

Bristol Botanists at Casa Fontanalba

By Graham Avery

In 1907 and 1911 members of the Bristol Naturalists' Society stayed with the botanist and archaeologist Clarence Bicknell at Casa Fontanalba, his summer home in the Maritime Alps. Harold Stuart Thompson went there in June 1907, James Walter White in July 1911, and Cedric Bucknall and his wife Abbie in August 1911.

This note explains their links with Bicknell, and the events that preceded and followed their visits. Photographs of Bicknell and of the Bristol botanists are at Annex 1.

Clarence Bicknell (1842-1918)

After studying at Trinity College, Cambridge, Bicknell was ordained as an Anglican priest and served in parishes in London and Shropshire associated with the Anglo-Catholic 'High Church' movement. In 1878 he went to Bordighera on the Italian Riviera as Chaplain of its Anglican Church. Although he gave up his work in the church in 1879, he stayed in Bordighera for the rest of his life, and pursued his interest in botany. He collected and drew plants, and published:

- *Flowering plants and ferns of the Riviera and neighbouring mountains* (1885)
- *Flora of Bordighera and San Remo* (1896)

Later he became interested in the prehistoric rock engravings in the Vallone delle Meraviglie (today's Vallée des Merveilles) and Val Fontanalba, and from 1897 onwards he pioneered the scientific exploration and recording of this rock art in a series of publications culminating in:

- *A guide to the prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps* (1913)

To escape the heat of Bordighera, he usually passed the summer in the mountains, and in 1905 built a summer home 'Casa Fontanalba' in the village of Casterino, 1560 metres above sea-level. Here he pursued his study of the rock engravings and the flora in the surrounding mountains, and welcomed visitors – friends, relations, botanists, archaeologists and others.

The Visitors from Bristol

The Casa Fontanalba Visitors' Book¹ shows that Thompson arrived on 15 June and left on 18 June 1907. White arrived on 19 July 1911, but his date of departure is not given². The Bucknalls arrived on 2 August 1911, and although their date of departure is not given, we know that they stayed 'for a week'³ so they must have left on about 9 August.

¹ A vellum-bound album of cartridge paper of about 40 pages (265 x 340mm) held by Marcus Bicknell, great-great nephew of Clarence Bicknell.

² We know that White was at Casa Fontanalba on 4 August since Bicknell wrote on that day 'M. White et son ami M. Bucknall sont ici, et peut-être vous les rencontrerez à S. Bartolomeo ou à l'hôtel Certosa-Pesio ou ils seront la semaine prochaine' (letter Bicknell-Burnat 1911-08-04). This suggests that White stayed until leaving with the Bucknalls on about on 9 August.

³ See page 112 of Bucknall's *Rock Figures of the Maritime Alps* (1913).

There are entries for the Bristol visitors also in the Book of Guests in Esperanto⁴ that Bicknell kept for those who stayed overnight. This volume was compiled and illustrated by Bicknell with skill. He was a talented artist who painted watercolours of landscapes and flowers, and decorated the interior of Casa Fontanalba in the Arts and Crafts style. Bicknell was an adept of the international language Esperanto, and in the Book of Guests he inscribed the name of each person together with his/her monogram and a biographical note in Esperanto, and on the facing page a water-colour of a flower with its botanical name.

Photographs of the pages that Bicknell created for the Bristol visitors in his Book of Guests in Esperanto are at Annex 2. Here are transcripts of these pages, with (in square brackets) English versions of the Esperanto texts and the botanical names:

1907 Harold Stuart Thompson, angla botanikisto, kiu estis logenta en la hotelo S. Dalmazzo kaj suprenvenis tien-ci por kenaliĝi kun nie monta florero⁵.

[Harold Stuart Thompson, an English botanist who was staying in the hotel at San Dalmazzo and came up here to know more about the mountain flowers.]

Pinguicula vulgaris L. [Common Butterwort]

1911 James W White, fratulo de la Linnea Societo, lerta Botanikisto, kiu multe verkis pri le Kreskajaro de Britujo. Le estas farmaciisto en Clifton, Angluja

[James W White, Fellow of the Linnaean Society, a learned botanist who has written about the vegetation of Britain. He is a pharmacist in Clifton, England]

Brunella grandiflora Jacq. [Large-flowered Self-heal]

Cedric Bucknall, profesoro de muziko, kaj bonega organisto en Clifton, Anglujo. Li estas ankaŭ larta botanikista. Kaj multo voyagis en Europaj landoj por kolekti florojn.

[Cedric Bucknall, a teacher of music and excellent organist in Clifton, England. He is also a learned botanist and travels widely in European countries to gather flowers.]

Potentilla pedemontana Reut. [Piedmont Cinquefoil]

Abbie C. Bucknall, edzino de sro Bucknall

[Abbie C. Bucknall, wife of Mr. Bucknall]

Alchemilla saxatilis Bus. [Alpine Lady's Mantle]

At home in Bristol, these people knew each other well. Not only were the men active in the Bristol Naturalists' Society, but they all lived in Clifton, close to Bristol's city centre⁶. Bicknell, however, had no particular links with Bristol and, as far as we know, never visited it. But in the period 1903-1914 he did exchange a number of letters with the Bristol botanists. Transcripts of this correspondence are at Annex 3.

Harold Stuart Thompson (1870-1940)

Born in 1870 into a Quaker family in Bridgwater, Somerset, Thompson went to school at Sidcot in Somerset and Bootham in York. He studied at Bristol University and Christ's

⁴ A vellum-bound album of cartridge paper of about 40 pages (130 x 205mm) held by Marcus Bicknell.

⁵ This page includes a later entry for Rhea Bottacco Sanseverino (1917).

⁶ Thompson was living at 33 Southleigh Rd in 1922, and 11 Buckingham Place in 1931; White lived at 18 Woodland Rd and worked at 52 Royal York Crescent; Bucknall lived at 13 Whatley Rd and worked at All Saints Church, Pembroke Road.

College, Cambridge, and initially practised as a land surveyor, but his main interests were natural history, archaeology, and above all botany. He seems to have had private means that allowed him to live in Clifton, botanise in the Bristol region, and travel regularly on the Continent. He published many papers in botanical journals, and three popular books: *Alpine Plants of Europe* (1911), *Sub-alpine Plants of the Swiss Woods and Meadows* (1912) and *Flowering Plants of the Riviera* (1914). These books, with illustrations in colour and advice on collecting specimens and cultivating alpine plants in British gardens, were among the most practical botanical guides available in English at the time.

As a boy, Thompson was the first to record the pale yellow hybrid rock-rose on Purn Hill, Bleadon; later he added the hybrid *Carex x evoluta* to the British flora, and he was the first to find *Agrimonia odorata* in the Bristol area. His British herbarium is now at Birmingham University, and his European herbarium is at the National Museum of Wales. He was Honorary Secretary of the Watson Botanical Exchange Club, Fellow of the Linnaean Society, and a member of the Bristol Naturalists' Society and the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society.

Thompson toured extensively in Europe, particularly in Switzerland, in search of plants, and he was an alpinist as well as a botanist: he climbed the Breithorn (4,164m.) in 1903⁷ and made other ascents such as the Matterhorn ridge (3,200m.) above Hörnli and the Grands Mulets (3,500m.) below Mont Blanc⁸. The quotation that he chose for the preface of his *Alpine Plants of Europe* revealed his passion for the mountains:

‘The sense of independence, of self-confidence, induced by the great precipices and vast silent fields of snow is something wholly delightful. Every step is health, fun and frolic. The troubles, cares of life, together with the essential vulgarity of a plutocratic society, are left far below, foul miasmas that cling to the lowest bottoms of the reeking valleys. Above, in the clear sky and searching sunlight, we are afoot with the quiet gods, and men know each other and themselves for what they are’⁹

Thompson and Bicknell

Thompson may have been aware of Bicknell’s botanical publications of 1885 and 1896, and probably knew of him from White and Bucknall, whose visit to Majorca in 1903 benefited from Bicknell’s advice. But we have no evidence of direct contact between Thompson and Bicknell until August 1906, when Thompson wrote a letter asking whether certain plants grew in Bicknell’s district – a letter that has not survived, but which Bicknell in his reply¹⁰ described as ‘long and interesting’. Since Thompson had been on Monte Toraggio (1,950m.) in the Ligurian Alps on 19 June 1906¹¹, his letter to Bicknell may have been related to that excursion. In his reply, Bicknell responded to Thompson’s botanical questions and commented ‘I hope someday you will come to see me’.

