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THE SCOTSMAN

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Property



ROYAL CONNECTIONS

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PROPERTY OF THE WEEK



Family rooms

Trading up is difficult when your home is almost perfect, writes **Kirsty McLuckie**

James McLennan and his wife Jennifer have a problem. Having lived at 7a Royal Crescent for four years, their expanding family means that they could now do with extra space. But having looked for over a year, they are finding that their current home is so well-served, it is difficult to trade up. James says: "We have loved living here, it took us a long time to find it and it ticked all the boxes. All we want in the new place is something similar, but a little bigger."

The couple moved from London when James decided on a change of career from banking to oil and gas consultancy. Jennifer is from Surrey but James, originally from Glasgow and brought up in Dubai, had spent time in Edinburgh at school and university. "Jennifer had almost never been across the border before, but we landed on a perfect day and Edinburgh was bathed in sunshine. We compared prices to what we were used to in London

and knew that we could afford a lot more here, so she was sold on the idea."

It wasn't quite so straightforward as planned, however. After initially renting for six months to give them time to buy, the couple were still looking 18 months later and if anything, had narrowed their ideas of what they wanted. James says: "We were renting in Fettes Row and loved it, so we wanted to stay in the New Town or in Stockbridge. We were in a lovely drawing room flat but had no access to a garden, so that was another thing on our tick list." He also admits that they were somewhat bamboozled by the Scottish offers over system. "It was at the height of the market and things were going at 30 to 40 per cent over the asking price."

Luckily, the lower ground and basement flat at 7a Royal Crescent was fated to be theirs and the couple moved into a property which wasn't a compromise in any way. "It is like a house because it is up

and down stairs, and although there are four bedrooms we have it as three plus an extra sitting room we call the snug. There are also three bathrooms and a utility room, which is unusual for a flat."

But what ultimately swayed them was the outside space at the front and back, giving them a garden in the centre of the city. They felt both areas were under-utilised when they moved in and so brought in a landscaper to make the most of them. Now there is a beautiful paved area accessed from the snug and utility room at the back and a more formal dining area at the front of the house. James says: "We use both areas; on Saturday mornings we take the papers and coffee out to the back and sit in the sunshine and my eldest daughter, who uses the snug as a playroom, is in and out in the summer."

At the front of the building, below street level, the couple have entertained guests armed with gin and tonics or even dinner, protected from prying eyes by the arches above. James says that the road outside has become a lot quieter in the last two years due to a route into Broughton Street being blocked off and now there is little passing traffic. The couple's bedroom is at the front of the building too and James says that while it is still a city flat, they've never been disturbed here.

After moving in, they redecorated throughout and had the kitchen reconfigured. James says: "There was a lovely new fitted kitchen here but the space didn't work and after agonising about it a bit, we ripped it out and redesigned." The result,

Inside knowledge



7A ROYAL CRESCENT, EDINBURGH

■ A four-bedroom lower ground and basement flat with private front and rear patios and a shared garden. The property, which forms part of a mid-terraced late Georgian townhouse dating from around 1829, is situated in the heart of the New Town, a short walk from the city centre and Stockbridge.

■ Period features include a flagstone floor in the hall, sash and case windows, and polished timber floors. There is a fireplace in the living room, which has enough space for a dining area. The fourth bedroom has French doors to the garden and can be used as a further public room. The master bedroom is en suite and there is a further bathroom and shower room. ■ Offers over £480,000, Simpson and Marwick, tel: 0131-525 8600.

he says, is now the luxury of a large kitchen with acres of worktop space.

One feature which always draws comments is the glass panel set in the hallway of the ground level and looking down into the hallway below. The McLennans can't claim credit for the idea, it was already installed when they moved in, but it is an interesting feature which works well in bringing light to the basement level. Having said that, there are only bedrooms and bathrooms down there and upstairs the living space is very well lit.

The flat was never meant to be a ten-year home and the plan was to move out when they had two children. With Alice now nearly three and her sister Emily one, they feel it is time to trade up.

Having such tight criteria met in their first home in Edinburgh, the couple now know just what they want. James says: "We

like a lot of things about this place – the utility room, the outside space, the number of bathrooms. We also like having a formal sitting room and a family room as well, but to have that here we can only have three bedrooms. And ideally the girls would have their own rooms, plus we'd have a guest room."

But James has been disappointed by the choices on offer for their next step up. "There are much larger houses that we have looked at, for hundreds of thousands of pounds more, but they aren't as nice as this or they only have one bathroom or the kitchen is too small." The couple may have to be prepared to compromise, but on one point on their wish list they refuse to budge. "At 36 and 35 we feel we are way too young to be moving out of town. We like the buzz of the city and aren't ready for retirement to the country just yet."



Clockwise from main: the exterior; living room; the kitchen; view of the back; the master bedroom with en suite