



Transcript

Letter from an official at the Department of British Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum to the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, 8th June 1939

Department of British and Medieval Antiquities.
8th June 1939.

My dear Reynolds,

I write now to confirm what I was able to tell you yesterday and this morning, about the evidently Viking ship-burial discovered in excavations for Ipswich Museum in a large barrow near the shore of the Deben estuary at Sutton, near Woodbridge, Suffolk. The excavator is a Mr. Basil Brown, and a good deal of the work seems to have been done while the Ipswich Curator, Guy Maynard, was away on holiday;

...

He states that the ship is evidently a large sea-going vessel, and about 30 feet of her length, beginning at the bow end, has now been exposed, the beam so reaching 16 or 17 feet and still increasing. Phillips estimates the total length as 100 feet. The barrow is formed of sand, and the excavator has proceeded by clearing the inside of the ship as he goes, leaving the sand behind and above each side. The wood of the ribs and (it is thought) the keel, with some planking, and all the bolts, are still in position, but Maynard is anxious

about erosion by wind, and one may add that if the sun and wind action now going on is followed by rain, the exposed portion may be irretrievably ruined. I put the position to Dr. Plenderleith, our Laboratory chief, this morning, and he had no hesitation in urging that the exposed portion should be covered up again at once, and the digging suspended until a shelter can be built over the whole barrow.

...

This is the first time a Viking ship-burial has been found anywhere in England, and it really must be properly looked after! At the same time the Ipswich people are I am sure taking every care they can; and there is no reason to suppose they will not readily co-operate, as will the lady who owns the site; in

fact, co-operation is what they want, since as things are they do not quite know what to do. The fact is, the safe-guarding of the find is bound to cost money that they cannot afford, and for this reason alone I think they should be pleased for your Office to come on the scene.