

‘Andy finds my taste in wallpaper a bit bizarre’

Ten years ago Andy and Kim Murray bought a hotel in Scotland filled with family memories, and now Kim has given it a showstopping revamp. She gives **Shelley Rubenstein** the tour – and for the first time talks about life as a tennis wife



Kim Murray in the drawing room at Cromlix. The painting, Linlithgow & Loch from the Golf Course, is by the Scottish landscape artist Ruth Nicol. **Opposite top** The bedrooms are all inspired by nature. The Tulip bedroom is “one of my favourites”, Kim says. “The dark colour scheme and the four-poster create a real sense of drama.” **Opposite bottom** The exterior of Cromlix, which was built in 1874 as a Victorian family home



“There’s this moment when you emerge out of the other side of the baby stage and that’s when you start finding your feet,” Kim Murray declares. “It was just a matter of what I chose to apply myself to, which is this.”

The “this” is Cromlix, a 15-bedroom hotel sitting in 34 acres of Perthshire countryside that Kim and her husband, the tennis champion Andy Murray, bought a decade ago. “Andy felt very strongly that it would be lovely to do something for the local area,” Kim says about why he was so keen to buy the hotel when the previous owners approached him. “Andy and [his mother] Judy were always passionate about its location and the huge connection with the family.” An added lure was that a management company specialising in luxury properties would do all the heavy lifting. “We were presented with an interior designer at the beginning and we were really young, so I can’t say we were hands-on in terms of the feel of it,” continues Kim, now 35. “I expressed opinions but I definitely wasn’t connected with it in the way I am now.”



Photographs Caroline Briggs



In the bar, Green Wall wallpaper by Osborne & Little paired with soft pink glass sconces creates a sense of intimacy. **Left** Andy and Kim at the hotel in January

Back then it was a perfectly pleasant yet fairly tired-looking classic country hotel, serving cream teas and arranging clay pigeon shoots. But after three months of extensive refurbishment, the result of Kim's now-very-hands-on revamp is a skilful modern-day interpretation of a country pile. Where once furniture and wall colours were muted, bold prints and strong shades now pop with traditional and contemporary art — a mix from the Murrays' personal collection and pieces on loan from the Royal Scottish Academy — complementing this new direction. With no two rooms the same, it was a daunting task for Kim, who has a background in art and a previous career painting pet portraits, to undertake.

The Murray family's home town of Dunblane is close by and the family have a long history with the property — Kim and Andy held their wedding reception here in 2015, while Andy's brother, Jamie, had his wedding ceremony in the on-site chapel five years earlier. The catalyst for the refurbishment took place in September 2021 following another family celebration. "I had never really engaged with a critical eye until about 18 months



The tennis courts at Cromlix are in Wimbledon colours. **Right** The guests' boot room



Portrait of Kim and Andy: Remember Tomorrow Photography



In this bedroom, Thyme, the headboard is covered in Mixed Tone Canvas by Designers Guild. "We placed Roberts radios in the bedrooms as you can have fun matching the colours to the room schemes," Kim says. **Below** In Hyssop's sitting area, the wallpaper is Posy by Eijffinger

ago," Kim says. "We came up for Andy's grandad's 90th birthday family lunch, held in the study. He gave a lovely speech about what this place means to them, but it was looking a bit knackered and hitting that point where it needed to be refurbished."

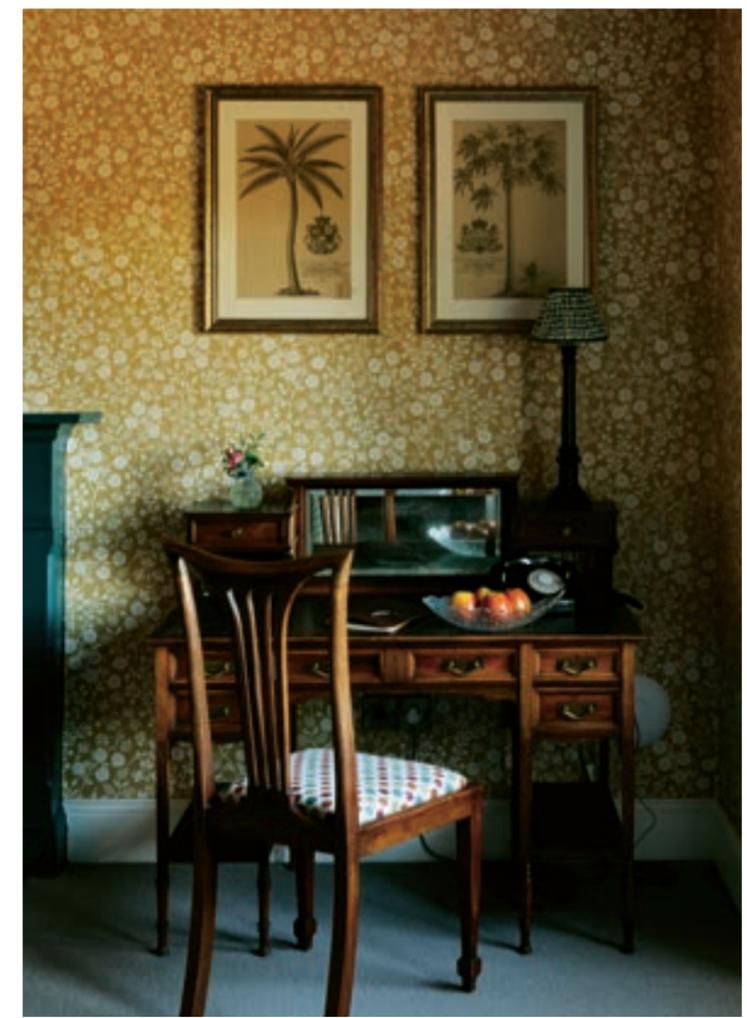
The time had also come for the Murrays to make a pivotal decision as to whether they would remain Cromlix's owners. "We were at a crossroads and if we decided to hang on to the hotel, I felt like we really needed to have a say. It came at the perfect moment. I finished having babies and I'd completed our house, so I said I'd do it. There's so much potential that I knew I'd always regret it if we didn't do it and someone else got hold of it."

