

Local Development Framework
Evidence Base

Shopland Churchyard
Conservation Area Appraisal



LDF Evidence
Base

Cantonese

如果你 需要 放大,盲

文資訊或者不同語言的

版本請聯絡 01702 546 366

Gujarati

તમને આ માહિતી મોટા છાપેલા

અક્ષરો માં, બ્રેલ(અંધલિપિ) યા

બીજી ભાષા માં જોઈતી હોય તો

મહેરબાની કરી સંપર્ક કરો

01702 546 366

Spanish

Si desea esta información
impresa en letra grande,
Braille o en otro idioma,
por favor llame al teléfono
01702 546 366

Urdu

اگر آپ یہ معلومات بڑی چھپائی میں، بریل (اندھرو کا
رسم الخط) یا کوئی اور زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو
براہ کرم رابطہ کیج 01702 546 366

Portuguese

Caso necessite desta
informação em impressão
maior, em Braille ou
nouta língua, por favor
contacte 01702 546 366

Bengali বাংলা

আপনি যদি এ তথ্যগুলি
বড় মুদ্রাক্ষরে, ব্রেইলি
হরফে অথবা অন্য কোন
ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে
অনুগ্রহ করে 01702 546 366
নম্বরে ফোন করুন ।

Shona

Kana uchida ruzivo, kana
tsananguro iyi yakanyorwa
nemavara makuru, kana kuthi
yakanyorwa nerurimi
rwemapofu, kana nerumwe
rurimi, kana umwe mufauro
sununguka kuti taurira parunare
ronoti 01702 546 366

If you would like this information in
large print, Braille or another language
please contact 01702 546 366

This document was produced by Essex County Council for Rochford District Council in July 2006.

Contributions were made by the following officers of Essex County Council Historic Buildings and Conservation Section:

Karen Fielder MA, PGDip

© Essex County Council and Rochford District Council 2006

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
	<i>Character Statement</i>	2
	ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT	
2.0	LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING	3
3.0	HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY	4
	<i>Cartographic Evidence</i>	6
	CHARACTER APPRAISAL	
4.0	SPATIAL ANALYSIS	7
5.0	CHARACTER ANALYSIS	8
6.0	PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES	12
7.0	RECOMMENDATIONS	12
8.0	CONCLUSIONS	14
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	15
	APPENDIX 1 Listed Structures in Conservation Area	16

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are areas of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990), and were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation imposes a duty on the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in exercising its planning functions. It places firmer planning controls over certain types of development that might otherwise erode the special character of the Conservation Area, including boundary treatments, demolition of unlisted structures and works to trees. However it does not prevent any change to the Conservation Area, and this may be subject to a variety of pressures that could affect its character and appearance.
- 1.2 Conservation Area Appraisals aim to evaluate the designated area in order to identify and record its special character and describe its current appearance. Some aspects of the Conservation Area will contribute to the 'special character' for which it was designated, some will have a neutral effect and some even detract from it. These aspects will be identified to help further the planning aim to 'preserve or enhance the character and appearance' of the Conservation Area, including the open spaces, trees and other elements of the environment that contribute to its character.
- 1.3 The Shopland Churchyard Conservation Area was designated in March 1992. The Conservation Area lies in Green Belt land about three miles north-east of the conurbation of Southend-on-Sea, in the parish of Sutton. The Conservation Area is formed by the boundary of the churchyard of the former parish church of Shopland. The church was demolished in 1957.
- 1.4 This appraisal was commissioned by Rochford District Council and the research and fieldwork was carried out in July 2006. It will be used to guide the Council in exercising its planning functions in relation to the Conservation Area and to support the conservation policies that form part of the new Rochford District Council Local Plan.
- 1.5 The appraisal provides a brief development history of Shopland Churchyard, followed by a general description of the Conservation Area and assessment of character. Any issues which may affect the protection of character are highlighted and opportunities for enhancement identified.

