





Love match

Generations of Andy Murray's family have celebrated special occasions at Cromlix hotel in Dunblane – including his marriage in 2015. So when it was threatened with closure, he and wife Kim resolved to rescue it and renovate the Victorian mansion for a new era

Kim Murray's first visit to Cromlix hotel wasn't an auspicious one. 'We were there for the wedding of Jamie, Andy's brother, and arrived in the dark, with the satnav in our rental car sending us the wrong way around a farm so we arrived late for the rehearsal dinner,' she laughs. 'The hotel was lovely but very traditional, with "thunderbox" loos and typical Victorian country house décor. I didn't actually think much about it again, until it came onto the market in 2013 and Andy was approached by the owners about buying it. He was advised not to – back then, he was a tennis player on the up and he was told the hotel would be a money pit. We were children really – I was still at university! – but something kept drawing us back. Andy felt a real connection to Cromlix because it meant so much to his family.'

The Victorian mansion three miles from Andy's hometown of Dunblane was once home to the Drummond family and became a hotel in 1981. A year later, Andy's grandparents

celebrated their silver wedding anniversary there, followed by many more family birthdays and weddings – including Andy and Kim's. 'By then, we owned Cromlix but it was run by a management company; Andy and I were more like guardians of the hotel than truly involved; pleased that it was doing well and was popular with the local community for whom, like Andy's family, it was a place to go for special occasions,' Kim says.

That all changed in 2021, when a cocktail of circumstances turned Kim from hands-off custodian to in-at-the-deep-end hotelier, driving the creative transformation of Cromlix for a generation of guests who wanted great design as well as traditional country comforts. 'It was the first summer of Covid, the original management contract had come to an end, and I was coming out of the fog of breastfeeding and was beginning to feel more human again,' she says (Kim and Andy have four children). 'We'd also moved into the family home I'd spent five years building and decorating with the help of →





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interior designer Suzanne Garuda, and I was on a high because I so loved what we'd done there.' But it was a lunch with Andy's grandad for his 90th birthday that sealed the deal. 'He wanted the lunch at Cromlix because the place meant so much to him,' Kim recalls. 'I had this realisation that we couldn't hand off the hotel, especially during the pandemic, and make it someone else's problem. Suddenly, running it ourselves was appetising.'

The transformation of Cromlix is very much Kim's project, driven by an understanding of how our definition of luxury and escape in Britain has changed. 'The pandemic altered everything; people want to feel relaxed and comfortable, and luxury doesn't need to be as formal any more,' she explains. 'Plus, Cromlix was a family home before it was a hotel, so I wanted to bring that feeling back when you stay, it's a boutique, curated experience. Life should feel slower here. From your bathroom to the cocktail bar, everything is indulgent and inspirational, but also homely and welcoming.'

Together, Kim and interior designer Suzanne devised a characterful, modern country update for Cromlix – there are floral lampshades above the table in the billiards room, shapely upholstered headboards and bouclé armchairs in the suites, funky patterned wallpaper and bobble mirrors in the bathrooms, in a palette of natural shades ranging from pale periwinkle to rich olive and ochre. Did Andy have a say in the décor? 'No, I did our entire house without asking and it was the same with Cromlix,' Kim laughs. 'All Andy wants from a hotel is good food, a comfortable bed and working internet. He trusts me, although he probably does think I overdo the botanicals and the colours. He's



just like, "Why? I don't understand." But I love that and I don't feel I need Andy's approval. He does enjoy art, though, so he helped choose a lot of the paintings we have on the walls.'

Supporting Scottish artists, artisans and suppliers was important to them both. One of Andy's favourite paintings, which hangs in reception, is by local artist Ann Wegmuller. Others are on loan from the Royal Scottish Academy. This focus on the local extends to the community of Dunblane, too, and Kim counts it as a huge success that Cromlix has now become a place to pop in for a coffee after a dog walk in the grounds, or for a weekday lunch with friends, as well as the go-to for big events and luxurious home-from-home for international visitors exploring all that Scotland has to offer.

'Andy holds Dunblane incredibly dear, so when we're here and people stop him in town to say how much they love the hotel, it gives him such a buzz,' Kim says. The reborn Cromlix also gets a seal of approval from the Murray clan. 'Andy's twin nieces had

their 21st birthday here last year, and that was the dream – that we could infuse the hotel with life and spirit to appeal to a younger crowd, while still keeping our loyal repeat guests feeling at home here.'

There are more changes to come, including a brand new restaurant and landscaping of the grounds, but Kim's transformation of the hotel is virtually complete. So what next, another hotel, or a full-time role as chatelaine of Cromlix? 'For me, the excitement and adrenaline comes from the building and design, running around in a hard hat or looking at moodboards, not the financial side and management of the hotel. So, thinking about what's next is a challenge,' Kim admits. 'I've spent the last 10 years building a family, and that's been my passion and priority. I wanted to create a beautiful home for them, and I took the same approach to Cromlix. I love that it could stay in our family for generations and that our kids already enjoy it so much. There's so much here, we're only just seeing its potential.'

Left Kim worked with interior designer Suzanne Garuda on the transformation of Cromlix, respecting its history while reinventing it for the future
Right Andy and Kim have created a home from home