

MARGARET AND EDWARD BERRY

Vital support for Clarence Bicknell at Bordighera and Casterino

*By Marcus Bicknell, at the Edward Berry day
at the Museo Bicknell, Bordighera, 1 June 2013*

Edward and Margaret Berry were not only pillars of the Bordighera establishment but also provided essential support to Clarence Bicknell, the forgotten man¹ of Victorian science, arts and crafts, after whom the Museo Bicknell is named.

Who were Edward and Margaret and how did they come to be in Bordighera and play these roles?



Image, above: At the Casa Fontanalba, c.1910-1912, Edward Berry, his uncle Clarence Bicknell and Margaret Berry.

¹ Clarence is not a forgotten man in Bordighera and Tende, but awareness of his work in the UK and worldwide is very limited.

Edward Elhanan Berry (1861-1931)

Edward Berry was Clarence Bicknell's nephew. He was the son of Clarence's sister Ada, so the genes, family background and culture which formed Clarence were also a significant influence on Edward,

Edward's maternal great-grandfather

Ada Bicknell, Edward's mother, was born in 1831, the seventh child of Elhanan Bicknell, whose father **William Bicknell** (1749-1825) (image, right), had, early in the 19th Century, sold a prosperous, but to him uncongenial, family cloth business, to run an Academy for young gentlemen in the suburbs of London. William was a staunch Unitarian². He was a voracious reader, a charming and witty conversationalist, a dedicated and conscientious worker, a lover of music, liberal in religion and greatly beloved. William established a tradition of happy family life, based on a civilised appreciation of the liberal arts. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and his brothers Charles and Samuel³ were friends of the Bicknell family. William himself found his happiest moments playing the spinet, the harpsichord and the organ.



Edward's maternal grandfather

Elhanan Bicknell (1782-1861) (image, right) made a fortune as a merchant of refined sperm oil, at that time a world-wide source of lighting, particularly for streets and lighthouses. The firm of Langton & Bicknell had financial interests in fleets of whalers engaged in the South Sea fishing industry. This was specifically the pursuit of the sperm whale which is the romantic background of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and some of Turner's most dramatic paintings. One of the principal sources of inspiration for these paintings was a series of exciting incidents graphically described and illustrated in Beale's *Observations on the Natural History of the Sperm Whale*. Elhanan owned at least four copies of this book, one of which he probably lent to Turner. Elhanan also put at Turner's disposal one the firm's portraits of a whaler by

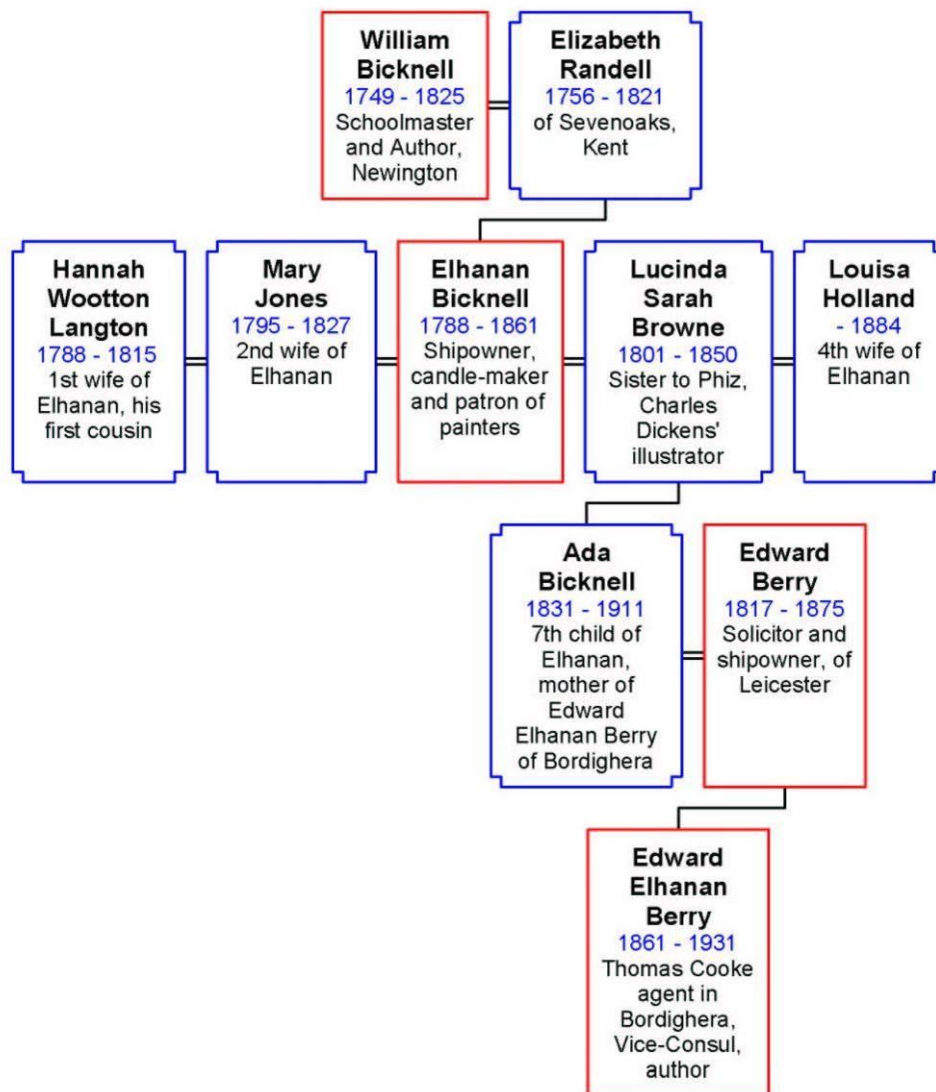


² Unitarianism is a Christian church, very widespread in the 19th century, which rejects some conventional doctrine such as the Trinity, Original Sin and Predestination. Science and reason can co-exist with faith.

