



Committee members as at 1 August 2020

Marcus Bicknell

Committee Member, Chairman

Marcus Bicknell is a marketer in high tech products. He managed Genesis and worked for CBS and A&M Records in the 70s, then with Luxembourg based satellite SES Astra 1986-1990. MD Europe for TV channels BBC World and BBC Prime, and President of CMGI Europe (AltaVista, Geocities, Lycos &c.). Founder partner of RainwaterHarvesting.co.uk in 2006. He was for twelve years a Member of the Board of the world's biggest TV satellite operator SES Astra in Luxembourg, is a patron of RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) in London, and an investor and board director in other smaller companies. Born in the USA in 1948, a British national, M.A. in Physical Anthropology from Cambridge University, motor-racer, horse-rider, ex-private pilot, has lived in 7 countries, speaks English, German and French and lives with his family in the Chiltern Hills west of London.

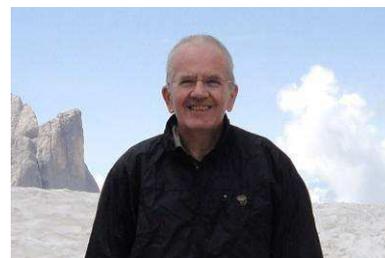


Clarence Bicknell's father Elhanan Bicknell is Marcus's great great grandfather. Marcus has studied Clarence's work since the 1970s and has led study trips to Casterino, Tende and Bordighera on several occasions, notably 1988 and 1998. He is the curator of the Bicknell family's collection of Clarence's works, he created the web site www.ClarenceBicknell.com and founded the Clarence Bicknell Association which he chairs. He worked from 2013 on the 2019 celebrations of the centenary of Clarence's death and produced in 2016 the 18-minute documentary *The Marvels of Clarence Bicknell*. He produced the art reproduction of Clarence's Casa Fontanalba Visitors' Book to make it available for purchase by the public, and participated in the research, image sourcing and production of *MARVELS: The Life of Clarence Bicknell, Botanist, Archaeologist, Artist*, the biography of Clarence by Valerie Lester published in 2018. During Covid-19 lockdown he wrote a historical novel *Sculpted Love* which was published on 1st August 2020.

Graham Avery

Committee Member, Vice-Chairman

Graham Avery CMG FLS is a Visiting Fellow at the European University Institute, Florence, Honorary Director-General of the European Commission, Brussels, and Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. He has been a Senior Member of St. Antony's College, Oxford University, Secretary General of the Trans European Policy Studies Association, Fellow at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, and Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute, Florence.



Graham's interest in Clarence arises from his interest in botany, in particular the flowers and plants of the Alps. His research into Reginald Farrer (1880–1920), traveller and plant collector brought him to Clarence's Casa Fontanalba visitor's book, published by Marcus Bicknell online, and the realisation that Farrer and Bicknell had met there. He has developed a knowledge of some of the other parts of the Alps where Clarence studied the flora and has provided original research, from other part of Italy, France and the UK, much of which is published in his own name, for example on the web-site www.clarencebicknell.com, and which also underpins much of the new material in Valerie Lester's 2018 book *Marvels – The Life of Clarence Bicknell*. He speaks English, French and Italian.

His publications include:

- '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
- Several papers on Clarence and related subjects at www.clarencebicknell.com/downloads.

Susie Bicknell, born 1949, has been a researcher and writer for the BBC, Midem/MipCom, Time Life Books, SES ASTRA, Rainwater Harvesting Ltd and other organisations in a 45 year career. She runs the Hodgemoor Riding Association with over 200 members and has raised about £80,000 in 10 years for the creation and maintenance of horse trails to encourage riders off the roads. She is a horse-rider herself, competing in dressage on a Welsh Section D (Mikey) and in horse agility in hand with an Andalusian (Mango). She is an amateur artist specialising in sketches and water-colours of horses and dogs; she has recently taken to printing the same subjects but from wood- and lino- cuts. She speaks English and French with notions of German, Italian and Spanish.

