

Graham Avery CMG FLS

Graham John Lloyd Avery was born in Cardiff in 1943, the son of a Methodist minister. During his childhood, the family moved between Methodist circuits in Wales, England and Scotland. He was educated at Kingswood School, Bath, and Balliol College, Oxford, where he took a degree in Literae Humaniores (classical studies and philosophy) and was a keen member of the Oxford University Archaeological Society.

Graham Avery was an original thinker, and his career was a model of public service, both national and international.

Graham joined the civil service in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, where he played a vital role in the British negotiations for accession to the European Communities (ECs), and was later private secretary to successive Ministers.

After the United Kingdom entered the ECs in 1973, he joined the European Commission as a member of the cabinet of Christopher Soames, Vice-President responsible for external relations. He was Adviser and then Deputy Head of Cabinet of Roy Jenkins, President of the Commission from 1977 to 1980, and later was a member of the cabinets of Commissioners Finn Gundelach, Poul Dalsager and Frans Andriessen, responsible for agriculture. He held posts in the Directorate General for Agriculture in 1981-1990 as Head of Unit for strategic questions and later Director for rural development. In the Directorate General for External Relations, he was Director for relations with the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from 1990 to 1992, and Director for relations with the countries of the European Free Trade Area and the European Economic Area from 1992-1993. As Director in the Task Force for Enlargement, he took part in the accession negotiations with Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway in 1993-94, and was the Commission's negotiator with Austria. He was Chief Adviser for Foreign Policy Planning in 1995; Chief Adviser for Enlargement 1996-98; Chief Adviser for strategic questions in the Directorate General for Enlargement 2000-03; and Director for strategy, coordination and analysis in the Directorate General for External Relations 2004-06. He led the task force which made the Commission's report to the European Council in 1992 on *Europe and the Challenge of Enlargement*, coordinated its Opinions in 1997 on the applications for membership by countries of Central and Eastern Europe and contributed to the report *Agenda 2000*. He was the author of the report *Policies for an Enlarged Union* in 2001 and piloted the report *Enlarging the European Union* presented to the Commission by Wim Kok in 2003. In 1998-2000 as Inspector General of the Commission and head of the Inspection Générale des Services he coordinated the report *Designing Tomorrow's Commission*. His last post in the European Commission, was as Director for Strategy, Coordination and Analysis in the Directorate General for External Relations.



He was Secretary General of the Trans-European Policy Studies Association (2006-8), Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute, Florence (2002-3, 2009, 2010), Visiting Professor at the College of Europe, Natolin (2003-5), Fellow at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University (1986-7), European in Residence at Canterbury University, New Zealand (2006) and Practitioner Fellow of the Sussex European Institute. He was co-author of *"The Enlargement of the European Union"* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) and contributor to *"The Future of Europe: Enlargement and Integration"* (Routledge, 2004). He was Senior Adviser at the

European Policy Centre, Brussels, and after his retirement in 2006 was awarded the title of Honorary Director-General of the European Commission.

For his service as the Commission's negotiator with Austria in respect of its accession to the EU (1993-94) he received the '*Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich*'. For his services to European affairs he was appointed Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2012.

He published articles in magazines & journals including the Journal of European Public Policy, Challenge Europe, European Affairs, International Affairs, World Today, Prospect, European Environment Review, and the Journal of Agricultural Economics. His publications include:

- *The Enlargement of the European Union* (1998) co-author
- *The Future of Europe: Enlargement and Integration* (2004) (contributor)
- *The EU Foreign Service: How to Build a More Effective Common Policy*, EPC working paper 28. Brussels: European Policy Centre, 2007, (contributor)
- *The European Union: How Does It Work?* (2008), (contributor)
- *Europe's Future Foreign Service*, The International Spectator 2008
- *Robert Schuman on Hungary and Europe*, Hungarian Quarterly, 2010
- *EU Expansion and Wider Europe in The European Union: How Does it Work?*, Oxford University Press, 2011
- *The European External Action Service: new actor on the scene*, European Policy Centre, Brussels, 2011

During the Brexit referendum in 2016, Graham campaigned for Remain, and he was hugely disappointed by the result, which he felt deprived him of his European citizenship and undid the efforts of everyone from Britain who had worked in the EU Institutions over many years, contributing to European policies and earning much respect from their colleagues for their integrity and constructive achievements. He was finally able to regain his European citizenship thanks to being married to an Italian. After a lengthy and often frustrating process, he became an Italian citizen in 2020.

Graham possessed an insatiable curiosity and contributed much to everything he was involved in, whether professionally or as an amateur. He had a wide range of interests and knowledge that never failed to surprise: music, art, writing, and quite recently, collecting 20th-century medals. He researched and wrote about the inscriptions of the streets of Florence, W. G. Collingwood's travels in Iceland, and the British climbers who opened up routes in Norway. His passion for walking took him from the Lake District to the Tour du Mont Blanc, the Grande Randonnée des Alpes, the Chemin de Compostelle and the Via Francigena. In the Alps he developed a love of the wildflowers of the high mountains.

In 2012, in researching a book he was writing on Reginald Farrer (1880-1920), the renowned rogue trader in Alpine plants to an eager market in Britain, Graham stumbled across a note on Farrer's encounter with Clarence Bicknell (1842-1918), English botanist and archaeologist based in Bordighera in northwest Italy and at his mountain house at Casterino. Graham quickly adopted a fascination for Bicknell and worked to promote his heritage and that of the network of botanists he had developed. Avery was a founder member and a lifetime vice-president of the Clarence Bicknell Association from 2012. He provided a wealth of research and cameo papers on the botanists in the network including Emile Albrezol, Augusto Béguinot, John Briquet, Cedric and Abbie Bucknall, Emile Burnat, François Cavillier, Henry Correvon, Clarence Elliott, Aileen Fox, Thomas Hanbury, Théodor Katz, Louis Lutz, Fritz Mader, John Traherne Moggridge, Matthew Moggridge, Renato Pampanini, Stefano Sommier, Harold Stuart Thompson, Lino Vaccari, C. Werner, James Walter White, E. Wilczek and Bicknell himself. The papers are published on the Clarence Bicknell web site.

He was a principal researcher for Valerie Lester whose *MARVELS: The Life of Clarence Bicknell, Botanist, Archaeologist*, published in 2018. Graham pored over real-world records such as the London Metropolitan Archives (for details of the Chiesa Anglicana where Bicknell was curate for a year before renouncing the Anglican church) and the archives of the Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques de la Ville de Genève where 690 letters between Bicknell and Burnat are stored.

He spent his retirement with his wife Annalisa in their house in Oxford and their homes in Brussels and Florence.

Graham passed away in April 2026 at home in Oxford, after several months of painful illness, supported by his wife and by his sons Matthew, John and Nicholas and their families.

28 July 2026