

UK NEWS

Richard E Grant sells Provence farmhouse to Jim Piddock and Ann Cusack

David Byers, Deputy Property Editor
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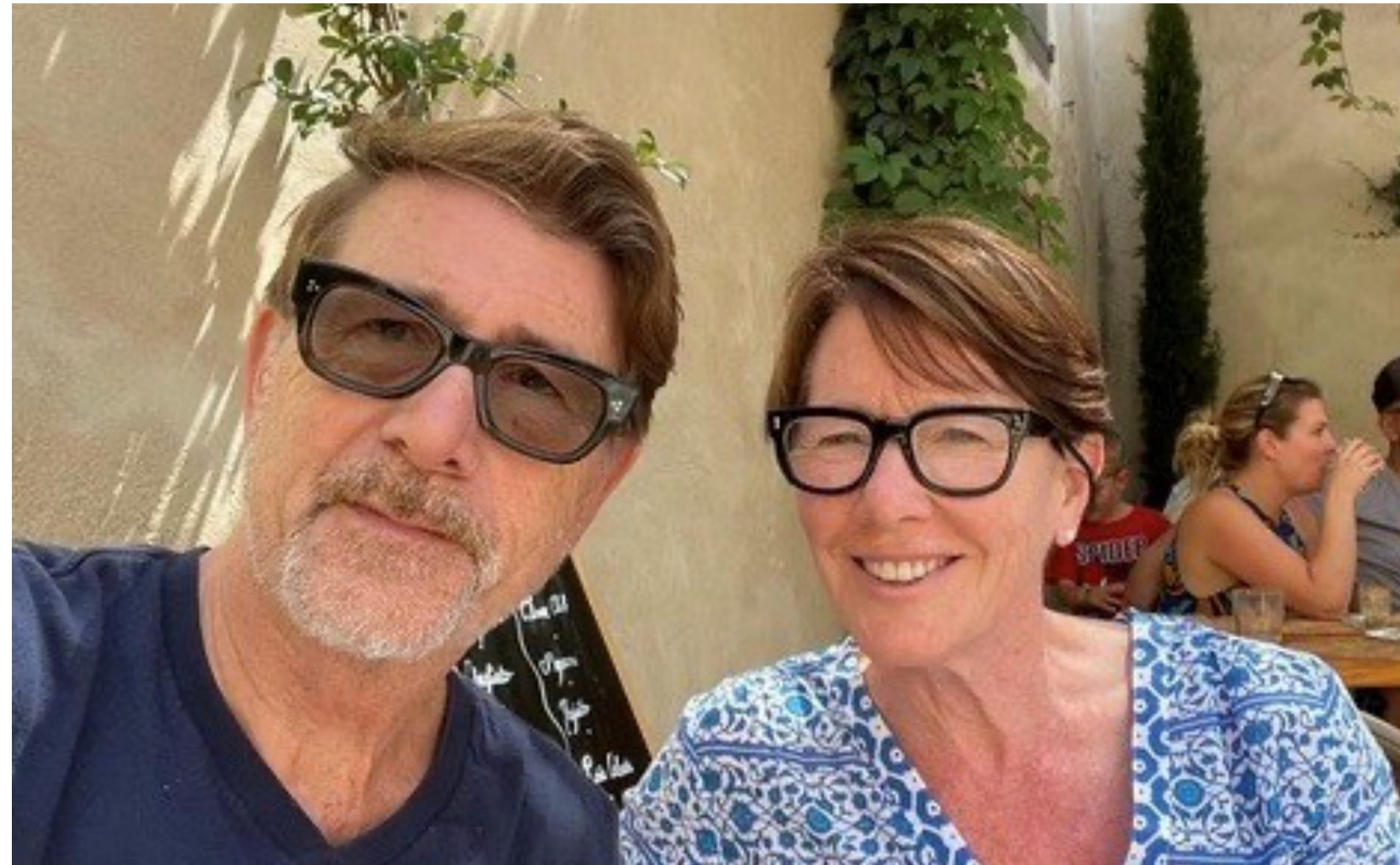
Richard E Grant owned the farmhouse with his wife Joan Washington for 33 years until her death in 2021

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Earlier this year, the actor Richard E Grant described the process of emptying out and selling his holiday home in Provence as being akin to a "second bereavement" after the death of his beloved wife Joan in September 2021.

The couple, their family and friends had spent 33 years enjoying languid summers at the three-bedroom farmhouse, called Le Pigeonnier, in the village of Aups in the Haut Var region before she passed away from lung cancer. The actor said that he was "heart sore" when he announced that he was selling their bolthole, which contains ancient mulberry and olive trees, a badminton court and swimming pool.

