

Nicholas and Audrey Waterhouse – Generous Contributors to the Arts

JEREMY PALMER

Sir Nicholas Edwin Waterhouse, a prominent accountant and philatelist, and his first wife Audrey, accomplished musician, composer and philanthropist, together provided warm hospitality and generous support to many key figures in the Arts, making their home at Norwood Farm a well regarded hub of artistic and social activity. They also contributed significantly to the Effingham community, just one example being their substantial donation towards the purchase of the KGV Playing Fields.

Introduction

At the heart of Effingham's Bohemian scene in the 1930s were Sir Nicholas and Lady Audrey Waterhouse of Norwood Farm on Effingham Common. They had lived there from 1930 and had established links to various artistic circles in London, cultivating friendships with musicians, actors and writers, some of whom – like Yvonne Arnaud shown below with the Waterhouses – had followed them to live in Effingham.



Figure 1 From *The Tatler*, 21 April 1926; under Licence from the Mary Evans Picture Library.

Norwood Farm is located to the north of Lower Farm Road and is a Grade II listed Hall house dating to the early 16th century [Historic England: List Entry No 1029390 (formerly 288665)]. An account of life at Norwood Farm before the Waterhouses owned it can be read in the Oral Histories section of Effingham Local History Group (ELHG)'s website as a transcript of an interview with the late Doreen Emily Hemus.

Origins

Sir Nicholas (born 24 August 1877, died 28 December 1964) was the second son of Edwin Waterhouse who had co-founded the accountancy practice of Price Waterhouse in 1865. His uncle Alfred Waterhouse was the architect responsible for designing London's Natural History Museum and, as an assessor for architectural competitions, was very influential in promoting the neo-Gothic idiom of many Victorian buildings.

Sir Nicholas grew up in the Waterhouse's country retreat of Feldemore in Holmbury St Mary, built in 1879.



Figure 2 Feldemore in Holmbury St Mary.

His father had employed George T Redmayne, a Manchester architect who had worked extensively for Alfred, to design the house. It is especially notable for the Arts and Crafts decoration chosen by Edwin, including furnishings by William Morris and tiles by William de Morgan. After Edwin's death in 1917 Feldemore passed into the hands of the Waterhouse Trust and later would become the Belmont Preparatory School.

Sir Nicholas was educated at St David's School in Reigate, followed by Winchester and then New College, Oxford. His first wife, Audrey Hale Lewin (born 26 June 1883, died 7 September 1945), was the third and last child of Colonel Thomas Herbert Lewin of Parkhurst in Abinger, which is in close proximity to Feldemore.

Audrey had been exposed to the Arts from an early age. Her father was a close friend of the artist Edward Burne-Jones and also of the novelist George Meredith who lived at Box Hill. Through Meredith Colonel Lewin may well have known the Maxse family at Effingham Hill in the far south of Effingham parish. Beyond these local connections, Audrey's uncle William Terris and his daughter Ellaline were both famous London stage actors.



Figure 3 Parkhurst in Abinger, 1906.

Audrey learnt music from an early age, and later studied violin at the Royal College of Music. Under the name 'Audrey Hale' she had musical compositions performed in London, in the 1920s. John Whitehead notes in his biography of her father *Thangliena: A Life of T. H. Lewin* that her father thought Audrey 'perhaps the cleverest and most original of the three (children)' (p344) and also mentions that Audrey composed 'light music hall songs' (p393).



THE WIFE OF A FINANCIAL EXPERT : LADY WATERHOUSE

Lady Waterhouse is the wife of Sir Nicholas Edwin Waterhouse, K.B.E., of the famous firm of Price, Waterhouse & Co., chartered accountants. He was Director of Costings at the War Office from 1917 to 1919. Lady Waterhouse was married in 1903, and is the daughter of the late Lieutenant-Colonel Lewin, of Parkhurst, Abinger, Surrey.

Photograph by Bertram Park.

Figure 4 From *The Sketch*, 1 February 1922; under Licence from the Mary Evans Picture Library.

Married life

Audrey and Nicholas married on 22 August 1903 at Abinger Parish Church. They lived at 71, Victoria Road in London W8 until in 1926 their main London residence became 2, Swan Walk, Chelsea.

She accompanied him on overseas business trips and holidayed with him across Europe. In his unpublished memoirs *Reminiscences* Sir Nicholas remembered how they toured San Francisco's Old China Town in 1906 just prior to its destruction by the great earthquake. From 1908 onwards they visited remote parts of France, Spain and Germany, relying, as Sir Nicholas recounts, on Audrey's linguistic skills:

'Her French, German and Spanish were such that when in those countries she was usually taken as a native and she also could get on pretty well with Italian and Swedish.' [*Reminiscences*, p67 – Sir Nicholas Waterhouse]

Their marriage did not produce any children. John Whitehead describes how Audrey filled her days, including doing works of philanthropy among Jewish immigrants to London from south Germany (*Thangliena*, p394). She also enrolled in the Royal College of Music in February 1910, her testamur being issued on July 1914 where she was graded 2 in the violin. During WW1 she drove an ambulance, as recorded by a later friend, Wyndham Lewis. Her husband's pre-War Rolls Royce was also put to good use by the Belgian Red Cross.

