

STORIES DEAD MEN TELL: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY IN THE ALL HALLOWS GRAVEYARD, ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Abstract

Now largely overlooked, the historical environs of London Town, Maryland and the All Hallows Parish Church were once part of a tightly knit colonial community. As part of Anne Arundel County's *Lost Towns Project's* ongoing archeological study of the defunct 17th century tobacco port of London Town, research has unearthed the connections between this settlement and its church. This research report outlines the relationship between the church and the inhabitants of London Town and offers a glimpse into the past, disclosing the physical and geographic nature of a colonial community. The employment of a non-invasive geophysical survey using ground-penetrating radar helped to solve some of the mysteries regarding the colonial inhabitants of London Town.

Introduction

London Town was a 17th century tobacco port town and it has been the subject of ongoing archeological and historical study by Anne Arundel County's *Lost Towns Project*, under the direction of County Archaeologist, Dr. Al Luckenbach, since 1996. London Town was part of a development plan that attempted to establish over thirty towns in colonial Maryland. In 1683, the Maryland Assembly passed an act to promote trade and this legislation designated new ports and towns as areas of official trade and development. Historical research has shown that London Town was not only a tobacco port but also a travel-town and the location of two 18th century ferry crossings, as well as merchant warehouses, taverns, homes, and a ropewalk.

The 1683 act decreed that each town would have 100 one-acre lots. We have found documentation for sixty-four lots at London Town. Its primary function was that of a tobacco port and it flourished during the period of 1700-1750 but was defunct by 1800. London Town is located on the South River in Anne Arundel County, in All Hallows Parish and is approximately seven miles from Annapolis, the capital of Maryland (Figure 1).

The Anglican Church was active in Anne Arundel County in the 1680s, although it seems that early church activities were itinerate. Some geographic areas were con-

sidered parishes before the Church of England became the official church of Maryland in 1692. The original South River or All Hallows Parish church (apparently an earthfast building) was built ca. 1680. However, it was in need of replacement and considered dangerous to use by 1729: "Whereas the vestry-men, church-wardens, and other inhabitants of All-hallows Parish, in Anne-Arundel County, have, by their petition to this General Assembly, set forth, that their Parish Church is so decayed and ancient, that is dangerous to be therein..." (MSA 1916:462). All Hallows Episcopal Church or the "Brick Church" replaced the first church and has served Anne Arundel County residents since 1733. In 1940, a fire ravaged the church, leaving only the brick walls intact. The building was refurbished with a reconstructed colonial period interior after the fire (Figure 2).

All Hallows Parish

Very little is known about early religious activities in the county. The records simply do not exist. It seems that the first ministers were itinerate, serving more than one community at a time. Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain what came first, the parish or the church. Some records indicate that Anne Arundel County had churches but no permanent ministers in the 1690s (Skirven 1923:106). The Rev. Duell Pead served the South River area from 1682 until 1690 (Maryland Historical Records Survey 1940:149-152). However, the meeting place of his fold is unknown. In the 1670s and 1680s, before the establishment of London Town, the county court and the Maryland Assembly occasionally met at the tavern of John Larkin at "The Ridge." About two miles from the current church, Larkin's may have been the location of the first church or a meeting place, as the parish's second minister, Rev. William Colbatch, purchased property adjacent to this early gathering place.

Unfortunately, the existing vestry records for early All Hallows Parish are not complete. Therefore, the names of the vestry members have been gathered from various sources such as Anne Arundel County Land Records and from the *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland*. According to the Maryland Assembly's "An Act for the Service of Almighty God and the Establishment of the Prot-

