture from **Living Lighting London North**. A substantial built-in buffet and floating shelves by Woody's make for convenient serving and storage along one wall, while on the opposite wall a door opens to one of two covered porches, this one featuring a conversational grouping of chairs around a large fire bowl. *Continued on page 28*



A grouping of tables and comfy seating purchased at **Austin & Taylor Home Furnishings Inc.** has been placed around the fireplace. **The Lighting Shoppe** provided the overhead light fixture. On the wall opposite the fireplace, **Woody's Premium Cabinetry** designed a system that hides the family's flat-screen television, ready to open electronically when required. Woody's was also responsible for cabinetry in the kitchen, involving a long wall of white cabinets, quartz countertops (**Coni-Marble Manufacturing Inc.**) and tile backsplash by **Centura London**. Opposite is a substantial island that includes an apron-front sink and faucet supplied by **Atchison**



feature

Upstairs, Brad's plan called for two bridge-style hallways to create a sense of openness between the dormered wings. One overlooks the foyer and leads to the master suite nestled in a dormer on the west side of the house. The other open hallway overlooks the great room's living area, and connects the children's bedrooms with their playroom, a sunny space designed to be multifunctional through the years. Dormers add charm to the children's bedrooms. The two youngsters share a large Jack-and-Jill bathroom. All bathrooms in the home were fitted with vanities from Woody's, Coni-Marble countertops, tiling by Centura and fixtures from Atchison.

Dashwood supplied the exterior doors as well as the windows, while **Riverside Millwork Group** (formerly County Heritage) looked after the interior door systems. Other construction details involved fibreglass roof shingles by **Titan Roofing**, a heating and cooling system by **Donaldson Heating & Air Conditioning** and an electrical plan by **Pro Electric Inc.**

To add to the enjoyment of their home, which also includes a lower-level television room, home gym and guest suite, **Kyle Greenwood** of **AV Integrators Limited** designed and installed a sound system that brings music anywhere at any time. For Rob, this system was a key component of the plans. "Our family now enjoys music whenever we want it, and just about anywhere in the house," he says.

Following their original purchase, Rob's father presented him and Shannon with an account of the family who had previously occupied their property for many years. It read, "With a house to be built and a family to be raised, there is a new history yet to be written."

Rob and Shannon have opened their own new chapter very well. **OH**



LEFT: Classic whites and greys make for quiet elegance in the master bath. **BELOW:** The master bedroom, painted Benjamin Moore's Metallic Silver, is nestled into a shed dormer that overlooks the back yard and gardens. **BOTTOM:** The home includes an extra room to be repurposed from time to time as the family grows and their needs change. For now, it is a sunny upstairs playroom.