Upon his father's retirement from Price Waterhouse in 1906, Nicholas was elevated to the partnership. Although his apprenticeship had been decidedly average, his avuncular charm and ability to balance competing points of view enabled him to become a very successful partner in the firm. Effingham resident Michael Waller reported the same impression that many others held:

'... he appeared very approachable, quite tall, bespectacled and distinguished ...'

Edgar Jones, in his history of Price Waterhouse [*True and Fair – A History of Price Waterhouse*, publ Hamish Hamilton, 1995], echoed this in his description of Sir Nicholas (p218):

'He had a capacity for self-deprecation and his puckish humour could often defuse a tense situation ... he manifested the qualities of a gentleman: honesty, reliability, modesty, an absence of show or ostentation, reserve and probity.'

Norwood Farm

In 1930 Sir Nicholas bought Norwood Farm on Effingham Common from the Effingham property developer Anthony Nicholas Diamantidi, funding the purchase from selling one of his collections of stamps.

Sir Nicholas was an internationally known philatelist, with a world-famous collection of stamps from the United States. He would build up further collections, keeping them in a walk-in safe in Norwood Farm. He had astutely acquired stamps of the United States cheaply and before they became desirable items, selling his first collection for £13,700 on 14 November 1924 through Puttick and Simpson [*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1924]. This funded the purchase of 2, Swan Walk but Waterhouse kept sufficient stamps back to form the basis of a new, and subsequently award-winning, collection. This was sold by private treaty in America in order to fund the purchase of Norwood Farm, although again a few were retained to form the nucleus of a third collection [*Reminiscences*, p86].

Norwood Farm would be their country residence until the outbreak of war, at which point they moved to Effingham to escape the Blitz. We know that Swan Walk was badly damaged in late November or early December 1941. The St Lawrence Church accounts show Sir Nicholas donating money through the 1930s and we know that he also gave £5 for the restoration of the cricket pavilion just across Effingham



Figure 5 No 2, Swan Walk in Chelsea.

Common Road from Norwood Farm. His generosity extended in other directions too; descendants of his chauffeur, John Hubert Jebbitt, have told ELHG that Sir Nicholas allowed Jebbitt (who lived in Balham) to borrow the Rolls Royce and take local children for rides in it. Sir Nicholas was also a significant (but anonymous) donor toward the fund raised in the 1930s for the purchase of the King George V Playing Fields in Effingham.



Figure 6 Norwood Farm in Effingham; © Ronald George Burton.

Norwood Farm was a working farm with a herd of cows. The farm manager was a man named Bertram Lewis who lived with his wife Ellen (née Colborne) in Tyrley, Surrey Gardens; their marriage had been solemnized at St Lawrence on 20 February 1936.

Norwood Farm was close to Orchard Cottage where Teddie Gerard, the revue artist, lived. Probably, Audrey already knew Teddie through Gwen Farrar, since Audrey and Gwen were two of the four women who had opened the Chelsea Art Gallery on the King's Road for young artists on 1 February 1921. Audrey and Teddie were also guests at Gwen's partner Norah Blaney's engagement party in April 1922.

Another star of stage and screen, Yvonne Arnaud, would also come to live a short walk away at Banks Way Farm. Arnaud and her husband Hugh McLellan built their new home on land which, it is believed, had been gifted to them by the Waterhouses from the Norwood Farm estate.

Arnaud stayed at Norwood Farm from January to May 1937 (as evidenced by correspondence between Arnaud and Val Gielgud in the BBC archives) while this new house was being completed. On 16 June Arnaud took part in a photoshoot and the results provide us with a unique view of the interior of Norwood Farm in the 1930s (see Figure 7). We might infer that her newly completed house was deemed insufficiently photogenic and that she therefore posed in the Waterhouses' home instead.

Parties and visitors

Norwood Farm seems to have been the venue for wild parties in the 1930s although Sir Nicholas is circumspect about them in his *Reminiscences*. However, Eileen Ascroft, working as a journalist for *The Daily Mirror* during this time, and whose mother lived in Flower Cottage next door to Norwood Farm, did leave us a hint. Writing in that newspaper on 24 February 1938 she says:

'I think that Lady Waterhouse has this charming gift of real hospitality. Invitations to her lovely country home on Effingham Common are much prized, and all the young people who flock down on Saturdays and Sundays adore her. She makes everything such fun and so homely.'



cc013578

SOURCE: Historic England Archive

Figure 7 Yvonne Arnaud at Norwood Farm; © Historic England.

One of Sir Nicholas's close friends, the author and artist Wyndham Lewis, went further when writing to him in June 1952, complaining that the *Reminiscences* had excised the more exciting stories of the parties in Effingham. Audrey's Russian Ballet party at Swan Walk in the Twenties was at least recorded in a list of memorable Chelsea parties [*The Queen*, 8 March 1939]. This was probably due, as Sir Nicholas mentions in the text, to the influence of his second wife, Louise How (born 22 May 1907, died 23 November 1986). She seems to have had various roles in the Waterhouse household, employed as a hairdresser according to

the 1939 National Register, as the housekeeper, and as the teacher / ward of the wartime child refugees. They married on 12 August 1953.