³ John Wesley had two brothers: Charles and Samuel Wesley. Another Samuel Wesley, a son of Charles Wesley, was an organist and composer, and had a more famous son Samuel Sebastian Wesley, another organist and composer. (note from Graham Avery whose father was a Methodist Minister, and who was at the school founded by John Wesley)

the marine artist Huggins as a model for *The Whaler* - now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

It was in about 1840, when Ada was 9 and Clarence had not been born yet, that her father began to buy the works of art which were to form one of the great Victorian collections. Elhanan's purchases were limited to the works of living British artists. After a visit to Italy he said that he didn't give a damn for the works of old masters. Among the well known artists represented were Turner, Roberts, Stanfield, Ety. Callcott, Landseer, De Wint and Muller. David Roberts⁴ was his closest friend (they were buried side by side in Norwood Cemetery), and Ada's half-brother, Henry, married Christine, David Roberts only daughter.



Elhanan generally bought his pictures from the artist and not through dealers. They were often personally commissioned. The works of fourteen artists were described in the great sale of 1863 as "Painted for Mr. Bicknell". This method of buying brought him into

⁴ David Roberts RA (1796-1864) was a Scottish painter. He is especially known for a prolific series of detailed lithograph prints of Egypt and the Near East that he produced during the 1840s from sketches he made during long tours of the region (1838-1840). These, and his large oil paintings of similar subjects, made him a prominent orientalist painter. He was elected as a Royal Academician in 1841.

contact with the artists whose company he loved and whom he entertained at Herne Hill. Ada's cousin, Edgar Browne, found Herne Hill delightful, not only on account of the profusion and excellence of its art treasures but for the certainty of meeting, particularly on Sundays, a number of men occupying distinguished positions in the art world.

Edward's maternal grandmother



Ada's mother, **Lucinda Sarah Browne** (Linda to the family) was the third of Elhanan's four wives. Her striking beauty shown in sculptures of Lucinda is not reflected in this portrait⁵ of her in 1831 (left) when she was 30 years old. Or, the picture might not be of her.

Lucinda was ostensibly the elder sister of the artist, Habelot Knight Browne, "**Phiz**", the illustrator of Charles Dickens's novels. He was the fourteenth of Catherine and William Loder Browne's fifteen children.



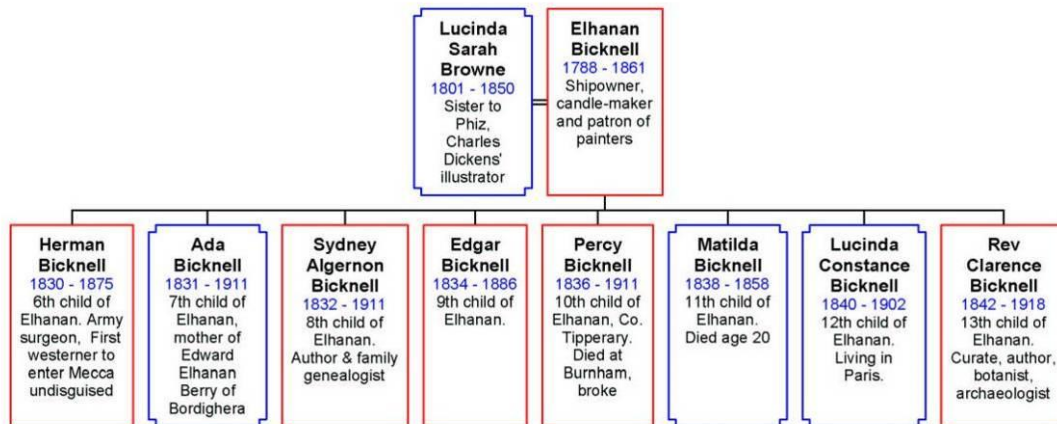
According to Phiz's descendant, writer Valerie Browne Lester, Phiz was not the fourteenth of Catherine and William Loder Browne's fifteen children but in fact the illegitimate son of his (and Lucinda's) eldest sister Kate and Captain Nicholas Hablot of Napoleon's Imperial Guard. So Lucinda was Phiz's aunt, and Ada and Clarence were his cousins.

Dickens' illustrator Phiz spent much time at Herne Hill in the company of Ruskin, Turner and other painters under the patronage of Elhanan, so Ada (and Clarence) would have been influenced by Phiz too. Turner was a frequent visitor, and the Turner paintings and water-colours formed the most important element in the collection. The Ruskins were neighbours, and the young John Ruskin was constantly in the house studying the works of Turner. Denning, the director of the nearby Dulwich Art Gallery, a family friend and a regular member of the Herne Hill set, painted a water-colour (right) of six of Elhanan and Lucinda's children in 1841, the year before Clarence was born. From left to right: Edgar, Matilda, Herman, Ada, Percy and Sydney. Lucinda was a baby in arms when the picture was painted.



⁵ probably Lucinda Sarah Bicknell (née Browne) by James R. Mackrell, after Stephen Poyntz Denning, stipple engraving, 1838 (1833) in the National Portrait Gallery, London

The most remarkable of the elder boys was **Herman Bicknell**, the eldest of this six, a year older than Ada and twelve years older than Clarence. He became a distinguished oriental scholar and traveller. He was the first Englishman to make the pilgrimage to Mecca totally undisguised. He was a passionate mountaineer who made more than one ascent of Vesuvius during an eruption, and survived a serious accident on the Matterhorn, later to make one of the early ascents of that mountain.