This invitation was taken up in 1907 when Thompson was at San Dalmazzo di Tenda – a popular base for botany – and went up to Casa Fontanalba (3 hours on foot above San

⁷ Letter to Thompson from Nicola Ponza di San Martino (an Italian alpinist) dated 4.11.1903.

⁸ See Thompson’s article *Notes on the Alpine Flora*. Climbers' Club Journal 1906 Vol IX No 34 pages 43-54.

⁹ The quotation is from A. F. Mummery, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*, 1908, chapter 14.

¹⁰ Letter Bicknell-Thompson 1906-09-16

¹¹ *Notes on the Alpine Flora*. Climbers' Club Journal 1906, page 49

Dalmazzo) where he stayed for three nights as Bicknell's guest. We have no information on what he did during this stay; presumably he botanised and looked at the prehistoric rock engravings. After leaving on 18 June he travelled via Tenda and Torino to Susa and Mont Cenis, where he botanised until mid-August¹² He wrote another letter to Bicknell that has not survived, to which Bicknell replied¹³ in October 'You seem to have a very interesting time, though I don't quite understand if it has all been holiday, or making, or settling down to some work of a profitable kind, such as you told me you were seeking'.

In the spring of 1908 Thompson wrote a letter which Bicknell described in his reply¹⁴ as an 'interesting & long letter with newspaper enclosure¹⁵ and an account of your summer gatherings in the high regions'. Bicknell's reply included the friendly remark 'Take care of your throat – talk Esperanto instead of French – that is the cure' and continued 'Let me hear from you from time to time',

One of Bicknell's friends was the Swiss botanist Emile Burnat, author of *Flore des Alpes Maritimes*, about whom he wrote to Thompson 'I certainly hope you will go & see M. Burnat and his charming home & well-ordered collections... He is the most charming and genial of men'¹⁶. Thompson's name appears later in the list of botanists who corresponded with Burnat¹⁷, but not in the lists of those who visited Burnat's home at Vevey or contributed specimens to his Herbarium. However, Thompson had other contacts with Swiss botanists. In the Preface to his *Alpine Plants of Europe* he expressed his thanks for kindness received when working on the Alpine flora at *l'Herbier Boissier*, the *Conservatoire Botanique* and the Candolle Herbarium at Geneva. At Mont Cenis on 8 August 1907 Thompson found a plant in the genus *Galium* (Bedstraw), which he sent to John Briquet, Director of the *Conservatoire Botanique* at Geneva, who determined it to be a new sub-species which he named *Galium asperum* var. *Thompsonii*¹⁸. It was Briquet who in 1898 had named the new species *Pimpinella bicknellii* after Bicknell.

Thompson's book and Bicknell's illustrations

We have no evidence of further contact between Thompson and Bicknell until 1914, when Thompson published *Flowering Plants of the Riviera* whose 24 coloured plates were reproductions of water-colours by Bicknell. The success of Thompson's *Alpine Plants of Europe* (1911) with 64 coloured plates by the Austrian artist Joseph Seboth, and his *Sub-alpine Plants of the Swiss Woods and Meadows* (1912) with 33 coloured plates by George Flemwell, a British artist living in Switzerland, led him to write a similar book on the plants of the Riviera. It is not surprising that for this he chose to use illustrations by his friend Bicknell. In his Preface to the book Thompson wrote that he had found 'Mr Clarence Bicknell's large illustrated volume (now out of print) entitled *Flowering plants and ferns of*

¹² As a result of his botanical activity in the summer of 1907 Thompson published *Liste de Phanérogames et Cryptogames vasculaires recueillis ... dans les districts du Mont-Cenis, de la Savoie, du Dauphiné et des Alpes-Maritimes, juin-septembre, 1907, etc.* in *Bulletin de l'Académie de Géographie Botanique* 1908 pages 194-258, and *The Flora of Mont Cenis in The Gardeners' Chronicle* 16 & 23 April 1910

¹³ Letter Bicknell-Thompson 1907-10-19

¹⁴ Letter Bicknell-Thompson 1908-03-24

¹⁵ The newspaper enclosure seems to have been an article by Thompson in which he mentioned the rock figures.

¹⁶ Letter Bicknell-Thompson 1907-10-19

¹⁷ Page 150 of Burnat's *Autobiographie* of 1922

¹⁸ Briquet in *Annuaire du Jardin et du Conservatoire Botanique de Genève* 1908 pages 191-2.

the Riviera very helpful... and the same writer's *Flora of Bordighera and San Remo*... contains many original notes of great value'.

A reviewer of Thompson's book wrote in the *Gardeners Chronicle*:

'It is a worthy companion to his older books for, despite the fact that 1,800 species of plants are described sufficiently fully for easy determination, that keys are provided to the genera, and that in the case of most of the local species, localities are given, yet it is such a slender and portable volume that no one should grudge it space and weight in his luggage'. 'The figures in Mr. Thompson's book are very charmingly drawn and coloured, but have been reduced to such microscopic dimensions that one feels the size must be as great a trial to the proper pride of the clever artist and botanist who drew them, as it is to the eyesight of the average reader'.

The *Journal of Botany* commented that readers

'will be aided in their work by the coloured figures, much reduced from the admirable drawings of Mr Clarence Bicknell... Those who know Mr Bicknell's volume published in 1885 ... will share with us the hope that more of his drawings may be reproduced in a style worthy of the originals'.

When he received the book in April 1914, Bicknell wrote¹⁹: 'I congratulate you on its being finished & thank you for the copy, though now you will be wanting & worrying to start another'. Bicknell complained that an incorrect name had been attributed to a plant in one of the figures, and about the way in which the figures had been printed. He wrote that some were 'very dingy', others 'ought never to have had the dark background, it looks like a smudge! However, at any rate one can see that the plants were well drawn if not well coloured, which satisfies me'.

James Walter White (1846-1932)

Born in London in 1846, White moved to Dorset where he attended a school in Dorchester run by William Barnes, the Dorset poet, Apprenticed to a chemist at Weymouth, he won a medal from the Pharmaceutical Society for his herbarium. As an assistant at the pharmaceutical firm Allen and Hanbury in London, he was encouraged by the botanist and pharmacologist Daniel Hanbury who invited him to his house at Clapham Common. White then started in business himself at Hampton-on-Thames, and in 1874 took over a chemist's shop (Giles, Schacht & Co.) in Clifton, Bristol, where he lived for the rest of his life²⁰.

He joined the Bristol Naturalists' Society and devoted himself energetically to botany. His *Flora of the Bristol Coal-field* appeared in the Society's Proceedings from 1881 onwards, and was published in book form in 1886; his magnum opus *The Flora of Bristol* was published in 1912, and received much praise. The botanical historian D.E. Allen has commented that 'it was particularly outstanding for two reasons. One was the generous amount of valuable or otherwise interesting comment appended to so many of the entries... The other was the

¹⁹ Letter Bicknell-Thompson 1914-04-30

²⁰ Clive Lovatt of the Bristol Naturalists' Society has made a valuable contribution to research into J.W. White with (a) his article in the Society's *Nature in Avon* Vol. 67 (2007) pp 54-63 *A fitting tribute: the late years and funeral of J. W. White* and (b) his articles in the Society's *Bulletins* No. 486 (Dec-Jan 2009-10) *A reply ... concerning the recently published Flora of Bristol*, No. 487 (February 2010) *Under Cook's Folly Wood*, No. 492 (July/August 2010) *Balearic Botany in 1903: two Bristol botanists abroad*.

author's graceful prose: it was a Flora that was a contribution to literature as well as a contribution to botanical knowledge'.