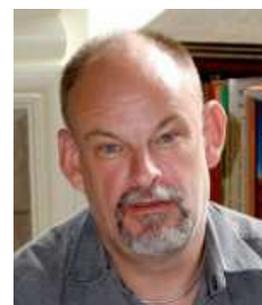


She has studied Clarence Bicknell alongside her husband Marcus since the 70s and has contributed significantly to the Clarence Bicknell web site and the Association. She handled several functions for the production team of the 2016 documentary *The Marvels of Clarence Bicknell* with continuity, research, screenplay and costumes. She curated the exhibitions “*Clarence Bicknell’s Passion for Flowers Revealed in his Art*” in Bordighera in 2017 and “*Merveilles de Clarence*” in the Musée des Merveilles in Tende in 2018. She is currently working towards the 2024 bicentenary of Clarence’s friend George MacDonald. Her papers on Clarence are published at Several papers on Clarence and related subjects at www.clarencebicknell.com/downloads.

Christopher Chippindale

Committee Member

Christopher Ralph Chippindale, BA Hons MA PhD MIFA FSA (born 1951) is a British archaeologist, researcher and writer. He was educated at Sedbergh School and at St John's College, Cambridge, graduating Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons). He then studied for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at Girton College, Cambridge.



He worked at Penguin Books and Hutchinson Publishing Group 1974-82, and edited *Antiquity* magazine 1987-97. Chippindale was a Research Fellow in Archaeology at Girton College, Cambridge from 1985 to 1988 and Bye-Fellow from 1988 to 1991. In 1987, he was appointed Assistant Curator of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. He was promoted to Senior Assistant Curator in 1993. From 2001 to 2013, he was Reader in archaeology at the University of Cambridge. Chippindale was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA) in 1991. One of his research interests is rock art, the ancient images placed on or cut into natural surfaces, especially in Alpine Europe and north Australia. Other research interests include the contemporary commercial market in antiquities, quantitative approaches to artefacts and collections, the modern history and meaning of Stonehenge and the relationship between what actually happened in the past and what is remembered as ‘heritage’ today.

Chippindale has taken a close interest since the 1970s in Clarence Bicknell, the man, and his archaeological works. He has published several learned papers on the rock engravings of the Vallée des Merveilles on the border of Italy and France in the Southern Alps and wrote the definitive mini-biography of Clarence “*A High Way to Heaven*” (Conseil Général des Alpes Maritimes, 1998) which was also issued in French and Italian. More recently he has worked on the rock engravings at Val Camonica in Lombardy, Italy; here a Copper Age tribe may have enjoyed a primitive cinematic experience by making stone engravings in an echo-filled Alpine valley. Torchlight and flickering shadows would have made the engravings on stone walls seem to come alive at night. And spoken words that became magnified in a natural outdoor theatre could have awakened the storytelling imaginations of observers. With this in mind, Chippindale and others have used 21st century technology to animate the images into movies... prehistoric man walking, running and hunting.

His publications include:

Stonehenge Complete (first published 1983)

Who Owns Stonehenge? (1990)

The Archaeology of Rock Art (1998)

A High Way to Heaven (Clarence Bicknell and the Vallée des Merveilles) (1998) also published in French and Italian language versions

Vanessa Bicknell

Committee Member, Treasurer

Vanessa was born in 1949 and went to Winchester County High School for girls. On leaving school she emigrated to Canada with her first husband and returned ten years later with two children. She went to live at Thedden Grange where she met Renchi whom she married in 1988. She co-founded with him in 1982 the Little Green Dragon Book and Art Shop in Alton, Hampshire, which subsequently ran for sixteen years. They moved to Glastonbury in 2001 and bought the Flying Dragon Bed and Breakfast. Vanessa was also a massage therapist, and spiritual and small business life coach. She presently runs the Flying Dragon's Nest self catering apartment and has seven grandchildren. She found out about Clarence on their first Bordighera trip in 1988 and has been fascinated with the journey of discovery. She participated in *The Marvels of Clarence Bicknell* film in which she plays Alice Campbell.