As can be seen on the family tree above, Lucinda had 8 children in 12 years, a physical feat which was not unusual in Victorian Britain. Elhanan had had 5 children by his first two wives. Percy, the great-grandfather of Marcus Bicknell, the writer of this paper, is the fifth of Lucinda's children, so I feel the influence of Elhanan in my own heritage too. The family line has, since Clarence and the Berrys' era, produced many artistic men and women, including architects, talented amateur artists, draftsmen and a church organ designer alongside business and professional people. Clarence Bicknell, Ada's little brother, and who we know so well in Bordighera, clearly inherited this creative gene too.

Edward's mother

Herne Hill was Ada's home for the first thirty years of her life. Here she enjoyed the amenities of life in a large and happy family, in a prosperous comfortable, nonconformist, middle class atmosphere, in which an appreciation of the arts was encouraged. In this, Herne Hill was like many good Victorian homes. But it was exceptional in being not only a gallery of contemporary art, but also a kind of club for the leading artists. Count d'Orsay, working from a sketch of Landseer's, published a lithograph of "Turner In Mr Bicknell's Drawing Room". It was not every Victorian girl who grew up in a home where there were more than thirty Turners to be seen, where she might find Turner himself having a cup of tea in the drawing room, or Ruskin discussing pictures such as Turner's great "Palestrina" or his "Fort Ruysdael".

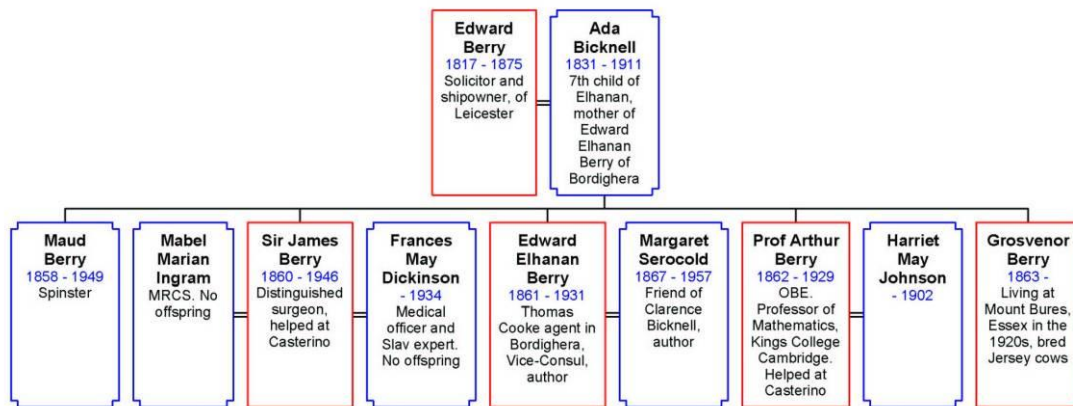


Ada's mother Lucinda died in 1850, and her father had immediately married his fourth wife Hannah in 1851.

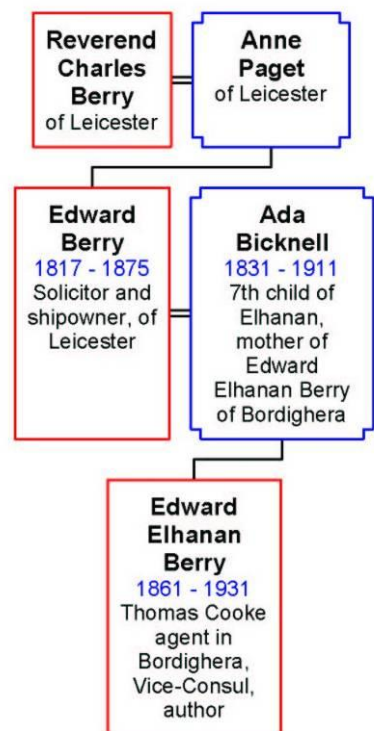
Ada married in 1857 (see "Edward's father" below) and was living abroad, in Canada, when Elhanan Bicknell himself died in 1861. At that time Herne Hill, life among the

artists and the huge art collection came abruptly to an end... but her father's name lived as her son Edward's middle name.

Ada moved back to London (probably in the late-1860s). Ada's address was 27 Upper Bedford Place, London W.C., now called Bedford Way, which is also the address given at the time for the Froebel Society (an international forum for the development of the principles of educational theory and practice associated with the child-centred philosophy of Friedrich Froebel, formed in 1874) in which Ada became active. The family was Unitarian, like her grandfather William Bicknell. Ada founded the Croydon High School for Girls in 1874.



Ada and Edward's other children⁶ included Sir James Berry (1860-1946), celebrated surgeon and scholar and Arthur Berry (1862-1929), Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University and Fellow of Kings College.



Edward's father

Ada Bicknell married **Edward Berry (senior)** in 1857. He had trained as a solicitor in Leicester and became a successful shipowner. He lived in Croydon (not far from Ada's home in Herne Hill) but his business took him for much of the time to Canada, so Ada moved with him to Kingston, Ontario shortly after their wedding. For this reason James (1860) and Edward Elhanan (1861) are known to have been born in Canada, possibly others. There is little to find about Edward's career and business; don't confuse him with Rear Admiral Sir Edward Berry, 1st Baronet, KCB (1768 –1831), Nelson's right hand, and several other Berrys in the shipping business in the 19th century.

