

**THIS IS LONDON:**  
 7 million people,  
 5,700 pubs,  
 2,000 wine bars,  
 300 nightclubs,  
 1,200 late night kebab shops  
 and thousands of  
 greasy spoon breakfasts

This is London is the Capital's number one website for going out in town. Whether you're interested in clubs, gigs, comedy or fine arts, you'll find our unbeatable entertainment guide at This is London.

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Dependent  
 on alcohol?

You're not alone.

Becoming dependent on alcohol can be surprisingly easy, particularly for successful professionals who seemingly thrive under pressure. People who have demanding jobs and stressful 24/7 lifestyles may be susceptible to a wide range of mental health issues. Many high-achievers typically deal with these problems by self-medicating - using alcohol, cocaine or other substances to relieve their emotional and psychological distress. Risk-taking behaviour, relationship problems, ill-judged decisions and impaired work performance may often follow. The only certain way to deal with dependency is through abstinence. The Priory offers a range of tailor-made in-patient and outpatient treatment programmes that can help you to overcome your dependency and successfully re-gain control of your life.

**If you or someone you know has a problem with alcohol or drugs, please contact the Priory Group on 0845 60 50 121 to arrange a confidential free assessment with a qualified addictions therapist, or visit [www.prioryhealthcare.com/alcohol](http://www.prioryhealthcare.com/alcohol) for further information.**

**PRIORY**

The Priory Group is the UK's leading independent provider of addiction treatment, with 15 hospitals throughout the UK. The Group is recognised by all major private medical insurance providers and also treats depression, anxiety, eating disorders and other general mental health issues. Free assessment is for addiction problems and is subject to availability.

Ring 0845 60 50 121 for a FREE assessment with a qualified addictions therapist

**Business**

BY ADRIAN GATTON

**F**RIEDHELM ERONAT is one of the world's most successful oil dealmakers. He is also one of the most secretive men in Britain. He has an estimated fortune of at least \$100 million (£55 million) built on controversial deals worth billions — often in connection with Mobil — in far-flung, difficult places such as Nigeria, Russia and Kazakhstan. But details about him are scant. He eschews all publicity.

He lives in a £20 million Victorian house in a Chelsea square. The sumptuous property has a Degas painting on the wall and a magnificent wine cellar. He is married to society beauty Melisa Lawton. But typically, when she was snapped by paparazzi at Royal Ascot last year, her elusive husband was nowhere to be seen. He became a British citizen (after renouncing his US passport) in 2003, and is now based in London, from where he operates his Cliveden Petroleum empire. Financier Robert Hanson is a friend, as is the embattled Lebanese businessman Eli Caili (accused of helping to finance the foiled Equatorial Guinea coup attempt in which Mark Thatcher was implicated).

With this sort of profile, you would expect to find Eronat in the Sunday Times Rich List or see him posing with his wife in Hello!

Yet few people have heard of him. But an employment tribunal in West Croydon has blown the lid off this Great Gatsby-like figure's private world. Cliveden Petroleum is being sued for £8 million by lawyer Dr Peter Felter, its former executive chairman, for unfair dismissal. Felter claims he was sacked for disclosing a sensitive, strategic oil deal in Africa between Eronat's company and the Chinese. The dispute has brought Eronat, 51, out of the shadows. After attending tribunal hearings, the Evening Standard can for the first time piece together his extraordinary life.

The case reveals Eronat to be at the hub of what has been dubbed "the new scramble for Africa", as the US, China and mercenaries led by the likes of Equatorial Guinea coup leader Simon Mann vie to carve up the continent's prized oil wealth. Eronat is not fond of journalists. When, on the off-chance of contacting him, the Standard went to his house, the Filipina maid let us in, but we were ushered off the premises by the startled oil trader. Cliveden's lawyers attempted — against the Standard's objections — to exclude the Press from the West Croydon hearing, but the tribunal ruled we could stay. That left the door wide open to a fascinating look into his life. Within the oil industry, he has always had an aura of mystery. Even the name Eronat sounds unplaceable. Indeed, opinions vary as to whether he was born in a refugee camp in Eastern Europe, or Louisiana. In fact he was born in Prem, Bavaria, in 1954.

Little is known of his early career but now he mixes at the highest levels. The tribunal was told "Eronat's world" was a "singular" place: hobnobbing with prime ministers, glitzy conferences staged by Opec (Rilwanu Lukman, its Nigerian former head, is a friend), multi-million-dollar deals done in Park Lane hotels and skiing in St Moritz. Nothing — not even Felter's contract — is committed to paper. Wherever he is, he is always talking the bottom line or, as he puts it, "the money in your pocket".

The sums involved are eye-popping. "Eronat told me he earned a \$40 million commission from Phillips Petroleum on one oilfield deal," Felter explained. It is no surprise then that Felter, until 2001 the £375,000-a-year head of energy at Clyde & Co and for many years Eronat's lawyer, joined Cliveden. "There will be huge rewards for everybody," Eronat is supposed to have promised Felter.

But, while he likes making money he does not appear to welcome sharing it. Jean-Gabriel Antoni, Eronat's satumine Geneva-based financial manager, told the tribunal that British Virgin Islands-registered Cliveden, which in 2003 posted net profits of \$63 million, is "not making tax returns anywhere".

To understand the dispute, it is necessary to go back to a remarkable "completion" dinner held at Eronat's home in 2003. That night, 18 December, marked a victory for China in the scramble for Africa. The banquet, with guests including Felter and Chinese State officials, was held in the basement, three storeys below a Chelsea street. In the impoverished nation of Chad, Eronat had landed a huge exploration concession — the "Chad Convention" — potentially holding 10 billion barrels of oil.

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Society beauty: Eronat's wife Melisa Lawton