

# The COUNTRY SIDE of TEAM MURRAY

On the eve of Wimbledon, Kim Murray – wife of the British tennis legend – tells us why life off court is a whole other ballgame

INTERVIEW BY LAURA SILVERMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER

Andy's terrible," laughs Kim. "He would just collect animals. But he doesn't do the maintenance. Everything has to go through me because I'm the one who will be looking after them. If he had his way, we'd have a whole menagerie." When tennis is going well, Andy Murray – double Wimbledon champion, double Olympic champion and former world number one – is away for 40 weeks a year. "It's crazy," says Kim, who remains at their country estate in Surrey to look after their children, dog, rabbits and hens. "Tennis is very unforgiving. Unlike other sports, it doesn't stop."

Kim's dad was a tennis coach, so she knew the score when they met as teenagers. But she is looking forward to Wimbledon, when Andy will be at home. He will slide comfortably into family life, although work will remain his focus: "When Andy's at a tournament, he's there to do a job." Since they got together in 2005, Kim has seen Andy hit dizzying highs, a knighthood among them,

and desperate lows – injury a few years ago left him struggling to walk. Kim has been his number one supporter throughout.

With four children under seven, Kim's life over the past few years has been as consumed with childcare as Andy's has been with tennis. "This is just a glorified excuse to get away from the kids," she jokes about her recent decision to do up the couple's hotel in Dunblane. Every fortnight for three months, Kim has been scooting up to Scotland to oversee the renovations, leaving Sophia, Edie, Teddy and Lola with her mum: "With Andy away so much, I couldn't do it without her."

## GRAND SLAMS TO GRAND DESIGNS

Andy bought Cromlix, a former Victorian mansion, ten years ago. It was the family's go-to place for a celebration – from his grandparents' silver wedding anniversary in 1982 to Andy and Kim's wedding reception in 2015. For years, it was looked after by a management company, until Kim suggested she take it on: "We'd finished having children and we'd finished building our house, so it seemed the perfect time." Kim might not be trained ▶

# “I’D HAVE LOVED TO HAVE BEEN A FLORIST – I’M OBSESSED WITH FLOWERS”

in interior design, but she did once consider art college and ran a pet portrait business, displaying her work through her Brushes and Paws Instagram page. Her paintings included a six-foot by four-foot depiction of Maggie May and Rusty, the couple’s Border terriers. “Six months after having each baby, I’ve thought, ‘I’ll start painting again,’ but I never got round to it,” she says. “Having little kids has been all-consuming. Renovating the hotel has enabled me to come out of motherhood and create something different.”

Kim has been especially keen for the hotel to make the most of its grounds. She has plans for nine cabins in the woods and walking paths through the 34 acres of land. But her current joy is the kitchen garden, overseen by Sarah Janisch Corser. In 18 raised beds and surrounding areas, Sarah and her team supply the hotel restaurant with calendula and forget-me-nots, lemon balm and hyssop, gooseberries and blackcurrants, ‘Shiraz’ mangetout and beetroot among the generous growing list.

Slugs and snails are controlled with beer traps and nematodes, while a fence keeps out wild rabbits and the resident cockerel, who is awaiting a partner after his friend had a fatal run-in with a guest’s Labrador last week. “Our dog would have torn the chicken to pieces,” says Kim, just out of the cockerel’s earshot.

Kim takes a drift of flowers from the garden inside to help Sarah with the arrangements for the rooms: “In another life, I would have loved to have been a florist. I’m obsessed with flowers.” Kim slips a spray of salvias into a vase and tames a couple of stray stems. She assesses her work by her artist’s eye rather than formal principles. “I love Willow Crossley [one of the florists behind Prince Harry’s wedding]. She’s very freeform. There doesn’t have to be a rule for everything.”

## HOME TURF

Back home, Kim often brings flowers from the garden into the house. “Andy sometimes says, ‘How many flowers do we need?’” she laughs. “When we have people to stay, I love putting flowers next to their beds, and I love gifting them.” Summer at Murray Mansion means dahlias and roses, nasturtiums and sweet peas, which all grow in abundance. Andy gets excited about winning a match; Kim gets excited when a Sarah Raven delivery arrives.

Kim has gone big on prairie planting on their Surrey property, inspired by Piet Oudolf’s Glasshouse Borders at RHS Garden Wisley. “I bloody love that place!” Kim says. With the help of a gardener, she is also reviving 20 acres of ancient woodland on their land. “Our gardener lets me fuff and then subtly helps me. I love the process of creating a garden, planting seeds in the autumn and seeing the flowers come up in the summer. It’s really satisfying.”

