

Anthony Nicholas Diamantidi – Entrepreneur and Patron of the Arts

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Extraordinarily well connected in the world of the Arts, Anthony Diamantidi saved deteriorating old properties around Effingham in the 1920s and 30s, as well as transplanting other old buildings from other locations to the village. He played a key role in securing the land that would become the King George V Playing Fields, as well as assisting on various village groups.

Overview

Anthony Nicholas Diamantidi lived in Effingham from the mid-1920s. He was not only highly successful as a businessman but also moved in the highest artistic circles, particularly the ballet. Yet only the barest details of his life have ever come to light and of the sources we have turned up, we cannot always be sure which reliably refer to him. We have heard him described as a ‘shady character’ and as a ‘smooth operator’, a man who wrote felicitous letters to Effingham Parish Council and appeared quite agreeable to sorting out problems on his land, and yet engaged in a bitter and protracted dispute with another Effingham resident of high repute. He held house parties in Effingham attended by members of The Russian Ballet no less, piquing the interest of residents such as Mrs Lena (née Keeling) Bridger whose shop they visited. In a later oral interview Mrs Bridger told her interviewer:

‘In those days Mr Diamantidi lived at Grove House and members of the Russian Ballet visited him and came into the shop.’

He lived to the age of either 97 or 103 (depending on which source one believes) but in all that time as far as we know only one photograph of him – shown in Figure 1 – ever slipped into the public domain. This one was published in *The Sketch* on 20 October 1937.

According to the numerous passenger manifests for his flights to and from the US in the late 1950s and 60s, he was born on Chios, Greece on 4 November 1883. Effingham residents who knew him said he was a White Russian (ie amongst those who opposed the Bolshevik revolution of 1917) who had fled to the West after the end of the First World War. That Diamantidi had some Russian contact or history may well be true. Some online genealogy websites state that he was born on 4 November 1888 in Taganrog, a port city on the Black Sea coast of south-western Russia (which had started as a Greek settlement). Effingham Local History Group (ELHG) has also received confirmation from a Diamantidi family member that the family were ethnic Greeks, living in southern Russia (Taganrog and Odessa) for many years, and who were fluent in Russian and Greek. Bearing a Greek name meant that he could travel as a Greek, which potentially made it easier than identifying as Russian during his American ventures in the late 1950s. Claiming to be born in 1883 would also have made him 31 at the start of WWI as opposed to 26. An older age might have allowed him to explain away an apparent lack of war service. ELHG has been given information originating from a Diamantidi genealogist that Diamantidi had siblings living in Paris in the 1920s, a brother Volodia and three sisters, one whose name or nickname was given to us as ‘Toutousha’, another named Aglaée, plus a further sister named Olga. Some passenger lists in the 1950s have him named as Antoine Diamantidi.

He may have first come to notice as a person having some expertise in insurance or reinsurance. An ‘A Diamantidi’ is mentioned in *The Gloucester Citizen* of 16 February 1916 as an insurance manager in Petrograd (St Petersburg) taking a share in a new insurance company, The Overseas Marine Company Limited, in the business of insurance against loss or damage at sea by war or other means. There is also an ‘A N Diamantidi’ who published a handbook on reinsurance in January 1918. He was moreover cited in *The Times* on 3 January 1921 as someone with expert knowledge in this field. An ‘A Diamantidi’ is further mentioned in insurance trade magazines as being the foreign representative in England of a group of Russian insurance offices. ELHG has also been told by an acquaintance of Diamantidi’s that he owed his fortune to anticipating the rise of oil to replace coal as the fuel used by freighters as they traversed the world’s shipping lanes. To this end he sold all the valuable and sought-after licenses he owned for coal refuelling stations around the world, and thus exited the market at the top before oil reduced them in value. It is also known that in 1957 he turned over \$11m of oil rights granted to him by the Indonesian government for stock in New British Dominion Oil Co (reported by the *Toronto Star*, 17 July 1957), having stated that he had previously been retired for a number of years and hoped to be retired once more when the deal was complete (see Appendix 1 for the article). Evidently his retirement was put on hold for a few

years, as in a letter to the Effingham parish clerk (dated 26 June 1972) Diamantidi mentioned he was spending a few months every year at his American residence (West Redding, Connecticut), trying to liquidate certain American and Canadian interests.



Figure 1 Diamantidi with ballerina Tatiana Mikhailovna Riabouchinska in *The Sketch*, 20 October 1937; under Licence from the Mary Evans Picture Library © Illustrated London News Ltd. / Mary Evans.

By 1922, according to an address given on a passenger manifest for a sailing from Southampton on 30 November, Diamantidi was residing at Grey Wings in Ashted. This is a highly noteworthy property, occupied at the time by Lawrence and Ethel Margaret Boustead, with their son Hugh. Ethel would later move to Effingham, living in Old Westmoor Cottage on Orestan Lane from 1933 until her death in 1936. Possibly her move had been influenced by this connection to Diamantidi.

