

Links between Clarence Bicknell and Genova



Clarence Bicknell (1842-1918) forged close links with Genova during 40 years of his life, especially with his friend Professor Arturo Issel, archaeology professor at the University of Genoa. Bicknell donated 3,165 tock engraving rubbings, 10,146 herbaria and 3,428 botanical drawings which are still archived in the university today.

The link between Bicknell and Genoa have been perpetuated and have been at a high pitch since the Chronos exhibition of 2023-2024. This paper illustrates the links by pointing to third party articles and book reference about Bicknell and Genoa.

1 Clarence on arrival in Liguria in 1878 - intentions to record the flora of Liguria...

"Unable to find a handbook to the flowers of the area, he consulted John Traherne Moggridge's magisterial Contributions to the flora of Mentone, and to a winter flora of the Riviera, including the coast from Marseilles to Genoa, published in 1871. 104 He soon realised that Moggridge's book was incomplete, and indeed Moggridge himself, in his preface, exhorted others to keep adding to his inventory, an invitation Clarence took to heart. Moggridge states: 'The want of an illustrated Continental Flora has long been felt by tourists, invalids and others, who fail, either from want of power or inclination, to determine their plants by the present available means. Though unable at present to commence such an undertaking, I hope that the present work may afford some facilities which may induce not a few invalids and others to turn their attention to the study of the wildflowers of the district, and thus find a pleasant subject for recreation.' When he wrote this, Moggridge was dying of consumption. He then makes a heartfelt complaint, an issue about which Clarence also felt strongly: 'When considering the thousands of idle hands which every winter pull myriads of flowers to pieces south of the Alps . . . it becomes quite a marvel that these hundred-handed colonies of English should so rarely be set to work at drawing for publication some few of the wonderful objects of Natural History by which they are everywhere surrounded.'

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p64

2 Terremoto 1887 - Clarence Bicknell and Arturo Issel, University of Genoa

Clarence's correspondent Arturo Issel, an archaeology professor at the University of Genoa and also a palaeontologist, geologist, malacologist, wrote extensively about the earthquake in his book Il Terremoto del 1887 in Liguria. In his introduction, he acknowledges Clarence's help and, in his exhaustive description of the damage wreaked upon Liguria, includes two interesting nuggets of information that relate to Clarence. The first is that on one his forays out of town to help others, keen-eyed Clarence noticed that the level of the spring of sulphurous water at Giancarello, just outside Bordighera, had risen by about a third, even though there had been no change in its temperature. 140 The second is that near Ventimiglia in the gardens of the Villa Hanbury, the home of Clarence's friend Sir Thomas Hanbury, the marble balustrades of an arcade completely changed their orientation from south to north, while the villa itself was undamaged.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p82

3 Clarence Bicknell presents a paper to the Società Linguistica in Genoa 1897

Clarence's new career as an amateur archaeologist was off to a flying start. He was fascinated by the engravings. He applied the techniques he used when collecting flowers to document the engravings: he would list them, copy them, and describe where and on what date they were found. However, his methodology was simple and he realised its shortcomings, stating 'we are fully aware that if scientific men had had the opportunities we had, they probably would have made more important discoveries. They would have known where best to have looked for the traces of habitations or burial places of the prehistoric sculptors, and might have found what we have failed to do, and shed more light upon their mysterious work. We are only the collectors of facts, and must leave to others the task of studying them more profoundly.' 183 Nonetheless, the mere collector of facts wrote about the engravings that winter, and delivered his paper at the Società Linguistica in Genoa. The following year he wrote another paper for their bulletin. It is notable that he only ever wrote one article about the engravings for a British publication, 184 and did not join any British archaeological societies, having distanced himself from his roots and academic archaeology.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p122