⁶ Clara Berry, born in Canada in 1864, was a teacher and ran schools in Bolton and Folkestone. She has been shown by research by Carolina Mitchell for the University College London Bloomsbury Project in 2008 to have been a child of Ada and Edward Berry (University College London records). Clara will be shown on future Bicknell/Berry family trees.

Edward's paternal grandfather

The Reverend Charles Berry (1783-1877), the father of Edward Berry senior, was a particularly distinguished cleric. Born at Romsey, Hampshire, the son of a prominent Independent minister and preacher, Berry entered the Congregationalist Homerton Academy in Hackney in 1799 to prepare for the Ministry, though he also showed promise in science, particularly chemistry and mathematics. In 1803, at the age of only twenty, he was elected Minister of the Unitarian Great Meeting, Leicester, serving to his retirement 56 years later in 1859.

He was twice elected to President of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society. The subjects of his presidential addresses included: *'Etruria'*, *'The Character of Richard III'*, and *'The Ictis of Diodorus Siculus'*. In his *Music and Friends*, William Gardiner, a founder-member of the Leicester Lit & Phil. who had been the musical director of the Great Meeting during the earlier part of Berry's ministry, reported that Berry had “a conciliatory and appealing personality, while his preaching, which dealt with issues of daily life in pithy and studiously simple language, was greatly admired”. Gardiner also said that Berry had a fine singing voice, and under his Ministry the Great Meeting became well-known for its music. Though he was very reluctant to commit his views to print, it was recorded that his doctrinal lectures reflecting Unitarian themes such as opposition to the doctrine of Original Sin and on the contemporary corruption of Unitarian Christianity compared with its original values, attracted large and appreciative audiences. He also conducted a successful school in the town from 1808 to 1838.



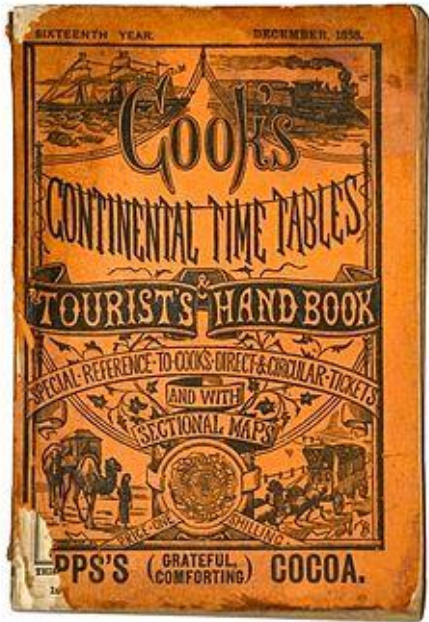
Edward's paternal grandmother

In 1810 Rev Charles Berry married **Ann Paget** whose brother Thomas Paget (1778-1862) ran the family bank in Leicester. The grandson would have been aware of this gene when he started the Berry Bank in Bordighera in 1881 or soon after. Paget led the radical reformers who took control of the traditionally Tory town for several decades following the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.

Edward Elhanan Berry

Little is recorded of Edward's early life... born abroad, son of a ship-owner, he moved back to London when he was a little boy... then what? He would have finished university studies in the early 1880s. It is likely that he had chosen science in further education and as a career as he is listed, in later life, curiously, as a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

But as early as 1891 Edward Elhanan Berry arrived in Bordighera; little did he know that he would spend 50 years and the rest of his life there. He was initially the manager of the Berry Bank; had his ship-owner father endowed his 30 year old son with enough finance to start a banking business? The bank must have thrived because it existed still in 1909 when an “officer” of the bank, Edgar Skinner, signed the Casa Fontanalba visitors’ book.



Then he became the agent for Thomas Cook's, the travel company, at a time when the Italian Riviera was becoming an all-important winter destination for the English and other nationalities. The company's "Continental Time Tables of 1898 is pictured left. The railway from Nice to Ventimiglia had been completed in 1872, so linking Bordighera station (image, right) with both the French and Italian networks.

At that time Bordighera was almost an English colony. Indeed, towards the end of the century the English outnumbered the native Italians. It preceded the French Riviera - Menton, Monaco, Cannes etc. - as a popular winter resort. Foreign visitors, many of whom became residents, flocked there for the winter sun in a climate which was considered particularly beneficial for sufferers from the still incurable disease of tuberculosis.





*Portrait of Edward Berry by Herbert Olivier
The Portrait now (1972) belongs to Charles Evans,
Surgeon Lieutenant R.N.*

In November 1892 Edward created an “English Agency for the selling and letting of houses and other property, transmission of luggage and heavy goods to and from England, storage of luggage, purchase of good on commission etc. etc.” There is no indication of whether this business was an extension of his agency of Thomas Cook or a separate enterprise. The same announcement, in the Bicknell family collection, gives Edward’s address as Villa Rosa... one imagines this is the same house that Clarence occupied later.

The painting of Edward by Herbert Olivier⁷, a contemporary of Edward’s, was most likely painted in the prime of Edward’s life in the 1890s. Although the handwriting on this photo from Margaret’s vellum scrapbook, further edited by Anthony Packe, says that the portrait “now (1972) belongs to Charles Evans, Surgeon Lieutenant R.N.”, the original has been handed down by Margaret through Peter Bicknell to Marcus Bicknell. Either the handwriting is wrong or there are some sophisticated copies of the portraits. On the occasion of the presentation of this paper in June 2013, the original painting is presented as a gift to the Museo Bicknell in Bordighera.

