

Augusto Béguinot on Clarence Bicknell

Note by Graham Avery

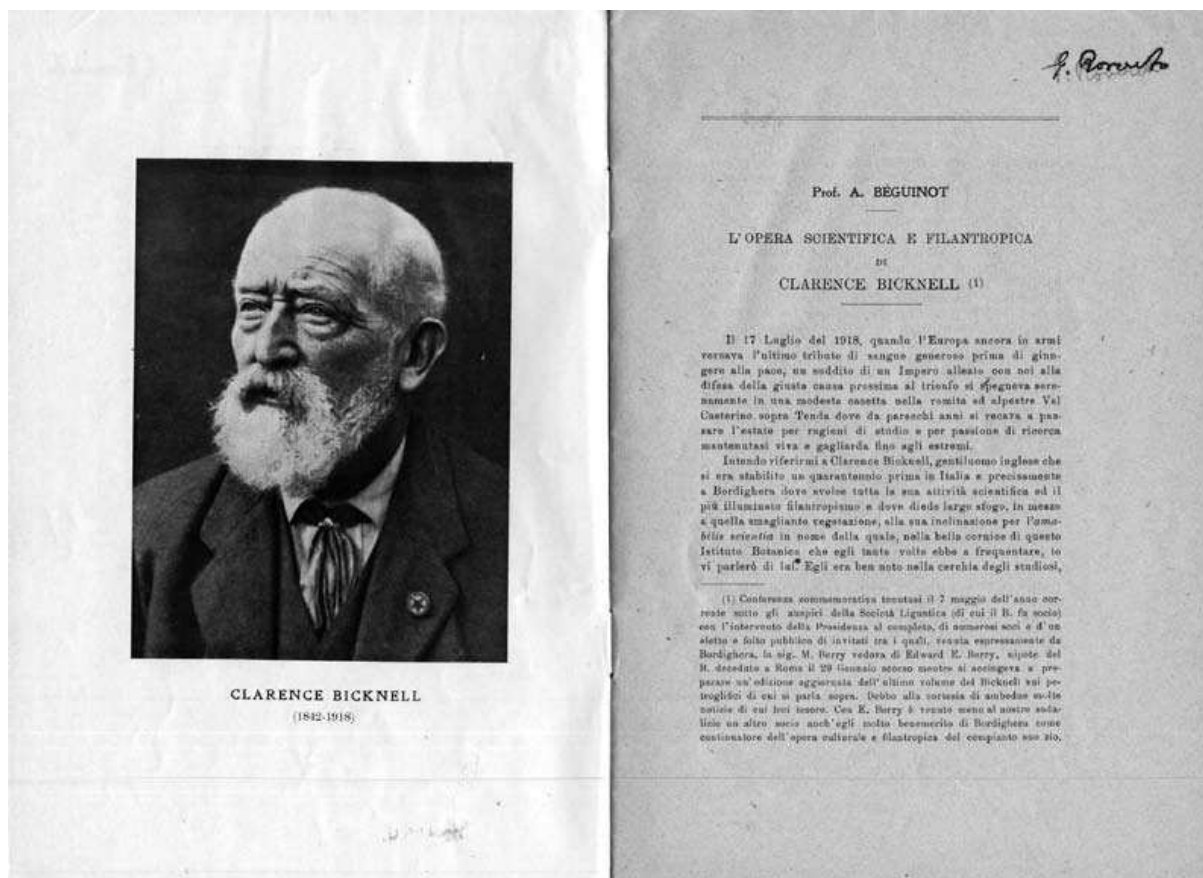
The article *L'opera scientifica e filantropica di Clarence Bicknell* ('The scientific and philanthropic work of Clarence Bicknell'), the text of a lecture given by Augusto Béguinot at the Istituto Botanico in Genova in May 1931¹, is the earliest substantial account of the life and work of Clarence Bicknell (1842-1918).

Bicknell died on 17 July 1918 in Val Castérino, and was buried in the cemetery of Tende (then in Italy, now in France). His death was reported briefly in scholarly journals in Italy², in the *Journal of Botany of London*³, and in an Esperanto periodical⁴.

Thirteen years later Béguinot's longer article appeared. It describes in 23 pages:

- Clarence Bicknell's life in England (1 page)
- his work in Italy as a botanist (7 pages)
- his work as an archaeologist (12 pages)
- his contribution to culture and philanthropy in Bordighera (3 pages)

Here is the first page of the article:



Professor Augusto Béguinot (1875 - 1940) was Director of the Istituto Botanico at Genova. After graduating in Roma, Béguinot taught at Padova, Sassari, Messina, Modena and Genova. He published many works on botany and was co-founder in 1904 of *Flora Italica Exsiccata*, a network for exchange of dried herbarium specimens, research and publication. He had met Clarence Bicknell in 1912, and corresponded with him on botanical matters. Specimens collected by Bicknell labelled 'Flora Italica Exsiccata' are in the herbaria at Oxford and Kew.

Among those present at the lecture was Margaret Berry, whose husband Edward Berry, Clarence's nephew, had died in Rome in January 1931, a few months earlier. In his lecture Béguinot paid tribute to Edward Berry, with whom he had corresponded in December 1930. Presumably he obtained information on Clarence from the Berrys, who had known him well.

In his lecture Béguinot said that Bicknell had left his *Erbarion Europeo* ('European Herbarium') to the Botanical Institute at Genova, and a complete series of his rubbings of rock engravings to the Geological Institute at Genova. He also mentioned that, in addition to his books on the local flora, Bicknell had made a collection of his drawings and paintings; entitled *The Weeds of Monte Verde* and *Wild Plants growing in the rock-garden of Casa Fontanalba*, and that he had recently seen these volumes, containing about 3,000 drawings and paintings; in Mrs Berry's house in Bordighera. He expressed the hope that they would be entrusted to the care of his Institute, and in the following year he reported that Mrs Berry had done this⁵

¹ *L'opera scientifica e filantropica di Clarence Bicknell* was the title of a commemorative lecture given by Béguinot on 7 May 1931 to the Società Ligustica di Scienze e Lettere in the Istituto Botanico, Genova. The text of the lecture, illustrated by a photo of Bicknell, was published in the Society's journal (*Atti della Società Ligustica di Scienze e Lettere*, n. ser., vol. X, 1931, pp. 223-245). It was also issued separately as an extract from the journal (Augusto Béguinot, *L'opera scientifica e filantropica di Clarence Bicknell*, Ed. Pavia, Fusi, 1931)

² L. Pigorini, *Necrologio* in *Bollettino di paleontologia italiana*, Parma, 1918 p.140, P. Barocelli Clarence Bicknell in *Bollettino della Società Piemontese d'Archeologia e Belle Arti*, Torino, 1918, pp 65-9, A. Issel, *In memoria di C. Bicknell* in *Atti della Società ligustica di Scienze Naturali e Geografiche*, Genova, 1919, pp 111-4. These references are taken from *Clarence Bicknell: La Vita e le Opere, Atti del Convegno di Studi, Bordighera 1998*, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, Bordighera, 2003, p. 353

³ *Journal of Botany (British and Foreign) of London*, Vol LVI 1918, p. 303,: see image at http://www.clarencebicknell.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=145&lang=en

⁴ *Esperanto*, 1918, 9/10, p.111,: see translation at http://www.clarencebicknell.com/images/downloads_news/Obituary%20Clarence%20Bicknell%20Esperantist%201918.pdf

⁵ *Rendiconti delle Sedute e Brevi Comunicazioni*, Giornale botanico italiano, Firenze, 1932, page 686