

= Leslie Grinsell =

Leslie Valentine Grinsell (14 February 1907 ? 28 February 1995) was an English archaeologist . He became noted within the discipline for his studies of the prehistoric barrows found across southern England , and published widely on archaeological subjects during his lifetime .

Born in London and raised largely in Brighton , Grinsell developed an early interest in archaeology through visits to Brighton Museum . Later working as a bank clerk in London , he embarked on archaeological research in an amateur capacity , visiting prehistoric barrows during his weekends and holidays in order to record their shape , dimensions , and location . On the basis of his research , he published a range of academic articles and books on the subject of barrows during the 1930s , gaining recognition as Britain 's foremost expert on the subject . In 1933 , he carried out his only archaeological excavation , at the Devil 's Humps in Sussex .

During the Second World War he joined the Royal Air Force and served in Egypt , where he acquainted himself with the archaeological remains of Ancient Egyptian society ; after the war he published a book on the Egyptian pyramids . On his return to Britain , Grinsell became the treasurer of the Prehistoric Society , a position that he held from 1947 till 1970 . Moving to Devizes , in 1949 he entered the archaeological profession as an assistant to Christopher Hawkes and Stuart Piggott at the Victoria County History project . From 1952 to 1972 , Grinsell worked as Keeper of Anthropology and Archaeology at Bristol City Museum , during which time he continued his examination of barrows , focusing on those in south @-@ west England . On retirement , he was appointed to the Order of the British Empire and a festschrift was published in his honour .

Over the course of his lifetime , Grinsell examined and catalogued around 10 @,@ 000 barrows and advanced the archaeological understanding of such monuments . His use of non @-@ excavatory fieldwork influenced much British archaeology in the latter part of his 20th century , while his willingness to pay attention to other sources of information , such as folklore and place @-@ names , has been deemed to be ahead of his time .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early Life : 1907 ? 45 = = =

Grinsell was born in London on 14 February 1907 . With his family , he moved to Brighton shortly after the First World War . There , his interest in archaeology was encouraged by H. S. Toms , the curator of Brighton Museum who had formerly been an assistant to the archaeologist Augustus Pitt Rivers . Moving back to London , in 1925 Grinsell became a clerk for Barclays Bank . Although he had developed his interest in prehistory through an examination of stone tools , he came to focus his attention on barrows , recognising that these were among the least well understood prehistoric monuments in the British landscape and one of the few that could be studied from the position of an amateur . At the time , a number of antiquarians were still active in southern England , with Grinsell being encouraged in his interests by prominent figures in this milieu such as Eliot Curwen and Hadrian Allcroft .

Grinsell 's techniques of conducting archaeological fieldwork were entirely self @-@ taught , and from the start of his investigations he was very interested in understanding both the distribution and the chronology of the barrows . During the 1930s , Grinsell personally visited and catalogued all of the extant barrows in the counties of Surrey , Sussex , Berkshire , Hampshire , and the Isle of Wight , establishing himself as the " pre @-@ eminent " figure in the study of British barrows . The archaeologist Nicholas Thomas later noted that despite Grinsell 's status as an amateur , by 1932 he had established himself as being " without parallel " in British archaeology , with his accomplishments surpassing even the work of professionals like O. G. S. Crawford . Never having learned to drive , Grinsell conducted all his visits through the use of buses , trains , and on foot .

In 1932 Grinsell attended the First International Prehistoric Congress , held in London ; it was here that he was introduced to Crawford , with the two becoming close acquaintances , both sharing an

interest in the use of maps as part of their archaeological fieldwork . It was also here that he met the Dutch archaeologist Albert Egges van Giffen ; they discussed whether the bell barrows of Sussex were related to the palisade barrows of the Netherlands which van Giffen had been investigating . Seeking an answer to this question , Grinsell conducted his only excavation , an examination of one of several bell barrows ? collectively known as the known as the Devil 's Humps ? atop Bow Hill in Sussex . Conducted in April 1933 with the help of two members of the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society , publication of the results was delayed until 1942 . In 1936 he published The Ancient Burial Mounds of England , and then followed this with The Bronze Age Round Barrows of Wessex in 1941 .

