Report 2519

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at Shrublands, Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk

ENF125579

Prepared for
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Contents

Figures

Plates

Location:	Shrublands Community Centre, Magdalen Way, Gorleston-on-Sea
District:	Great Yarmouth
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney ahead of the construction of a new medical centre at the Shrublands site, Magdalen Way, Gorleston-on-Sea.

A large area of the paddock was stripped for a temporary car park and works compound and fifteen trenches plus a lift pit were excavated in the existing car park, as well as several small service trenches. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The construction of a temporary car park and the ground works for the new medical centre at the Shrublands site, in Gorleston, Norfolk, required archaeological monitoring due to the proposed development site lying in an area of extensive late prehistoric to Roman field system crop marks.

A condition for archaeological watching brief monitoring was applied to a Planning Application (Ref. 06/10/0145/F) submitted to the Planning Authority, Great Yarmouth Borough Council for the construction of a car park, a new medical centre and associated works at the Shrublands site, Magdalen Way, Gorleston (TG 5183 0405). The requirement for the archaeological work was detailed in the Brief for Monitoring of Works Under Archaeological Supervision and Control issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (James Albone, 17 June 2010, ref: CNF42793).

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5 2010).

The Brief required watching brief monitoring of all below-ground disturbance related to the car park and associated works. In order to comply with that condition a Project Design was prepared for LSI Architects Ltd (NAU/BAU2519/NP).

The main contractors were ISG Jackson. The work was commissioned by LSI Architects Ltd, and funded by NHS Great Yarmouth & Waveney.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