⁷ Herbert Arnould Olivier R.I. (1861 – 1952), was a London-based portrait and landscape painter who studied at the Royal Academy Schools. In 1917, Olivier was appointed an Official War Artist. 'The Supreme War Council' (the original of which was given to the French Government and displayed in the Palace of Versailles), 'The Armistice Meeting', 'The Military Representatives in Conference', 'The Peace Signature Table', and various portraits now form part of the collections of the Imperial War Museum.

Edward Elhanan Berry was British Vice-Consul in Bordighera from 1897, succeeding Henry de Burgh Daly (born in Galway, Ireland, around 1852).



The image above is of one of many of Edward's visas in the Bicknell family collection. His profession "British Vice Consul" appears to be enough to get him and his wife across borders in the middle of the First World War (May 1915).

Margaret Berry née Serocold 1867-1957

Margaret's grand-parents

Margaret's paternal forebears had long been lords of Uphall Manor in Cherry Hinton near Cambridge or, like her great-great-grandfather **Walter Serocold** and his father **Edward Pearce-Serocold**, rectors of St Andrew's Church. Her maternal great-grandfather **William Pearce** had come to Cambridge from Cornwall to be Master of Jesus College in 1789, Dean of Ely in 1797 and to hyphenate with Walter's daughter Anne.

Margaret's father

Margaret's father was **Charles Pearce-Serocold**, senior partner in the Clerkenwell brewers Reid & Co for whom he acquired interests in many pubs including The White Hart in Theobald's Road, The Man-in-the-Moon in Chelsea and The Hole-in-the-Wall between Gray's Inn and Hatton Garden. He lived on Taplow Hill in the Thames Valley, some 30 miles from London, and he was among the first to commute into London on the new railway.



Margaret's mother

Charles's wife was **Marie Grenfell**, a distant cousin of the Grenfells of Taplow Court. From 1860 they lived at Taplow Hill, a fine mansion off Church Road (now Rectory Road) which they either had built or acquired soon after it had been. With its privacy preserved like Elibank House opposite behind a long brick wall, it was a very comfortable home for him, Marie, their ten children and twelve servants for 44 years. In their dotage, Charles and Marie took to spending their winters in the Casa Sant'Ampeglio in Bordighera. They both passed away there in 1904 – he in January, she in April.

In 1891 Charles had acquired from Charles William Grenfell a 'close' across the road from St Nicholas Church, Taplow, where he built The Red Cottage in 1893. It was rather grand to be a cottage but it made a delightful home for three of his daughters, Marie (known as Minna), Lucy and either Margaret, Caroline, Dorothy or Ruth. Three of their brothers were already building military careers which culminated with their distinguished service during the Great War. Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald Pearce-Serocold commanded the 1st/4th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment in 1914-1916. He dropped his Pearce prefix when he retired in 1924 after forty years with the Berkshires. Commander Claud Pearce-Serocold was awarded the OBE in 1918 for his service in Royal Navy intelligence and Brigadier-General Eric Pearce-Serocold of the King's Royal Rifle Corps was wounded five times in the course of three commands. His injuries weakened his constitution considerably and probably led to his untimely death from pneumonia in 1926.



Margaret Berry née Serocold

Margaret Serocold first came to her family's villa in Bordighera in 1886, five years after Edward Elhanan Berry. She would have thrown herself, or been thrown, into the social and cultural whirl of the English colony. It would have been almost impossible for her not to have met Edward but nothing is written about their courtship... they were not married until 11 years after she came, in 1897.

Margaret's nephew Anthony Packe writes in the preface to the Villa Monte Verde scrapbook, Margaret and Edward "had no children, but an adopted daughter, Jane Barker-Mill, Margaret's god-daughter". A "Miss Barker" is listed in a printed show of support for one of Edward's businesses, dated 30 November 1892. Edward also mentions her in a codicil to his will as a possible trustee of the charitable foundation he left in Margaret's name, but little is known of Jane's origins or what happened to her.

The Berrys, Bordighera and Bicknell

In 1904 the Berrys laid the foundation stone of the Villa Monte Verde. A photograph of the ceremony (right) shows Edward with the plans, Margaret with her dog and Edward's uncle Clarence Bicknell with the white beard uncharacteristically wearing a bowler hat. In the last decade of the nineteenth century Clarence's life was significantly enriched by the advent of the Berrys to Bordighera. They became his closest friends, sympathetically involving themselves in his activities and, after his death, becoming the custodians of his enterprises.

Clarence's principal passion had been the study of botany and a love of flowers. The richness of the flora of Bordighera and its neighbourhood was for him one of its main attractions. In them he found a wonderful source of inspiration and he collected plants and recorded them in explicit and attractive water-colour drawings. He came there in 1879, before Edward and Margaret; by



*Laying of foundation Stone of Monte Verde
1904.*

1884 he had made over a thousand of these drawings, 104 of which he selected as illustrations for his *Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Riviera and Neighbouring Mountains*, published in 1885.

We know that Edward and Margaret provided much help and encouragement to Clarence in the lead-up to the opening of the Museo Bicknell in 1888. Clarence had also visited the Vallée des Merveilles in 1881 and 1885. His interest was captivated by the mysterious marks on the rock which led to an intense period of work on the engravings from 1897 to 1902 when he published *A Guide to the Prehistoric Rock Engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps* first edition 1902, last edition 1913.