Titus Bicknell

Committee Member

Titus Bicknell (born 1971) is co-founder of pink ink and TheGalleryChannel.com and co-principal of Museums and the Web LLC. He is an expert in new media, the small screen and cultural exhibitions. Apart from a fascinating stint at NBC Universal working on the big screen, Titus has spent the last 20 years exploring the small screen both web and hand held.

As Chief Engineer at Antenna Audio Ltd in London, he oversaw ground breaking hand held projects at Tate Modern, the Louvre, Pompidou, the Intel Museum, and the Getty, among others. As Director of Business & Production systems at Hendricks Investment Holdings LLC in Washington DC, he developed documentary and publicity production workflows, live sports event in-stadium broadcasting and digital asset optimization for mobile app development, and oversaw the Property Management, IS and online systems.

As Chief Engineer at MyDiscovery, also in DC, Titus oversaw the inception of a community life-long learning platform that now forms part of Learnist through a major joint venture between Discovery Communications and Rocket. As VP Digital Platforms & Chief Engineer at Discovery Communications, Titus oversaw systems architecture and engineering, software architecture and back end development for Discovery's web and mobile portfolio, implementing a portfolio-wide migration to a cloud-based delivery platform and CMS supporting RESTful JSON API delivery to fixed, portable, mobile web and native app experiences. As Lead Architect, Digital Innovation at Discovery, Titus explored the key digital opportunities and technical requirements for the growing non-linear content and user experience.

Titus has been Chief Digital Officer at RLJ Entertainment since the beginning of 2014, based in Silver Spring, MD., a premier independent owner, developer, licensee and distributor of entertainment content and programming in primarily North America, the United Kingdom and Australia with over 5,300 titles. RLJE manages the intellectual property and publishing rights to some of the greatest works of mystery fiction, including stories of the iconic sleuths Miss Marple and Poirot. RLJE produces the hit UK mystery series Foyle's War.

At various times Titus has been a film maker, Latin scholar, avid cyclist and advocate for the WordPress open source platform. He attended Winchester College in the UK, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he took a BA in English & Creative Writing in 1993 (Morehead scholar, Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma Kappa Alpha National Italian Honor Society). He received a Fulbright scholarship to study Latin at the Gregorian University in Rome and a British Academy grant to pursue a DPhil in 19th century Latin poetry at the University of York 1995-1999. He lives in Silver Spring near Washington DC with his wife Nancy Proctor and three children.



Renchi Bicknell

Committee Member

Renchi was born Laurence Bicknell in 1946, son to Peter, architect, and Mari, ballet teacher, both passionate about the arts. He joined seven families in the 1970s to found a rural community at Thedden Grange and later with Vanessa founded the Little Green Dragon Book and Art Shop (1982-1998). In 2001 Renchi and Vanessa moved west to Glastonbury, where Renchi, alongside their B&B and self-catering enterprise, found himself freer to develop other creative and spiritual projects. These included the M25 project walk and illustrations for Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital*; Michael and Mary *Dreaming Walk* and series of paintings; *A Pilgrim's Progress*, a walk and series of etchings; and more recently *Starling Day*, over 100 starling paintings gathered over six years of filming and painting the starling murmurations on the Somerset Levels at dawn and dusk.



Renchi played the role of Clarence in the film *The Marvels of Clarence Bicknell*; the photo above right is a still from the film. He has always felt Clarence to be a kindred spirit and shares his love of nature and oneness.

Helen Blanc-Francard

Committee Member

Helen Blanc-Francard is an expert in managing the landscapes of prestigious country estates and historically important properties. She specialises in conserving heritage sites and has a life-long experience in practical horticulture, ecology and botany.

Of English nationality, her home for the last 30 years has been in France with her French husband and their three sons. From her base close to Paris, in the horse racing town of Chantilly, she creates gardens and develops landscapes for private clients and international organizations around the world. As a plant connoisseur, Helen's particular interest in Clarence centres on his plant hunting activities and his contribution to our global knowledge of plant taxonomy.