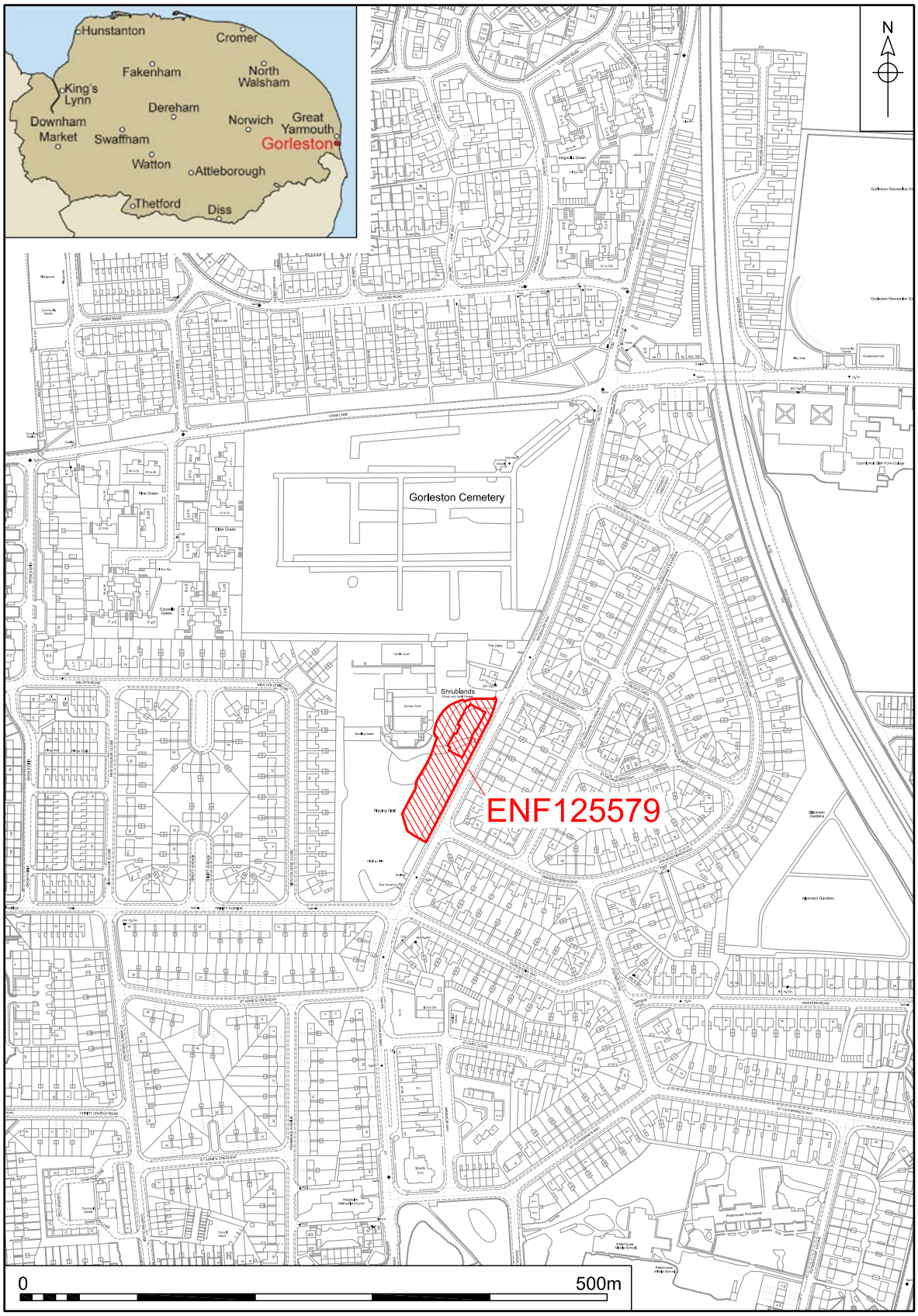

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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is situated off Magdalen Way in Gorleston-on-Sea, just to the south of Gorleston Cemetery (Fig. 1).

The local geology consists of superficial Happisburgh Glacigenic Sand Formations on a bedrock of Crag (maps.bgs.ac.uk).

The site of the proposed new development was a patch of rough grassland and a former car park in a residential area between the A12 and the A143 in the centre of the town. It was situated on generally flat, well drained terrain at around 16m OD.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although now a heavily developed suburban location, the proposed development site lies within an historic landscape of some importance. A search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Records within a 500m radius of Shrublands revealed that one of the largest hoards of Late Bronze Age metalwork found in Norfolk was recovered from the nearby Peterhouse Middle School site in 1952 (NHER 10556).

The Shrublands site also lies within an area of multi-phase cropmarks (NHER 43466), believed to indicate a field system and boundaries of predominantly Iron Age to Roman date.

The recent evaluation of a site located on Magdalen Square some 200m south of Shrublands has recorded the presence of prehistoric pits and ditches and an assemblage of Beaker and Iron Age pottery (Crawley 2011).

Evaluation trial trenching and a subsequent watching brief undertaken at Peterhouse Middle School some 300m south of the site (Crawley 2009, Westall and Ames 2010) demonstrated the presence of two ditches, one Iron Age or Roman the other undated but probably medieval, both believed to be associated with cropmarks in the area.

The Shrublands site itself was formally a dairy farm, consisting of a Grade II listed farmhouse dating from around 1810 (NHER 42922) and several barns and out-buildings and surrounding land. It ceased to serve as a farm in 1947 when it was handed over to Great Yarmouth Education Committee for educational purposes. The property was then opened in 1949 as the Shrublands Youth and Adult Community Centre and continues operate in this capacity to this day (www.remembernorfolk.org).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was where archaeological remains are identified and these cannot be preserved *in situ*, to minimise the potential impact of the scheme by appropriate levels of archaeological excavation and recording.

The Brief required that an archaeologist to be present by constant attendance during the mechanical excavation of the car park and associated works.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma*. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and

colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The work took place in cold, often freezing, and very wet conditions.

Plate 1. Groundworks for the temporary car park and works compound

5.0 RESULTS

Work commenced on the 16 November 2010 for the construction of a temporary car-park and compound for construction activities associated with the new medical centre building on the site. This area of the site is part of what had been known as 'The Paddock', has more recently been used as a recreation field; it was covered in rough grass.