Now Cromlix has become Kim's post-baby passion project, which is why she has agreed to her first interview. In person she's warm, fun and, when we meet at the hotel, in need of a strong coffee and a bacon sandwich. Reassuringly like one of us, in other words, but with *that* impossibly glossy hair — it really is glorious and looks straight out of an advert. Infuriatingly its maintenance is as low-key as Murray herself, who elected to do her own hair and make-up for Style's shoot.

Considering how long she has been in the public eye, she has managed to keep a remarkably low profile. "It was a conscious decision because I don't believe that being the partner of a tennis player is anything newsworthy. I have never been interested in capitalising on that [Andy's profile] and would have felt like a fraud. I was always confident and satisfied that I had stuff going on and that my life was full with direction. And I have never felt the need to justify that to anyone."

Indeed, in the current era of oversharing, intel on Kim is refreshingly scant. The couple met at the US Open in 2005, when she was travelling with her tennis-coach father, whose oldest friend was coaching Murray. Andy was 18, Kim 17, and they have been together ever since. They now have four children: Sophia, seven, Edie, five, Teddy, three, and Lola, two.

Kim's confidence in interiors comes from the five years she spent creating their family home in Surrey.





"I found the place that we demolished and rebuilt when Sophia was four months old. We moved in when our youngest, Lola, was three months, so it bookended my babies. It was a big project and I worked with an amazing team. The number of decisions I had to make and my ability to make them quickly was learnt during that process. I had to tell the architect I was pregnant three times during the course of the building works. For the last one we'd finalised the scheme for the extra guest room, which we then had to turn into a nursery for Lola. They made me promise not to get pregnant again!"

Where did Kim get her ideas for the refreshed Cromlix? "I had a broad sense of the overall look. I was inspired by what we've done at home and I knew I wanted Suzanne from Garuda Design, who worked with me on our house, to do the interior." For Kim, one of the most crucial changes was to make it more family-friendly. "It didn't feel reflective of our taste and where we are in our lives at the moment. We've got kids running around, and although I've always felt really proud of the place — especially the restaurant, run by the chef Darin Campbell, which has a devoted local following — it felt a bit austere and formal."

Although Andy is not remotely interested in interior design, "he was the one who wanted to buy the hotel in the first place, to be an asset to the community, and he loves the family connection. He was vocal about how he wanted it to feel and what he looks for when he goes to a hotel, which is good wi-fi and a comfy bed." That's not to say his wife isn't prone to forcing inclusion. "I'll show him my mood board to wind him up because he finds my taste in sumptuous statement wallpapers bizarre."

Where Andy did get involved, though, is in the new focus on art — Kim explains he was initially interested



The artwork in the bar is part of the Made in China series by the Irish photographer Spencer Glover, on loan from the RSA. **Above** Thyme's bathroom, with products by the Edinburgh brand MODM. **Right** Kim in the kitchen garden



The window nook in Hyssop. "This is where we stay if we are visiting with the children," Kim says. "They love being able to peer out of the turret windows"

in buying artwork from an investment perspective but now has a genuine passion and has chosen to share some favourite pieces from their home, including works by Sage Barnes, David Shrigley and Damien Hirst. Another personal touch is the freshly baked "Granny's shortbread" placed in the bedrooms. Made from Andy's grandmother's recipe, it's the sporting star's favourite sweet treat.

Over the years Kim has received various requests seeking her endorsement or offering ambassadorial contracts, but she has zero interest in self-promotion for its own sake. It's only now with her work on Cromlix that she feels she has something to discuss publicly. "I genuinely don't engage in reading things about me, but one time so many people sent me an article titled 'How to get Kim's caramel highlights,'" she says, now on a roll. Brace yourself for her potty mouth, made famous when cameras caught her swearing during one of Andy's Wimbledon matches in 2015. "The thing that f***ed me

off at that stage was that I had never dyed my hair or styled it. I used to finger-dry it and I was blessed with good hair from my mum. The line 'strategically placed caramel highlights' has stuck with me — and they put a ridiculous four-figure cost on my hairstyle." She does, however, admit to dyeing her hair now, post children, "because the texture of it has completely changed".

She is currently deep in planning the next stages of the Cromlix project. After the revamp the hotel reopened in late March, with prices over the summer starting at £400 a room, B&B, based on two people sharing; then later this year they'll open nine lodges by the loch and a new restaurant, which the Murray family intend to visit frequently. Has spearheading Cromlix's revamp launched a new career for Murray, then? "Oh God, no. I see delivering on this as a job that I take really seriously. I'm not an interior designer, but I've got the passion and connection with this place to see it through." ■ cromlix.com

Take a video tour of Cromlix with Kim Murray at thesundaytimes.co.uk/style