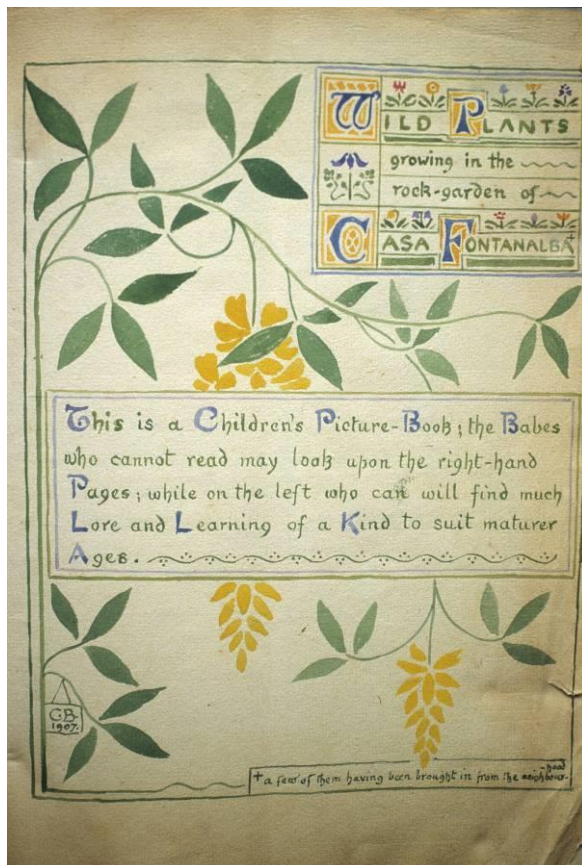
During these years living and working in Bordighera, it is certain that Margaret forged a strong attachment to Clarence, her husband's uncle.



The relationship between Margaret and Clarence is beautifully illustrated by the story of the vellum albums. Shortly after her marriage Margaret saw in Lorenzini's shop in Siena some

exquisite books of superior drawing paper elaborately bound in white vellum. She bought one and gave it to Clarence. He was delighted. A few months later he gave it back to her, now filled with flower designs. Next time Margaret was in Siena, she bought one and repeated the gift; and again Clarence returned it to her transformed. This became a ritual. At least once a year until the outbreak of war in 1914 an album was exchanged and

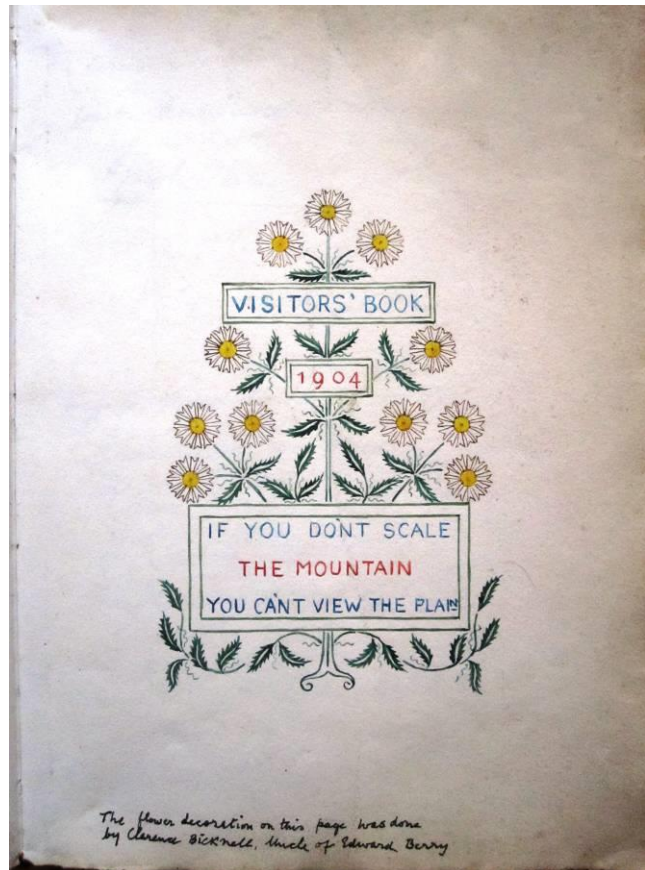
dedicated to Margaret Berry. Seven of these are now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, as part of their outstanding collection of flower paintings, and some are in the Bicknell family collection. Each album has a theme - for instance, one is a book of marguerites for Margaret; one is book of wild plants described for children (image, left); one is a Book of Berries for the Berrys; another is a book of flowers from the Val Fontanalba; another is a book of poems decorated with appropriate flowers. The album dated 1911 is a coronation procession of the flowers of Fontanalba to celebrate the coronation of King George V. The last dated 1914 is an elaborate fantasy, *The Triumph of the Dandelion* in which the flowers compete for the crown of the Beauty Queen of Fontanalba. Page by page each flower presents her claim in enchanting drawings, supported by descriptions of her charms



(sometimes medicinal) in prose and in verse (often facetious), The largest and finest of the albums is that of 1908 which is a complete botanical catalogue of 404 wild plants that grew in the garden of the Casa Fontanalba. The book ends with the couplet,

*"Now if you say, Oh what a show of plants.
I beg your pardon.
This book is finished; not so the treasures
of my garden."*

The Bicknell family collection included one of these vellum books, prepared this time by Clarence as a visitors' book for the Berry's Villa Monte Verde. The front cover shows their initials in a logotype and a stylised image of the Bordighera coast with a path winding up to the villa. The inside front cover is shown in the image, right. Clarence is the first visitor to sign, on October 18th 1904, followed by Margaret's sister Caroline⁸ and Edward's mother Ada. 20 more of the family visited within the first year, and the villa's first full year at the centre of the Bordighera social scene is marked by a pantomime performance of Old King Cole; each guest has signed alongside the role they took in the play.