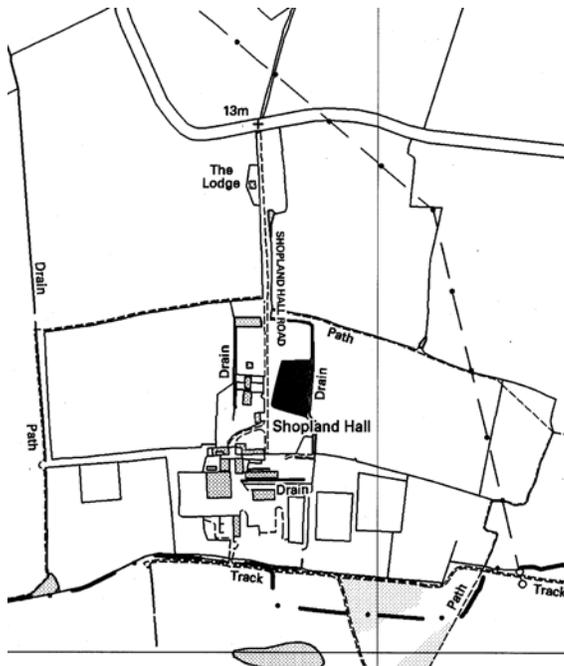


Figure 1. The location of the Conservation Area (shown blocked out)

1.6 Character Statement

Shopland Churchyard is a peaceful, isolated rural churchyard, fully enclosed by a thick boundary of mature trees and scrub, with an informal and generally dispersed arrangement of gravestones set in greensward. Shallow earthworks marking the original position of the church add interest to the landscape, and the graves of notable local residents add special significance to the site. The tree cover in the area of the churchyard is in marked contrast to the surrounding open landscape of arable fields and paddocks.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

2.0 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

2.1 The Shopland Churchyard Conservation Area is located approximately three miles north east of Southend-on-Sea and one mile south east of Rochford. It is positioned on the east side of Shopland Hall Road, a short private road running south off Shopland Road in the parish of Sutton, which incorporates the former parish of Shopland. The River Roach lies to the north.



*Figures 2 and 3.
Location and setting of
Shopland Churchyard*

*Reproduced by permission of
Ordnance Survey® on behalf
of the Controller of Her
Majesty's Stationery Office.
©Crow Copyright. Licence
number LA100019602*

- 2.2 The Conservation Area is defined by the boundary of the churchyard of the former parish church of Shopland, dedicated to St Mary Magdalen. The plot is trapezoidal in shape, and is approximately 74m by 47m. The edges are marked by a thick hedge of mature trees and scrub which prevent inward views. It is approached from Shopland Hall Road which runs along the western boundary. This is a private road leading to a large equestrian centre with several cottages on its west side. The eastern edge of the Conservation Area is bounded by a drainage ditch, with paddocks to the north and south.
- 2.3 The Conservation Area lies at one end of a distinctive east-west raised ridge composed of London clays overlain by deposits of sand and gravel.
- 2.4 The Conservation Area is set in Green Belt land in an area that is predominantly rural and recreational, including golf courses, scattered farmsteads and agricultural fields. Despite its proximity to the urban conurbation of Southend-on-Sea it is largely undeveloped.

3.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- 3.1 Although there has only been limited archaeological analysis in the area, field walking and prehistoric and Roman finds suggest occupation and utilisation over a long period of time. The Scheduled Monument of Prittlewell Camp, a partly upstanding earthwork likely to be the remains of an Iron Age Hillfort, lies about a mile to the south west¹.
- 3.2 Medieval occupation was focussed on Shopland Hall, located on the west side of the lane leading up to the church from the Shopland to Barling road. The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 (*Figure 5*) shows the church and hall at Shopland. It illustrates the dispersed nature of the settlement in the area with church/hall complexes and scattered farmsteads.
- 3.3 The Hall was converted into two farmworkers' cottages in the late nineteenth century, and was later demolished. Around the same time a new hall was built at the southern end of the lane. This in turn was demolished and replaced with a cattle shed and milking parlour in the 1970s, buildings which now form part of the Shopland Hall Equestrian Centre. A house built in the 1970s now stands on the site of the original medieval hall².
- 3.4 The parish church of St Mary Magdalen was one of the oldest churches in Rochford District prior to its demolition in 1957, built principally in the 12th century. The Nave was constructed in the early 12th century, the Chancel was rebuilt and widened in the 13th or 14th century, the South Porch was added early in the 15th century, and the bell-turret in the 16th century. The walls of the church were of rubble covered with cement and roughcast, with dressings of limestone. The roof was tiled and the bell-turret was boarded.³