4 Clarence introduces Issel to the rock engravings in the Val Fontanalba

Clarence's first account in English of his archaeological work was published in 1902 with the title *The Prehistoric Rock Engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps* (74 pages). He published the book in English but not in England, using the Bordighera publisher, Pietro Gibelli. The paper he gave in Italian at the Società Linguistica in 1897 had already been published in 1898 with the title *Le figure incise sulle rocce di Val Fontanalba* (23 pages). His finds had also been reported in 1901 by Arturo Issel, his friend the paleontologist from Genoa, who had visited him in Casterino and had climbed with him up into the mountains. In 'Le rupi scolpite nelle alte valli delle Alpi Marittime'. Issel, the professional, is clearly speaking to his tribe, those men working the same field as he, but in other locations. He plunders Clarence's work on the engravings in the Mont Bégo region, and uses his photographs and dozens of rather odd negative reproductions of his rubbings – giving tribute, to be sure, where tribute is due. For Clarence to lead the agreeable Professor Issel up into the Val Fontanalba and show him his discoveries was a great pleasure. It would have felt wonderful to discuss knotty issues such as the age of the engravings, their subject matter, and the question of who created them. They tried to solve these problems together, and came to much the same conclusions: the engravings represented, for the most part, ploughs, oxen and weapons, while a few appeared to have some religious, but absolutely no funerary, significance.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p127

5 Clarence gave a decorated bowl to Issel, date unknown

Clarence decorated this slightly oval bowl, 33.5 x 37 cm, with images from the rock engravings using a red-hot poker. The bowl was probably given by Clarence to his friend the prehistorian Professor Issel in Genoa. It was found 100 years later in an antique market by its present owner Fabio Negrino, also of the Antiquities Department of the University of Genoa.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p131

6 Clarence's herbaria in Genova

Clarence spread his botanical net wider and wider. 238 Specimens collected by him are to be 148 CB Book tiffs.indb 148 24/04/2018 12:46 botanical exchanges found in least 21 herbaria in Europe and the USA – in Italy (Genoa, Florence, Torino, Sassari, Ventimiglia), Britain (Oxford, Kew), Belgium (Meise), the Netherlands (Leiden), Germany (Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart), Sweden (Göteborg), France (Montpellier), Switzerland (Geneva), Austria (Vienna) and the United States (New York NY, Boston MA). However, although they were collected by Clarence himself, not all of these specimens were donated

directly by him to the institutions in which they are held; in some cases, he gave them to a collector, who in turn donated them to an institution.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p148-149

7 University of Genova has vast collection of Clarence Bicknell output

The family collection is not the half of it. It was known and respected that Clarence, with Luigi's help, had found, copied and catalogued 12,000 of the rock engravings in the high mountains of the Mont Bégo area. But in 2013 Marcus started logging Clarence's bequests elsewhere, and the total of his output turns out to be of an unimaginable quantity. Thirty-six museums and universities in a dozen countries and nine private owners have more than 38,000 of Clarence's rubbings of rock engravings, watercolours of flowers or landscapes, albums, letters, diaries, note books, sketchbooks, photos and personal items. The complete list is published online. Genoa University alone has 3,165 sheets of copies of rock engravings, over 10,000 plant samples and 3,428 botanical watercolours. Clarence was keen that his findings, material or recorded on paper, be available to other students; the quantity and quality of his legacy continues to be appreciated and looked after

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	Rock engraving rubbings	Herbaria	Botanical drawings
Genoa University "Legate Bicknell", Italy	3,165		
Genoa University Botanical Dept "Fondo Hanbury", Italy		10,146	3,428
Genoa, Museo Civico (Natural History), Italy			
Genoa, Museo Civico Archeologica, Italy			
Genoa, Museum of Natural History, Italy			

... and his 9 beautiful field notebooks on the rock engravings in the Archaeology department.

At the Università degli Studi di Genova, where Clarence's archaeological field notebooks and huge collections of pressed flowers and botanical watercolours are held, Professor Mauro Mariotti, Director of Genoa University's Department for the Earth, Environment and Life Sciences, and a prolific writer on botanical issues, has been a vital source of images and information.

Valerie Lester - MARVELS p213

8 Clarence Bicknell's Botanical Exchanges

It is well known that Clarence Bicknell (1842-1918) collected wild flowers for his herbarium at Bordighera, and that many of his herbarium specimens (dried and pressed plants, mounted on sheets of paper) are conserved at the Museo Bicknell in Bordighera, which he founded, and **in the Università degli Studi di Genova**, to which he bequeathed much of his collection.

