

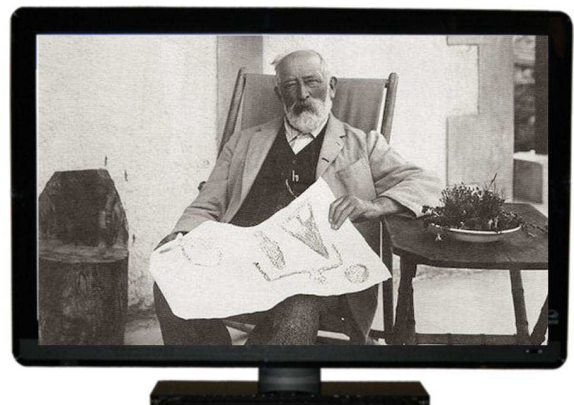
Renchi, Go

The book of the film of the making of the film...



Some five years after the idea of a film about Clarence Bicknell was first mentioned, a small team came together in Bordighera for a three day shoot, there and in the Val Fontanalba. Bordighera is the town on the Italian Riviera where Bicknell lived and worked from 1878 till his death in 1918 and where he created the Museo Bicknell which still today houses much of his work and is the backdrop to concerts, seminars and exhibitions. The Val Fontanalba, in the high mountains of the Mercantour round the Mont Bego, is accessible from the hamlet of Casterino where Bicknell spent his summers and Tende where he is buried. These mountains were in Italy in Bicknell's time but have been part of France since 1946.

Ring-master Marcus Bicknell, a great grand-nephew of Bicknell, acts as producer for the video and has commissioned the director, the script and the cast of thousands. Susie his wife is assistant producer, costumes, continuity, note-taker and eye-on-the-ball expert. The company they own, New Media Foundry Ltd has financed this



low-budget 15-minute pilot, with the objective of finding a TV company willing to produce a full scale TV documentary.

Marcus and Susie met Rémy Masseglia in 2012 with the Countess Roberta d'Alberti who had engaged him on her putative "Wild Flowers" art-classes-to-perfume-



company initiative. Rémy in the meantime has been forging a reputation for visually-exciting short videos on high mountain biking, dance, comic theatre and education. Rémy is based in Breil-sur-Roya, a village in the steep valley of the Roya river which runs from our French site to our Italian one. He knows the Val Fontanalba, the adjoining Vallée des Merveilles where Bicknell also discovered thousands of pre-historic Rock engravings, the flora and fauna of the area, the park authorities and most of the locals. Rémy is director of the film but acts also as creative director, screen play editor and camera man. The producers and others in the Clarence Bicknell Association and the institutions which hold his work in such respect are keen to see Rémy bring to Clarence the originality and liveliness that he brings to biking. Although we have the complete text for the narration and the overdub of Clarence's words, we know that visuals will be so informative that the number of words can be slashed.

Rémy's wife of three months, Gwenn is a Breton folk and folk-rock singer and flute-player with a growing interest in cinematography and history. In the team she complements Susie in the on-set management role by keeping Rémy disciplined to the tasks he's undertaking, and by staying close to his side to ensure his part in continuity, time-keeping and creative opportunities. The energy of her love for her husband and her infectious laugh keep us all in a positive frame of mind.

Marcus's cousin Renchi Bicknell plays Clarence Bicknell. Renchi is a creative, spiritual and mild-spoken soul who not only looks like Clarence but has similar instincts and, one could say obsessive, interests. Renchi painted a series of 365 pictures of the patterns of murmurations of starlings on the marshes of Glastonbury, one a day every day for a year. He also created a cycle of text and drawings of his circumnavigation of London's rural ring road, the M25. He has limited experience of acting but assimilates with Clarence so much that by taking on the role of Clarence in his mind he finds he can act the part convincingly. Six weeks earlier, he worked with Marcus on a day's filming in the Shropshire village of Stoke-

upon-Tern where Clarence was a priest in a high-Anglican-church sect the *Societas Sanctus Spiriti* before coming to Italy; the experience guides Renchi in the Clarence role and highlights how effective the portrayal is even if Renchi is not speaking to camera.