Wyndham Lewis, co-founder of the Vorticist art movement and now seen as one of the most important of all British Modernist artists, had met the Waterhouses in 1926. They became generous and consistent supporters and Lewis in turn dedicated his novel *The Apes of God* to them. Despite controversy never being far from Wyndham Lewis (for example he was sued for libel by one of Sir Nicholas's other friends, the writer Godfrey Winn), Sir Nicholas steadfastly supported him through illness and crisis, even helping his widow after Lewis's death. Lewis's letters to the Waterhouses sent during the War describe his memories of them and of visiting Norwood Farm. Late in life, Lewis would also base his character Percy Lamport in his novel *Self-Condemned* on Sir Nicholas.

Another visitor to Norwood Farm from the Arts was the French violinist and impresario André Mangeot. Audrey had met Mangeot through her youthful musical circles and it had proved an enduring friendship. We know of one recital at which he appeared with Bienvenido Socias at their Swan Walk residence on 4 November 1926 (see the flyer in Figure 9, reproduced here by kind permission of the Royal College of Music, London).

The flyer, on which the year is not stated, has been manually altered to read Tuesday (instead of Thursday) 4 November, from which we can infer that the concert must have taken place in 1926; this fits in with another concert, at which Mangeot and Bienvenido Socias performed together on 29 October at the Bedford Music Club, in the Hall of Bedford High School where Mangeot was teaching violin.

The 1923 Membership List of Mangeot's Music Society includes Yvonne Arnaud and Lady Waterhouse amongst other luminaries. Audrey would also become friendly with Mangeot's second wife, the Australian violinist Beatrice Huckell, who would come to live at Norwood Farm for a period during WW2. We believe that the undated photograph in Figure 10 shows André Mangeot (on the left) with the other two members of his Cembalo Trio, John Ticehurst (centre) and Beatrice Huckell (on the right).

André Mangeot's greatest contribution to the Arts was through fostering young talent, such as the conductor John Barbirolli who joined



Figure 8 Wyndham Lewis with his portrait of T S Eliot, controversially rejected by the Royal Academy in April 1938; under Licence from the Mary Evans Picture Library.

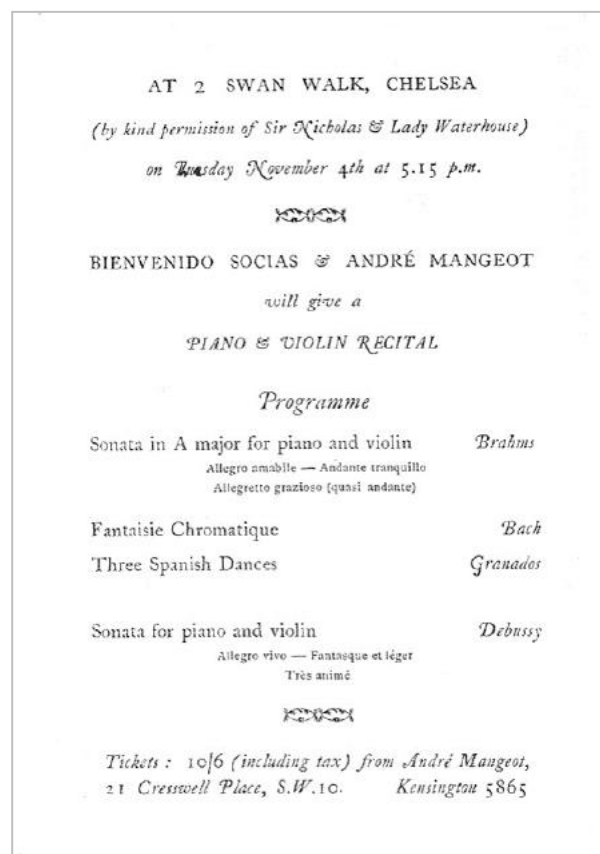


Figure 9 Flyer for concert at 2, Swan Walk, 1926.

Mangeot's Quartet as a cellist in 1922. A mutual friend was Yvonne Arnaud, who frequently accompanied Mangeot on piano in concert, as late as 1939. They corresponded even after she had moved to Effingham and indeed Mangeot would write an unpublished biography of her. She remained a lifelong friend of Barbirolli too, and her last written letter from May 1958 describes meeting him in Manchester.



Figure 10 Mangeot (at left) in his Cembalo Trio; licensed from the Royal College of Music / ArenaPAL.

AEOLIAN HALL
NEW BOND STREET, W. 1

MONDAY, MARCH 22nd at 8.45

THE CEMBALO TRIO

ANDRÉ MANGEOT BEATRICE HUCKELL JOHN TICEHURST

in a Programme of
CONCERTED MUSIC for HARPSICHORD and STRINGS of the
XVIIth and XVIIIth CENTURIES

SMOKING ALLOWED

TICKETS (including Tax): Reserved, 8/6 and 5/9 Admission, 3/-
May be obtained at Adams' Box Office, 130, New Bond Street, W. 1; usual Ticket Offices; and
IBBS & TILLET, 124, Wigmore Street, W. 1

Telephone: Walbrook 3528 (3 Lines)
Telegrams: "Organel, Wende, London."