Marriage

On 16 February 1924 Diamantidi married at St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham to Gladys (née) Hayward. Gladys was the daughter of the late Victor Silberberg Hayward, born in Hungary, and his wife Augusta Mary (she had been baptised at St Mary's Church in Tetbury, Gloucestershire on 16 October 1892, the register giving her date of birth as 12 March 1886). The marriage certificate gives his place of residence as Ashted and a newspaper jotting mentions him as then living at Moorlands in Ashted. His father's name is entered as Nicholas Dimitri Diamantidi, both son and father generically describing their profession as 'merchant'. Both were marrying late: Gladys was 37 and Diamantidi was 43. Victor had died in 1923 and been buried in the same church.

Gladys's parents had run a well-known costumier known as 'Madame Hayward' on New Bond Street – their names are mentioned in connection with a libel case reported in *The Globe* on 30 April 1908, as seen in Figure 2.

CORSET TRADE MYSTERIES.
WEST-END COSTUMIERS' QUARREL
AMUSING INCIDENTS.

To-day, in the King's Bench Division, before the Lord Chief Justice and a special jury, Mrs. Charlotte Jane Connah, known in the corset trade and to West-end costumiers as "Madame Lottie," brought an action for alleged libel against Victor Silberberg and Augusta Silberberg, trading at 64, 67, and 68, New Bond-street as "Madame Hayward."

The libel complained of was characterised by Mr. Hugo Young, K.C., who represented the plaintiff, as one due to trade jealousy. The plaintiff had been employed by the defendants for many years in the corset department, and became known to customers, mostly ladies of title, as "Lottie," having, as she alleged, all but complete control of the department. She subsequently started business as a corset-maker on her own account. A circular issued by her in connection with her new venture brought about a counter-circular from the defendants, which formed the subject of the libel complained of. In it the defendants said:—

A short time ago a saleswoman in the corset department left us and established herself, circularising our customers, and no doubt you also. We wish to point out in your interests, as well as in ours, that to make corsets which will fulfil all the requirements of perfect fit, ease, shape, and good wear, is not an easy matter, "though attempted by many." Now, this person who has left us, and may be soliciting your custom, has been merely a machine, an instrument for carrying out Mdme. Hayward's instructions, and has no master hand behind her to control, direct, or advise.

This, plaintiff said, was an unjustifiable reflection on her in the way of her business, while the defendants pleaded that the statement was true, and counter-claimed in respect to patterns and addresses of customers, which, it was alleged, the plaintiff had taken away.

During the examination of the plaintiff by Mr. M'Cardie as to the mysteries of the corset-trade in the West-end, the Lord Chief Justice suggested that the questions were irrelevant, as counsel must, he supposed, "know all about it."

Mr. M'Cardie remarked that "he was not married," a confession which brought about roars of laughter, in which his Lordship joined.

The Lord Chief Justice then suggested that the matter should be left to Mr. Hugo Young as an old and experienced hand, and that learned gentleman admitted the soft impeachment.

The plaintiff indignantly resented being called a "person," and Mr. Hugo Young, amid laughter, assured the jury that no young lady engaged in the West End corset and dressmaking world could tolerate such a description.

Mr. Duke, K.C., for the defendant, contended that his client was justified in issuing the circular complained of, and called Mrs. Silberberg to show that the mysteries of corset making for the West-end aristocracy remained with her, and the patterns taken away by the plaintiff were of a unique character.

The jury returned a verdict for the plaintiff, awarding £100 damages, and found for the defendant on the counter-claim.

Figure 2 Diamantidi's wife Gladys ('Mrs Hayward') embroiled in libel; © British Library Board.

'Madame Hayward' was renowned as a court dressmaker and by the 1910s the shop had also begun dressing stars of the stage such as Marie Tempest and Ellen Terry. Gladys is mentioned as working as a manageress there in 1931.

Effingham properties

After Diamantidi and Gladys married they may then have taken up residence in The Villa on the Guildford Road, Effingham. The previous tenants, the Ross family, had vacated it after the father, James Aitchison Ross, had died in 1920.

The Villa (later Grove House) is shown on the map segment opposite, contained in the brochure for a local auction in 1921. The main house was the west-most building whilst the elongated structure to its immediate north-east was Grove House Cottage (sometimes called simply Grove Cottage). The square structure just south-east of this (above the letter 'A' in the map's 'MANOR' label) was a small cottage which eventually became Walnut Tree Cottage, although before that had been named Allways Cottage.



Figure 3 Map from a local auction brochure, 1921;

The Villa was put up for sale in March 1922, as shown in the advertisement below, published at the time.

EFFINGHAM, BETWEEN GUILDFORD & LEATHERHEAD

TWO MILES FROM EFFINGHAM JUNCTION, WITH ITS EXCELLENT SERVICE OF TRAINS.



A VERY ATTRACTIVE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY, comprising an old-fashioned COUNTRY HOUSE, WITH UP-TO-DATE IMPROVEMENTS, situate on the outskirts of the village, and distinguished in the title deeds as "The Villa"; contains lounge hall, three reception rooms, oak panelled billiard room, twelve bed and dressing rooms, two bathrooms, and excellent offices.

**ELECTRIC LIGHT.
CENTRAL HEATING.
TELEPHONE.**

Garages, stabling, men's rooms, cottage, farmery; well-timbered gardens and grounds, three tennis courts, large kitchen garden, park pasture and arable; in all about

42 ACRES.

The beneficial interest in the Lease of 35 years unexpired, with the option of buying the Freehold, to be SOLD by Private Treaty or by AUCTION on May 10th next.