Clarence continually expressed his preference for wild plants rather than garden varieties. His delight in playful fantasy has much in common with the nonsense of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. He loved puzzles, riddles, jokes, puns and parlour games. For Margaret Berry he made a botanical version of the popular Victorian game of Happy Families (image, left).



It was not till 1905 that Clarence embarked on the enterprise of building a house for the summer at Casterino. The study and recording of the engravings had become almost as absorbing of his energies as the flora; Casterino was an ideal base for the field work of both

⁸ When Caroline signs 5 months later she is married and named Caroline Packe

activities. The Berrys, now his close companions and friends, were deeply involved in the building of the Casa Fontanalba. Two of Edward's three brothers, Sir James, a distinguished surgeon, and Arthur of King's College Cambridge, Professor of Mathematics, with their wives, gave active help to Clarence, Margaret and Edward clearing the surroundings of the site and preparing the garden. The photo above shows Clarence seated at the left, Edward Berry standing and Margaret Berry seated with a cane.



The names of everyone who spent a night in the Casa, including Margaret and Edward, were recorded decoratively on the walls of one of the rooms. And one of the vellum albums was filled with entries cataloguing these people with biographical notes in Esperanto.

Some idea of Clarence's character is given in the appreciations written by Edward and Margaret Berry after his death. But it must be kept in mind that the Berrys always saw Clarence through rose-coloured spectacles.

"He roamed over the hills seeking rare flowers, but noticing everything - small insects, birds, stones, light and cloud effects, and talking in his gay and eager way to everyone he met.

"His lively conversation, full of sparkling wit and humour and the wonderful letters that he used to write, illustrated with pen and ink sketches, are precious memories to those who were privileged to call themselves his friends.

"He was greatly loved by the Italian population... who recognised in him an unfailing helper and adviser in all their needs material and moral. The familiar

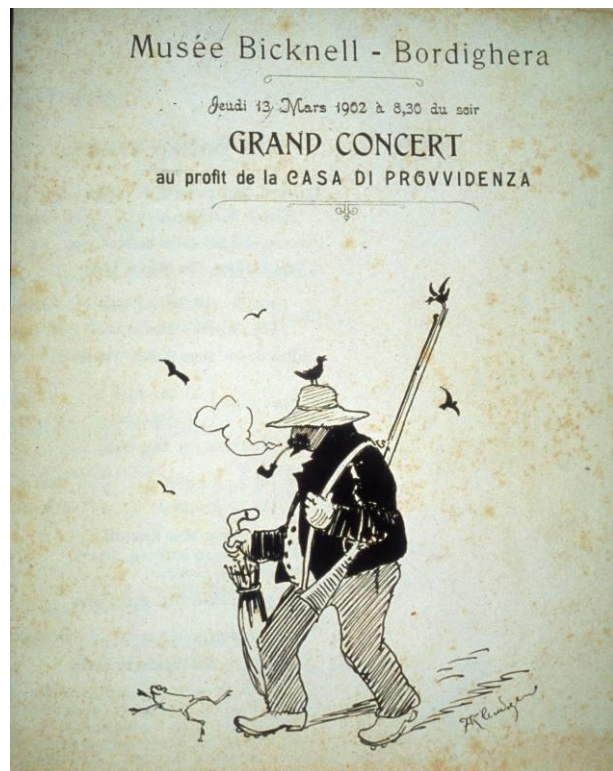
figure, in loose flannels, with open collar ... with an immense grey felt hat on his head, was always welcome.

"Intensely affectionate and emotional, he was inclined to violent prejudices, from which he could not always easily free himself and the haste with which he threw himself into new intimacies was a standing joke amongst his old friends."

So, Clarence “*threw himself into new intimacies*”. I consider that Margaret was not one of them, certainly not one which would become a standing joke. On the contrary, she was a source of support and encouragement over a 30 year period. The vellum books were but a manifestation of the intellectual stimulus she provided for him in his flower painting. She was supportive in a practical way, as members of her extended family were, in the construction of the house in Casterino. She was often there... her signature⁹ appears in the visitors’ book 8 times between 1906 and 1916. As if to signal his own support, her husband Edward was there 10 times in the same period because he sometimes went up alone with visitors; and this despite being fully employed in Bordighera with the bank, the travel agency and his vice-consulship.

In the rare instances of Margaret writing about Clarence, there is a certain distance expressed in the choice of words. The only diary of Margaret’s in the Bicknell family collection was written between July 6 and July 22 of 1906, “our first summer in the new house”. This choice of words is interesting in itself because it implies a certain ownership of the house, or at least some pride in having helped Clarence so much. Of significance to their relationship is her use of “the uncle” or “uncle C.” when referring to him. The diary is very factual; there is no fawning or complimenting of Clarence.

Clarence’s plan in building the museum in Bordighera was to create enough space for his books and collections of various sorts which were outgrowing the Villa Rosa. But the Museo Bicknell quickly became a focal point (alongside the Anglican Church) for the English colony in Bordighera. The concerts and conferences there, many organised and promoted by the Berrys, were well-attended and memorable. The Berrys’ involvement in the Museo Bicknell, before and after Clarence’s death, and Margaret’s support for the creation of the International Institute for Ligurian Studies are well covered by Enzo