Renchi's confidence is boosted by his wife Vanessa's presence on the travels and the shoot. She in turn plays the cameo role of Alice Campbell, a mystery woman who according to local folklore was Clarence's faithful companion in the latter years of his life and who is seen fleetingly and distantly with Clarence in two period photos. Among the unsolved mysteries of Clarence Bicknell's life is the identity of the lady whom Enzo Bernardini describes in his 1977 paper. Vanessa and Susie have brought from the UK a long black skirt, a high-necked white blouse, and hat similar to those in the photos. Renchi, or should we call him Clarence, has brought at least two different costumes. His white linen jacket and baggy slacks are what Clarence wore in the heat of Bordighera, while Marcus's heavy tweed Norfolk coat, knickerbockers from a hire company in Bristol that supplies BBC TV, long woolly socks and hob-nailed boots are ready for the mountain scenes. We have a variety of props to complete each costume; the correct hat in each case, cravat or scarf with pin or toggle, green and gilt Esperanto badge, pocket watch, Clarence's treasured watch strap with green jade amulets and the metal badge of the *Societas Sanctus Spiriti* and a six foot long walking pole cut for the occasion by André Boulanger at the Mèlèzes Hotel at Casterino.



Valerie Lester, descendant of Clarence's cousin Phiz, Dickens' illustrator, is researching Clarence Bicknell for a full scale biography due in 2017, so she is sad not to make the trip from Boston for the video shoot. Her research and creative input have informed the production team about the key aspects of Clarence's life and work. Input over the last 3 years from archaeologist Christopher Chippindale, garden expert Helen Blanc-Francard and botanical researcher Graham Avery has provided a continuous stream of research to enlighten us on the background to Clarence.

Monday 27 June 2016

The four Bicknells meet up in Nice off two planes and drive the hour to the Hotel Aurora in Bordighera and then the forty minutes up to Breil-sur-Roya to meet Rémy and Gwenn. They have just arrived by train from Montpellier whence she is about to uproot her two children to come and live with Rémy in Breil. Over dinner we plot the week's filming and get to know each other. Rémy has no English. Renchi's French is rusty. The communication starts off haltingly but within half an hour the creative conversation is flowing back and forth across the table. The sulky reception by the teenage waitress, glossy red lips making a lurid grimace, does not dim our excitement. La Bonne Auberge provides home-made pasta stuffed with *cèpes* and meat, or a lamb shank in its juice. Renchi and Vanessa stick to vegetarian and gluten-free dishes at every meal but enjoy fish which is plentiful.

Rémy's approach is not based on the words of the screenplay but on the imagery that Clarence and his environment provide. We find that he is particularly focused on the flow of the final cut, how each scene transitions to the next and how the pan or zoom of the camera is connected from scene to scene. The language of his film-making is new to us but seductive and convincing. We feel we just to have to stress the key points and subjects which have to be covered and he'll paint them in video.

We collapse into the rickety but comfortable beds of the Aurora back in Bordighera and fall asleep to the plaintive solo whoops of a Scops Owl, the night-time screeching of sea gulls when disturbed, two cats having a slanging match and a few teenage revellers. The dustbin men come at 6 o'clock, as is always the case in Italy, but we sleep on till breakfast at 8. Now why do the Italians annoyingly anoint their croissants with sugar and spiced fruit? Is the plain butter croissant so loved of the French not good enough? But the bread, jams and coffee are fine.

Tuesday 28th June 2016

We have finely-planned morning. Bruna de Paoli, long time assistant curator at the Museo Bicknell and wife of a director of the Bordighera Tourist Board, has got permission for us to film in the English Church where Bicknell started off as chaplain and she has the key in her pocket. A few blocks by car. 9 o'clock. To work...