Turf, topsoil and subsoil were removed under constant archaeological supervision to a depth of 0.50m using a hydraulic 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil consisted of loosely compacted dark-grey sandy silt. The subsoil was a moderately compacted mid-brown silty-sand with occasional charcoal and red-brick flecks and small flint nodules (Plate 1).

No other deposits were disturbed during these works and no archaeological features were observed. Two modern plastic soakaways from earlier works at the site were uncovered, indicating that this part of the site has been disturbed

previously. It is feasible that it was the location of the works compound during previous phases of construction on the Shrublands site.

Plate 2. Small service trench alongside Trench 12

Between 13 December 2010 and 13 January 2011 fifteen foundation trenches and one lift pit were excavated across the existing car park, using a 360° mini-digger (Fig. 2). Each trench consisted of four to five pits ranging in size from 1m x 1m to 1.70m x 1.70m; they were all 1.40m deep. These pits were connected by narrow channels 2.80m long, 0.60m wide and 1.40m deep (Fig. 3). In addition to this arrangement, small, narrow and shallow trenches were dug alongside the foundation trenches to contain service runs. These were approximately 0.40m wide and 0.50m deep, running alongside the entire length of the foundation trenches (Plate 2). The only deposits disturbed during the excavation of these trenches were subsoil, topsoil and surface deposits (described below).

A thin layer of tarmac (1), with a maximum depth of 0.40m, which represents the surface of the car park was observed across the area (Figs 3 and 4 Sections 1-3).

Underneath this was a layer of light creamy-brown material, heavily compacted and consisting of a sandy ‘crushed’ mortar and hardcore of chalk and flint (2). It had a maximum depth of 0.25m and was a make-up layer that was laid to level the car park surface and prepare it for tarmac (Figs 3 and 4 Sections 1-3).