Full particulars of Messrs. GIDDY & GIDDY, 11A, Regent Street, S.W. 1.

Figure 4 The Villa advertised for sale in *County Life*, 25 March 1922; © Future Publishing Ltd.

Diamantidi renamed The Villa as Grove House, possibly after his wife's family home Bookham Grove. An advertisement from *The Surrey Advertiser* of 18 April 1925 placed by Mrs Diamantidi of Grove House, Effingham, stating 'Young Lady wanted for two hours daily to teach English to a Russian Boy, aged 7', is the earliest we can confidently locate the Diamantidis in Effingham. Whereas he had (apparently) worked previously in the insurance business, he seems now to have begun developing properties in Effingham as new opportunities arose.

In 1928, according to a later resident, he bought Walnut Tree Cottage on the Guildford Road (now called The Coach House, virtually opposite Effingham Golf Club) on 27 March 1928, and would keep it until 7 October 1932 when he sold it to Mrs Marguerita Pughe, mother of the champion figure skater John ('Jackie') Dunn whose story is told in another article [*John ('Jackie') Dunn – Professional Ice Skater of Effingham* by J Palmer in *Studies in the History of Effingham*, Vol 2, Article No 17, 2023].

He also bought Norwood Farm in 1928 from its owner Charles Meaburn Tatham. This farm had been tenanted by the Hemus family during the previous 18 years. Miss Hemus recorded that this sale apparently took place without the knowledge of her grandfather, which led to their leaving. Diamantidi promptly set

about doing the place up, uncovering some coloured Latin frescoes dating from the 15th century in the process of demolishing a wall, as reported in an article published in *The Surrey Mirror and County Post* on 24 May 1929. He then sold it on to Sir Nicholas Waterhouse in 1930.

It is in the late 1920s that we begin to see Diamantidi playing a wider role in village life. For example he is listed as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Effingham Working Men's Club in 1927. In 1935 he was one of three members of a Parish Council sub-committee tasked with identifying and negotiating land to form the nascent King George V Playing Fields. This sub-committee was renamed the Effingham Playing Fields Committee and for a time was chaired by Diamantidi. He played a key role in the early negotiations which eventually secured the land identified, and although he also offered, in the summer of 1936, £250 towards its purchase, the Hon Treasurer Mrs Nina MacNair reported to the Committee nearly a year later that he was still promising her the money; he never did produce it.

In later life he stated

'I also owned on the opposite side of the road [from Norwood Farm] a cottage which was completely derelict [sic] which I restored completely and sold to Lady Devine, equally on account of the cottage facing the common' (remarks made in a letter to Antony Page dated 25 September 1975).

ELHG has not been able to identify this cottage or 'Lady Devine'. Other old properties were shipped in from further afield; next to Grove House he built, using imported old materials, Grove Paddock which was let to the revue star Gwen Farrar from June 1934. Another house, The Old Cottage (now called Pilgrims), was likewise built by him nearby on the Guildford Road.

Continuing the theme of stage artists moving to Effingham, he may also have had something to do with the actor Andrea Malandrinos moving, around 1939, into Grove House Cottage which stood in the Grove House grounds close to the main building. He and Malandrinos would have a very close friendship for the remainder of their lives. Malandrinos is another of the artistic incomers appearing in Effingham in the interwar period and his story is told in [*Andrea Basil Malandrinos – Versatile Film Actor of Effingham* by C J Hogger in *Studies in the History of Effingham*, Vol 7, Article No 59, 2025].

In the village he also brought in The Barn, set to the west of The Street and just off Madge's Lane. In about 1970 the Effingham builder Henry Tyrrell (born in 1875) told the late Mary Alfreda Rice-Oxley that the timbers for this had come from Wonersh. Wonersh Historical Society has confirmed to ELHG that a very large Wonersh building, known as Wonersh Park or Wonersh Mansion, was demolished in 1929. However architecturally Wonersh Mansion bears no resemblance to The Barn. Possibly The Barn's timbers came from an outbuilding on the estate but no evidence has so far come to light to support this hypothesis. Diamantidi's address was written as The Barn in the lease for Grove Paddock dated 14 June 1934. Thus while still owning Grove House, he must have built The Barn by this time and was using it for some purpose, even if he still entertained at Grove House. In time he would move into The Barn after finally disposing of Grove House.

Diamantidi also owned as part of the Grove House estate the Village Hall standing at the bottom of The Street. The article shown in Figure 6, published in *The Surrey Mirror and County Post* on 21 November 1930, is an example, among several, showing that he allowed uses of the Hall by others.

LINK WITH 15TH CENTURY. SURREY FARMHOUSE DISCOVERY.

While alterations were being carried out at the picturesque 11th century home of Mr. A. N. Diamantidi, at Norwood Farm, Effingham Common, Surrey, some coloured Latin lettering was found inscribed on plaster behind a wall which was being demolished. The remainder of the hall was carefully taken away. On another unsuspected wall behind was revealed a unique set of coloured frescoes in the Gothic style.

These depicted the Ten Commandments and the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The frescoes are in a wonderful state of preservation and are believed to date from the 15th century.