Marcus has been promoting the idea that Clarence's turning his back on the church in about 1879 when he was 37, is the key moment in his story¹. Film professionals have advised us that this makes a much more impactful pitch to commissioning editors at big TV companies than cleric-who-draws-plants-and-discovers-rock-

engravings. Rémy has latched on to this theme with vigour and has devised a way of highlighting the moment of revelation when Bicknell realizes "There is no God but Nature". He insists on those words for the title of the video, remaining in English for the French and Italian versions and applies them even to the first rushes. He spends time perfecting a shot from inside the church in which Bicknell, in clergyman's hassock, moves from the gloom and austerity of the dark church interior, and pushes open the main doors to the dazzling light of Bordighera. Only later in the day we see how this scene cuts seamlessly to Bicknell dressed in his civvies, the white jacket and baggy slacks pushing open some doors... shot from outside. Clarence merges from the dark of his church life to the brilliant light of the second half of his life.



¹ On May 14 1879, St Ampelio's Day, Clarence talked about St Ampelio, the patron saint of Bordighera, in church and wrote a prayer for him. The congregation rose up and complained about such favour for a different flavour of Christianity, which was the last straw for Clarence in his disaffection with the small-mindedness of religion. He only served as chaplain 1878-1879.



Now Rémy starts to assemble his drone, the *piece de resistance* of his camera technology and the smooth dynamic of his video style. Crouching over the carry case he attaches the four propellers to their nacelles, removes the transport safety catches, turns the drone and the remote control handset on. The drone purrs effortlessly off the ground and sits motionless in the air while Rémy finishes his instructions to Renchi. The drone is stabilized in all three axes by gimbals and GPS. The ultra-high-

definition camera, the size of an egg cup, maintains directional stability even when the drone adjust for wind and up-current changes.

The outdoor scenes here are relatively straightforward, Renchi as Clarence the vicar going about the daily work of his first year in Bordighera, arriving at the church, walking alongside the bougainvilleas and rhododendra of the town. We had not realized that the Villa Rosa, which became within a couple more years Clarence's permanent home, is just across a fence



from the church. Bruna has got permission to film outside the house which is all we need to re-create from a classic black-and-white photo, a pose of Clarence, his hand on his bicycle. Bruna's own bike has an antique look and makes a most

convincing prop.



Rémy and Renchi are working very well together and neither interpreter nor assistant director is needed. From time to time Rémy leaves the camera and walks Renchi through the motions he'd like in the scene. "I'd like to see you put the hat on here, while you are

standing between the doors you've just opened, before you walk forward again". Okay. Rémy in position. "Renchi." Pause. "Go". His phrase for action, "Renchi, Go" becomes a catch phrase and raises a smile every time he says it. "Quiet on set. Action"? No. "Renchi, Go".

Maybe we'll keep for another time, when the media are clamouring for more details about the new superstar of the international cinema world - the Cannes Film Festival 2018 for example – the origins of his name. He's christened Laurence, but at a time when he was besotted with Italy and Italian friends, he wanted to change his identity. His pals called him Lorenchi, which soon became shortened to Renchi. The name stuck and the Italian influence stays a part of his earthly soul.

By 11 we have one eye on the clock to be at the Museo Bicknell at the time its Director, Dr Daniela Gandolfi, is expecting us. She clearly appreciates the benefits this film can bring to her and the museum in terms of attracting attention and providing information to visitors so she has made copy rubbings of rock engravings, Clarence's books, parts of his other collections and the whole space available to us. We are really grateful for Daniela's unconditional support and access throughout the Museo. Bruna's colleague Elena Riscosso, Daniela's right hand Marta Garulli and Genoa University researcher Giovanni Russo are there to greet us.



Rémy gets straight to work. The drone comes out of the box... the scenes of Clarence walking in the garden between the giant ficus tree and the wisteria on the porticos of the museum are enchanting. We shoot scenes of Clarence opening the doors of the museum and coming out into the sun.

All those who know the images of Clarence find the portrayal by Renchi to be unnervingly accurate; his body language, the angle of his stoop, the fullness of his beard, the colour of his cheeks and the twinkle in his sun-soaked eyes all project, in moving images, a Clarence we have only known in stills. Only his eyes are wrong. Valerie reminds me subsequently of the obituary in the Esperanto magazine of late 1918 “Who will not recall his tall figure, with the blue eyes and silvered beard... ?” Renchi’s eyes are brown. Here’s hoping that this inaccuracy does not spoil the effect for any hard-nosed Clarence specialist.