Now it has been announced that the Withnail and I star's home has been sold to two other film stars, the British actor Jim Piddock and his wife, the American actress Ann Cusack, who will become the latest stars to move to a bucolic region located a 90 minute drive from Nice, which has already attracted George Lucas, the Clooneys, Brad Pitt and Eric Idle.

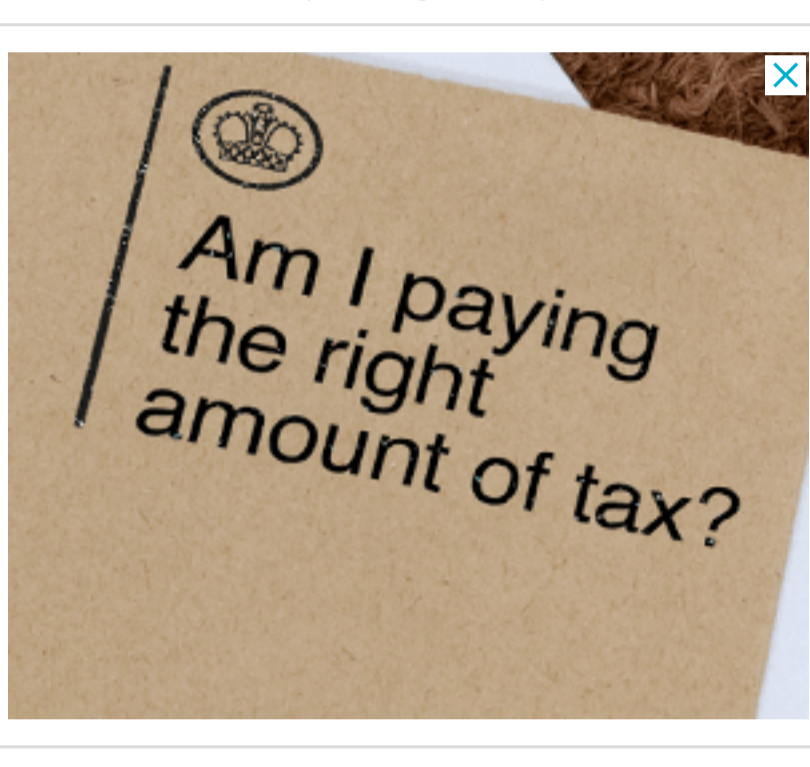


Jim Piddock and his wife Ann Cusack bought the property having fallen in love with the region

Piddock, who is best known for his role in the movies *Independence Day* and *Austin Powers in Goldmember* and Cusack, who starred in films including *A League of Their Own* and *The Informant* said they had originally fallen in love with the Haut Var area, known for its vineyards and understated lifestyle, after being introduced to it by their friend, the Monty Python star Idle in recent years.

Piddock said he had been told by Grant that his chateau was for sale with the agency Agence Grossi at an advertised price of €570,000 (£498,000).

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"Every year, I'd fantasize about buying somewhere in Provence and we'd maybe look at a small handful of places for sale, but we never quite found the right fit. The time and the place both finally seemed right."

Grant, 66, has spoken extensively about his relationship with Washington, a dialect coach to the stars, whom he met when he was taking classes to improve his accent after moving to London from the former British protectorate of Swaziland in 1982.

The couple spent every summer at Le Pigeonnier with their daughter Olivia, 34, and Grant's stepson, Tom. Upon deciding to sell the property, in July, he posted a message on social media, which read: "Heart sore to sell Le Pigeonnier in Provence after 30 Summers. Sleeps 7. Pool, badminton, olive and fruit trees."



Speaking in a video diary when emptying out the house in September, he described how difficult it was to go through Joan's possessions at the house where they "swam, danced, played badminton, had parties, surrounded by flea markets."

"It feels like a second bereavement because you have to go through everything all over again. My sympathies to anyone who's going through this or having to go through this brutal process. It always makes me wonder at the end of it, do we need any of this stuff, especially if you're a magpie collector as my family is."

At The Times and Sunday Times [Cheltenham Literature Festival](#) this month Grant, whose permanent home is in the Cotswolds, said some friends had stopped speaking to him after Washington died, including a Swedish couple who lived next door to them in Provence. "I have had people cross the road rather than talk. Whether they think you're going to fall apart and you're an emotional wreck, I don't know," Grant said. "But I will never speak to them again."

Tony Patterson, from the property buying agent Home Hunts, who brokered Piddock and Cusack's purchase, said: "It is a magical place and it's in a wonderful location."

Home Hunts would not confirm how much the couple eventually paid for the house. Grant declined to comment further on the sale.

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