A member of the London firm who are conducting the sale of the house told a "Daily Chronicle" representative that it is believed that at one time the house, or, at any rate, the portion containing the frescoes, formed an old chapel.

Norwood Farm is a house of much historical interest. It was here that the Puritans are reputed to have met secretly during their persecution in the 17th century. Other features of the house are its rare yew panelling and fine old oak-timbered barn.

Figure 5 Frescoes discovered at Norwood Farm;
The Surrey Mirror and County Post, 24 May 1929.

Both the deteriorating and cramped state of the St Lawrence School and its continued inability to admit new children led to the education authorities seeking temporary premises at the end of the 1930 school year. The following are excerpts from the St Lawrence School Log Book which delineate the role played by the Diamantidis in helping the school and its pupils:

1930:

July 11th: Managers now arrange to place at the disposal of the Education Committee, for further accommodation, the Village Hall.

Oct 13th: Re-opens the School.

The Village Hall taken into Commission as a Temporary room for infants.

1931:

Dec 23rd: Later part of the Afternoon devoted to a Xmas Tree Party mainly arranged by Mr and Mrs A N Diamantidi. A few parents present.

1932:

January [date uncertain but likely to be the 11th as next entry is 12th]: A letter has been received by the Head Teacher from the owner of the Temporary School requesting us to evacuate on Feb 12th 1932 as he has sold the property. This information is passed to the Surrey Education Committee.

Feb 11th: A further leave of 6 weeks has been obtained by the Head Teacher on the temporary school building from the owner Mr A N Diamantidi.

There would be further discussions on extensions of the lease on 11 February, at the end of the month's notice, and on 16 and 18 March. Through 1932 there was more work done on securing extra space on the existing school plot for new buildings. On 20 December, there was a repeat of the Christmas Tree party, with the Diamantidis again noted as the principal donors. Each child received a gift in front of a number of residents and parents.

The extended use of the Village Hall as a temporary school was brought to a close through an exchange of letters:

1933:

April 28th: School Log Book copy of letter from Head Teacher to Mr A N Diamantidi:

'I desire very cordially to offer you my heartfelt thanks and the sincere gratitude of the children for allowing us so long the use of the Temporary School – the Village Hall. This tribute to your kind generosity and public spiritedness will be entered on the School Record.'

April 30th: School Log Book copy of reply from Mr A N Diamantidi:

'Thank you very much for your kind letter; the Council wrote to me a few days ago a very nice letter to acknowledge it.

In the matter of the temporary accommodation of part of your Infants – may I say – the pleasure was entirely mine. Infancy, I am afraid, is the time when most of us have been their best and a great pity it is. I wish we should all conserve a little more of the good that is inherent in us – the world would become an even pleasanter place to move in.'

Grove House was advertised for sale on several occasions in the Thirties, including 1931 (in both May and December), 1932, 1936 and 1937. In the latter year the contents were put up for auction as shown by the notice shown in Figure 7, published by *The Surrey Mirror and County Post* on 10 December, and the house itself may, at last, have been sold soon afterwards.

Although Grove House was likely sold by 1937 or 1938, Diamantidi already had tenants in The Barn. The Electoral Registers tell us that the Nicholson family lived there from 1935 until 1939, and they in turn were replaced by the Robertson family. The Robertsons were still in situ when the father, Mr Laurence Robertson, died and was buried in St Lawrence on 12 January 1945. Hence it may be that Diamantidi did not actually take up residence in The Barn until 1945 or 1946 (which is when his mother-in-law died there on 21 November 1946 (see below). Members of the Nicholson family appear in four photographs (see Appendix II) purchased by ELHG depicting a summer party on Sunday 7 July 1935.

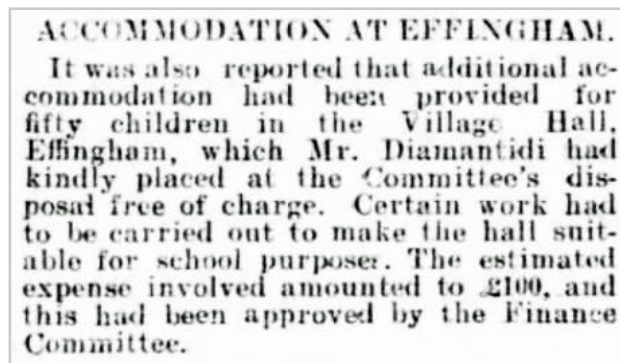


Figure 6 Diamantidi offers use of the Village Hall;
The Surrey Mirror and County Post, 21 Nov 1930.

The photographs show a swimming pool in the back garden of The Barn. Whether Diamantidi or the Nicholsons had built it, it shows a taste for the latest domestic luxury and an awareness of the then-new fashion for sun-tanning. A swimming pool was also built in this period at Diamantidi's other property, Grove Paddock cottage.

The Ballets Russes

The Diamantidis possibly also maintained a property in Shepherd Market in London's Mayfair; Eileen Ascroft, ever alert to using her Effingham neighbours and contacts, in a February 1938 *Daily Mirror* column mentioned that Mrs Diamantidi had a small house there, while extolling the parties she hosted for Colonel de Basil's Ballets Russes (this was the successor company to The Russian Ballet, which had fallen apart in 1929 after Diaghilev's death). *The Daily Mirror* had earlier reported on the Russian Ballet stars visiting there.