White was a member of the Bristol Naturalists' Society, the Botanical Exchange Club of The British Isles (B.E.C.), the Watson Botanical Exchange Club, and the Exchange Club founded by Dörfler in Vienna. The reports of the B.E.C. include many notes by White, some of them co-authored with Bucknall. White was a friend of G. Claridge Druce (1850-1932), Secretary of the B.E.C. and an important figure in British botany: like White, Druce was a pharmacist (he had a chemist's shop in Oxford). In 1910 White became Lecturer in Systematic Botany at Bristol University, to which he bequeathed his herbarium.

His obituary²¹ recalled that 'readers of the *Pharmaceutical Journal* often enjoyed his racy articles, especially those descriptive of botanical tours in Spain, the Balearic Isles, etc. These tours were made usually in the company of his old friend, Cedric Bucknall'.

White's private address was 18 Woodland Rd, Clifton, now owned by Bristol University. His chemist's shop was at 52 Royal York Crescent, on the corner with Regent Street, in Clifton's fashionable district; although it is now a hair salon, the business name Giles, Schacht & Co is still just visible on the stonework.

White and Bicknell

Since no correspondence between Bicknell and White has survived, we rely on other sources for the links between them. We know that Bicknell had established contact with White and Bucknall by 1902, since on 24 April of that year he wrote to the Swiss botanist Emile Burnat 'I have found two English gentlemen who would be glad to send us plants from England. Their names are Cedric Bucknall 13 Whatley Rd Clifton Bristol, J.W. White F.L.S. Woodland Rd Clifton Bristol'²². The result was that White sent a large number of plants to Burnat: his name (but not that of Bucknall) appears in the list of collectors who contributed specimens to Burnat's Herbarium²³.

*White & Bucknall and *Pimpinella bicknellii**

The next occasion when we know of contact with Bicknell was the tour that White made with Bucknall in 1903 to the Balearic Islands, where they found the plant *Pimpinella bicknellii* in the place where Bicknell had discovered it in 1897²⁴. We know a lot about the tour of 1903

²¹ *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society* 1932, pages 341-2 (signed by Ida M. Roper and H. Stuart Thompson)

²² Letter Bicknell-Burnat 1902-04-24 : 'Cher Monsieur, enfin j'ai trouvé deux Mess. Anglais qui seront content de nous envoyer des plantes d'Angleterre etc. Ils s'appellent Cedric Bucknall 13 Whatley Rd Clifton Bristol, J.W. White F.L.S. Woodland Rd Clifton Bristol'

²³ According to page 160 of Burnat's *Autobiographie* of 1922 White sent him 692 specimens from England. According to page 6 of *Les collections botaniques Emile Burnat* by H.M. Burdet, 1996, 319 of them were sent before 1905 and 127 in 1906

²⁴ See my article *Clarence Bicknell and *Pimpinella bicknellii** at http://www.clarencebicknell.com/images/downloads_news/clarence_bicknell_pimpinella_bicknellii_avery_2017.pdf

because White published an 11-page description of it soon afterwards²⁵, and Bucknall later published a list of the plants that they found²⁶.

White explained that in spring 1903, because of Bucknall's engagements in Clifton, they had only 18 days (from 20 April to 8 May) but wished to gather plants 'as far South as possible'. After 'a careful comparison of maps and timetables showed that we could have a day or two longer in the Balearic Islands than in any other spot on the same parallel of latitude' they travelled via Paris and Barcelona to Port Mahon on the island of Menorca. Under the guidance of local botanists they made a series of botanical excursions on Menorca, and then took a night boat to Palma on Majorca. From there they botanised on the shores of the bay and the slopes of Belver Castle, made an excursion to the mountains via Val de Ternellas and Castel del Rey to Pollensa, and visited the Miramar estate of the Austrian Archduke Ludwig Salvator. White wrote:

'from Pollensa we also reached the charming hamlet of Ariant... By the mule-path over the Col we saw *Delphinium pictum*, not yet in flower, and masses of *Phlomis italica*. On the coast beyond Ariant we were successful in finding the most interesting plant of the whole trip, the very latest discovery in the Balearic flora. Six years ago Mr Clarence Bicknell, on a journey through the mountains with mules, strayed from the track in a fog, and so came upon a new species of *Pimpinella* that now bears his name. Prior to our visit no botanist but himself had seen this plant growing, and without his instructions we should not have found the place. Sheltered among huge masses of rock fallen from stupendous precipices above, at a spot where another 1,000 feet of cliff shelves down to the sea below, *Pimpinella Bicknellii* is safe enough from man's interference. Although of robust habit, it may, of course, be a decadent or dying-out species under the ban of some inexplicable natural limitation, and if so its destiny will be worked out alone amid the solitude and desolation of that grand north coast. My fond hope is that some day I may revisit the spot at a time when the plant shall be in fruit, for that had not developed in April'²⁷.

Bucknall's article gave a list of plants found by him and White in the Balearic Islands in 1903 & 1904, and by him in Spain in 1904 & 1905. He commented: 'our thanks are due to Mr. Clarence Bicknell, of Bordighera, for his kind and valuable assistance in planning our tours, and for the loan of books and maps.' His notes on the plants included:

'*Pimpinella Bicknellii* Briquet. Ariant, near Pollensa. We were guided to the only known station of this distinct and interesting species by Raphael Muraghes, of Pollensa, who assured us that we were the only botanists who had visited the spot since its discovery by Mr. Clarence Bicknell.'²⁸

Although White and Bucknall went to the island again in August 1904²⁹, they did not revisit the plant's find-spot. We have no evidence of further contacts between them and Bicknell

²⁵ *Balearic Botany, 1903* by J.W. White F.L.S in *Year-Book of Pharmacy... with the Transactions of the British Pharmaceutical Conference... Bristol. July 1903*, pages 547-558. White was a vice-president of the Conference, and his paper was published also in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* Vol. 17 pages 166-170 (August 1 1903).

²⁶ *Some Spanish and Balearic Plants* by Cedric Bucknall, Mus. Bac. Oxon in *Journal of Botany British and Foreign*, No. 529, Vol. XLV, January 1907, pages 53-59.

²⁷ Pages 556-7 of *Balearic Botany, 1903*

²⁸ Page 55 of *Some Spanish and Balearic Plants*

²⁹ See White's article *Palma de Majorca* in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* Vol. 20 pages 740-744 (May 20 1905)

until they went to Casa Fontanalba in 1911. No doubt Thompson, after his visit there in 1907, told his friends in Bristol about it, and may have encouraged them to go.

White arrived at Casa Fontanalba on 19 July 1911, two weeks before Bucknall's arrival on 2 August; that is surprising, for they often travelled together. Perhaps Bucknall's delay was due to the constraints of his duties in Clifton. We know that after staying at Casa Fontanalba White & Bucknall planned to go to the Ligurian Alps to stay at San Bartolomeo or Certosa di Pesio, which Bicknell and Burnat had used as bases for botanical exploration.

We may suppose that one of the topics mentioned in conversation between White and Bicknell was the Hanbury family. In his youth White had worked for the firm Allen and Hanbury, where he was befriended by the botanist Daniel Hanbury (1825–1875); as a result, White may have been acquainted with Daniel's brother Sir Thomas Hanbury (1832–1907) whose gardens at La Mortola on the Riviera were well known to Bicknell³⁰.

Cedric Bucknall (1849–1921)

Bucknall was born in 1849 into a musical family in Bath, and already at 14 was organist of a country church. After obtaining a degree in Music at Keble College, Oxford University, he held posts as organist at King's College, London University, St. Thomas' Church, Clifton, and Southwell Minster. In 1876 he was appointed organist and choir-master at All Saints' Church, Clifton, Bristol, where he remained until his death. His address (in 1918) was 13 Whatley Rd, Clifton, not far from All Saints' Church. We know little of his wife Abbie Cecilia Bucknall, who accompanied him to Casa Fontanalba; they married in 1873 when he was organist at Southwell, and both are buried in Canford Cemetery, Bristol, where White is also buried³¹. Bucknall's gravestone there is inscribed 'Musician and Botanist'.

