

'Ann's on a mission to make Lympne the best known castle in the world' Stephen



Ann poses in the grounds of the castle, which boasts stone walled gardens in addition to a vineyard, an orchard and stables

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS

WELCOMING US TO THEIR MEDIEVAL CASTLE IN KENT ANN KAPLAN MULHOLLAND AND STEPHEN MULHOLLAND CANADIAN STARS PLAN REALITY SHOW TO REVEAL REVAMP OF THE HISTORIC HOME



When hunting for a new home, many people might consider downsizing, but Ann Kaplan Mulholland and her husband Stephen Mulholland did quite the opposite.

"We weren't going to buy a castle, but it happened," says Ann as she invites **HELLO!** to join her behind the ornate doors of the pair's new pad: the medieval Lympne Castle in Kent.

The Canadian TV star and entrepreneur, along with her world-renowned plastic surgeon husband, already own ten residences in the world's most exclusive places, from Hawaii to the British Virgin Islands, but even they didn't expect to end up as king and queen of their own castle. ▶

The couple, who starred in

Having added Lympne Castle to their portfolio of properties around the world, Stephen and Ann plan to film a £15m renovation for a new docuseries

'Ann thought that doing a castle makeover would make a great reality show' Stephen

The Real Housewives of Toronto in 2017 and were previously based in Las Vegas, had been looking for a bolthole in Britain after the youngest of their six children flew the nest.

"Our youngest son was 17 and went off to university. The next day, we said: 'We're out of here,'" says businesswoman, author and public speaker Ann. "When we started looking for flats in London, it got me curious. When an apartment is so expensive, I wondered what a house costs. Then it was: 'I wonder what a castle costs?'"

The rest is history, and now Ann and Stephen, both 62, are delighted to call the £11m castle home.

Boasting turrets and fortified towers, a wood-panelled Great Hall and 20 bedrooms, the grade II-listed building is surrounded by beautiful stone-walled gardens, a vineyard, an orchard, stables and 139 acres of land.

The panoramic views take in Kent's rolling countryside, Romney Marsh, the English Channel and, on a clear day, the French coast.

FIT FOR A KING

The heady scent of wood smoke emanating from the fireplaces harks back to the castle's medieval history as Ann shows us around the maze of lavish rooms.

"This is the King's Room; King Henry VIII slept in there," she points out as we pass a room decked out with a four-poster bed and vintage treasures that Ann found at auction.

The castle's rich history dates back to 1080, and tragic 11th-century Archbishop of Canterbury (and later saint) Thomas Becket spent time there. ▶

Stephen admires his "smart, beautiful and kind-hearted" wife (above) as they settle into their new home, set in 139 acres of rolling English countryside (below). Ann (left, second left) at a Max Mara event in 2017 with fellow *The Real Housewives of Toronto* stars Joan Kelley Walker, Jana Webb and Gregoriane Minot

(RIGHT) ANN'S DRESS: DRESS & PARTY BELT; PRITCH; EARRINGS: LAURENCE COSTE. (FAR LEFT) ANN'S DRESS: KRUSZYNSKA; EARRINGS: SUSAN CAPLAN





**'We want it to feel as though
you're in a fantasy castle
– medieval outfits, drinks in
goblets, and harps' Ann**



With its sumptuous
wood panelling, the
Great Hall (also inset
above right) is the
centrepiece of the
grade I-listed building



Paul McCartney performs with Wings (below) in 1979 – the year after the band recorded their *Back to the Egg* album at Lympne Castle

More recently, it has played host to everyone from the cast of *The Only Way is Essex* to rock'n'roll legends Sir Paul McCartney, who recorded the album *Back to the Egg* here with his band Wings in 1978, and Sir Mick Jagger, who performed a gig nearby.

Ann may have starred in a reality show that follows the lives of glamorous women as they go about their daily lives, but she is also creative and business-driven.

She has a doctorate in business administration and a degree in interior design and, in 1996, she founded iFinance, now one of the largest consumer-finance companies in Canada. She's also a regular on lecture circuits and has presented shows such as *The Ultimate Makeover* in Canada.

Now, Ann and Stephen are looking forward to inviting TV cameras into their lives once again, to follow their journey as they invest £15m in a grand renovation of Lympne Castle.

BEHIND THE SCENES

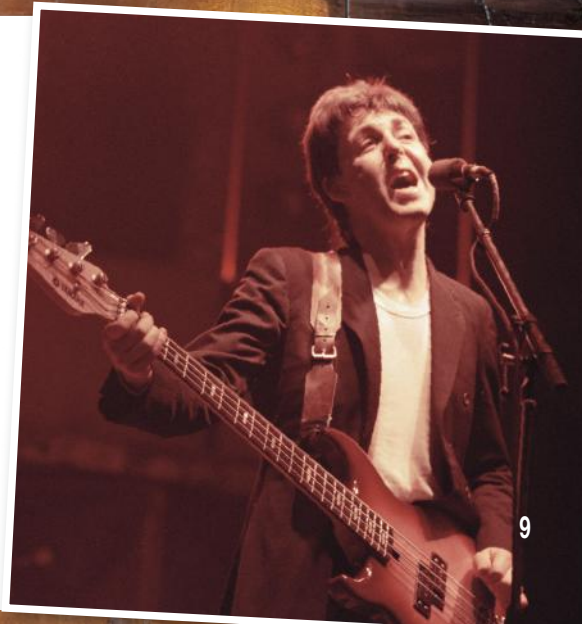
"Ann immediately thought that us doing a castle makeover would make a great reality show," says Stephen, whose own vision for the forthcoming docuseries started out as a mash-up of *Below Deck*, a cult reality show following the antics of staff on luxury yachts, and period drama *Downton Abbey*.