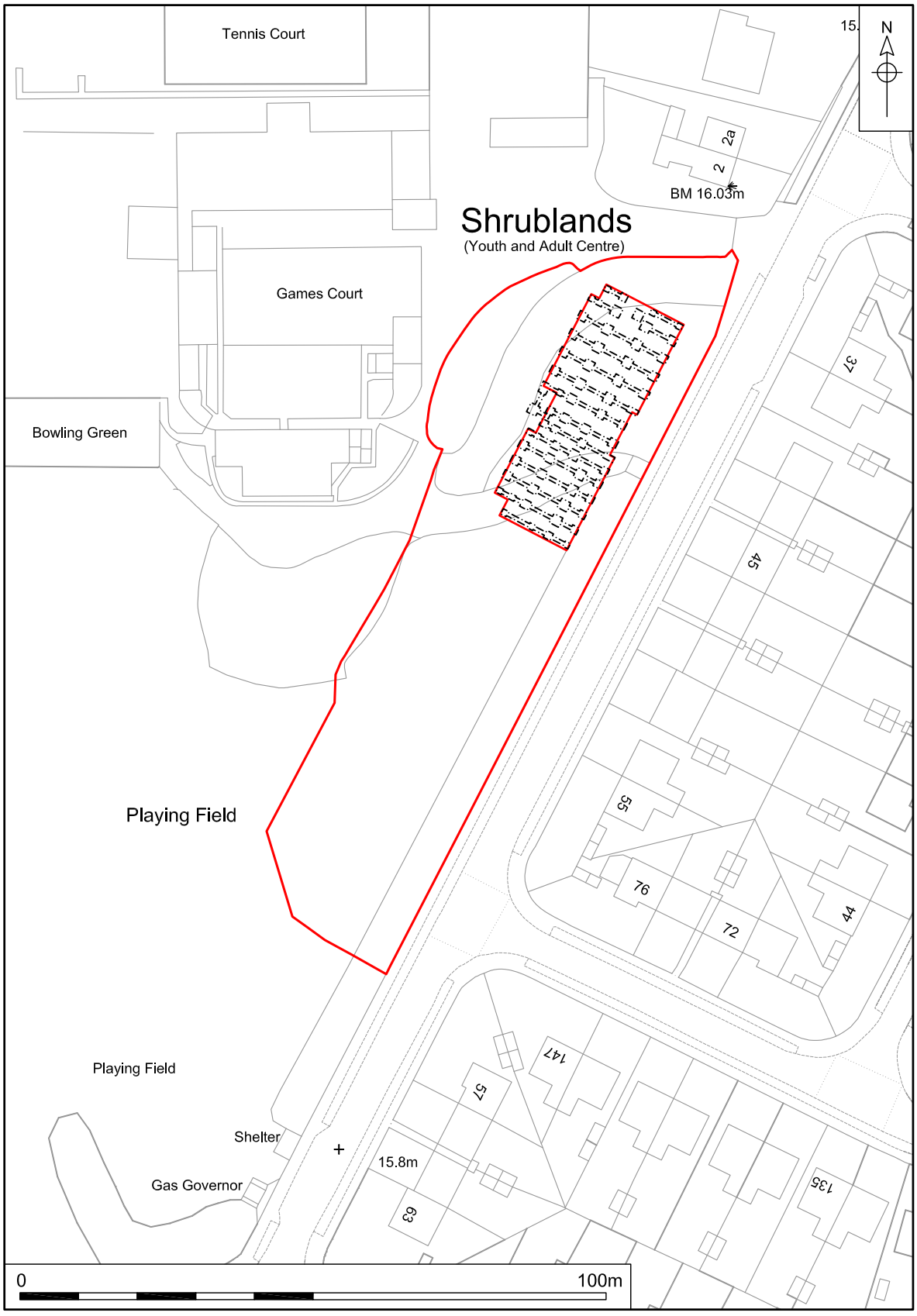

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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:1000

Underneath layer (2) was a fabric membrane which appears to have been laid to prepare the ground for surfacing (Figs 3 and 4 Sections 1-2).

Beneath the membrane was a layer of dark greyish-brown silty-sand of moderate compaction (3) which may have represented the previous topsoil on the site, as it is similar in colour and composition to the topsoil found at The Paddock during the stripping for the compound and temporary car park. This topsoil would have been exposed after stripping the turf off this site for the construction of the existing car park, through which these foundation trenches were being excavated. It contained a few small red brick pieces and occasional flint nodules and had been disturbed by root action.

Below subsoil layer (3) was another subsoil layer (4) which was a moderately compacted mid-brown, silty-sand with occasional red brick flecks and flint nodules; it too exhibited root disturbance. This deposit was also very similar to the subsoil layer identified during the stripping of the paddock for the temporary car park, and probably represents the same layer.

In Trench 9 an additional subsoil layer (5) was identified which appeared to be stratigraphically higher than subsoil (3), and lay directly underneath the membrane (Figs 3 and 4 Section 2). The deposit was a mid orange-brown silty-sand and contained frequent roots and charcoal flecks. It may have represented disturbance from tree roots or possibly even the presence of a flowerbed in this small area.

In the base of Trench 11 a thin layer of re-deposited natural (6), was identified which may have been a lens within subsoil layer (4), perhaps brought up by tree roots (Figs 3 and 4 Section 3).

The only other deposit which was exposed during these works was the underlying natural consisting of lenses of bright yellow and bright orange sand. This started to appear higher in some foundation trenches than others, indicating a rise in the surface of the natural layers towards the south-western end of the site (Figs 3 and 4 Section 1).

No archaeological features were recorded during the excavation of the foundations and associated service trenches.