¹ See *Rochford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project*, 2006

² Jerram-Burrows. *History of Rochford Hundred (Shopland)* (Rochford Hundred Historical Society 1979) pp991-2

³ Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England): *Essex Vol. 4* (HMSO 1923) pp135-136

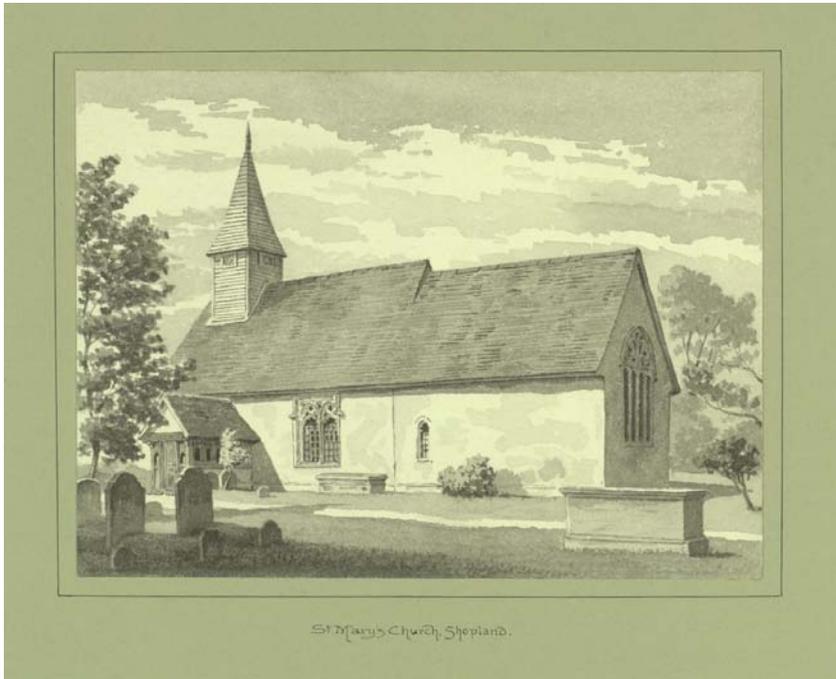


Figure 4. Wash drawing of St Mary's church by A.M. Bamford, c.1900

- 3.5 By the 1920s the church had become ramshackle and unsuitable for worship and a programme of restoration was carried out in 1928-9. Despite this the congregation dwindled during the 1930s, and severe gales caused significant damage to the roof. The congregation received a temporary boost from military personnel in wartime when a large anti-aircraft site was established to the east of Shopland Road known as Butlers Camp. However further damage occurred when a landmine burst nearby, and the church fabric continued to suffer during subsequent bombings. When congregations diminished once more the church was forced to close.⁴
- 3.6 The church was controversially demolished in 1957, and some of the stonework, monuments and fittings were dispersed elsewhere, notably a brass memorial to Thomas de Stapel, serjeant-at-arms to King Edward III, dated 1372, which was removed to Sutton church. The timber porch was sent to the parish church at Bradwell-on-sea.⁵
- 3.7 The two parishes of Sutton and Shopland are now combined, and responsibility for the care and maintenance of the churchyard lies with the Parochial Church Council for Sutton. An open air service is held at the churchyard most summers in memory of the families that are buried there.

⁴ Jerram-Burrows pp 1023-4

⁵ *ibid*

CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 3.8 The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 and the Tithe Map of 1839 show Shopland Church as part of a small complex with Shopland Hall in a rural setting not linked to a village settlement. This pattern of dispersed settlement is typical in this part of Essex.
- 3.9 The First Edition OS map shows that trees were significant both in the hedge line of the enclosure and within the open space at that time.
- 3.10 Subsequent OS Maps show that the isolated nature of the small settlement complex continued.