Susie and Bruna have picked up a selection of focaccia, pizza, vegetable tart and stuffed courgette flowers. Can a picnic taste better? We dare to use the kitchen and glass house which the new English Bicknell Museum Group has adopted for their meetings. Marcus is deep in conversation with Daniela and Marta about the promotion of the film when it comes out in September and other areas of cooperation between the Clarence Bicknell Association and the Museo Bicknell. The film crew has eaten already but has left plenty of food for the late-comers.



Renchi is set up in a succession of poses inside the museum, covering as many of Bicknell's disciplines as possible. He walks past the shelves of encyclopaedias with a book of his own botanical watercolours, shot with just the books as the backdrop. He inspects the wild flowers in the herbarium press and his butterfly collection in the

drawers of their cabinet, the camera now high above on the balcony of the museum. He sits at the big table in the middle, smiling lightly as he inspects the book on the engravings he has written, from close-up this time.

By four in the afternoon, tired and satisfied, it is time to check out of Bordighera and move camp up the valleys to Casterino. Our Renault Scenic is delightfully underpowered but it

means we can relax as we potter up the sweeping corners up the side of the Roya valley, cliffs above us and river far below us. The air conditioning is a relief after the 30 degree centigrade heat of Bordighera.

We leave the main Breil-Tende-Cuneo road at St Dalmas and head up the increasingly tight zigzags past the dam at les Mesches to Casterino. We are in the high country of the prehistoric shepherds who engraved images on the open rocks of the Vallée des Merveilles and the Val Fontanalba. We are in the mountains which enchanted and fascinated Bicknell from the early 1880s all the way to the end of his life in 1918. Here he could discover and catalogue the rock engravings and collect wild flowers to his heart's content.



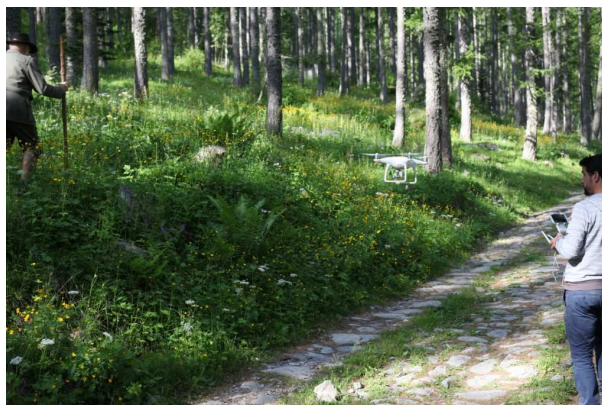
Les Mèlèzes Hotel in Casterino has Bicknell history for Susie, Marcus, Renchi and Vanessa have been coming here with various family groups since 1985. It is also located within 100 metres of the Casa Fontanalba, the colonial-style house which Clarence built in 1906 as his summer base. The Casa is closed up and uninhabited; our long and warm relationship with the owners, the d'Alberti family, is not enough for them to give us permission to record Clarence's extraordinary frescos of botanical creations, rock engravings, sayings in Esperanto and arts-and-crafts motifs. For the owners, the danger of vandalism, if the house is promoted, is a risk too great to run.

Marcus and Susie celebrate their 41st wedding anniversary over dinner. André Boulanger, whose cooking experience runs to an apprentice course with Paul Bocuse in Lyon, runs the hotel with his wife Natalie. Andre makes a yumptious meal including smoked ham with kiwi then *filet de chevreuil* stuffed with mushrooms, or trout live from the tank. The vegetarians Renchi and Vanessa take a delicious thick nettle soup with a blob of cream and *croutons*.