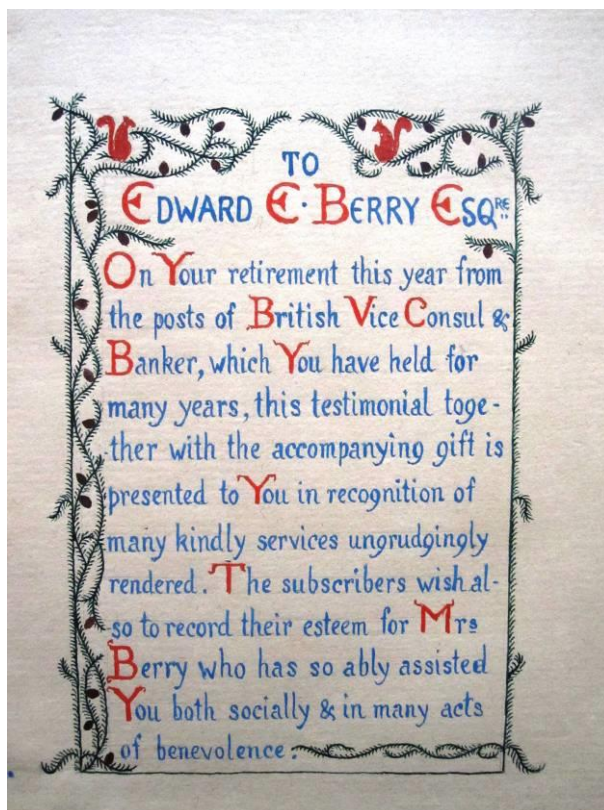
⁹ Clarence’s visitors’ book at the Casa Fontanalba, and his VIP book in Esperanto, were transcribed by Marcus Bicknell in 2011 into a spreadsheet so the data is searchable.

Bernardini's 1971 paper. Edward was 57 in 1918 when Clarence died, and Margaret 51, so they had the energy and remaining life span to be Clarence's trustees on earth and the two who continued his charitable and museum activities.

For all of their life together, Margaret and Edward explored, walked, collected flowers, visited villages and churches and recorded their findings. This was the ethos of the era... to discover and to record... which also drove Clarence to his work in archaeology, botany, art and Esperanto. The Berrys were not amateurs either; their book "At the Western Gate of Italy" published in 1931 is a guidebook or, as they call it, a "sketch", of the history, art, and architecture of the Western Italian Riviera. This was quite a family enterprise. Eight pen-and-ink drawings were by Lucy Galton née Serocold, Margaret's sister. Eleven aquatints were by Francis Barry (also known as Claude Barry) whose mother was Kathleen Ellen Bicknell, Clarence's niece. She was the daughter of another of Clarence's brothers, Percy Bicknell of Co. Tipperary in Ireland (Marcus's great grandfather). Either the rose tint of the spectacles faded in the 15 years since Uncle Clarence died, or the Berrys made an effort not to give any undue space to him in the book; his work on the engravings is limited to three pages of text (out of 266 pages of the book) plus three pages of his ink drawings of the engravings. Margaret also writes "It was published at the expense of Cecil Hanbury of La Mortola"; one assumes the building of the Villa Monte Verde and "entertaining many distinguished visitors there" left their finances a bit depleted.

When Edward retired from the post of British Vice Consul, Clarence prepared a vellum book for all his friends in the town to sign, pages and pages of signatures of good wishes. The Berrys in old age still lit up Bordighera society.

Margaret and Edward worked unceasingly for charitable causes, including those which Clarence had founded. The Clarence Bicknell Memorial Fund had been created after Clarence's death in 1918 to continue to raise funds for the poor of Bordighera and other specific charities. The notice of winding up of this Memorial Fund (and of the creation of a new one) in 1921, signed by Margaret Berry, lists an "increase in the endowment for the Ospizio S. Giuseppe (home for the aged poor) by L 10,000 capital, and



expenditure of L. 3,818 for equipment for the Clarence Bicknell Communal Dispensary, and provision of an initial endowment fund of L 113,700 for the Clarence Bicknell Institution for the Relief of the Sick Poor of Bordighera." This last endowment is essentially a name change for the continued activity which the Bicknell and the Berrys started. The new institution had been registered as a charity and a new appeal for funds was made in the same notice.

Clarence Bicknell might have been a lonely soul without the social and cultural infrastructure of Bordighera. If we think of him now as a forgotten genius of Victorian science, arts and crafts, imagine how ignominious he would have been without the support and encouragement of Edward and Margaret Berry. As it is, the Museo Bicknell is a permanent repository of much of his work, the universities of Genoa and Cambridge hold collections of his, and the Musée des Merveilles at Tenda celebrates his work on the rock engravings; those who want to find out about his talents can do so.

Edward died in Rome on 29th January 1931. His headstone in the Protestant Cemetery of Rome is illustrated with “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; From whence cometh my help.”

Margaret lived to a fine old age. In about 1935 Margaret sold up the Villa Monte Verde and moved back with all their furniture to Taplow, where her father had lived, and where her sister Caroline Packe lived. Margaret died there in 1957 aged 90; only many years later did her family auction off, at Christies on 20 March 1969, her ornate Italian furniture.

The complete collection of Clarence’s vellum books and other affairs, which were kept proudly by Margaret after his death, were passed on in February 1950 to Peter Bicknell, architect and fine-art-writer of Cambridge, who like Marcus was descended from Elhanan’s son Percy, Ada’s brother. Notes in Margaret’s scrapbook indicate that this inheritance was not mandated by Clarence’s will (which does not appear to exist any more) but that she felt that Peter had more interest in Clarence’s work than her siblings offspring. 30 years later in 1980, Peter Bicknell gave seven of the better vellum books with water-colours of flowers to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge to join their collection of botanical art. On the same basis, Peter’s widow Mari Bicknell passed the rest of the collection to Marcus Bicknell in about 2002.



Please contact the author at marcus@bicknell.com with any corrections or comments.