How and when Diamantidi's connections to the Ballets Russes began is uncertain and, given that this organisation had an extremely complicated history, it is unlikely to ever be fully determined. The photograph of him seen in Figure 1 shows that an association was established pre-War. Whether this began in Russia and whether he was the 'A Diamantidi' acting as a conduit for insurance business between Russia and the West, we do not know.

It was in the 1950s and 1960s that Diamantidi became more visible. Firstly, after the Colonel's sudden death in August 1951, he looked after de Basil's widow, Olga Morosova. Katherine Sorley Walker, in her 2010 book *'De Basil's Ballets Russes'* (p156-7), writes:

'De Basil and Morosova were now living in an apartment borrowed from a friend in the rue Jean-Mermoz in Paris. Another friend of long standing saw a good deal of them. This was Anthony Diamantidi, a charming and by all accounts unscrupulous Greek financier who had known them all since the 'thirties when he lived in Effingham in Surrey. Now de Basil recommended him to Morosova as someone who would look after her in an emergency.'

Diamantidi arranged a studio residence for Morosova in the aftermath of de Basil's death but, as with Norwood Farm, he sold the lease to it without notice. He also took control of two separate holding companies for the Ballets Russes. As Sorley Walker says, these companies formed the background for Diamantidi's 'Diaghilev and de Basil Ballets Foundation'. This formed a vehicle for selling at auction scenery and costumes associated with the legendary years of de Basil's ballet.

Items had been originally stored in Montrouge, Paris but then used by de Basil. When he died in 1951 they were warehoused again, presumably in Paris with Diamantidi paying the storage costs. However, Diamantidi then became involved in a court case concerning another warehouse full of ballet props which had been stored in Montreal by de Basil during WW2. In December 1958 fire had swept through that warehouse. Diamantidi, via one of the holding companies – the Russian Ballet Development Co Ltd of London – issued a \$300,000 damages action, as reported on 10 January 1961 in *The Gazette (Montreal)* (see Appendix III).

Conceivably, Diamantidi took whatever could be recovered and shipped it back to Paris. Alternatively, if nothing was recovered, this may have prompted Diamantidi to think of auctioning the items in the Paris repository before they too were rendered worthless. However this played out, we do know that, as Sorley Walker points out, new object clauses were added to the Russian Ballet Development Co by Diamantidi on 20 November 1964, essentially in order to acquire and sell on items relating to the original Russian Ballet companies.

He first took representatives of Sothebys to the Montrouge warehouse after an initial small sale of Diaghilev ballet material in June 1967. Subsequently the riches of the Ballets Russes were put up for auction



Figure 7 Auction of goods at Grove House;
The Surrey Mirror and County Post, 10 Dec 1937.

by Sothebys on 17 July 1968 causing, as Sorley Walker says, 'wild excitement'. Further auctions would follow. In 1969 Diamantidi gave £30,000 towards a National Museum of the Performing Arts, in which some of the purchased items from the auctions would be displayed [*The Guardian*, 17 December 1969].

Social life

By the 1930s Anthony and Gladys Diamantidi were well-placed to become part of Surrey society. We see their names appearing in the guest lists for fashionable weddings. We see him performing charitable actions around the village. For example, *The Surrey Advertiser* reported (Wednesday 23 May 1934) on an event held in the grounds of their house:

'An attractive fête was organised by the Effingham and District branch of the British Legion and held in a meadow adjoining Grove House, Effingham, by invitation of Mr A E [sic] Diamantidi, on Whit-Monday. The proceeds were in aid of the branch building fund, which at the moment stands at £250. The building, which will form the branch headquarters, is estimated to cost £450.

Organised by a committee, of which Mr G M M Mallaby-Deeley was president, the fête was formally opened by Mrs H C Willock-Pollen. Music was provided by the band of the 2nd Queen's Royal Regt., which also played for dancing on the green.'

The profit was expected to be £30 towards the Legion building. It should be noted that later in his life Diamantidi supported attempts to protect Effingham Common in the 1970s, including sending a cheque for £50 for this cause in September 1975.

Loss and renewal

We are not sure of the location of Diamantidi's main abode after Grove House had finally been sold in 1938, nor do we have any information on where he was based during the War. However, we do know that shortly after the end of the War, he suffered two sudden losses. Firstly his mother-in-law Augusta Mary Hayward died at The Barn on 21 November 1946.

HAYWARD.—On Nov. 21, 1946, at The Barn, Effingham, Surrey, Mrs. A. M. HAYWARD, late of Bookham Grove, Surrey, and 67, Grosvenor Street, W.1, beloved mother of Dorothy Simon and Gladys Diamantidi. Funeral, St. Nicholas's Church, Great Bookham, on Monday, Nov. 25, at 3 p.m.

Figure 8 Death of Gladys's mother Augusta;
The London Times, 22 November 1946.

Just two months later Gladys also died, on 31 January 1947, in 3 Rue Hotel de Ville, Vevey in Switzerland.

A later Effingham resident said that Gladys had died from cancer. Diamantidi may have kept the Swiss residence for business reasons or perhaps for the potential health benefits for his wife. Her name does not appear on her parents' headstone and so it is probable that her remains were not returned to Bookham.