Wednesday 29th June 2016

I think we would have been willing to be up at 5 in the morning for the day's shooting in the mountains. The hotel prefers giving us breakfast at 8. Franck Panza, mountain guide authorized by the Parc National du Mercantour to drive guests up to the two pre-historic sites, is ready for us at 8 and we share coffee and croissants to the tune of excited catch-up chat between old friends Rémy and Franck. Marcus and Susie have been up with Franck several times so we can pick up the good relationship where we left off.

The 4x4 route leaves the Casterino tarmac immediately and winds its way up through the pine and spruce forest on a dust and rock road. Franck balances the speed of the 8-seater Land Rover, the gear changes, the bumps and hollows with the passengers' needs for some comfort. Rémy and Franck have been discussing non-stop the filming sites and have a clear plan for the day.



After only 15 minutes Rémy calls a halt where the track climbs straight and true through a truly beautiful forest of sparse spruce trees over a bed of grass, quantities of flowers and ground cover. There have been good rains in 2016 and there are more flowers in bloom than the Bicknells have ever seen. Particularly spectacular is a group of large-flowered aquilegias whose blue is as deep as that of the gentians which we had also spotted on the way.

Rémy shoots Clarence walking up the road, which is what he would have done every time he and his companion Pollini went up to the Val Fontanalba to discover and rub rock engravings. Now, were these routes surfaced like this in the late 19th century? Here there are rectangular stones laid geometrically, certainly strong enough to carry a horse-drawn carriage or car. Would Valerie know? We are just in mobile-phone coverage and we ping her a message just in case. Was the Italian army active here as early as this or only from World War I onwards? Just in case Bicknell's use of the "road" here proves to be historically-inaccurate, Rémy shoots Bicknell walking up on greenery through the forest, the drone

following the path of the road and moving alongside Bicknell as he walks purposefully upwards with a swing of his giant walking stick.



The walking stick, more like a stave, is not only seen in still images of Bicknell and Pollini in the mountains but is also noted by

Margaret Berry, Clarence's niece by marriage, in her 1906 diary . “... we rested for a while as we saw the uncle’s alpenstock a little further on as a signal that he was near.”

The marmots here are bolder than we remember in previous visits. Franck agrees; they are getting used to the walkers and tourists. We are enchanted during the day by some displays of two or three marmots frolicking around and chattering without making their piercing danger calls.



As Rémy spots the right background we stop from time to time for a shoot. Clarence walks across the near horizon of a hilly outcrop with the Mont Bego behind. with the 4x4 parked at the highest point accessible to the guides, we continue on foot. Renchi spreads himself on a rock to better get the details onto paper with the black wax he has brought for the purpose, as

Bicknell and Pollini did². The drone is at full stretch, with one notable shot running from a meter from Renchi spread-eagled to more than five hundred metres higher, the human figure decreasing to a dot and the giant flat faces of the rock, the Chiappes de Fontanalba, and the neighbouring mountains increasing to cover the screen. The drone itself is almost in the clouds which gather every afternoon round the Mont Bego, and it's invisible to the human eye. Rémy is using its position-holding software to keep it in control until it's time to come down.

In another shot, Clarence rests on a spit of gravel at the edge of the Lac Vert, resting against his staff. The drone starts a meter above the water at the other end of the lake, alongside huge clumps of red rhododendra, 200 metres away, then races towards him at low level before rushing up above him.



Groups of walkers stop to watch and cooperate in their movement with Rémy so that they do not walk into the hunter ground of a shot. Some of them realize what is being filmed and gasp open-mouthed, as they talk to us, at the likeness of Renchi to the Clarence Bicknell whose image

they have seen in the Musée des Merveilles at Tende, in books, on merchandising, on the Internet and on posters. The drone is not too intrusive for them, sounding more like a giant

² Margaret Berry's 1906 diary again: "It is a walk of one and three-quarter hours before he reaches the beginning of these rocks and then he spends all day clambering and climbing about on and lying on his face at full length for hours rubbing the design with healball² on large sheets of paper. He rubs till his nails are all worn down and his hands burned nearly black with the sun, and cracked and split by the incessant work. When he comes home he goes through all the drawings he has done and dates them, locates them as best he can. Then writes an elaborate diary with full description of his day's work illustrated with small designs of the new drawings he has found." Margaret mis-spells heel ball. The name "Heel ball" dates back to the earliest days of Brass Rubbing, in the Victorian era, when the wax that was used was often cobblers' "heel ball", a stiff wax used by shoemakers to colour the heel of new shoes.

bee than an aircraft. Rémy holds back a smile as he skillfully brings the drone back to land on a pebbly clearing. "Bravo Maurice". For Rémy and Gwenn everything has a name, including the drone.