Bucknall the naturalist

Among Bucknall's recreations were astronomy, microscopy, and the study of fungi. The Bristol Naturalists' Society, of which he was a member, published his *Fungi of the Bristol District* in its *Proceedings* from 1878 onwards. His obituary in the *Proceedings*, written by his friend White, recounts that:

'when the supply of fungi failed him, Bucknall gave attention to flowering plants with the same assiduity and methodical care that characterised all his work. Although this branch of botany was comparatively new to him, his industry and capacity for dealing with difficulties soon secured him a standing. His critical revision of the genus *Symphytum* (published in the *Journal of the Linnaean Society*) and his work among the Eyebrights ... enhanced a reputation already well founded ... During the latter half of his life Bucknall made many Continental trips, collecting plants and acquiring a good knowledge of the flora of Central and Southern Europe. In the course of these travels he learned to read at least six languages and could converse in four'³².

³⁰ Sir Thomas Hanbury had a Bristol connection since his wife Katharine Pease (1842–1920) was from Westbury-on-Trym.

³¹ Cedric died in 1921 aged 72, and Abbie died in 1930 aged 85. J.W. White died in 1932 aged 86.

³² *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society* 1922, pages 243–4. The full text is at <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/178461#page/300/mode/1up>

Bucknall's contributions to botany included the discovery near Bristol of *Stachys alpina* (Limestone Woundwort) a plant previously unknown in Britain, and the bramble *Rubus Bucknalli*, named after him by White.

Bucknall the musician

Bucknall's contribution to music in Bristol was equally important. The Anglican church of All Saints Clifton, built in 1868-72, was designed by the architect G.E. Street to seat 800 people. It aimed to restore ceremonial and revive Catholic usage in the Church, with a daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist; it had its own choir school, and offered daily choral services and full cathedral music on Sundays. In 1940 most of the church was destroyed by an incendiary bomb; it was replaced in 1967 by a modern building incorporating the old tower. In a side-chapel is a wall-tablet inscribed 'Pray for Cedric Bucknall, Organist of this Church 1876-1921. *Requiem eternam dona ei Domine et lux perpetua luceat ei. Amen*' ('Grant him eternal rest, Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon him').

Bucknall's obituary in the All Saints' Parish Magazine praised his mastery of plainsong, the beauty and fluency of his improvisations on the organ; and his humility, calm, tact and gentleness, and thoroughness and devotion to duty. He was Bristol University's first lecturer in Harmony and Counterpoint, and his work as a composer received national recognition: four of his tunes were included in the Anglican hymn book *Hymns Ancient and Modern*³³ whose Preface thanked 'musicians of distinguished merit' including 'Cedric Bucknall Mus. Bac.' and other composers such as Arthur Sullivan.

Bucknall on tour

However, the obituary of Bucknall that White contributed to the *Journal of Botany* offered a different perspective:

'Although he had adopted music as a profession, taking high rank as an organist and composer, blessed with a marvellous gift of improvisation, and lecturing on harmony and counterpoint in Bristol University, the genuine enthusiasm that inspired his youth waned perceptibly with age. It may be that the monotony of his calling wearied his spirit (he played five services the day before he died), but he was never known to grumble, and, indeed, always seemed interested in the work of training and teaching.

Still, it was a manifest relief to get away from it all, and on our Continental tours it was never an easy matter to make him touch a piano. On one exceptional night in the Austrian Tyrol I remember that something moved him after dinner to sit down to a concert grand in the big dining-room. Within five minutes all the hotel guests and most of the servants were jostling in the doorways, attracted by unaccustomed melody. Noticing this, the performer plunged straightway into the country's national airs, to the general delight.

Bucknall's brain could always supply his fingers with whatever might be needed at the moment; thus in a Palermo drawing-room he accompanied the weird songs of a Roumanian vocalist to her entire satisfaction. Once or twice in humble southern hostelries, when the innkeeper's daughter, in compliment to the foreigners, strummed

³³ Revised edition with supplemental tunes, 1889. The tunes that Bucknall composed were 'Gloria' (Hymn 511), 'Communio' (559), 'Compassio' (637) and a litany (466) harmonised by him.

out our national anthem, my companion, not a whit behind in courtesy, would follow and play the fitting rejoinder with variations ad lib. On the other hand, if there were a large organ within reach, Bucknall would get at it somehow. In Carcassonne, that ancient city, the cathedral organ was under repair, but Bucknall tipped the workmen to blow for him and contrived to show that the violinist's feat of making good music on one string could be matched in other ways.

Bucknall was an ideal companion on our collecting expeditions, for his patience, sympathy, and tolerance of discomforts that ruffled the nerves and temper of ordinary mortals, never failed. Restricted to an absence of two Sundays or at most three, on account of his engagements, we yet managed to reach Carinthia, the Apennines, Naples, Sicily, the Balears, and Southern Spain, travelling with hand-baggage only to the farthest point planned in the shortest possible time. As may be supposed, we usually arrived, after days and nights of dozing weariness, dishevelled, ravenous, and as black as tinkers. Revelling till the last minute in the fine air, sunshine, and novel vegetation, we hurried homeward in a like continuous rush. The Great War, of course, put a stop to it all, and only one trip has been undertaken since. This was in April of last year, when, in company with the Rev. E. Ellman, we went down the east coast of Spain ... On this, as on every occasion, Bucknall's instinct for kindness, for the comfort of others, showed itself continually. If among the rooms allotted at an inn there was one especially dark, small, and stuffy, he was instantly installed therein, asserting that a small person was happier in a space that corresponded³⁴.

Bucknall and Bicknell

We have seen that Bicknell had established contact with Bucknall and White by 1902, when he passed their names and addresses to Burnat, and that Bicknell gave advice and lent books and maps for their visits to the Balearic Islands in 1903 and 1904. Evidently both men corresponded with Bicknell at that time, for in December 1903 Bicknell wrote to Bucknall: 'You and your (and my) friend Mr White are about the best letter writers I know, and as for handwriting – you are both an example to the world'. He continued 'You seem to have had a delightful tour' and added wistfully 'I long to revisit that delightful Soller and dear Pollensa'.

We have no evidence of further contact until Cedric and Abbie Bucknall travelled to Casa Fontanalba in 1911. One may suppose that during his stay Bucknall, who for 35 years had been organist and choirmaster of an Anglo-Catholic church, talked about this experience with Bicknell, who had served for 15 years as an Anglican priest in a similar environment.

Bucknall later described his visit to Casa Fontanalba in a paper *Rock Figures of the Maritime Alps* published by the Bristol Naturalists' Society³⁵. He wrote:

'It is not generally known... that within two days journey from England there is a district in which rock engravings abound, and which, for an area of equal size, is perhaps unequalled in interest in the whole world. This district is at the head of four valleys directly under the summit of Monte Bego, one of the highest mountains of the

³⁴ *Journal of botany, British and foreign* Vol. 60, 1922, pages 64-7. The full text is at <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/33755#page/86/mode/2up>

³⁵ *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society* 1913 pages 111-117. The full text is at <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/185303#page/143/mode/1up>

Italian Maritime Alps, and covered with snow for a great part of the year ... The Vallone delle Meraviglie - the Valley of Wonders ... is reached by continuing westwards ... Here, the first rock figures are found. If, instead of following this route, the traveller turns to the north ... into Val Casterino, he reaches in about one hour the entrance to Val Fontanalba, at the head of which rock engravings are found in great numbers.

For our knowledge of these we are indebted almost entirely to the researches of Mr. Clarence Bicknell, who for the last fourteen years has spent a part of each summer in drawing and taking rubbings of the figures. It is through his kindness that my wife and I were enabled, in August, 1911, to spend a week in Val Casterino, to collect a large number of the rare plants with which this most interesting region abounds, and above all to visit and examine for ourselves examples of the various types of figures on the rocks of Val Fontanalba...

In Val Casterino there are a few houses and a ruined chapel. One of the houses was built by Mr. Bicknell, in a beautiful situation, close to the Fontanalba torrent which here comes rushing down the steep hill-side. In the wild garden on the banks of the stream, amongst the rocks and in the boggy places, hundreds of the plants which inhabit the neighbouring valleys and mountains flourish, some planted, but a great many native. Here Mr. Bicknell spends several months in each summer studying the rich flora of the district, and making excursions to the region of the rock engravings, which is easily accessible from this point.