Clarence Bicknell's Botanical Exchanges, Graham Avery – April 2016

https://clarencebicknell.com/wp-content/uploads/clarence_bicknell_botanical_exchanges_avery.pdf

9 Digitisation of the alpine flower water colours in the Università degli Studi di Genova

We were very happy to hear in 2023 of the project to digitise the alpine flower water colours in the Università degli Studi di Genova under the leadership of Prof Stefano Schiaparelli. The Clarence Bicknell Association will play its part at the right moment to promote the database and images and bring the 3,418 extraordinary images to a wider public worldwide.

10 CHRONOS exhibition in Genova...

Prof Schiaparelli was also one of the driving forces behind the excellent exhibition in Genova's Palazzo Ducale from November 2023 to March 2024.

CHRONOS...

THE FOOTPRINT OF MAN IN THE ANTHROPOCENE OF LIGURIA - 350,000 YEARS AGO TO NOW

The exhibition was curated by Stefano Schiaparelli (Associate Professor (Zoology and Marine Biology) at the Università degli Studi di Genova) acting for the university's Rector's delegate for the enhancement and propagation of the university's archives and museums. "Clarence Bicknell donated to Genoa University 3,165 rock engraving copies (frottages), 10,000 pressed flowers (herbaria), 3,428 botanical water-colours and his 9 beautiful field notebooks on the rock engravings. In 2022, in order to "bring into the light" these materials (that have so far only partly been studied), thanks to the availability of funds from the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, all the drawings, all the field notebooks and almost all of the frottages have been digitised. Now the University can share, with scholars and the public, this incredible legacy and cultural heritage. To this aim, they are launching the exhibition focusing on the transformation of the Ligurian region made by humans, from the Neolithic to the Anthropocene. Professor Schiaparelli is supported by many other members of the University including Mauro Mariotti, Professor of Environmental and Applied Botany at the University of Genoa. The aim of these activities is to share the Genoa University's cultural heritage and deliver information and "food for thought" to the public. The rock engraving rubbing frottages documented the development of the hunters-gatherers through to agriculture, focusing on the images of ploughing with ox carts. "

11 Clarence Bicknell avatar

As part of the exhibition, Prof Schiaparelli's team at the Università degli Studi di Genova created avatars of Bicknell and his Genova friend Prof Arturo Issel – a means of bringing alive the exhibition for a larger number of visitors. Look and listen to Clarence at...

<https://clarencebicknell.com/wp-content/uploads/Clarence-Bicknell-avatar-Chronos-Genova-November-2023.mp4>



"The digital images (the speaking avatars) were projected on a wall of the exhibition, introduced by Clarence Bicknell himself; advance in AI (artificial intelligence) both the moving images of Clarence Bicknell and Arturo Issel, their realistic avatars and their voices. Visitors were enchanted by the story of their great friendship and the exchange of materials and knowledge between two great scholars that worked so passionately in Liguria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries." We, the Clarence Bicknell Association, promoted this exhibition on our web site and socials...

<https://clarencebicknell.com/chronos-exhibition-genova-november-2023/> and <https://riviera-buzz.com/features/local-buzz/item/those-rock-engravings-rock.html>

12 Professor Mauro Mariotti, Università degli Studi di Genova

At the Università degli Studi di Genova, where Clarence's archaeological field notebooks and huge collections of pressed flowers and botanical watercolours are held, Professor Mauro Mariotti, Director of Genoa University's Department for the Earth, Environment and Life Sciences, and a prolific writer on botanical issues, has been a vital source of images and information.

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Prof Mariotti (also previous Director of the Hanbury Gardens) introduced Susie and Marcus Bicknell in 2013 to the Clarence Bicknell collections in Genoa University, including Clarence's 9 hand-written rock engraving field notebooks, and continues to ensure the botanical drawings are looked after. He has

supported the efforts of the Clarence Bicknell Association and has spoken in our favour on regular occasions...

https://clarecebicknell.com/wp-content/uploads/clarence_bicknell_citizen_scientist_mariotti_2019.pdf

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