He subsequently entered into a relationship with a German-born woman, Mimosa Dietlinde Dorothea Maria Wilhelmine Luise Daniele von Klitzing (born on 7 Oct 1909 in Berlin, according to the genealogy site <http://buro-klicken.de/Stammbaum/Bennecke.htm>, although other researchers into the Diamantidi family have proposed that Mimosa came from the far east, possibly Indonesia). She came to live in The Barn along with her daughter, also named Mimosa (familiarily known as 'little Mimosa'), from her second marriage to Ludolf Graf von Alvensleben Schönborn. Mimosa and Anthony had two further children, Hélène and Joachim (known as 'Zouzou'), who were brought up in Effingham. ELHG has been told by a then local resident that the family lived in The Barn, and that Joachim was educated at Parkside School in Forest Road in the late 1950s, whilst Hélène was educated at St Teresa's School at Effingham Hill. In the entry in *The Times* announcing Diamantidi's death he was described as the 'dearly loved father of Joachim [sic] and Hélène'.

DIAMANTIDI - On August 12th, peacefully at his home in Vevey, Switzerland. Anthony N. dearly loved father of Joachim and Hélène.

Figure 9 Notice of Diamantidi's death;
The Times, 16 August 1985.

Hélène married in Effingham in June 1975 to Jonathan Fitzroy Talbot Baines. We have not so far found any evidence that Diamantidi and Mimosa Dietlinde von Klitzing ever married.



Figure 10 The grave of Gladys's parents in the churchyard of St Nicolas, Bookham.

Local matters

Diamantidi's ruthlessness and ability to exploit a situation to his own advantage should not be underestimated. When the Ross family left The Villa and the Diamantidis moved in, Miss Effie Jane Ross was living at The Hollies on The Street. She was a pillar of the village establishment with a solid record of volunteering and support of many charitable causes in the village since World War I. She had leased from Diamantidi the field directly opposite (west of) The Hollies, which had the effect of preserving for her a

view from her front windows of open countryside, and a part of her childhood home. The understanding was that this was some sort of garden or agricultural lease on the land and she paid a rent for it.

Allotments were provided in the village by Mr Almond on some of his land at The Vineries on Lower Road, but when this had to be withdrawn, a new site was required. While various candidates were tried and failed, Effie, apparently out of charitableness, allowed some people to use the Diamantidi land for allotments. However, when her lease on the land came up for renewal, at some point in the period 1946-55, Diamantidi refused to renew on the grounds that she had breached the terms, that is, she had sublet the land for a purpose not covered by the original terms. He also demanded a sum of money to cover appropriate back rent, causing Miss Ross great embarrassment.

It took the intervention of Barnes Wallis as Chairman of Effingham Parish Council to smooth this out. There are indications that he personally may have paid some money to Diamantidi. In addition, the Council agreed not to object if planning consent were sought by Diamantidi from Guildford Rural District Council for buildings on his land bordering The Street. In return Diamantidi donated some land behind this to Effingham Parish Council for use as allotments.

Departure

At some point Diamantidi left the village and took up permanent residence at his Swiss property in Vevey. We know from the dispute over the redevelopment of the Yew Tree House site (which adjoined The Barn) in a *Surrey Advertiser* report (15 October 1966) that despite now living in Switzerland, Diamantidi was willing to put up 50% of the price if other residents would match the remainder. Evidently he was still trying to save Effingham's old buildings thirty years after his original efforts. However it seems there were no further offers, so Yew Tree House was demolished and the site redeveloped.

The Barn was offered for sale in December 1980. The following advertisement appeared in *The Field* on 10 December 1980:

'More than £200,000 is sought for The Barn at Effingham in Surrey. Dating from the Seventeenth century it was moved from Berkshire and reconstructed in its present position in 1928.'

This offers another possible origin for The Barn but as with Womersley (above) no further evidence has been located.

ELHG received an account by a friend of Anthony Diamantidi of visiting him at The Barn in 1982, so it is possible that The Barn did not sell in 1980 or was taken off the market. It seems that in the last years of his life Diamantidi was moving between Vevey and Effingham, looked after by a woman named Catherine who was described to ELHG by one of his acquaintances as 'his house-mate and caretaker'.

He died in Switzerland on 12 August 1985. Later owners of Grove Paddock have told us that Diamantidi returned to visit that cottage in the 1980s, which it would be pleasing to think indicated his affection for the village, a tone previously set in his letters to the Parish Council during the battle to save the Common. A number of acquaintances of Anthony Diamantidi have kindly shared their personal memories of him with ELHG, with common themes being his generosity, thoughtfulness and charm, as well as being extraordinarily well-connected, a man, to quote from one correspondence, with a 'relentless spirit for living a life well-lived'.