Ticket Office: Walbrook 8415
Hours 10-5 Sat. 10-12

FOR PROGRAMME P.T.O.

Figure 11 Flyer for the Cembalo Trio; reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Music.

The photograph in Figure 12, dated to the 1940s, shows Yvonne Arnaud and André Mangeot and may have been taken in the garden of Arnaud's Effingham home.



Figure 12 Yvonne Arnaud with André Mangeot; licensed from the Royal College of Music / ArenaPAL.

Mangeot was also closely involved in the early career of Benjamin Britten, participating in the first concert and broadcast performances of Britten's Phantasy Quartet in 1933. We further know from Britten's diaries from this time that he accompanied Mangeot out to Effingham to play tennis, most likely on the court at Norwood Farm. The novelist Christopher Isherwood, as a young man, was also employed by Mangeot as the Secretary for his Music Society, and his relationship with Mangeot and his family is discussed at length in Peter Parker's biography *Isherwood* [publ Picador, 2004]. ELHG has been told anecdotally that Isherwood was another visitor to Norwood Farm.

Mangeot and his wife Beatrice appear in the 1939 National Register at Banks Way Farm, evidently staying with Yvonne Arnaud and her husband. Beatrice would also live at Norwood Farm later in the War. Afterwards, having separated from Mangeot, she remarried to the career diplomat Sir Patrick Hancock.

Wartime events

Lady Waterhouse, writing in French to Mangeot on 9 August 1940 [letter held in the André Mangeot archive at the Royal College of Music], wrote evocatively of the dangers in the Blitz. Sir Nicholas was still commuting into London:

'Docker goes 2 to 3 times a week and almost each time his train is stopped by raids so we never really know when he will be arriving.'

'Docker' was Sir Nicholas's nickname; Audrey's being 'Mauve'. The reason for either is now long lost. The Waterhouses had also helped out an old employee. Audrey writes:

'Do you remember Emily, the parlourmaid at Victoria Road? Very nice girl who married one of the P.W. employees and who has a 13 year old daughter. Their house got destroyed by a bomb and the little girl has been chased by a dive bomber while she was cycling to school. So we offered them to come and rest here for 1 month during which the husband will try to find a new house.'

'Emily' is probably the parlourmaid Emily Holt listed in the 1911 Census return for 71 Victoria Road. Audrey also mentions the evacuees staying in the bungalow on Norwood Farm, saying the children had to sleep in her husband's study because of the intensity of the raids. The Waterhouses took in a series of child evacuees from South London. Effingham Local History Group interviewed one of these Norwood Farm evacuees, Ronald George Burton, in October 2013, recording his memories of an idyllic life at Norwood Farm, fishing and collecting birds' eggs with Sir Nicholas, working with the dairy herd on the Farm and watching wartime aerial dogfights over the Common. Ronald's friendship with Sir Nicholas continued after the War and he recalled a children's Christmas Party hosted by the Waterhouses at Swan Walk.

However he was not among the Norwood Farm evacuees whom Audrey formed into what became her so-called 'Cockney Choir'. The newspaper articles in Figures 13-15, all from *The Surrey Advertiser*, provide examples of the entertainments they provided.



Figure 13 7 December 1940.



Figure 14 28 December 1940.

There were other shows around the immediate area. Audrey, writing about a year later to Wyndham Lewis in Canada, told him that her activities with the evacuees led to a variety show and a tour of canteens and hospitals, describing their popularity thus:

'We used to go down like Nervo and Knox on Saturday night at the Palladium ...'

The BBC had apparently recorded the Cockney Choir but regrettably the recordings were lost in the Blitz. Ronald Burton mentioned that another evacuee, named Ron Bailey, had had a lovely singing voice and was a particular favourite of Audrey. However, he ran away back to London with his sister Rosie, causing much distress to Lady Waterhouse.

By this point, however, Lady Waterhouse must have been seriously ill. Sir Nicholas had written to Wyndham Lewis on 8 December 1941 describing her illness. He would continue the gloomy prognosis in later letters through the War. Lewis returned to England in August 1945, and having taken time to get his affairs in order, wrote to Audrey on 19 September. However he was too late. Lady Waterhouse had died at Norwood Farm on Friday 7 September, aged 62.

Her death certificate recorded the cause of death as '1a Myocardial degeneration; b Chronic bronchitis; 2 Carcinoma of breast'. The informant, present at the death, was 'B Lewis', presumed to be the farm manager Bertram Lewis.

The Surrey Advertiser reported her passing a week later. Her father, Colonel Lewin, had chosen to be cremated at Golders Green, and similarly Audrey was laid to rest in a private ceremony at Woking Crematorium on Monday 10 September 1945.

Aftermath

Sir Nicholas continued at Price Waterhouse until 1960, when at the age of 82 he finally retired. His retirement was commemorated by a visit to Norwood Farm by the Dean of Westminster Abbey, as Sir Nicholas had held the Auditorship of the Abbey from 1916.

After a brief illness he died on 28 December 1964 at the Nuffield Nursing Home in Woking. Like Audrey he was cremated and his ashes interred in the Waterhouse family plot in the churchyard at Holmbury St Mary. An article about his Will is shown in the Appendix.