Figure 5.
Chapman and
Andre Map,
1777

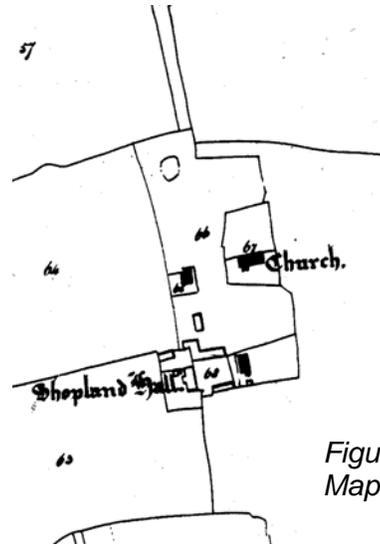


Figure 6. 1839 Tithe
Map

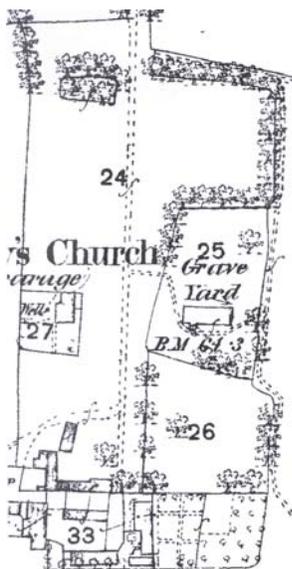


Figure 7. 1st edition
OS Map, 1872

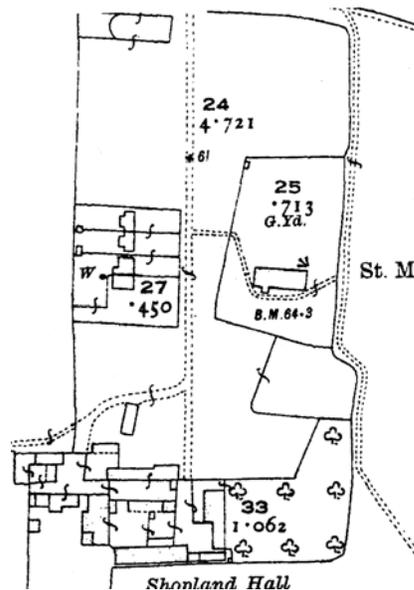


Figure 8. 3rd
Edition OS
Map c. 1923

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

4.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

- 4.1 The edge of the Conservation Area is defined by the thick boundary hedge of Shopland Churchyard. The churchyard is fully enclosed by this tall hedge, which provides no inward views on the approach down Shopland Hall Road and there are no clues to its existence. There are views of modern equestrian buildings at the end of the road, and as one reaches modern cottages on the right hand side the churchyard reveals itself through a gap in the hedge line.



Figure 9. The approach along Shopland Hall Road. The churchyard lies behind the tall hedge on the left

- 4.2 Through the entrance one first catches sight of a tall monument and a low cross at the foot of a large sycamore tree. On entering the churchyard, the full extent of the site can be taken in, with views across the open green space to small dispersed groups of gravestones, mature trees and scrubby vegetation. Across to the south, shallow grassy earthworks mark the original position of the church. There are no paths or routes through the churchyard, and the visitor can wander freely. From within the space, the rich green boundary provides a sense of complete enclosure and isolation, and, at least in the summer months, affords few glimpses of the agricultural landscape beyond.



Figure 10. View through the entrance into the churchyard



Figure 11. View north from within the churchyard

5.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The special character of Shopland Churchyard Conservation Area lies both in its value as green space and in the historical and local interest associated with its use which resides in the surviving monuments and landscape.
- 5.2 The gravestones are dispersed and lie mainly to the south and on the eastern edge of the churchyard, either in isolation or in small groups.
- 5.3 The only large memorial is an imposing granite monument to Lewis Utton and his family, former residents of Shopland Hall, which stands close to the entrance to the churchyard.