Later in the morning, the mythical (or not) Alice Campbell makes her appearance. We are not certain to use the footage but, in case Valerie Lester or other researchers prove her role and identity, we choose to shoot the scenes. Clarence holds Alice's hand over a stream, then shows her a rock engraving. They sit together in a pose which recreates one of the period photos. Mahdi the dog could not make an appearance; we couldn't find a four-legged actor nor are dogs allowed in the Parc du Mercantour.

Packed lunches had been provided by the Boulanger family at the hotel. We relish a *baguette campagnard* with ham and cheese, crisps, a little sweet cake, an orange and water. When the filming party clambers onto the side of the Cima Bicknell for the next takes, Marcus pulls rank (director's privilege) and takes a long nap under an outcrop. Nobody remarks on the degree of confidence he must have in the team that he can relinquish control for an hour and a half.



While Marcus sleeps shots are made of Clarence studying various engravings on huge pink slabs, the



Chiappes de Fontanalba. Rémy steers clear of the Voie Sacrée, the best know site on the mountain, which is therefore crowded with three groups of walkers. What would Clarence have made of the thousands of visitors who make the climb to see the rock angravings every summer, so much so that the engravings have to be protected by zones policed by full-time mountain rangers.

We get back to the vehicle at 16h30 after a long day's filming and the hotel at 17h30. We've hardly finished a cup of tea when André Boulanger's parents, Michel and Elise, arrive from their home at Tende to see the Bicknells. Since our visits of the 1980s there exists a strong bond of affection between the Boulangers senior and the Bicknells, and grand mum Boulanger is 15 to the dozen with memories, anecdotes and new gossip about Clarence. Who minds if it's fictitious when we have done such a lot of research from original source material. "Ah oui" she says "Alice Campbell la Governante" putting the middle fingers of both hands in the air as quotation marks. Her best new one is that Clarence had expressed wishes to be buried in the garden of his beloved Casa Fontanalba. Pollini was to send his coffin down to Tende full of stones, Clarence to be buried in a grave surrounded by his favourite orangey-red Martagon Lily.



Tired as they were, Rémy and Gwen had not quit yet and went to reconnoitre the possible sets for tomorrow's shoots. As we can't use Clarence's house we need to find something similar, even if it's just to have him looking at his day's botanical and archaeological work on a terrace. The horses from the riding manège canter smoothly up the road,

untethered but in a group, with two beautiful female riders, bare-back, one leading and one bringing up the rear. The remains of the sun move up the west facing mountains opposite then leave them in dusk.

Rémy and Gwen have stayed with us for the evening and overnight. The pre-dinner treat is a preview on Rémy's laptop of the first mash of 5 scenes, 1 minute 40 seconds long. We gasp in amazement. The opening shot shows Clarence spread-eagled on the Chiappes while the drone-mounted camera zooms infinitely out into the clouds. We see Clarence walking up through the larches and pines, admiring an aquilegia, in the museum and working on a rubbing. The images are emotive and powerful.

Andre and Natalie Boulanger have been invited out, so the *sous-chef* is in the kitchen. The *magret de canard* had rather soggy ratatouille. The maitre d' was rather severe until he realised our family link, then he opened up a bit.

Thursday 30th June 2016

Rémy and Gwen are up at 6. Renchi is not to be denied and they walk up the Val Casterino in the morning light. The best shot we see later is a close-up of a marmot in the dawn sun with Clarence approaching in the far distance; an easier shot would be Clarence in the foreground and the marmot in the background, but Rémy does like to challenge himself and the viewer.