Audrey's niece Eileen Margaret Lewin, who had married Major Cecil Bednall in Jerusalem in 1937, would move into Norwood Farm in the mid-1960s. Lady Louise Waterhouse who had been living there then moved to Flower Cottage, a property adjacent to Norwood Farm. They were essentially swapping houses as the Bednalls had been associated with Flower Cottage from at least 1941, at which time they had probably bought it from Winifred Ascoft when she moved to London to live with her daughter Eileen.

Major General Bednall would become Paymaster-in-Chief at the War Office from 1948 to 1955 and then Colonel Commandant of the Royal Army Pay Corps until 1960.

Thereafter he retired from the military and became a Lonrho director in Rhodesia. From what we can tell the Bednalls occupied Norwood Farm from late 1965.

A fuller biography of Major General Bednall's life and military career was set out in *The Staffordshire Sentinel* on 31 August 1948 and in his obituary in *The Times* on 2 June 1982; the former article can be read in full on ELHG's website.

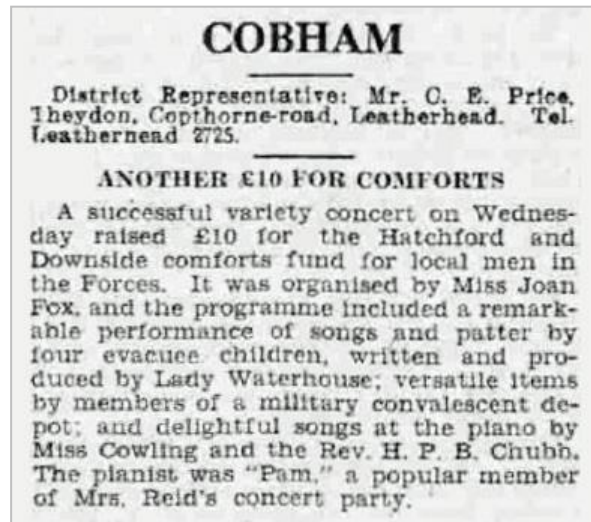


Figure 15 16 August 1941.

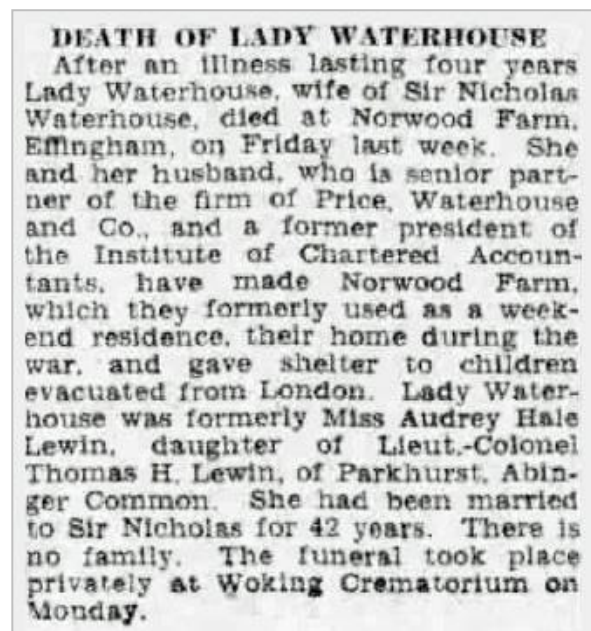


Figure 16 Report of Lady Waterhouse's death.



Figure 17 From *The Bystander*, 18 November 1936.



Figure 18 Major General Sir Cecil Norbury Peter Bednall by Walter Stoneman, 1954; NPG x164002, licensed from NPG Creative Commons.

General Bednall (a keen golfer) was giving The Club House, Effingham Golf Club as his address in the UK. Lady Louise Waterhouse continued living in Flower Cottage until at least 1972, before moving to Worthing. The Waterhouses' long association with Effingham had come to an end.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX

Article about the Will of Sir Nicholas Waterhouse

Sir Nicholas remembers rail guard in his will

SIR Nicholas Edwin Waterhouse, of Norwood Farm, Effingham, the former senior partner of Price, Waterhouse and Company, the well-known firm of chartered accountants, who died on December 28th, left £100 to Mr. William Barns, a guard on British Railways, of Effingham Junction.

Sir Nicholas, aged 87 years, left £291,396 16s. gross, £289,047 15s. net value. (Duty paid £157,315.)

In addition to his legacy to Mr. Barns he left:

£500 to Miss Tora Alund, masseuse, late of Bedford Court Mansions, London, and now of Stockholm;

"My painting by Guard," to John N. MacLeod, of The Gramophone Company, Barcelona;

£500 to the Chartered Accountants Benevolent Institution;

£250 to St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, for amenity or research purposes in connection with St. Luke's Hospital for Advanced Cases;

£250 each to the Salvation Army and the P.D.S.A.;

Tyrley, Surrey Gardens, East Horsley, to Bertram Lewis, if occupying same at the date of his death, and his half-hunter gold watch and chain and the sum of £2,500 (or £5,000 if not residing at Tyrley);

£600 to his secretary, Doris Glover;

£300 each to his former secretaries, Clairette L. Dering and Dorothy M. Atthill;

£500 to his former chauffeur, John H. Jebitt;

£250 to Mrs. Edith Rees, formerly in his service;

£250 each to Elizabeth, widow of James Everitt, formerly in his service and Ronald Everitt;

£750 to Sarah Filmer, formerly in his service;

£6 for each period of six months in his service to his indoor and outdoor servants.