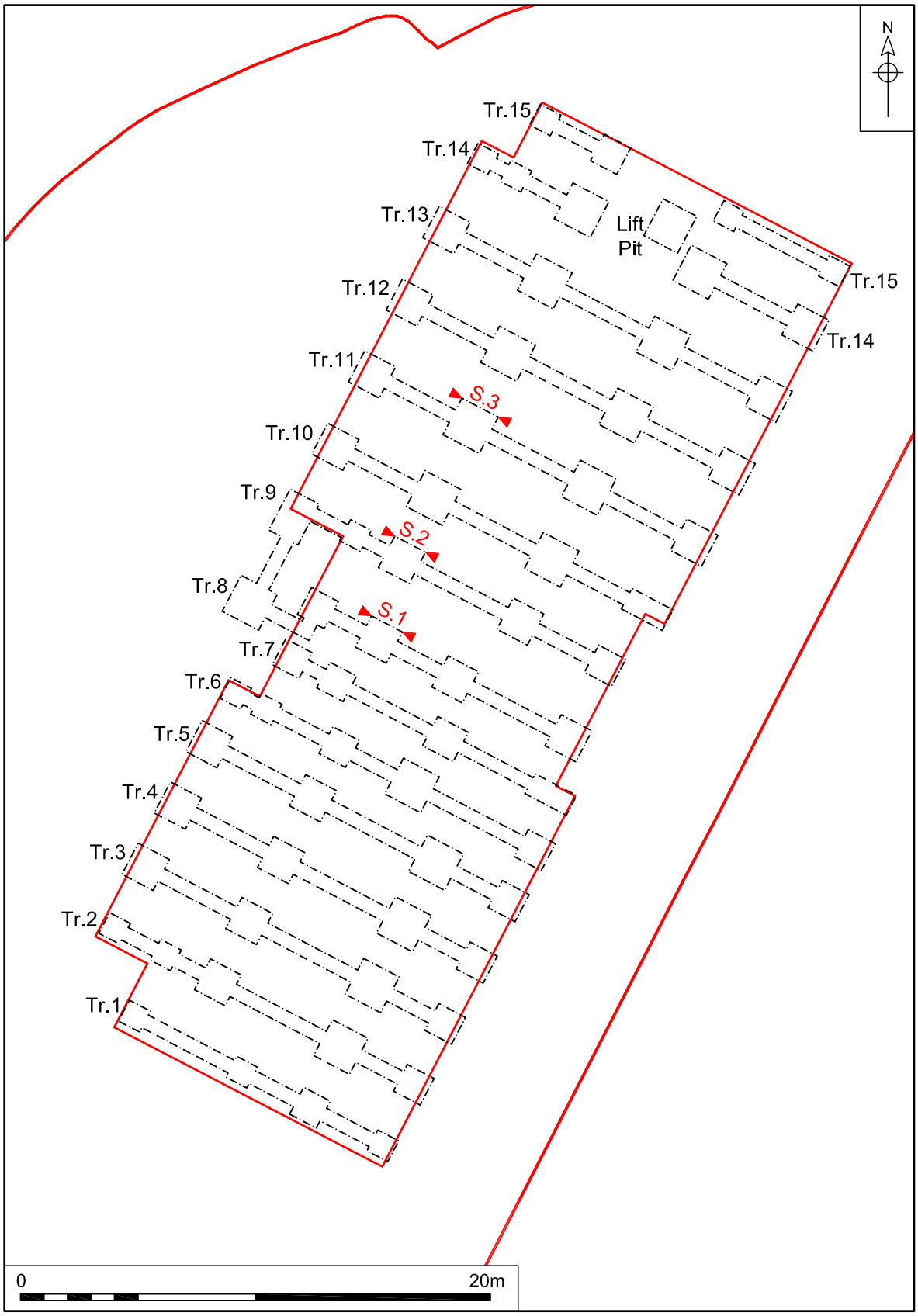

Figure 3. Trench plan. Scale 1:250

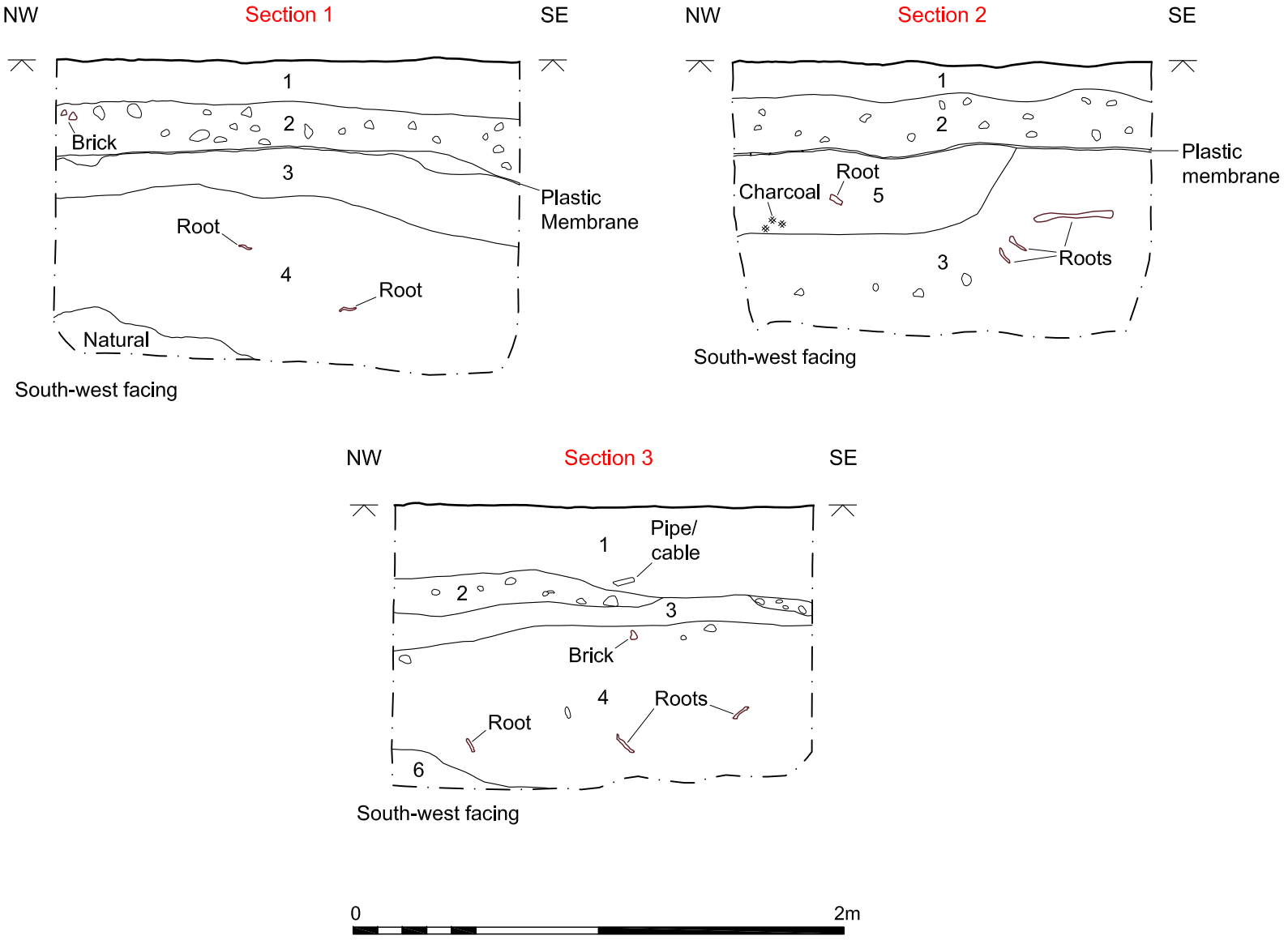

Figure 4. Sections 1 to 3. Scale 1:25

6.0 THE FINDS

The only finds that were recovered throughout this watching brief monitoring were a collection of modern glass and ceramic bottles dating from between 1895-1956 from Trench 9, within subsoil layer (3) (Plate 3).