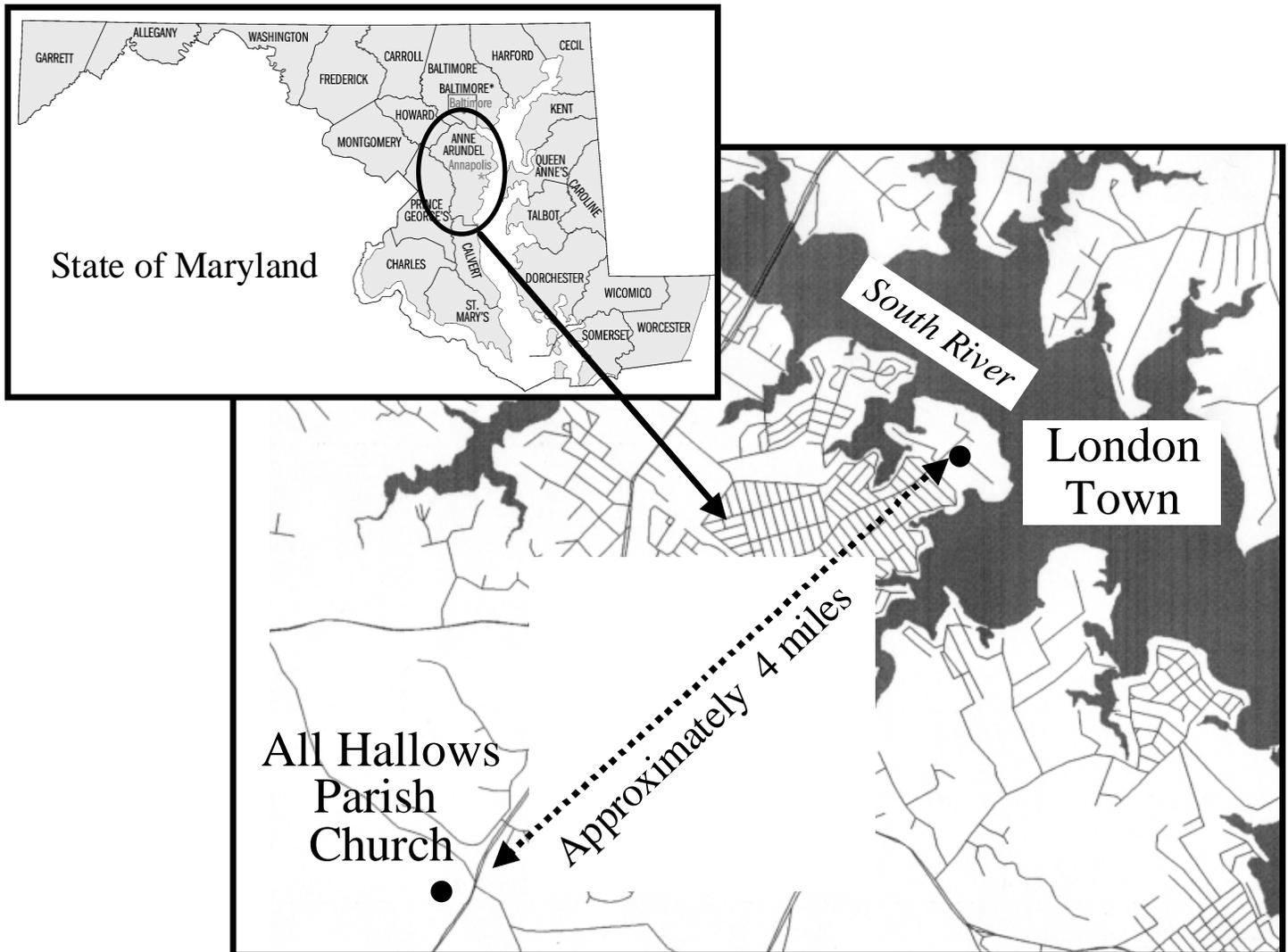


FIGURE 1. Project area, showing London Town and All Hallows Parish Church.

estant Religion within this Province,” vestry members were to be chosen from the ‘principal freeholders’ of the county (MSA 1894:425-430). When the parish system was established in 1692, each county’s commissioners and justices were to work together to divide the county into parishes. The justices were charged with selecting six vestrymen to oversee the operation of each parish. The vestrymen were to develop and establish each parish and were directed to “...erect and build in the most convenient place of the said parish, one Church or Chapel in such dimensions and proportions and in such methods and ways as by the said vestry men in their discretion and judgement shall think fit and convenient...” (MSA 1894:428). Both All Hallows Parish churches (the first perhaps located at Larkin’s “Ridge” and the second at the current location) were placed on the county’s main north-south thoroughfare, Solomon’s Island Road or Maryland Route 2.