On a summer’s day, the kids play outside, making castles in the sandpit or scampering about: “They’re a bit feral!” Kim keeps an eye

on them with her hands in the soil: “There’s something really therapeutic about weeding and yanking stuff out. My garden is my happy place.”

In quieter moments, she watches the birds – the red kites and the buzzards, the wagtails and the long-tailed tits. If she goes out early enough, she can hear owls in the surrounding woods. Being in the garden “immediately takes my mind off things”.

But for much of the time, Kim’s mind must be on all things domestic. She is the one responsible for the children while Andy is away, as well as their animals.

In addition to Rusty the Border terrier (Maggie May, who died last year, is buried in the garden), the Murrays have a brood of chickens. There are currently four, a mix of Orpingtons and Sussexes, named after Disney princesses, with more to follow. Fertilised eggs from Ebay are expected any day now.

There are also two rabbits. “I was getting nagged for a long time for those,” says Kim, who caved in this year. “They’re very cute, so I didn’t mind.” Next up could be pygmy goats: “They’re meant to be very naughty, but I’m quite into that idea.” And bees: “I’m trying to get my act together to do a beekeeping course.”

## COUNTRYSIDE CALLING

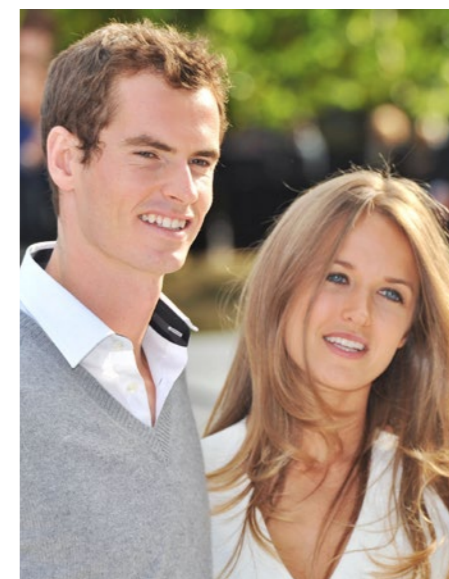
Kim wants her children to have the same opportunities to enjoy the countryside as she did, growing up in Barcombe, East Sussex. “Our home was by the River Ouse. It was proper *Swallows and Amazons* stuff. We spent our time pond-dipping, while our Alsatians jumped in the water. It was idyllic.”

Sometimes, the Murrays venture outside their grounds to explore Box Hill, Ockham Common or Headley Heath. “The children are too young to go on long walks, so we often just wander around with the dog, the kids whacking each other with sticks.” She pauses. “It’s the small moments that count.”

When they’re not whacking each other, are the kids whacking tennis balls? “We have kicking and screaming every Sunday morning when I say, ‘It’s tennis. Let’s go!’” admits Kim. Last year, she took the two eldest, Sophia, now seven, and Edie, five, to the Laver Cup in London. “It was the first time they’d properly watched Andy play. We went backstage and Federer came over. I said, ‘Will you say hi to Daddy’s friend Roger?’ They weren’t interested at all!” She is relieved they aren’t set on following Andy into tennis because she thinks they would always be compared to him. So few people make it: “I wouldn’t want my kids to feel as if they weren’t good enough.”

Kim wonders if the hotel might inspire a different vocation. “I think of it as a family project,” she says. “Maybe in 15 years, the kids will be interested in it. I want to see where it takes us.” It’s that or they join Andy running an animal sanctuary...

**TO FIND OUT MORE** about Cromlix, head to [cromlix.com](http://cromlix.com). The 2023 Wimbledon Championships take place from 3-16 July.



PHOTOGRAPH BY WENN



## THE MURRAY MAKEOVER

Kim has been working closely with the interior designer Suzanne Garuda on the renovations of Cromlix (bottom left). “I had a very strong sense of how I wanted it to look,” Kim says. Rooms that were once staid and muted, with beige carpet and grey armchairs, are now bold design statements. Walls are painted in rich reds and greens. Floral curtains frame the windows. There are oriental rugs, chandeliers, velvet sofas and plump cushions. “I wanted guests to feel as if they were on a decadent sleepover at someone’s house, as opposed to being at a hotel,” she says. The owner of this ‘house’ loves art. Medium-sized museums have fewer works on display: “Some of it is from Andy’s own collection. I don’t think many people know he’s into art.” Above the staircase hang eight Damien Hirst cherry blossom prints. In the hall are four David Shrigleys – bright, simple images of a dog, a shark, a horse and a fish (above). “When Andy showed them to me, I said, ‘It looks like our kids have done them,’” Kim laughs. “Now I love his stuff.”