£500 TO DOCTOR

He also left £1,000 to Sir Harold Claughton of Netherton Grove, Chelsea; £5,000 to Miss Agnes Bedford, of Eaton Mews North, S.W.; £3,000 to Mary Barnett, or to her children; £1,000 to Albert H. Ingram; £500 to Dr. Alan Easton, of Bookham; £1,000 to Leslie Stroud, of Minstead; his residence to his late wife's niece, Eileen Margaret, Lady Bednall (or to her husband, Sir Peter Bednall), if she makes it her principal place of residence and vacates Flower Cottage, her present residence (and subject to his wife's right of residence at Norwood Farm for 18 months after his death); his farming business to Lady Bednall and £1,000 (or £11,000 if she does not accept the aforesaid bequest of property) to her (or her husband); £2,000 and Flower Cottage, to his wife absolutely, and, subject to other personal bequests, the remainder of his property variously to her and other relatives.

Figure 19 From *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times*, 13 February 1965.

The Will of Sir Nicholas Waterhouse (Figure 19 above) contains many fascinating clues to the character of the man, and also to a particularly challenging period of his life. The newspaper story leads on the seemingly idiosyncratic gesture of leaving £100 to William Barns, a guard on British Railways, of Effingham Junction. However Sir Nicholas remembered many other people, formerly in his employ, some of whom,

like Jebbit his chauffeur, we have met in the main article. However, here we will focus on two people whose actions were of particular significance to Sir Nicholas within two days of each other in early 1930.

The first concerns a terrible fire in Chelsea, described in the article shown in Figure 20. This broke out in a motor garage close to Sir Nicholas's residence at 2 Swan Walk, with many people evacuated and cars destroyed; it would have been much worse but for the firemen successfully preventing the fire reaching the giant petrol storage tanks in the building. However, the flames did reach Sir Nicholas's home:

'The rear of the fifteenth century home of Sir Nicholas Waterhouse ... was damaged by flames. Sir Nicholas told [sic – told] a reporter that he and the family were roused by a 24 years' old parlourmaid, Miss Edith Hodges [sic – Hodge]. She was awakened by the crackling of the fire and rushed upstairs to give the alarm.'

BIG CHELSEA BLAZE.
Royal Hospital Road Garage
Gutted.
PEOPLE ROUSED FROM SLEEP
LEAVE THEIR HOMES.

One of the most terrifying fires in Chelsea for many months occurred in the early hours of yesterday (Thursday) morning, when a garage in Royal Hospital-road was gutted in a big blaze that engaged the attention of the firemen for over two hours. The garage belongs to the Albert Bridge Engineering Co., Ltd., and is situated at No. 7 Royal Hospital-road. The outbreak was discovered by the night charge-man, Mr. Edward Lane, of 121 New-road, Battersea, who told a reporter that he was startled by the lights in the garage falling. On entering the main central building to make investigations he found that flames were already leaping up, and had involved some motor cars. He hurriedly sounded the fire alarm at the junction of Royal Hospital-road and the Embankment.

The fire had secured a strong hold, however, and the flames, fed by the petrol and other inflammable material on the cars garaged in the building, spread with remarkable rapidity. The fire brigade arrived within a few minutes of the alarm, but the building was then blazing fiercely, and they were confronted with dangerous and difficult work. The petrol tanks of the cars exploded ominously, and owing to the fumes many of the firemen had to wear gas masks. Some also wore heat resisting clothing.

Three Large Petrol Tanks.

There are three large petrol storage tanks—one of which holds a thousand gallons—underground at the entrance to the central building, and despite the risk of explosion firemen stood over them with hoses keeping the flames back. The danger was so apparent that a district call was circulated, and fire engines came from all parts of London.

Great sheets of flame swept the streets round the block of houses of which the burning garage was the centre, and there was an imminent danger of the conflagration involving not only the adjoining houses but those in Swan-walk and Paradise-row. As a precautionary measure the police aroused those who had not been already awakened by the commotion, and the inhabitants joined the great crowd which had gathered in the neighbourhood. The majority of

those in the tiny working class homes in Paradise-row answered the police call so quickly that they did not stop to dress, but came out into the street with just a garment over their night attire.

Within the vicinity of the fire are both tenement houses and luxurious flats, and the inhabitants mingled together in a curious crowd. The expensive coats, covering gorgeous dressing gowns and vivid pyjamas of the men and girls of Chelsea's artistic quarter, contrasted with the overcoats and shawls of their poorer neighbours, and there were also many men in evening dress and opera hats, and women in evening frocks and brilliant opera cloaks, who, on leaving West End parties, had been attracted by the glare in the sky. It was an awe-inspiring sight, and spectators stood helplessly by while the motor cars in the blazing garage were destroyed.

Awakened by Crackling of the Fire.