Figure 12. Memorial to the Utton family of Shopland Hall

5.4 The remaining gravestones are modest in scale and simple but varied in design, with a generally informal arrangement. In addition to the Utton monument, other gravestones mark the resting place of important local individuals, including the local historian Philip Benton, whose grave is marked by a simple flat memorial alongside those of other family members in the north-east corner, and Frederick Thackeray, cousin of the author William Makepeace Thackeray. Other notable individuals whose remains were interred at Shopland but whose memorials have been removed are the aforementioned Thomas de Stapel, and Charles Tyrell, incumbent, who died in 1695 and whose memorial carried an ancient curse against its removal or desecration. Two adjacent head and foot stones on the south side of the site of the church, dated 1718 and 1727, are Grade II listed. The oldest memorial is on the south side close to the site of the south porch of the church, and is a large flat stone now heavily eroded and illegible, but believed to be that of William Haker, dated 1639. To the south there is an attractive and orderly arrangement of nine Victorian graves with upright headstones, body tombs and footstones. The most recent burials are of the 1930s⁶. The graves are free of flowers, plant holders and other ornamentation.



Figure 13. The Benton family memorials



Figure 14. Group of 19th century gravestones

⁶ The monumental inscriptions of the churchyard were surveyed by the Essex Society for Family History in 1985. The survey can be consulted in the Essex Record Office.

- 5.5 A significant proportion of the gravestones, perhaps a third of them, are overgrown by bushes and weeds, including ivy and self-seeded sycamore, and some have been completely engulfed by scrub encroaching from the boundary hedge. A small number have fallen, or have parts missing, others are badly eroded and have lost their inscriptions.



Figure 15. Listed 18th century head and foot stones



Figure 16. An overgrown group of gravestones in the south-east corner

- 5.6 Shallow rectangular earthworks and residual masonry now barely visible beneath grass and vegetation, mark the original position of the church, adding interest and variety to the landscape. Like all parish churches, its site is of great historical and archaeological importance.



Figure 17. Earthworks marking the position of the church

5.7 Shopland Churchyard has significant interest as a green space, with its mature boundary hedge and trees providing wildlife habitat, and attractive greensward. The existing boundary trees and vegetation appear mostly to have grown up by natural regeneration rather than as part of a formal planting scheme, but the First Edition Ordnance Survey map clearly shows that trees were a significant feature of the churchyard in the past. The boundary today is formed mainly of self-propagating species, particularly sycamore. There is one large yew tree in the northern boundary. In some areas, notably at the southern end of the west boundary, the encroaching scrub is altering the shape of the churchyard, and swallowing gravestones around the periphery. Two mature sycamores dominate the northern half of the churchyard, their broad trunks and spreading boughs framing appealing vistas and creating patterns of light and shade on the ground. Elsewhere to the south immature saplings are growing near the church earthworks.



Figures 18 and 19. Mature Sycamore trees make a significant contribution to the character of the churchyard.



5.8 Despite the encroaching scrub and an air of redundancy, the churchyard does not appear neglected. The grass is kept short and tidy, the area is free of rubbish and there are no signs of vandalism.

5.9 The absence of any signage or other modern utilitarian intrusions give a sense of timelessness and abandonment. The general impression is of peaceful isolation, and of a safe, calm and contemplative space.

6.0 PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES

Trees and Scrub

- 6.1 The trees and scrub that form the boundary at Shopland Churchyard have considerable aesthetic value and a value for wildlife, and are an important element in the special character of the Conservation Area. However the vegetation is now encroaching on the churchyard, altering its overall form and engulfing some of the gravestones. The aerial map of the churchyard on page 3 shows the extent of this incursion.
- 6.2 A number of notable local individuals are buried at Shopland, and their graves are the focus of local pilgrimages. These should not be surrendered to the encroaching scrub but should remain accessible for visitors. The two listed head and foot stones are also suffering damage from encroaching vegetation.
- 6.3 The earthworks and residual masonry of the church are in danger of becoming overcome by grass and vegetation. The site is both historically important and provides visual interest in the landscape and should be preserved.
- 6.4 The care and maintenance of Shopland Churchyard is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council. Volunteers regularly cut the grass and keep the area tidy, but they are unlikely to have either the capacity or the financial resources for significant intervention.