Visiting the Museo Bicknell in Bordighera in 2014 to study his archives and herbarium specimens (dried flowers), she was inspired to travel to the Vallée de Fontanalba high in the Maritime Alps where, for over 36 years, Clarence recorded its flora. The sight of the wide, glacier-smoothed valley with its chain of ink-blue lakes and boulder-strewn pastures that sweep upwards to the rocky flanks and snow covered peak of Mount Bègo, led her to comment:

“With the elemental beauty of the valley's topography; its crystalline air; the abundance and diversity of its alpine vegetation and the mineral presence of the alps forming a dramatic backdrop to the scene, it is easy to understand why the spirited and generous-hearted Clarence found personal fulfilment here. In this pristine and perfectly preserved environment he knew that a lifetime of observation and study lay before him: identifying its indigenous plant life and recording the mysterious bronze-age etchings on the flat-faced rocks that were scattered across the landscape. It was knowledge he ardently wished to share with the rest of the world”.

Helen provides the Association with stimulating and insightful research on a wide range of subjects. She assists with the promotion of Clarence's botanical work and reputation and support the other members by developing contacts and networks both in France and internationally. She has participated in the research for Valerie Lester's biography of Clarence, specialising in sourcing period images.

Alison Jean Lester is the daughter of Clarence Bicknell's biographer, Valerie Browne Lester. She is descended from Dickens' illustrator Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz), whose mother, Kate, was the sister Clarence's mother, Lucinda.

She is a novelist, and writes about herself on her website www.alisonjeanlester.com: 'I was born in Los Angeles in 1966 to a British mother and an American father. They met on an airplane in 1963 when she was a Pan Am stewardess and he was coming back from participating in the first American expedition to Mount Everest.

'I don't remember L.A. By the time I was eight I had also lived in St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands, and in London. I lived in coastal Massachusetts until college at Indiana University, where I earned a B.A. in Mandarin and French, having spent my junior year (1985-86) in Beijing. After getting an M.A. in Chinese Studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), I worked for the U.S. Commerce Department for a year, wondering about joining the Foreign Service. I got married and moved to Japan in 1991 instead.

'It was there that I started really concentrating on writing. While earning money at various jobs (editor, voice-over talent), I submitted freelance articles on business, culture and history to magazines and newspapers; I scribbled poetry; I wrote three novels. Lots of my articles were published, as was one poem. Please forget I told you about the novels. My daughter Kiri was born in 1995 and my son Linus in 1997. 'After eight years and two babies in Japan, I moved to Singapore. During my seventeen years there I got divorced, developed a successful coaching and training business, adopted a schnauzer, met the love of my life and remarried, and began writing for a living. In June 2016 I moved to England.'



Valerie Browne LesterIn Memoriam 1939-2019

10th June 2019

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Valerie Lester. Despite the quiet progression of metastasising melanoma since 2012 and the threat of imminent demise since 2017, Valerie continued to be largely symptom-free, and spent 2018 living life to the fullest - writing, travelling, laughing and loving. She succumbed peacefully in hospice care near her home in Hingham, Massachusetts, on Friday 7th June 2019 with her children Toby and Alison at her bedside.

Valerie's bio on the Clarence Bicknell Association website www.clarencebicknell.com read as follows:

Valerie Browne Lester, born 1939, an independent scholar, writer, and translator living in the Boston area, is descended from Clarence Bicknell's grand-mother and is therefore another family member on the team. She is the author of *Fasten Your Seat Belts! History and Heroism in the Pan Am Cabin* (1995), which is a history of Pan American told in the voices of its cabin crew; and *Phiz, The Man Who Drew Dickens* (London, 2004 - ISBN 0-7011-7742-X and ISBN 1-84413-534-9 (2006 edition), a biography of Hablot Knight Browne, Dickens's principal illustrator (who was also her great-great-grandfather). Her biography of the great Italian printer Giambattista Bodoni (1710-1813) *Giambattista Bodoni: His Life and His World* was published by David Godine in September 2014.