Many notable people in Hospital-road and Cheyne-place were also roused and advised to leave their homes. The rear of the fifteenth century home of Sir Nicholas Waterhouse, at 2 Swan-walk, was damaged by flames. Sir Nicholas told a reporter that he and the family were roused by a 24 years old parlourmaid, Miss Edith Hodges. She was awakened by the crackling of the fire, and rushed upstairs to give the alarm. Describing the fire, Miss Hodges said: "When I rushed upstairs flames were lighting the house, and I thought the master would be burned in his bed. As we left by the stairs we were scorched by the heat and flames which came through the broken windows. We took shelter in a taxicab outside the door."

Iron girders which supported the roof of the central garage crashed down on to the blazing vehicles, but the fire brigade were able to prevent the fire from spreading to an annexe where about 40 cars were garaged.

After two hours' work the fire was under control, and the energetic efforts of the brigade had saved the petrol storage tanks. A few cars just inside the back entrance to the main building were also damaged.

An eye-witness said it was humanly impossible to get any of the cars from

the main garage. When the owners of some of the cars heard about the fire they came rushing to the garage in the hope of saving their property. When they saw that it was impossible, some of them were in a dreadful state. It was pitiful to see them standing helpless, while their cars were being destroyed. One man, who came down in his pyjamas, was able to drive away his car, which was standing in the yard.

A party of girl artists who had been aroused by the police watched the fire for a long time, and then as it was still inadvisable to go back to their flat, decided to

Hunt Round for Breakfast.

"Eventually we persuaded a dear old woman whose house is not in the danger zone," one said, "to give us some tea and eggs and bacon. A breakfast pyjama party is a unique function, even for Chelsea." Others breakfasted at a coffee stall.

The wrecked garage presented an indescribable scene after the fire was put out. Only the walls and steel framework, scorched and twisted, were standing, and everywhere was chaos and confusion. About 30 cars were destroyed, and the owners looked ruefully at the unrecognisable wrecks.

Figure 20 The fire at the home of Sir Nicholas; *West London Press*, 28 February 1930.

It is not inconceivable that Edith saved the lives of the Waterhouses through her brave and selfless actions. Edith seems to have stayed in their employment until at least the time of the 1939 National Register which finds her at Norwood Farm as Edith M Hodge, with her married name Rees later inserted.

The form is a 1939 National Register entry for the household at Norwood Farm. It is handwritten and includes the following details:

- E.D. Letter Code:** DNLM
- Borough, U.D. or R.D.:** Guildford
- Registration District and Sub-district:** 33-3
- Household Members:**
 - 1. **Beraldi Gilbert S.** - F, 31 Oct 85 D, Dressmaker, Male, woman
 - 2. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 30 July 03 S, Managing Director, Medical Co.
 - 3. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 7 July 04 S, Domestic Servant, Postman
 - 4. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 1 Aug 06 W, Domestic Servant, House maid
 - 5. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 12 Sept 09 S, Domestic Servant, Cook
 - 6. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 16 Oct 08 S, Domestic Servant, Cook
 - 7. **Edith M Hodge** - F, 22 Mar 08 S, Hair Dresser

Figure 21 The household at Norwood Farm in the 1939 National Register; Edith is the fifth member listed.

Later, in 1947, Edith would marry George F Rees [GRO Ref: Croydon 5g 205, 1947 (Q4)]. Sir Nicholas clearly valued her, leaving her £250 in his Will.

Two days after the fire, Sir Nicholas received even worse news, this being the suicide of a long term, close friend and medical help, William Whitehorn Brooke Barnett. William Barnett had taken his own life on Saturday 1 March 1930 at Barons Court Tube Station, and Sir Nicholas was called to appear at the inquest at Hammersmith Coroner's Court on the following Tuesday.

William Barnett's association with Sir Nicholas had begun in 1904, as recounted in Sir Nicholas's *Reminiscences*. In his recollection of his school years, Sir Nicholas tells us how an existing knee injury had been made much worse by a kick to it [Reminiscences, p35]. Although the injury recovered, a further blow to it while playing soccer saw him laid up for a year. He describes it as having happened shortly after he had married Audrey in 1903 and states that in 1904 it had:

'entailed a long stay in Madeira and an operation on my return to London. It was a horribly painful experience and if it had not been for the clever diagnosis and help of a total stranger in Madeira who saved me from having my leg amputated at the Seamen's Hospital there and got me back to London I would, according to Sir Victor Horsley, have surely died during the next few days. The kind stranger was W B Barnett ("Beaver") a masseur who became my closest and dearest friend and companion till his death in 1930.' [ibid, p80]

The enforced recovery did have one benefit for Sir Nicholas, insofar as it spurred his interest in philately, as mentioned previously. Sir Nicholas also notes [ibid p109] that the knee had caused him to be rejected as unfit for service in WW1, although he would serve in an administrative capacity in the War Office.

The 1911 Census finds Barnett, described as a Medical Electrician, as a visitor to the Waterhouses' home at 71 Victoria Street. At the inquest Sir Nicholas described his erstwhile friend as suffering from heightened anxiety due to financial problems, with Mary his wife also expecting another child. The Coroner passed a verdict of 'Suicide while temporarily of unsound mind' and Sir Nicholas promised to pass on his condolences to William's wife, Mary Barnett.