Effingham also has cause to be grateful for his actions in saving and renovating several old properties which otherwise might have been demolished. Indeed one could make an argument that by transporting other old houses to the village, these were at least saved for posterity too. It is fair to say that Anthony Nicholas Diamantidi's great contribution was to create this brief but rather wonderful small Bohemia in the Surrey countryside, when one might have sauntered through Effingham and encountered quite casually any number of celebrities one might otherwise have only ever seen in magazines.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: from the British Newspaper Archive : Mary Evans Picture Library

Figures 2, 4, 8: from the British Newspaper Archive

Figure 3: from the sale plan of Warren Farm and part of Manor Farm, 1921; courtesy of Surrey History Centre
[SHC Ref: 1676/1]

Figures 5, 6, 7: by kind permission of Reach plc / *Mirrorpix*

Figure 9: from *The Times Archive*

Figure 10: photograph taken by Jeremy Palmer

Figures 11, 13: from Newspapers.com

Figures 12a-d: from ELHG archives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the several former acquaintances of Mr Diamantidi who made contact with ELHG and provided additional input to us for our writing of this article.

APPENDIX I

Article reporting Diamantidi's investment in oil stock, 1957

Contacted 'Umpteen' Ere Taker Located For Indonesia Deal

Special to The Star

New York, July 17 —

Anthony Nicola Diamantidi, who is turning over his interest in large tracts of potential oil lands in Indonesia for stock in New British Dominion Oil Co. worth about \$11,000,000, is a small, soft-spoken man. There is not much left of his thinning white hair, and he gives his age as 75.

In his suite at the Hotel Elysée on East 54th St., this "man behind the scenes" in operations involving millions is a striking contrast to the usual conception of a Wall St. tycoon.

"I really retired a number of years ago," he said, "but I returned to active life when the Indonesian government granted me these oil rights and wanted me to develop them."

Unlisted Industrials

(Select list by Intercity Securities)

	Bid	Asked
Alberta Gas Trunk Line	18.50	19.50
Cdn. Delhi Pete	11.75	12.25
North. Ontario Gas Shs.	18.75	19.75
North. Ontario Gas Un.	33.00	35.00
Que. Natural Gas Shs.	25.50	26.75
Que. Natural Gas Units	122.00	126.00
Trans-Can. Pipe Shares	37.25	38.25
Trans-Can. Pipe Units	145.00	149.00
Westcoast Trans VTC	46.00	47.00
Westcoast Trans Units	213.00	219.00

tread on one another's feet. But in North and South America there are hundreds of companies.

"However, even over on this side of the Atlantic I approached umpteen companies with little success. The biggest barrier was fear of the stability of Indonesia. Another objection was the absence of proper legislation on foreign investments, particularly the non-existence of a petroleum law.

Got Group Interested

"Finally I got a group interested, headed by the Empire Trust. I had incorporated Sea Oil as holding company and I worked out an arrangement with the New British Dominion to issue 4,000,000 shares which

Figure 11a Diamantidi's oil dealings; *Toronto Star*, 17 July 1957.*Continued on next page*

Exchange Interest

Sea Oil and General Corp., of New York—90 per cent. owned by Mr. Diamantidi—and its subsidiary Baud Corp., N.V., of Holland and Indonesia plans to exchange its interest in exploration rights to 2¼ million acres in Sumatra, Java and Borneo for 4,000,000 shares of New British Dominion. The plan, which involves a stock increase from 4,000,000 to 12,000,000 shares, will be voted on by New British shareholders July 31.

Empire Trust Co., of New York, is involved in the financing through its subsidiary Empire Resources Corp., as is the New York investment firm of Shearson, Hamill and Co.

Fifty per cent. of any profits from the venture would go to the Indonesian government.

For Many Years

"My wife and I have owned the Baud corporation in Indonesia for many years . . . it's been in the same family since 1824, producing tea, rubber and sugar," Mr. Diamantidi explained. "We never went into oil . . . I don't know a great deal about oil even now, but when the government granted me exploration rights and wanted my help I thought I'd give it a go.

"The thing was to get the capital. I couldn't raise it in England or France. In Europe, there's only British Petroleum and Royal Dutch, who don't

we will put in our group which will guarantee us a half share in the profits from the development of the Indonesian rights. I have no intention of putting the shares on the market. It will simply be held by Sea Oil as a guarantee, since it will be a controlling interest in New British.

"One reason I picked a Canadian firm with no previous foreign interests is that, although New British is Canadian, it is 80 per cent. held over here. For another, Empire Trust has been interested and connected with New British for several years. The company has never paid a dividend, but Empire Trust respects their management and they do have the knowledge and know-how to carry on the exploration."

Mighty Expensive

"Oil exploration is a mighty expensive proposition," remarked Mr. Diamantidi. "We'll need \$2,000,000 for the next 12 months of our program, and in the next five years, \$15,000,000 will be required for exploration alone"

Gen. Thomas Wilson, deputy undersecretary of commerce in Washington until last January, is now in Jakarta negotiating final details with the Indonesian government. He's vice-chairman of Sea Oil.