Plate 3. The bottles

The bottles included one large *Steward and Patterson Ltd* bottle; two *Backs Ltd of Norwich, Yarmouth & Lowestoft* ginger beer bottles, one bottle of clear glass and one of green glass dating from around 1912, two *Caley of Norwich* ginger beer bottles from around the same date; and a few smaller glass bottles of indeterminate use and date (www.swanseabottles.com). Some of the smaller bottles appear to have been roughly made, and may have been medicine bottles or even of veterinarian origin. These bottles will not be retained as part of the project archive.

One small animal bone fragment was also recovered from the same subsoil layer (3) during the excavating Trench 5.

All of the finds came from the west side of the site, quite close to the farmhouse, and may represent dumping of rubbish in the back garden when the property was still a farm.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Maps such as the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition and aerial photographs of the site show that this development area at the Shrublands site had in the past been a small wooded area in the northern corner of the paddock (Fig. 5) and the results of this watching brief seem to confirm this. There was a great amount of root disturbance, particularly towards the northern end of the site, and the small amount of finds seem to point towards occupants of the farmhouse dumping a small amount of rubbish in their back yard sometime between 1912 and 1947 when the site was acquired for the community centre.

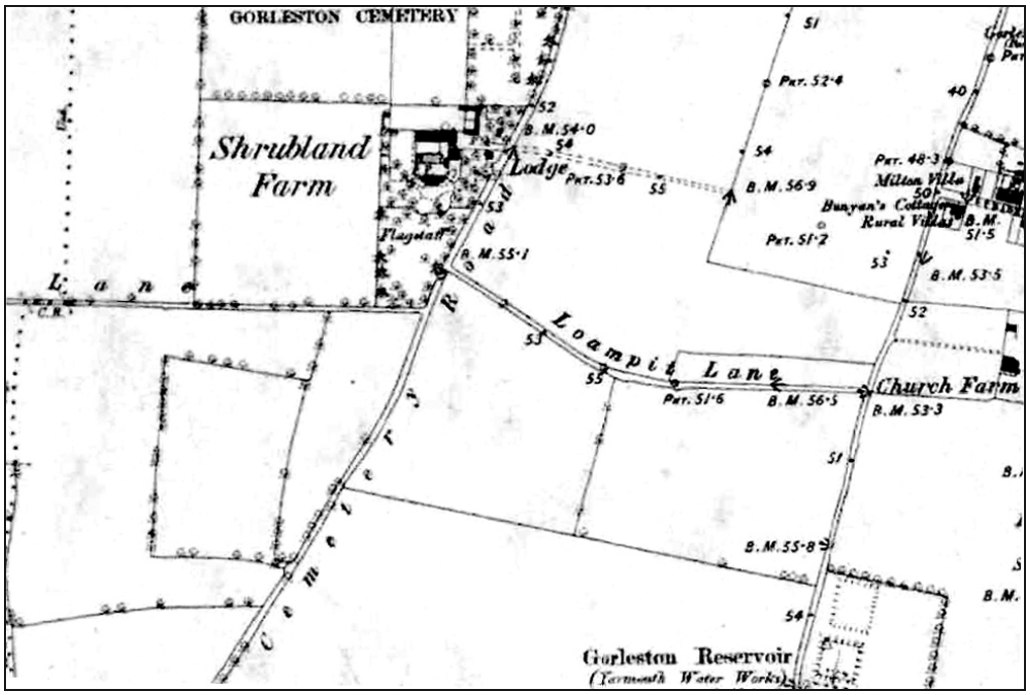

Figure 5. Ordnance Survey Map 1st Edition showing the Shrublands site

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The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Tarmac layer - existing car-park surface	Modern
2	Deposit	Crushed hard-core make-up layer	Modern
3	Deposit	Subsoil layer	Uncertain
4	Deposit	Subsoil layer	Uncertain
5	Deposit	Subsoil layer	Uncertain
6	Deposit	Re-deposited Natural	-

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
3	Glass	7		Modern	Ginger beer & medicine bottles
3	Ceramic	2		Modern	Ginger beer bottles
3	Animal Bone	1		Unknown	Small animal bone fragment

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Modern	Glass	7
	Ceramic	2