After spending a few days at the beginning of August botanizing in this delightful valley, we were, early one morning, conducted by Mr. Bicknell and his assistant Luigi Pollini to the Fontanalba rocks. A stiff climb of twenty minutes led us to a nearly level and meadow-like part of the valley, where Monte Bego comes into view. Further on we again began to ascend, finding many interesting plants by the way, and at length reached a beautiful little lake - the Lago Verde - in the midst of larches and huge masses of rock ...

After a lunch under one of the few pine trees which are found beyond the Lago Verde, we left Mr. Bicknell at work on the rocks, and were guided by Luigi Pollini to the "Napoleon Rock," which lies at some distance from the lake at an altitude of about 8000 feet. To reach this we had a stiff but quite easy climb over steep, broken, rocky ground to a scree where we saw for the first time large tufts of the beautiful *Viola nummularifolia*, and then, after a little more climbing, arrived at our destination. The rock derives its name from a drawing of Napoleon III on horseback, with dogs, and women offering flowers to soldiers. Underneath is written "Ti Napoleon torna i la tua Francia e lasia il Piemonte. Giuseppe Lanterio di Tenda 1849"³⁶... On the same rock there is an excellent figure of a man and two oxen with a plough, and of this, with one or two smaller figures, we took rubbings ...

³⁶ 'You Napoleon go back to your France and quit Piemonte. Giuseppe Lanterio of Tenda 1849'. The drawing is scratched in fine lines on the rock, not engraved like the prehistoric figures. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, President of France 1848-52 (later Emperor Napoleon III) sent a military expedition to Italy in 1849 to assist the Pope to regain Rome. As a result he was unpopular with supporters of Italian independence.

Leaving this extremely interesting rock we continued our climb to the top of the ridge, where there is more vegetation than on the rocky slopes, and here there were several good plants which we were glad to gather. We then descended by another route, very precipitous, but the rocks being broken up into natural steps and terraces there was no difficulty in following our excellent guide, and in reaching the comparatively level ground of the valley, and at length the Casa Fontanalba. Thus ended an ever to be remembered excursion, memorable alike for grand scenery, the glimpse into prehistoric times, and the rare plants which we collected.'

Bucknall's reason for going to the Maritime Alps was to explore the botany, but it seems that his most interesting discovery was the prehistoric rock art. The Bristol Naturalists' Society, dedicated to the natural history of an area which has no prehistoric rock engravings, would not normally publish a paper on archaeology in the Alps, but evidently Bucknall was so impressed that he wished to inform his colleagues at home. Apart from the reference to 'a large number of rare plants' he devoted his paper almost entirely to the rock art, about which he ventured no new ideas but summarised what had been published by Bicknell³⁷.

Conclusion

The Bristol botanists who visited Casa Fontanalba had much in common with Clarence Bicknell. Like him, they collected plants and kept dried specimens for their herbaria and for exchange with other botanists³⁸. Like him, they contributed articles to botanical journals, and published regional floras. Like him, they botanised in various parts of Europe.

Bicknell was a remarkable figure: having passed the first half of his life in one country (England), he spent the second half in another (Italy) and corresponded with scientists in others (France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland). He was not only a botanist but an archaeologist, artist, man of letters, Esperantist, pastor and philanthropist. Like him, the botanists from Bristol were distinguished in fields other than botany. The interwoven contacts between these men illustrate the extent and diversity of cultural and scientific exchange in Europe in the years before the Great War.

Annexes

1. Photographs of Clarence Bicknell and the Bristol Botanists
2. Pages from the Book of Guests by Clarence Bicknell in Esperanto
3. Correspondence of Clarence Bicknell with the Bristol Botanists



³⁷ For much of his paper (for example, his description of the 'Napoleon Rock') Bucknall drew on Bicknell's *The prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps* of 1902 (2nd ed. 1911). He would not have seen Bicknell's later book *A guide to the prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps* published in 1913.

³⁸ Thompson, White and Bucknall were all members of British botanical exchange clubs, while Bicknell corresponded with clubs in Italy, Austria and Germany. White and Bicknell were members of the exchange club founded by Dörfner in Vienna. For more on this topic see my article *Clarence Bicknell's Botanical Exchanges* at http://www.clarencebicknell.com/images/downloads_news/clarence_bicknell_botanical_exchanges_avery.pdf

Photographs of Clarence Bicknell and the Bristol Botanists

Clarence Bicknell

Source: Archives of the Bristol Naturalists' Society

Photograph sent by Clarence Bicknell to Harold Stuart Thompson

(probably with letter of 30 April 1914)



Harold Stuart Thompson

Source: Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society (1940)

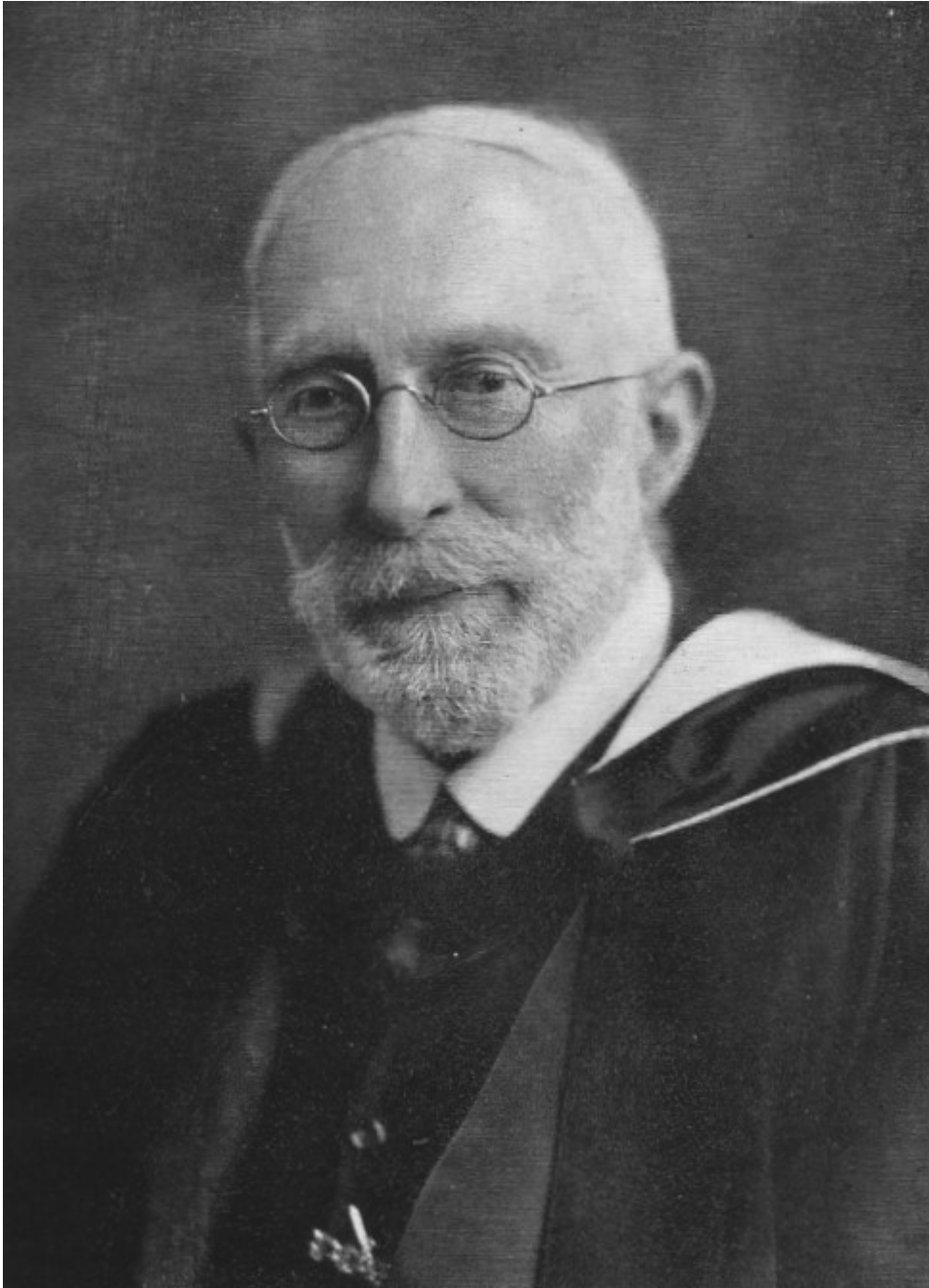
Photograph taken in 1896



James Walter White

Source: Journal of Botany (1932-3)

