

ROOM AT THE INN

To be beside the seaside

CHRISTINE McCABE

The flat sea shimmies in the summer heat, and the air is so salt-tanged with nostalgia I'm fancying Eskimo Pies, chicken salt on chips, and Snips (an icy South Aussie treat, rather like a milky Sunnyboy). There's something reassuringly old-fashioned about Adelaide's beachside Glenelg, where children play cricket on the lava-hot sand and extended families juggle Tupperware and complicated picnics beneath the Norfolk pines. Near the jetty the Ferris wheel seems to have nodded off.

Any South Australian who has moved away remembers with visceral longing hot summer days like these. The afternoons mired in torpor and the evenings too warm to sleep. There was nowhere to go but the beach, hauling a dishevelled caravan of dogs, kids and grandparents.

Olive Court, or Miss Olive's as the receptionist dubs the charming 1920s building, a sort of Spanish mission meets art deco mash-up featuring four apartments, perfectly captures that sense of nostalgia. Towels hang on the railings above the footpath, toys are scattered about the tiny lawn, and one can easily imagine generations of families traipsing sand into the cool entry hall. This is one of seven heritage buildings housing 22 one to four-bedroom flats operated by Seawall Apartments on The Esplanade, south of the jetty and overlooking the beach.

The wonderfully eclectic assemblage includes an old stable block, quaint fisherman's cottage (one of the oldest buildings in Glenelg), and the rather grand 1892 School House where the sons of Adelaide's great and good attended preparatory college in the early 20th century.

Seawall Apartments' late founder Alan Osborne had the foresight to establish a holiday rental business in the 70s when Adelaide's beachside suburbs were properly daggy and the notion of multi-million-dollar seaside pads a crazy pipe dream. His daughter Rachael grew up at Seawall and continues to run the apartments, in the heart of an altogether much smarter Glenelg.

Just up the beach from Miss Olive's, Australia's only European-style beach club, Moseley, fairly heaves with young bods lounging beneath large umbrellas on jaunty blue and white striped day beds while waiters whizz back and forth delivering chic cocktails. But I have my own little beach club right here in Miss Olive's because the master bedroom in



Seawall Apartments at Glenelg, above; beach club and jetty, top; coastal style, inset

Apartment 1 has a bathroom at the front window, the huge tub offering long views through the Norfolk pines to the sea.

This is an apartment with great dowager bones, high ceilings and voluminous rooms, and her makeover has been gentle, featuring just enough coastal motifs (think vintage fish prints and wall-mounted weathered oars) to anchor her firmly on the beach.

The old-fashioned kitchen has been cleverly updated and features a mid-century-style dining setting, and all mod cons are here including a television in each of the three bedrooms and free W-Fi access. The living room

opens on to a balcony with a barbecue, the perfect spot for sundowners.

Seawall recently commissioned a striking, 12m-high piece of public art by South Australian artists Che Chorley and Dave Court.

The blue-hued *Beastly Sea* adorning Miss Olive's southern wall makes a colourful addition to the long esplanade, a medley of high-rise apartments and grand 19th-century beachfront villas.

Fancy beach clubs notwithstanding, some things don't change at Glenelg. The tram still trundles into the city, kids still fish from the jetty and at Miss Olive's we still sit on the bal-

CHECKLIST

Seawall Apartments

21-25 South Esplanade, Glenelg, SA 5045; (08) 8295 1197; seawallapartments.com.au.

Tariff From \$180 a night.

Getting there Adelaide airport is an easy 15 minutes by car.

Bedtime reading *Storm Boy* by Colin Thiele. A seminal book when I was a child and always worth revisiting, painting an evocative picture of a different kind of South Australian beach life.

Stepping out Book a day bed at The Moseley Beach Club; the fee is redeemable against food and beverages. Swim with dolphins from a catamaran operated by Temptation Sailing. Grab a copy of a *Mansions of Glenelg* flyer from the Visitor Information Centre to discover the area's rich architectural legacy. Over summer, watch for the Glenelg Sunset Market held on the last Sunday of the month near the jetty and featuring more than 40 artists plus artisanal goods, food trucks and live music.

Brickbats Pack your shampoo and conditioner; there are no toiletries provided.

Bouquets Miss Olive is a clever thing, providing all essential mod cons while retaining the low-key, charm of the beach holidays of yesteryear.

Also try Bannisters by the Sea, Mollymook, NSW; Quarters, Flinders Hotel, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria.

cony with a bucket of chips listening to the cricket on the wireless.

Christine McCabe was a guest of Seawall Apartments.



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