Signage and Access

- 6.5 The churchyard is located down Shopland Hall Road, a private 'no through' road leading to the Shopland Hall Equestrian Centre. There are large signs for the Equestrian Centre at the junction with Shopland Road, but there is no signage for the churchyard. Neither is there any signage or information at the entrance to the churchyard, which is easily missed.
- 6.6 As a private road, there is no public right of vehicular access along Shopland Hall Road, which limits accessibility. However there is a public right of way providing pedestrian access, with two other public footpaths adjoining the road to the north of the churchyard.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Management Plan

- 7.1 Low level maintenance of Shopland Churchyard has contributed to its naturalistic character, and whilst continuing this approach will maintain character in the short term, a management plan for the trees and hedge is required to prevent further encroachment and loss, in accordance with

guidance from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches⁷. This management plan should be informed by a long term strategy for the site as a whole, considering issues of access and future uses of the churchyard.

- 7.2 There are three options that would be appropriate for Shopland Churchyard in its rural setting.
- Management to maintain the *status quo*, preventing further encroachment of scrub resulting in continuing loss and damage to the overall form, and to key gravestones and the site of the church.
 - Management for wildlife, maximising the potential of the churchyard as a wildlife habitat by allowing grass and wild flowers to grow up, but identifying key gravestones to be protected from further loss and encroachment, and respecting the site of the church. The Essex Churchyard Conservation Group could be requested to assess its importance for wildlife.
 - Reuse as a burial ground, in particular for woodland or green burials to maintain the value of the churchyard as a naturalistic space and avoid formal arrangements of headstones. There may be unmarked graves on the site which would be disturbed through re-use, but given the peaceful, natural character of the churchyard, it could provide an attractive local solution to the growing pressure on existing burial grounds as they reach their capacity.

Signage and Access

- 7.3 Whilst anonymity has undoubtedly contributed to the peaceful and isolated character of the Shopland Churchyard, some low-key signage of a style appropriate to its rural setting both at the Shopland Road junction and at the entrance to the Churchyard would increase awareness of its existence.
- 7.4 Bearing in mind that strictly speaking there is no vehicular access to the churchyard, local footpath signs and published walks could be used to encourage pedestrian access.
- 7.5 At present the absence of any utilitarian intrusions such as litter bins, signs and furniture contributes to the naturalistic appearance of the churchyard. However it is a valuable public amenity space, and the addition of a single appropriate style of bench would provide seating to encourage dwell time and enjoyment of the space without detracting from its special character.

⁷ See Practical Notes on Trees in Churchyards (Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee, 1995)

- 7.6 Although the original position of the church is visible in the shallow earthworks and masonry, this would benefit from clearer, but low key, indicators, perhaps with corner stones to act as markers.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Shopland Churchyard has a special character worthy of preservation and enhancement. Its character is derived from its verdant environment, its sense of isolation and abandonment, and its particular historic and local interest.
- 8.2 Although Conservation Area designation is rarely applied to small rural sites lacking in buildings, in this case it affords the most appropriate protection that is available given the combination of elements that contribute to its special character.
- 8.3 Low key intervention has up to now contributed to the special character of the churchyard, but some small scale improvements need to be made including clearing some of the scrub around graves and improving signage.
- 8.4 To preserve and enhance its particular assets in the long term, a management plan for the trees and boundary hedge is required, guided by a strategic plan for the overall site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee (1995)
Practical Notes on Trees in Churchyards

Essex County Council and Rochford District Council (2006)
Rochford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project

Jerram-Burrows, Lily E. (1979)
The History of Rochford Hundred, Vol 3. no. 60. Shopland

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1923)
Vol. 4 South-east Essex

APPENDIX 1
Listed Structures in the Shopland Churchyard Conservation Area

SUTTON

TQ 88 NE

OFF SHOPLAND ROAD
(south side)

11/317

2 adjacent Head and Foot stones,
Shopland Churchyard

II

2 adjacent head and foot stones. 29 December 1718 Peter Lodwick and 1727 Peter Lodwick and his wife Margaret, both with scrolled sides and heads and central foliate scrolls. The footstones inscribed PL 1718 and PL 1727 respectively. Shopland Church was demolished C20.



Rochford District Council

Council Offices South Street
Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW

Telephone: 01702 546366

Facsimile: 01702 545737

Website: <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>