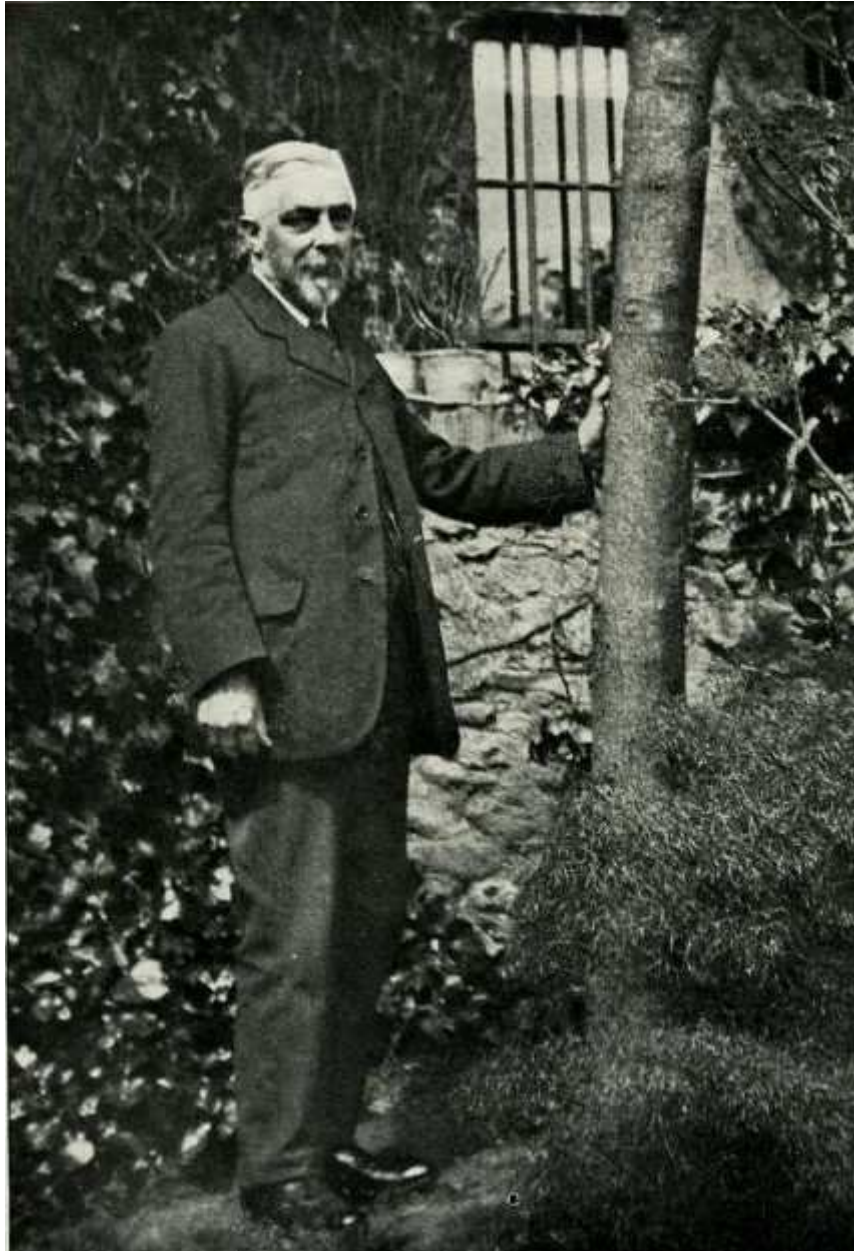
Photograph taken in 1927



Cedric Bucknall

Source: Journal of Botany (1922)

Photograph taken in his garden in 1915



Pages from the Book of Guests by Clarence Bicknell in Esperanto

Harold Stuart Thompson 1907



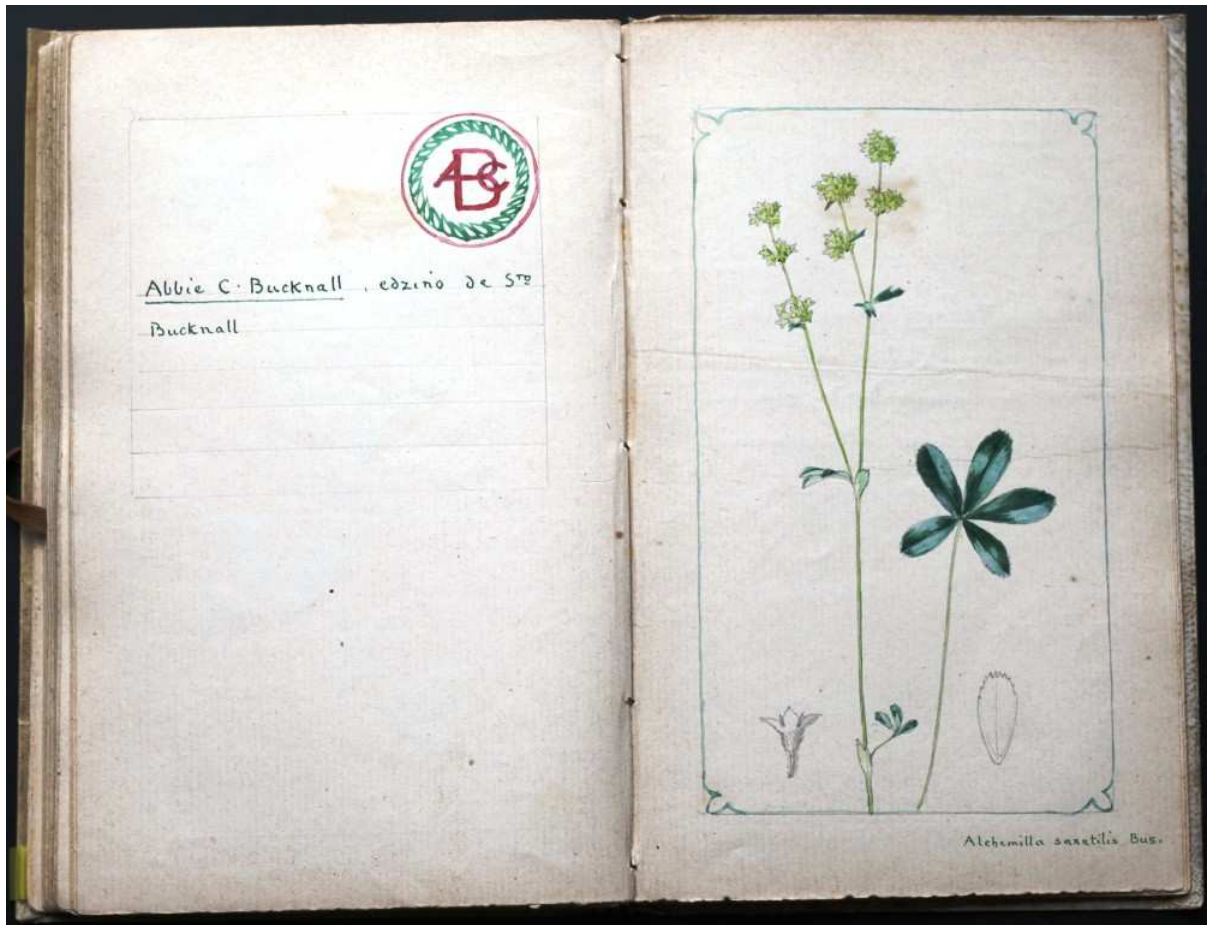
James W. White 1911



Cedric Bucknall (1911)



Abbie Bucknall (1911)



Correspondence of Clarence Bicknell with the Bristol Botanists

In this note I have transcribed 5 letters sent by Clarence Bicknell to Cedric Bucknall and Harold S. Thompson, members of the Bristol Naturalists' Society. Bicknell sent one letter to Bucknall (in 1903) and four letters to Thompson (in 1906, 1907, 1908 & 1914).