Some of the church’s first vestrymen lived in or owned property in London Town:

South River Parish [later known as All Hallows] consists of South River Hundred and a small part of West River Hundred. Vestrymen for the said parish chosen and etc, viz. Capt. Henry Hanslope, Mr. Edward Burgess, Mr. John Gresham, Mr. Walter Phelps, Mr. William Roper and Mr. John Watkins.

(Vestry Records, October 1696)

Both Hanslope and Watkins owned lots in London Town.

Although we do not have an original plat map of London Town, we know that the town consisted of the standard 100 acres of land. The equal and regular one-acre lots were surveyed, theoretically all at one time, and marked with a numbered stake. Furthermore, the town



FIGURE 2. All Hallows Parish “Brick Church,” ca.1733.

acts designated that each town was to have open space and a lot to erect church or chapel. Early land records suggest that one lot was indeed set aside in London Town. It is interesting to note that the act did not dictate that the towns *must* erect a church, thus helping to explain the absence of a church in London Town. The community already had a church or meeting place to in which to worship, the original 17th century All Hallows Church. Although the location of the first church remains undocumented, the 1733 brick church is a short four and half miles from London Town and served as the religious center for the community during the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the colonial period townspeople are buried there.

The All Hallows Parish Graveyard Project

During the summer of 2000, Anne Arundel County’s *Lost Towns Project* studied the graveyard of All Hallows to document the colonial period burials. The goal was to find burials for London Town residents and with the hope that the burial markers would provide new data on the residents of the town. Each grave marker was photographed, drawn to scale, and the text of the marker was transcribed. For the grave markers that were difficult to read, and to capture those with distinguishing characteristics such as family shields, an intern made rubbings to more fully record the content of the stones. In many cases, the rubbings provided details not readily perceived due to the deterioration of some of the grave markers. This textual information from the rubbings was transcribed and entered into a searchable database along with the rubbing image. A probe survey, accompanied by ground penetrating radar was used to find buried head and footstones as well as unmarked graves.

Our project involving All Hallows Parish (to get to the history of London Town) started with a simple visit to the graveyard and one headstone proved very important—the grave marker of Margaret Dick. It is considerably larger than other similar markers and the text is in Latin. Margaret Dundas Dick was a native of Edinburgh, Scot-

land and she came to Maryland by way of her husband James and his business pursuits. Margaret and James married in Edinburgh in 1730 where James was a member of the merchant’s guild; his father was the head or Dean of Guild. James Dick was London Town’s most prominent and important merchant during the period from 1734 until the American Revolution. It appears that Dick acted as London Town’s emissary to visitors. He was noted as “...mayor of London Town, a clever old gentleman...” in 1765 (*American Historical Review* 1921:75). Additional research came to show a very strong tie between All Hallows Parish and the Dick Family of London Town.

While studying probate records for residents of London Town, All Hallows Church appeared as a desired burying place. For example, James Dick and his daughter wrote their wills on the same day and both requested to be buried next to Margaret Dick at All Hallows. Furthermore, birth and marriage records indicate that All Hallows Church witnessed the major life events of many London Town residents.

After visiting the graveyard, a systemic study of All Hallows Parish was formulated in order to collect all the pertinent data involving London Town. Unfortunately the church has no formal published history; this information had to be gathered by the *Lost Towns Project*. This started with a review of the secondary source material regarding All Hallows Parish, and involved the use of Maryland State Archives and the Diocesan Archives in Baltimore. One of our goals was to collect all the land records information that dealt with the original church property. The bulk of this primary research on All Hallows Parish started at the Anne Arundel County courthouse in Annapolis. The date and circumstance of the church’s acquisition of this brick church site is unknown. There are no records that indicate a conveyance to the church; therefore, there is no information on the original size of the church property. Through information from later deeds, it appears that the church was built on property once owned by the Brewer family and was donated to the parish in the early 18th century.