Marcus leaves the team again, for a 10h00 business meeting. He drives down to Tende to meet the Sous-Director of the Musée des Merveilles, Silvia Sandrone. He shows her 30 seconds of wild footage from Rémy's shooting, starts planning the exploitation and release date of the video, discusses possible sponsors, and chats about the possible activities in 2018, the centenary of Clarence's death. Silvia agrees that the museum should put on an exhibition about Clarence, possibly with explanatory panels in Italian, English and French. She gives him back 5 items of Clarence's which Marcus had lent them for their 2016 exhibition "*Il y a un Grand Mystère*" which closed a week ago.

Up at Casterino, Rémy and the team have located a house which has an uncanny resemblance to the Casa Fontanalba and where they have the okay to film, the Casa Barbara. Clarence is filmed painting at a little table on the terrace, colouring one of his botanical studies with water colour. Renchi had prepared the picture in advance. Then a shot of the finished painting lying alone on the table without Clarence, and a final sequence, maybe to symbolise the end of the long version of the video, from the drone of this painting then rising and rising into the sky. To frame the end-credits, Rémy shoots Clarence leafing through some pages of the Children's Book of Flowers, bound in vellum like so many of Clarence's others, on which the titles can later be superimposed. Flowers were chosen from the book which we had filmed for real the day before.

By 11h30 Rémy has finished. About half a day ahead of schedule he has everything he needs. It's a wrap. He and Gwen leave for home in their white Fiat van. Half way down to St Dalmas they meet Marcus coming up. Rémy gives Marcus the good news; it's in the can.

The four Bicknells check out of the Mèlèzes and head down to Tende. We're on the trail of Alice Campbell who is rumoured to be buried next to Clarence in the cemetery there. Clarence now has a smart headstone quite near the entrance to the cemetery, and we find neither his original tomb nor one in the name of Alice Campbell.

At the Musée des Merveilles, after lunch, Silvia Sandrone and Angela de Toma are able to congratulate Renchi and Vanessa face-to-face on their performances. We look round the permanent exhibition on the Merveilles, the rock engravings, the history of prehistoric man in the region and the excellent touch screen valley navigation display. The received wisdom today is that Merveilles Man did the engravings between 3000 and 1500 BC, not in the 6000 to 4000 BC range I had previously read. The museum boutique is better than ever, with the reference books and postcards complemented by gifts, coffee-cups, jewellery and clothing with motifs of the *Sorcier*, the *Chef du Tribu*, and other Vallée des Merveilles favourites. We buy a selection.



Looking up to the mountains we see storm clouds; there are spits of rain here. We realise how lucky we have been to have had a dry day, with long sunny spells, for the shooting in the Fontanalba the previous day.

The drive down to Bordighera is leisurely, as is our evening there. We walk up to the old town and sit outside, served by the restaurant *Magiare*. Courgette cake with sliced white summer truffle is followed by seafood *cous cous* or fresh tuna with red onion.

Friday 1st July

We have Renchi and Vanessa. We have their costumes. So we have Clarence and Alice Campbell, 2 or 3 hours available, Marcus's Canon 5D with which we shot video at Stoke-upon-Tern and the Museo Bicknell right next door. Bruna delays her bronzing on the beach and comes to open up for us. The last shots we want to take are to



show in more detail the quantity and variety of Clarence's work. How can we communicate in images that he left over 37,000 rock engraving rubbings, pressed flowers, botanical drawings and letters? We shoot Clarence showing Alice a large pile of rock engraving rubbings, to emphasise the quantity, although we probably will not use that sequence as it seems likely that she visited Clarence only up at Casterino; Clarence writing at a desk a letter



referring to one of his vellum albums of flower watercolours, open alongside at a suitable page; Clarence rotating the painted umbrella pots so that the camera can linger on the proverbs in Esperanto. Clarence with the photo of his first Congress of his Bordighera branch of the Esperanto movement.