I wish to thank Clive Lovatt, Archivist of the Bristol Naturalists' Society, and Hannah Lowery, Archivist of Special Collections at the Arts and Social Sciences Library of the University of Bristol, for their kind assistance and encouragement during my visit to Bristol to examine these documents in May 2017.

In these transcripts I have

- identified the documents by author-addressee-date (thus the letter of 30 April 1914 from Bicknell to Thompson is 'Bicknell-Thompson 1914-04-30')
- indicated their present location (thus BNS = Bristol Naturalists' Society, UB = University of Bristol)
- used underlining where Bicknell used it
- enclosed in square brackets [] text that I find difficult to decipher
- used *italics* for my own comments

The full reference to the letters held by Bristol University in its Harold Stuart Thompson Collection is 'University of Bristol Special Collections DM34/Boxes 1-4'.

Bicknell-Bucknall 1903-12-19 (BNS)

4 pages

LINGVO INTERNACIA ESPERANTO (*in a circle at top left of the first page*)

Bordighera 19th Dec 1903

Dear Mr Bucknall

I am most grateful for your v. interesting letter. You and your (and my) friend Mr White are about the best letter writers I know, and as for handwriting – you are both an example to the world. You seem to have had a delightful tour. Many thanks too for referring to Senecio crassifolius. I think I finally determined it to be that, but I now am writing at home, and must look in herbarium tomorrow. The American at Montpellier who constantly goes to the Balearics has sent me some ripe seeds of the Pimpinella, & I hope they will come up here. I long to revisit that delightful Soller and dear Pollensa. But now I am thinking of a week in Malta via Tunis. I long to break the season by a little outing, and I have not been on a botanical ramble in a new country for a long long time. I shall not find Melittella in January, but I suppose I shall see some weeds of cultivation fumitories marigold etc., and perhaps there may be a surviving blossom of last summer's Centaurea crassifolia. Dr Sommier says that Parietaria populifolia, which I thought to be a good Maltese species, is nothing. But there is a Romulea melitensis to be found & Fumaria bicolor which I ought to have gathered in Capraja but did not. By the bye I believe there is a F. occidentalis lately discovered in

England. I have not seen that, I generally go to places at the worst times of the year but as no one else goes then I always find something which the visitors at the best season have not seen. I hope you & yours will have a v. happy Xmas. My best greetings to you & Mrs Bucknall for the New Year. Yours sincerely Clarence Bicknell.

Esperanto is looking up here, we had a dinner with speeches etc. last Wednesday, & some French, 1 Russian & 2 Bohemians from outside joined us English & Italians here.

Lingvo Internacia Esperanto: 'Esperanto the International Language'. Bicknell was Vice-President of the Italian Society for the Promotion of Esperanto.

Tour: in April-May 1903 Bucknall and White visited the Balearic Islands, where they found Pimpinella bicknellii on Majorca where it was first discovered by Bicknell in 1897.

Malta: Bicknell did not visit Malta until 1909, but in March 1904, soon after this letter, he visited Sardinia.

Sommier: Stefano Sommier (1848-1922), Italian botanist, expert on the flora of the Mediterranean islands. Bicknell corresponded with him & met him several times in Florence.

Capraia: island off the coast of Tuscany; Bicknell visited it in 1903, and began his correspondence with Sommier as a result of the visit.

Bicknell-Thompson 1906-09-16 (UB)

4 pages

Val Casterino Tenda 16 Sept (1906 added by another hand)

Dear Mr Thompson

I am very much obliged for your long and interesting letter of Aug. 25. I was at the Esperanto Congress at Geneva and did not return here till lately, and I have been too busy with guests and excursions to write and thank you. But now that the cold has come and the flowers except Carlina caulescens are over I have more time indoors. I shall be back at Bordighera at the end of month, and hope someday you will come to see me. I could not reply to your p.c. from Breuil as you gave me no address. M. Burnat author of the Alp. Mar. Flora was rather furious about the [Gruea] as his party hunted over the island for it in vain - but I made it quite clear to him that you were not responsible. I think Mr Ellman wastes his time. Every time that I have made a list of plants seen & have not collected them as a proof of their being there I have got into trouble. I think in Capraja I noted down 3 plants, which I did not collect, and then M. Sommier said "where are they? they have never before been seen there". Now about the plants you mention - Lotus uliginosus is certainly new for my district, I have never seen it there, I do not know Hippocrepis glauca Ten. & have no books here to refer to. I do not think I have found Chabert's Rhinanthus ossifragus before, only Rh. mediterraneus, Rh. Behrendsenii (?). Thank you v. much, I have not seen much here. Quantities of rosettes of the famous Saxifraga florulenta but none in bloom, & the Hieracia have been few & bad this year. Yours sincerely Clarence Bicknell.

Esperanto Congress: the second World Esperanto Congress was held in Geneva from 27 August to 5 September 1906.

Someday: Thompson visited Bicknell in Val Casterino in the following year, see letter 1907-10-19.

Breuil: alpine village in northwest Italy, base for ascent of Matterhorn, Monte Rosa, etc.

Burnat: Emile Burnat (1828-1920) Swiss botanist, author of 'Flore des Alpes Maritimes' published in 7 volumes from 1892-1931. Bicknell had corresponded with him since 1886 and met him regularly. After the Esperanto Congress in Geneva, Bicknell stayed at Burnat's home near Vevey. Burnat is mentioned in other letters below (1907-10-19, 1908-03-24).

Island: probably Corsica, where Burnat made a botanical tour in July-August 1906.

[Gruea]: I cannot decipher this word, Since it is underlined, it is probably a botanical name.

*Ellman: the Rev Ernest Ellman (1854-1929) botanised in S. England and Continental Europe, especially Spain; he was a member of the Botanical Exchange Club; *Teucrium ellmanii* was named after him. He collected with Thompson, and in April 1920 accompanied White and Bucknall on a botanical tour of the east coast of Spain.*

Sommier, Capraja: see notes on letter 1903-12-19 above.

*Chabert: Pierre Chabert (1796-1867) French botanist. Numerous species were named after him including *Rhinanthus chabertii* (Behreidsen) Kunz.*

Bicknell-Thompson 1907-10-19 (UB)

4 pages

Bordighera 19th October (see note below for identification of the year)

My dear Thompson

I am glad I waited a few days longer before writing to you, for now your letter has come – come while I was away at Mantua & Milan among floods and strikes – and I meant to write to Forest Hill as I thought you were long ago back in England. Since I returned here on Sept. 28th in time not to eat a Michaelmas goose. I had been intending to let you know that I had nothing much to tell you. You seem to have a very interesting time, though I don't quite understand if it has all been holiday, or making, or settling down to some work of a profitable kind, such as you told me you were seeking. M. thanks for your enclosures & promise or offer of more later on. I have that Phyteuma Balbisii & Silene campanula for you – shall I send them now, adding any other at all interesting double which I can find in my miscellaneous collection? I certainly hope you will go & see M. Burnat and his charming home & wellordered collections, tho' his big European herbarium is bit by bit being removed to Geneva. He is the most charming and genial of men. I have sent 15 packets of *Alchemillae* in 20-30 samples to Florence & many more to Buser – also Hieracia to Zahn & all sorts of other things to others. I had a delightful 2-3 weeks in England with 10 days at the enthusiastic and wonderful Esperanto Congress – but I must go again to E. in a week or two to see my sister. I don't think I [shall] subscribe to the H.B. bulletin. I subscribe to too many things

which I have no time to read. By the bye, I have just been told by Zahn that 2 *Hieracia* I sent him lately, which seemed to me quite different to anything I had ever seen before are his *H. Beauverdianum* evidently dedicated to your present helper, whose name I regret to say I did not know. With thanks & best wishes, yrs. sincerely Clarence Bicknell

Michaelmas: September 29, the feast of St Michael and All Angels. Traditionally this was the first day of the farming year, and was celebrated by cooking a fat goose.