Around 1937 he met the painter and amateur archaeologist Heywood Sumner while conducting an exploration of the barrows of Hampshire , with his own hand @-@ drawn plans of barrows becoming influenced by Sumner 's illustrative style . With the archaeologist R. F. Jessup he began conducting a survey of the barrows in Kent , although their notes for this were later destroyed in an air raid during the Second World War before they could be published . With the archaeologist R. Rainbird Clarke he then conducted a survey of the barrows of Norfolk ; their findings were stored in an archive although never published .

After the outbreak of the Second World War , Grinsell became a Pilot Officer in the Air Photographic Branch of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1941 . During he conflict , he was stationed in Egypt , where he spent time studying the archaeological remains of Ancient Egypt and visiting al of the pyramids near to Cairo . Based on these experiences , at his own expense he published Egyptian Pyramids in 1947 . Designed as a guide to the sites , it was (as Grinsell acknowledged) heavily reliant on the earlier plans of Egyptologists but with additional aerial photographs that Grinsell had obtained through his involvement with the RAF . The book was largely ignored by Britain 's Egyptological establishment .

= = = Life as a Professional Archaeologist : 1945 ? 95 = = =

On returning to Britain , Grinsell went back to his job at Barclays Bank . In 1947 he became the treasurer of the Prehistoric Society , a position that he retained until 1970 , during which he helped to secure the organisation 's post @-@ war reconstruction . In 1949 the archaeologist Christopher Hawkes invited Grinsell to join him and Stuart Piggott as a project assistant at Victoria County History in order to compile the Victoria County History of Wiltshire . Grinsell accepted , leaving his bank job and moving to the Wiltshire town of Devizes , thus becoming a professional archaeologist . Thomas later stated that the Victoria County History of Wiltshire " represents the high point in [Grinsell 's] combined powers of fieldwork , grasp of secondary sources and handling of a great deal of detailed information . " Grinsell later published the book The Archaeology of Wessex , which was based on his experience during this period .

Leaving Devizes , in 1952 Grinsell became Keeper of Anthropology and Archaeology at Bristol City Museum , remaining there until his retirement in 1972 . He also published a number of academic articles and book reviews . During his holidays he often visited the Mediterranean , where he examined various prehistoric tombs . He also continued pursuing his interest in barrows , and by the 1970s had also catalogued those examples in Dorset , Gloucestershire , Somerset , and Devon .

Bristol University awarded him an honorary degree on the basis of his work , while he was appointed to the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1972 . That same year a festschrift was issued in his honour , edited by Nichols Fowler . In 1989 , Grinsell published an autobiography ; reviewing it for the Folklore journal , the historian Hilda Ellis Davidson praised it but noted that it does not " tell us very much about the inner life of the author " . According to the archaeologist Paul Ashbee , Grinsell 's " directness , whimsical humour and sound common sense were legendary , as were his walking , youth @-@ hostelling and penchant for traditional afternoon teas of the cream variety . " A bachelor , he never married .

= = Legacy = =

Over the course of his career , Grinsell had examined and recorded around 10 000 barrows . Thomas stated that Grinsell 's " astonishing volume of published fieldwork ... assured for him a place without equal in the history of British archaeological studies " . This recording was particularly valuable for archaeologists because it occurred before large numbers of British barrows were heavily damaged as a result of deep ploughing and land development . It also demonstrated the spread of barrows within particular regions and confirmed the older assumption that these barrows were heavily concentrated on areas of chalk geology . Many of the barrows that Grinsell discovered ? such as Lambourn long barrow in Berkshire ? were previously unrecorded , while he was also responsible for the discovery of rock art on the face of an Early Bronze Age grave slab at Pool Farm in West Harptree , Somerset .

According to Thomas , Grinsell 's career illustrated the validity of amateur archaeologists , the importance of publishing one 's research , and the significance of archaeological fieldwork other than excavation . The archaeologist Paul Ashbee expressed the view that " to a great extent [he] determined the direction of field archaeology in the second half " of the 20th century .

Interested in using sources other than archaeology , Grinsell made use of documents , place names , folklore , and the accounts of antiquarians as part of his research . According to later archaeologists Amy Gazin Schwartz and Cornelius Holtfdorf , Grinsell was one of the few archaeologists of his generation who was interested in the relationship between folklore and archaeology , comparing him in this way to continental European scholars Paul Saintyves , Horst Ohlhaber , and Karel C. Peeters .