Maria Pia Luly Jones, brilliant botanical artist, supporter of the Museo and member of the committee of the Clarence Bicknell Association drops by to see the filming and to say hello. Since winning an award at the Spoleto Art Festival in 2014 she has been painting full time and one of her flowers paintings, of the suitably-named Esperanto Tulip, a gift to the Museo, is proudly displayed.

Time to leave for Nice and the plane home. We feel fulfilled and excited. A job well done. We have recorded for posterity many items and places from Clarence's life and Rémy will

shortly be editing the footage into a 2 minute hard-hitting version to get commissioning editors and big TV companies intrigued, and a 10 minute version for museums, university researchers, the web and the public. We cannot for a moment think how the action-packed days and the filming could have gone better.



Marcus Bicknell, 2 July 2016

TV Documentary and new biography – Clarence Bicknell

Bicknell was an eminent Victorian like Charles Darwin, William Morris, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll or Dante Gabriel Rossetti... but he never came to fame in Britain. He was self-effacing; he did not frequent the learned botanical and archaeological societies of London; he sought the attention of other researchers round the world not the media; his working life was spent in the mountains of the maritime Alps on the French Italian border. So his is a life waiting to be discovered by the increasingly curious TV viewer. He is all the more attractive as a subject for a TV documentary producer because he has *never* been exposed.

“How did the 13th child of a rich trader in Victorian London become an internationally-respected botanist and archaeologist on the Italian Riviera”

This note is directed at a multi-media agent, a television production company, broadcaster and or book publisher with a view to their creating a television documentary to promote alongside the first biography of Bicknell (due for completion in 2016) on interesting aspects of the life and work of Clarence Bicknell and his place in science and art across Europe at the end of the 19th century.

- a) **TV.** The topic of Bicknell (his life, his work, his times) is available to a TV production company to take on as a creative and commercial enterprise... a TV documentary (or mini-series). The creative aspect is up to the producer; Bicknell and the history of the English on the Riviera; Bicknell and his community of scientists across Europe, the contribution of enlightened amateurs to science at the end of the 19th century etc. It is hoped that a co-production deal could ensure the primetime broadcast of the show(s) in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the USA on the model of co-productions between ARTE, BBC, Channel 4, TF1, A2, RAI, ZDF, ARD, PBS etc. A suitable presenter for the English version could be one of those who have already worked on cultural subjects brought to a popular level including Michael Portillo, Richard E Grant, Alexander Armstrong, Simon Sharma, Lucy Worsley, Melvyn Bragg etc. Or, the show could be shot without a head-and-shoulders presenter so that French, Italian and German versions could be dubbed easily.
- b) **Book.** A biography of Clarence Bicknell, due in 2017, is at the research and writing stage by Valerie Browne Lester³, specialist researcher and writer based in Boston. She is also a descendant of Phiz, Charles Dickens’ illustrator, who was Clarence Bicknell’s uncle. A suitable company with a track record in multi-media exploitation (i.e. TV and print in this case) could take on both the TV documentary and the book to be able to promote them together across several major markets.

³ Valerie Browne Lester is the author of *Fasten Your Seat Belts! History and Heroism in the Pan Am Cabin* (1995), *Phiz, The Man Who Drew Dickens* (Chatto&Windus 2004), a biography of Hablot Knight Browne, Dickens’s principal illustrator, and her biography of the great Italian printer *Giambattista Bodoni: His Life and His World* (David Godine, 2015).

End credits of the video

Clarence Bicknell 1842-1918
“There is no God but Nature”

A film by Rémy Masseglia, Lez'Art Creation, France

Directed by: Rémy Masseglia
Assistant Director and Sound: Gwenn
Produced by: Marcus Bicknell

Renchi Bicknell played Clarence Bicknell
Alice Campbell played by Vanessa Bicknell

With the assistance of
Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri – Museo Biblioteca Bicknell, Bordighera, Italy
Musée des Merveilles - Conseil General des Alpes Maritimes, Tende, France
Susie Bicknell, Vanessa Bicknell
Valerie Lester, Helen Blanc-Francard, Graham Avery

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