In addition to her books and her translation of Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (*The Magnificent Meaulnes*, 2009), she has written poetry, plays, and articles, including "A Bird's Eye View of Nepal," for *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Valerie spent her early childhood in the West Indies, and then went to boarding school in England and Switzerland. She became a flight attendant for Pan Am in 1962, and flew for two years before marrying a passenger, Jim Lester. A psychologist, musician, and member of the first American Mount Everest Expedition, Jim subsequently became a writer and published *Too Marvelous for Words: The Life and Genius of Art Tatum* (1994). Together they raised two children, the writers [Toby Lester](#) and [Alison Jean Lester](#). During Toby and Alison's childhood, Valerie worked and studied part time at Harvard. She completed her B.A. at George Washington University and her M.A. at Georgetown. Valerie taught English and Western Civilization at George



Washington University for 10 years, and then worked as a writing tutor and workshop leader at the U.S. Naval Academy for seven years. From 2014 to early 2018 she was devoted to researching and writing *MARVELS: The Life of Clarence Bicknell, Botanist, Archaeologist, Artist*, published by Matador in June 2018.



But the facts of her life hardly do justice to a lady of fine intellect, a passion for facts, warm interest in people around her and dedication to making every moment of her life productive and enjoyable.

We in the Clarence Bicknell centenary project experienced all this and more. Valerie first reached out for the Bicknell family in 2000 when researching her biography of Phiz; his aunt Lucinda was Marcus Bicknell's great aunt grandmother and the mother of Clarence Bicknell, so the family link made for an immediate and warm contact. Marcus introduced Valerie to the scions of the Bicknell family and the seeds of the work on Clarence Bicknell were sown then. Valerie was a founder committee member of the Clarence Bicknell Association from 2013 and participated in all aspects of the five year research and publication programme leading up to the 2018 centenary of Clarence's death.

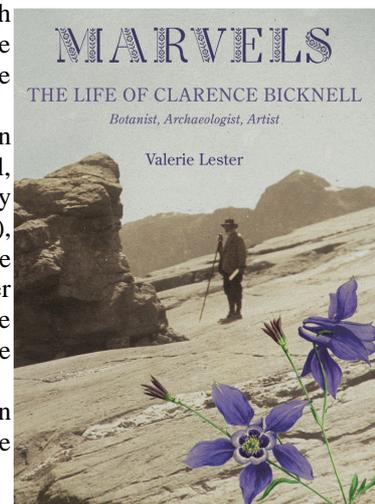
By the time her *Giambattista Bodini: His Life and World* was published in 2015, Valerie was already engaged in the five-year research into Clarence Bicknell. With the support of Graham Avery, Christopher Chippindale, Helen Blanc-Francard, Susie Bicknell, Marcus Bicknell and the

staff of the Museo Bicknell in Bordighera, Valerie made the most intensive study of the available archives; diaries, botanical water-colours, travel sketches, archaeological field studies, and correspondence.

Valerie read over a thousand letters, many to other botanists and many previously unseen, such that she got under the skin of the man and was able to write the biography with Clarence's voice. The scholars, librarians, clerics and experts that Valerie tapped and touched during this work are listed with joy in the acknowledgements of the book.

By a master-stroke of planning and Valerie's determination in completing such a daunting task, *MARVELS: The Life of Clarence Bicknell, Botanist, Archaeologist, Artist* was published in June of 2018, the centenary year. Events were held in Bordighera and Parma (Italy), Tende (France), Cambridge (England) and Hingham (USA) to launch the book and celebrate Clarence's talent and output. In the last two years of this work, she and her closest family and friends knew she was under the threat of the cancer, but she delivered herself to her work and her life with extraordinary gusto, never once complaining or slacking.

We mourn the passing of a good friend, a bright intellect, a person full of life and a warm human being. She enriched the lives of everyone she touched and she leaves a rich legacy.



Marcus Bicknell, 10 June 2019

Later in 2019 we were delighted to announce that Alison Lester, Valerie's daughter had joined the committee of the Clarence Bicknell Association and we welcome the continued involvement of the Lester-Browne family, such a vital part of Clarence's family succession.

Maria Pia Luly-Jones and Geoff Bicknell stepped down from the committee of the Clarence Bicknell Association in 2018. Valerie Lester died in June 2019; we thank them for their support since the creation of the Association.

This list of mini-biographies is kept updated at
www.clarencebicknell.com/images/downloads_association/officer_bios.pdf