

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

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS

WELCOMING US TO THEIR MEDIEVAL CASTLE ANN KAPLAN AND STEPHEN MULHOLLAND

CANADIAN STARS PLAN TV 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, Dr. 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, U.K.

The Canadian TV star and entrepreneur, along with her world-renowned plastic surgeon husband, already own 10 residences in the world's most sought-after destinations, 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 *The Real Housewives of Toronto* in 2017 and were previously based in Las Vegas, had been looking for a bolthole in Britain after ▶

Having added Lympne Castle to their portfolio of properties around the world, Stephen and Ann plan to film its \$25-million renovation for a new docuseries.

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



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

the last of their eight children flew the nest.

"Our youngest son was 17 and went off to university. The next day, we said, 'We're out of here,'" recalls Ann, a businesswoman, author and public speaker. "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?'"

FIT FOR A KING (AND QUEEN)

Boasting turrets and fortified towers, a wood-panelled great hall and 20 bedrooms, the \$19-million building is surrounded by beautiful stone-walled gardens, a vineyard, an orchard, stables and 139 acres of land. Its panoramic views take in Kent's rolling countryside, the English Channel and, on a clear day, the French coast.

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 she found at auction.

The castle's rich history dates back to 1080; tragic 12th-century Archbishop of Canterbury (and later saint) Thomas Becket spent time there.

It has also played host to Sir Paul McCartney, who recorded the album *Back to the Egg* here with his band Wings in 1978, and Sir Mick Jagger, who stayed at the castle when the Rolling Stones were performing in the area. ▶



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 from L) at a Max Mara event in 2017 with fellow *Real Housewives of Toronto* stars Joan Kelley Walker, Jana Webb and Gregoriana Minot.



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



Paul McCartney and Wings recorded their album *Back to the Egg* at the castle (below) in 1978.



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

BEHIND THE SCENES

Ann may have starred in a reality show that follows the lives of glamorous women as they go about their daily lives, but she's 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 hosted TV shows such as *The Ultimate Makeover*.

Now, she and Stephen, 62 and 63 respectively, are looking forward to inviting TV cameras into their lives once again to follow their journey as they invest \$25 million in a grand renovation of Lympne Castle.

"Ann immediately thought that us doing a

castle makeover would make a great reality show," says Stephen, a former professional hockey player who retired from surgery in 2021 and now specializes in teaching and non-surgical techniques. His vision for the U.K. docuseries was a mashup of *Downton Abbey* and *Below Deck* – a reality show that follows the antics of staff on luxury yachts.

"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."

"I love doing reality TV," says Ann. "I could wake up in the morning and be on camera

With its sumptuous wood panelling, the great hall is the centrepiece of the building.

ANN'S DRESS: JENNIFER CLAIR; STEPHEN'S SUIT: MARC D'ARCY; SHIRT: MARKS & SPENCER; MCCARTNEY: JOHN HENSHALL/ALAMY



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



transform it into a one-of-a-kind tourist attraction, while continuing its long-established use as a wedding venue. "We want it to feel as though you're in a fairytale castle," says Ann. "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."

BLENDED FAMILY
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," he adds, laughing, "I made the mistake of telling her that, and she was like, 'This guy's either deranged or too cocky for me.'"

Luckily, he succeeded in winning her over, and love blossomed.

At the time, they each had two children from previous marriages. "It was like a merger acquisition and new startup," quips Stephen of their blended family. "It worked out well. Our kids were very close in age and then we had a couple more. It's ►



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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 adorned with vintage treasures that Ann found at auction.



ANN'S DRESS: JENNIFER CLAIR. EARRINGS & NECKLACE: LAURENCE COSTE. (RIGHT) DRESS: JENNIFER CLAIR. EARRINGS: SUSAN CAPLAN

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."

"Ann is extremely smart and beautiful, but also kind-hearted," says her husband fondly.

The couple have a tradition of renewing their vows every five years in memorably extravagant ceremonies. Most recently, they said "I do" again at a Scottish castle, with an owl swooping on to Stephen's arm, a symbolic ring attached to its leg. The next vow renewal will be at their new castle home, which they also plan to let one of their sons use as a location for a film he's directing.

STRONG BONDS

"We're a very close family," says Ann of the eight children she and Stephen share: Luke, 34, Gabrielle, 32, Barrett, 31, Keaton, 30, Talise, 20, and 19-year-old Chase, as well as Destiny and Rock – Ann's ▶



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



'I love doing reality TV. When 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' - ANN

former niece and nephew, whom she became mother to after her sister Joan's death from cancer in 2014. "They're all very talented kids: dancers, musicians," she tells us. "There's never a dull moment."

HERITAGE PROJECT

Despite being constantly on the move themselves, Ann and Stephen feel very much 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 Stephen, who was born in Vancouver to Irish parents, while Ann has an English mother and Hawaiian father but was raised by a Scottish stepfather.

"We were brought up with food like porridge in the morning, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding," she says. "Being here has made me feel more connected to my English heritage."

"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 mansion in Toronto's affluent Bridle Path neighbourhood – prompting a few eye-rolls from their kids. 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," says Stephen. Adds Ann with a laugh: "I don't know if Kent is ready for us, let alone for Mulywood!" **M**

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For more, visit lympnecastle.com.

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).