"Rather than a luxury boat crew, we have the staff staying in the cottages in the castle grounds, and then you've got the captain, 'Queen Ann'. I'm the first mate, and we'll

have the crazy, colourful guests who come for their events," Stephen says.

"I love doing reality TV," Ann says. "I could wake up in the morning and be on camera and that would be normal. When you are who you are and you're living to your fullest, you don't care if there's a camera on you, because you're not putting on an act."

As well as making Lympne Castle their family home, Ann and Stephen plan to transform it into a one-of-a-kind tourist attraction, while continuing its long-established use as a wedding venue. ▶





Roaring flames in an original inglenook fireplace warm a cosy bar area, while stone staircases (below left) are carpeted in regal red



"We want it to feel as though you're in a fairytale castle," Ann says. "I want to have the staff in medieval outfits, drinks served in goblets and beer steins, and harps playing in the background, so that couples feel as though they're having their own fantasy dream wedding."

Ann and Stephen's own love story began in 1998, when they met at a plastic surgery convention.

"I saw Ann and knew within 30 seconds that I was going to marry her," Stephen recalls.

"Of course, I made the mistake of telling her that and she was like: 'This guy's either deranged or too cocky for

me,'" he adds with a laugh – but luckily he managed to win her over, and love blossomed.

BLENDING IN

At the time, they each had two children from previous marriages.

"It was like a merger acquisition and new start-up," quips Stephen of their blended family, adding: "It worked out well. Our kids were very close in age and then we had a couple more. It's been a great journey."

Adds Ann, smiling: "We've been happily married for 21 years, which I think is unusual. We actually like each other's company." ▶



'When a flat in London is so expensive, I wondered what a house costs. Then it was: "I wonder what a castle costs?"' Ann



Stephen jokingly goes down on one knee in a room used to host weddings. The venue (also pictured left) has a view of the walled gardens and the English Channel beyond

'Being here has made me feel more connected to my English heritage. It feels very normal' Ann



Blue blood: Ann and Stephen pose (below left) on the four-poster bed in what Ann calls the King's Room, where Henry VIII is said to have slept during a visit to the castle. The room, which is lit by a dramatic chandelier, is decorated with vintage treasures that Ann found at auction





"Ann is extremely smart and beautiful, but also kind-hearted," says former professional ice hockey player Stephen, who retired from surgery in 2021 and now specialises in teaching and non-surgical techniques.

STRONG BONDS

The couple are also kept busy by the six children they share.

"We're a very close family and they're all very talented kids: dancers, musicians, there's never a dull moment," says Ann of their brood, which includes Luke, 34, Gabrielle, 32, Barrett, 31, Keaton, 30, Talise, 20, and 19-year-old Chase, as well as Destiny and Rock – the children of Ann's late sister, whom she took under her wing following their mother's death.

And despite their love of travel, Ann and Stephen feel at home in Britain.

"We've been all over the world – every continent, every major city – and London has become our favourite city for sure," says



Ann in the bridal suite, one of the castle's 20 bedrooms (also above left), which is romantically decked out in white and gold



(LEFT) ANN'S DRESS: JENNIFER CLAIR, SHOES: STEVE MADDEN (RIGHT) DRESS: WILLIA LONDON, EARRINGS: SUSAN CAPLAN, STEPHEN'S SUIT: ANV OLD IRON

Stephen, who was born in Vancouver to Irish parents, while Ann has an English mother and Hawaiian father, but was brought up by a Scottish stepfather.

"Being here has made me feel more connected to my English heritage," she says.

"We were brought up with food like porridge in the morning, Yorkshire pudding and roast beef, so it feels very normal being here."

Ann and Stephen have a tradition of renewing their vows every five years with memorable ceremonies, each more extravagant than the last.

Their most recent was at a Scottish castle, with an owl swooping on to Stephen's arm with a symbolic ring attached to its leg. Their next will be at their new castle home, which they also plan to let one of their sons use as a location for a forthcoming film he's directing.

RESTORED GLORY

"Ann's on a mission to make Lympne the best-known castle in the world," says Stephen proudly.

The couple have given the tongue-in-cheek nickname "Mulywood" to their other luxurious properties, including their Canadian base in Toronto, in a nod to their surname, which prompts a few eye-rolls from their children.

But Lympne may be the only property on which they won't bestow the moniker.

"I'm not sure the historical society would appreciate it – Lympne Castle for 1,300 years, now Mulywood," says Stephen, while Ann adds with a laugh: "I don't know if Kent is ready for us, let alone for Mulywood!" **H**

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For more, visit lympnecastle.com.



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The couple enjoy the quintessentially English scenery – with the help of a friendly horse (above left). On a clear day, the French coast is visible when looking out from the castle (below left)