In fact Sir Nicholas did more than that, as he bequeathed a sum of £3,000 to Mary or to her children. He further left a sum to a Miss Tora Alund, also a masseuse, whom we might reasonably presume to have fulfilled the same role after William Barnett's passing.

The Waterhouses' thoughtfulness to their servants extended in other ways too. ELHG has also been contacted by a descendant of a woman named Adelaide Louise King, who described to us how Adelaide had also been in service to the Waterhouses at 71 Victoria Road from 1911. This period had been an exceptionally happy period of Adelaide's life, not least because 'she was treated more like a family member than just a housemaid'. After Adelaide left their employ, the Waterhouses continued to keep in touch, as well as using her exquisite sewing skills. Lady Waterhouse, it is noted, illustrated her letters to Adelaide with detailed ink sketches and cartoons, such as one portraying herself as a mouse.

BARONS COURT STATION TRAGEDY.

Man Who "Worried Himself to Death."

Sir Nicholas Waterhouse, the chartered accountant, whose home at 2 Swan-walk, Chelsea, was endangered by a devastating fire at an adjoining garage last week, attended Hammersmith Coroner's Court on Tuesday to give evidence at an inquest on a friend who met with a shocking fate at Barons Court Tube Station on Saturday. The inquiry concerned Mr. William Whitehorn Brooke Barnett (55), medical electrician and masseur, of 320 Earl's Court-road, who was seen to place himself across the rails in front of an oncoming train, and two carriages passed over his body before the driver could pull up. The train had to be uncoupled before the body could be extricated, and the mangled remains taken to hospital.

The coroner (Mr. H. R. Oswald), remarked that he did not understand why the body, obviously lifeless, was taken to hospital. Why the body was not removed to the mortuary passed his comprehension. He (the coroner) understood that there was a regulation that unless a doctor certified death, an injured person must be conveyed to hospital, but when the corpse was so mangled, as in this case, he did not see any reason why the constable should not use his discretion and remove the body direct to the mortuary. Extra public expense was likely to be incurred by the removal of the body from the hospital to the mortuary, but in that case he (the coroner) had saved that expenditure by viewing the body at the hospital.

Petty Business Worries.

The widow was spared the ordeal of attending the inquest by evidence of identification being given by Sir Nicholas Waterhouse. Sir Nicholas said he had been an intimate friend of Mr. Barnett for 25 years. He was a healthy man, of sober habits. For the last few weeks he had been suffering from marked depression, due to business worries, which witness considered were petty. He became anxious because he thought that some shares in which he had saved some money were dropping, and also over the fact that the number of his patients was decreasing. His nervous condition became acute, and he was treated by the family doctor.

The Coroner: Have you ever heard him threaten to take his life?

Sir Nicholas: No, but he has said he was afraid he would go off his head.

On account of his worries? Yes. They were comparatively trifling, but they got him down, as it were. When I saw him in bed about a week ago he said he was afraid to work because of his head, but I had a telephone talk with him the night before the tragedy, and he then seemed rather more cheerful, and mentioned that he had attended to one or two more patients during the week. "Mr. Barnett was a most popular and pleasant man, on good terms with everybody," added Sir Nicholas. "He and his wife were a most affectionate couple, with two children. Mrs. Barnett is

Expecting Another Child,

and from a financial point of view, that again worried her husband.

Alice Rose Jones, nurse to Mr. Barnett's children, said he left the house about 9.30 on Saturday morning, saying he was going to the bank. She saw him as he left the nursery and he remarked he would not be long.

How Mr. Barnett deliberately laid himself across the rails in front of an oncoming train was described by William Robertson, a railway inspector of 70 Bollo-lane, Chiswick. Mr. Robertson had just alighted from another train, and was standing on the platform when he first saw Mr. Barnett, who had got down on to the track and was standing between the platform and the running rail. At that moment a train from Hammersmith was entering the station, and when it was about three yards away he deliberately placed himself across the rails. The driver had no chance to pull up, and two carriages passed over the body before the train was brought to a standstill. The train had to be uncoupled before the body could be extricated.

The train-driver, Samuel George Middleton, of 53 Russell-road, Northolt, gave a similar version. His attention was attracted to the man, he said, because he was the only person at that particular end of the platform, and when the train was six or seven yards away, he ran from the centre of the platform to the edge and jumped on to the track. He alighted between the two rails, and then

Placed Himself Across the Metals

before witness could pull up. The alarm was given and the body extricated with all haste.

P.C. Martin, 645B, who was called to the station soon after the fatality, said the body was identified by a business envelope on the clothing. There was no money nor any railway ticket in the dead man's possession.

Dr. David Bethune Purves, house surgeon at the West London Hospital, said the body was extensively mangled, but there was no sign of electrocution. The injuries included fractures of the skull in several places, extensive crushing of the chest and ribs, and fractures of both arms and legs.

The coroner remarked that Mr. Barnett's mind had become distraught, and he worried himself to death.

After recording a verdict of "Suicide while temporarily of unsound mind," the coroner expressed sympathy with the bereaved, and Sir Nicholas Waterhouse promised to convey his condolence to the widow.

Figure 22 The suicide of William Whitehorn Brooke Barnett; *Fulham Chronicle*, 7 March 1930.