Interesting time: in the summer of 1907 Thompson stayed with Bicknell at Casa Fontanalba in the Maritime Alps (his name appears in the visitors' book of Casa Fontanalba for 15 to 18 June 1907) and then travelled via Tenda, Turin & Susa to Mont Cenis.

Burnat: see note on letter 1906-10-19. His herbarium, to which Bicknell contributed specimens, is now at the Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques de la Ville de Genève. In Burnat's autobiography the name of Thompson does not appear in the list of persons who visited his home or contributed to his herbarium, but it is in the list of his correspondents.

Florence: seat of the Società Botanica Italiana, of which Bicknell became a member in 1903.

Buser: Robert Buser (1857-1931) Swiss botanist, curator of de Candolle herbarium, Geneva.

*Zahn: Karl Hermann Zahn (1865-1940) German botanist, specialist in the genus *Hieracium*.*

H.B. bulletin: I cannot identify this botanical publication.

*H. Beauverdianum: the full name of this plant is *Hieracium doronicifolium* subsp. *beauverdianum* Besse & Zahn. Gustave Beauverd (1867–1942) was a Swiss botanist who worked for the Herbarium Boissier in Geneva; Thompson probably met him there.*

Year: I attribute this letter to 1907 since Bicknell mentions his attendance at the Esperanto Congress which took place in Cambridge in August 1907. He also refers to sending samples to Florence, Buser & Zahn; he sent the same information in a letter to Burnat in September 1907 'j'ai beaucoup récolté pour la Soc. Ital. Bot. de Florence, pour Buser, Zahn et autres spécialistes' (Bicknell-Burnat 1907-09-10).

Bicknell-Thompson 1908-03-24 (UB)

4 pages

Bordighera 24th March (see note below for identification of the year)

My dear Thompson

Many thanks for your interesting & long letter with newspaper enclosure & followed by an a/c of your summer gatherings in the high regions. I have been back nearly 4 weeks: [3 words indecipherable] all herbarium work, besides calls, letters etc. I did not collect in Ceylon – only did a few ferns and grasses, easily dried at bottom of portmanteau – but I enjoyed the tour, both sea and land, immensely and was enchanted with the vegetation and beauty of the island. I had not realised how beautiful the ferns would be – or anything else – and I could gladly travel much further to see again Amherstia in bloom, though that is a flowering tree from Burmah i.e. from Burmah's temple grounds, for its origin is unknown. Luigi enjoyed it

as much as I did & neither the snakes, sun, mosquitoes or other things did us any harm – we were prodigiously well – went up the highest mountain & saw all the botanical garden and worshipped at the shrines of Buddah by taking flowers to lay on the altar in front of his image. The country here is beginning to blossom. I found scarlet tulips, narcissi, violets, anemones on Sunday. I was amused by your saying in your mention – honourable mention – of me that I thought the shepherds had cut the figures in their idle hours because I took considerable pains to refute that theory put forward by some Italians who had hardly seen or had not seen the places at all – and I said in my pamphlet that they were not shepherds, but herdsmen who went up expressly to cut them for religious reasons. But it doesn't matter! it is only that you did not “verify your references”! Another person has lately written in a much more serious paper than a newspaper that the cuttings were made in the Stone Age!!! Did he read all our papers describing the forms of bronze? M. Burnat came for a [kind] visit the other day – I had to go out and saw him only for 1 hour. Take care of your throat – talk Esperanto instead of French – that is the cure. Let me hear from you from time to time. I [expect you will gravitate] to the mountains in the summer. I always long to be there when I am walking along English highroad seeing the [illegible] plantains & deadnettles. But for beauty there is nothing in the world like an English copse of Primula & Endymion [illegible] of course Amherstia! V.v. sincerely C. Bicknell.

Newspaper enclosure: remarks a few lines later suggest that this was an article by Thompson about Bicknell's work on the prehistoric rock engravings.

Gatherings in the high regions: the 'a/c' sent by Thompson may have been the text of his article in the Bulletin de l'Académie de Géographie Botanique 1908 entitled 'Liste de Phanérogames et Cryptogames vasculaires recueillis au-dessus de 8,000 feet (2,400 mètres) dans les districts du Mont-Cenis, de la Savoie, du Dauphiné et des Alpes-Maritimes, juin-septembre, 1907, etc.' Later Thompson published two articles on the flora of Mont Cenis in the *Gardeners Chronicle* of April 1910.

Luigi: Luigi Pollini, Bicknell's assistant, who accompanied him on many of his travels including the visit to Ceylon.

Stone Age: Bicknell had dated the rock figures to the Bronze Age (not the Stone Age) by means of a comparison of the daggers depicted on the rocks with Bronze Age artefacts..

My pamphlet: 'The prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps' (1902) which Bicknell described (in the Preface to the 2nd edition in 1911) as a 'pamphlet'.

Burnat: see note on letter 1906-10-19.

Year: I attribute this letter to 1908 since Bicknell returned to Bordighera from his visit to Ceylon at the end of February 1908.

Bicknell-Thompson 1914-04-30 (BNS)

7 pages

Bordighera 30 April 1914

Dear Thompson

On returning from Valescure last evening where, by the bye, I passed an interesting variety of Euphorbia amygd. which I had never seen before with long involucre bracts, divided... I found your card awaiting me & a copy of your book. I congratulate you on its being finished & thank you for the copy, though now you will be wanting & worrying to start another. Of course I cannot say much about it after only a cursive glance. Naturally I have looked at the Plates. Some of them are extremely good: indeed I do not think that they could be better in that reduced size. Anyhow they are larger than the figures in the book of the Miss Chamberlains; but it seems a pity that some are of the same plants. I see that (*there*) are 10 figured in your book which they have. But I told you this, and you would not heed!!!! Cistus salvifolius, Orobanche cruenta, Scolymus, Lentiscus, Scilla hyacinthoides & others are admirable but why has Longmans printed so many badly e.g. Plate I, they are on the edges of the sheet (*sketch of a page with 4 flower illustrations*). I notice one mistake. Xanthium italicum is the plant you have figured not the very different X. strumarium. One cannot mistake X. italicum with its lovely [pearly] apple-green fruit: the other is very dull & small in comparison. However as there are no details of the hooked bristles etc. it might be worse. But I am not responsible for a wrong determination, as my sheet has X. italicum on it. I think many plants were not well chosen. Longmans should have said they were not clear enough or sufficiently well coloured for copying. Lathyrus annuus [*illegible*], Trifolium etc. and some of the colours are v. bad especially the blues. Lithospermum & Anchusa, Specularia & Campanula & Primula are all very dingy. Medicago marina is horrible & Bellis sylvestris ought never to have had the dark background, it looks like a smudge! However as I say, the Plates, considering the reduced size are very good & at any rate one can see that the plants were well drawn if not well coloured, which satisfies me. You say 'there is much more in the book than appears at first sight' by which I suppose you mean that you had to work hard at it to get much information & I see there is some information not strictly botanical – to make pleasant reading for Riviera visitors – but perhaps you have some other meaning & if so tell me because I am a dense person. I have no more to say for the present & the only criticism to which you must attend for a future edition is the mistake about the Xanthium. Praise and criticism about the text I will send when I have studied it. By the bye Longmans has also sent me a copy – one copy. I mention this because you gave me flattering hopes of 6! Yrs. sincerely C. Bicknell.

Valescure: near Saint-Raphaël on the French Riviera

Euphorbia amygd. = Euphorbia amygdaloides

Your book: 'Flowering Plants of the Riviera: a Descriptive Account of 1800 of the more interesting Species, with 24 colour plates after water-colour drawings by Clarence Bicknell' by H. Stuart Thompson, Longmans Green, 1914.

Miss Chamberlains: in 1913 the sisters Hilda and Ida Chamberlain published 'Common Objects of the Riviera', a book about the flora and fauna of the area, with coloured plates from drawings by Ida. It was dedicated to their father the politician Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914); their brother was Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister 1937-1940.