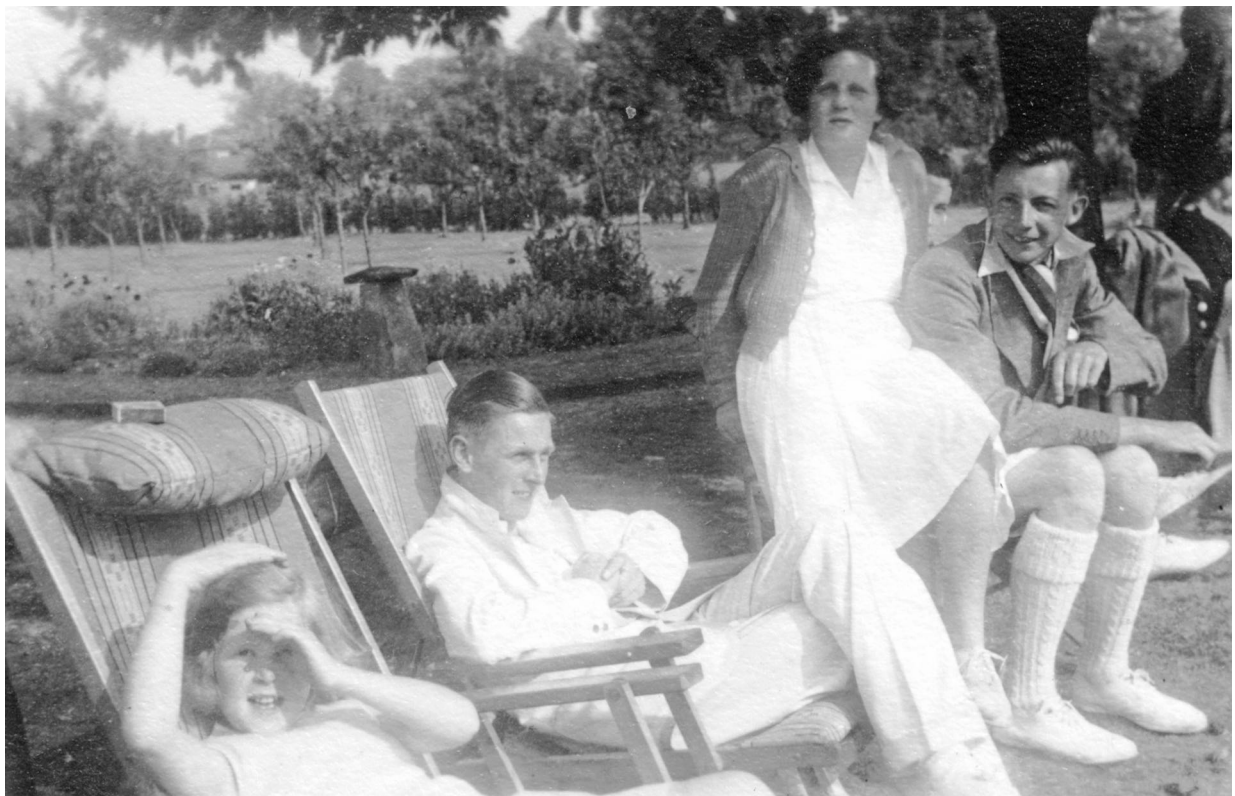
"If everything works out, I hope to be back in retirement by September," Mr. Diamantidi commented.

Figure 11b Diamantidi's oil dealings; *Toronto Star*, 17 July 1957.

Continued from previous page

APPENDIX II

Summer party at The Barn, Sunday 7 July 1935



Figures 12a, b Two photographs of the Nicholson family at The Barn; summer party on Sunday 7 July 1935.



Figures 12c, d Two more photographs of the Nicholson family at The Barn; summer party on Sunday 7 July 1935.

APPENDIX III

Article reporting the damage action filed by the Russian Ballet Development Co Ltd, 1961

Russian Ballet Fire Loss . . .

Damages Set At \$300,000

Russian ballet performances that thrilled thousands of Montrealers in the pre-war years are recalled by a \$300,000 damage action filed recently in Superior Court here.

The action involves fire-damage claims in connection with the handsome costuming and decors for more than a score of ballets in the repertory of the late Col. Wassily de Basil's famous "Original Ballets Russes."

According to the action taken by the Russian Ballet Development Co. Ltd. of London, England, the precious ballet equipment was placed in storage here in 1940 at the warehouse of J. B. Baillargeon Express Ltd. on Ontario St. by the great director and impresario, "due to war conditions in Europe."

The brilliant company with its cast of 80 and a repertory of 120 ballets left the articles in storage here when it set off on a tour of South America. It never returned to Montreal.

In the post-war years Col. de Basil carried on the company, until his death in Paris in 1951 of a heart attack.

In December, 1958, when the costumes and decors had been in storage here for 18 years, the warehouse of J. B. Baillargeon was swept by a fire. The Ballets Russes property in an annex of the building at 423 Ontario St. East suffered "enormous damage."

It is the contention of the plaintiff company (owners of the goods) that the Baillargeon company was negligent in failing to provide proper protection for the stored goods.

It is alleged that the building was not fireproof and that no operating sprinkler system was available.

Through counsel C. Antoine Geoffrion, QC, the plaintiff company declares that it was never advised of the damage to its property and that it was only by chance that company director A. N. Diamantidi learned of it several months later.

The cases and trunks containing the costumes and sets were allegedly left at the fire site during the winter of 1958-59, under a floor covered with ice "a foot thick." When this thawed in the spring, water dripped from the ceiling and added greatly to the damages originally caused by the flames.

Total damages to the goods are set by the action at the \$300,000 figure.

Figure 13 Negligence claim filed by the Russian Ballet Development Co Ltd, *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 10 January 1961.