However, other heretofore-unknown properties owned by the church during the colonial period did appear in the land records and were discovered during a review of the primary documents. For example, in 1768 the church, under the care of Rev. David Love, purchased 174 acres for a parish glebe (MSA Land Records 1767). This was located to the south of (and adjacent to) London Town on what are still called Glebe Bay and Glebe Creek. Before 1768, the waterway was known as Hill’s Creek, owned by Dr. Richard Hill of London Town. This property remained in the control of the church until the late 19th century. At the turn of the 20th century the glebe tract was sold and became consolidated as part of the area known as Glebe Farm and consisted of 612.5 acres. After various transac-

tions the property was sold to the Friendswood Development Corporation in 1989 and is now contained within a non-developed section (Parcel B) of the South River Colony subdivision. An archeological survey conducted before the development of South River Colony by R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Inc. located an 18th century site (18AN1092) on the property, with a mean ceramic date of 1778 (Goodwin 1998:35-42). This was the parish glebe and the likely location of an early rectory or tenancy associated with the church.

After completing the documentary research, the project concentrated on the graveyard. Because of time constraints and our specific interest in London Town, focus was placed on the colonial period graves, or the graves of those who lived during London Town's prosperity. A section of the graveyard was negatively impacted in 1957 when graves were moved to build a schoolhouse on the property (Breen 1956:10; AHP Vestry Minutes 1957).

When the survey of the graveyard started, it was assumed that many of the graves would pre-date the 1729/1733 construction of the brick church. Current church officials assumed that the current site was the original location of the first church. Our research pointed to one striking finding—this was not the site of the 1690s-period church. The oldest graves, those of the Burgess Family from the 1680s, were not original to the churchyard. The Daughters of the American Revolution moved the graves to the All Hallows church in 1960; therefore, the oldest original grave for this site is from 1733.

The Assembly called for the collection of funds (in tobacco) to build a new "brick church" in 1729, and the process of construction likely took time. The fact that there are no pre-1729 graves located at All Hallows suggests that they are in another unknown location, perhaps at Larkin's "Ridge." Assumedly, somewhere in the parish there is a large 17th century graveyard. Early parish burial records note the burial of hundreds of people during the period of the 1690s until 1729 and the construction of the current brick church.

The first dated grave at the new brick church is that of Samuel Peele, a merchant from London, England who lived in London Town. He died in 1733. Samuel came to London Town in 1716 and began the large-scale importation of manufactured goods, working as a factor for his brother, Robert Peele of London, England.

James Dick of London Town and All Hallows

As mentioned, James Dick was one of London Town's most important residents, not only for his enterprise but also for his influence and involvement in the community. He owned many lots in London Town as well as part of the adjacent tracts of Scorton and Burge. He not only brought sustained trade to London Town and Annapolis, but he invested in the town and the surrounding area by

providing loans and acting as secretary for property transactions. He is first documented at London Town in 1734, and advertised his wares in the *Maryland Gazette* in nearly every issue until his retirement in the 1770s.

When Dick lost his thirteen-year-old daughter Margaret in 1762, he purchased an acre of property abutting the church for a family graveyard. James set aside a section of it for his family and donated the remainder to the church:

Out of the said parcel or acre of ground the distance of about ten feet from the northeast corner of the said church in a line drawn due east from the said corner and running thence, south twenty-five feet, thence, east forty-five feet, thence north twenty-five feet, thence west forty-five feet to the beginning post, one half of the said reserved piece next the church being a burying ground for the said James Dick's family forever.

(MSA 1762)

Before James Dick's 1763 donation, all preceding burials were placed (facing east) on the west side of the church. Many of these early graves are very close to the church building, on the west side, toward the front, and are of a tablet style. Miss Margaret Dick's (d. 1762) grave and that of her mother (Margaret Dundas Dick, d. 1766) are of the headstone style. They are the earliest surviving markers of that kind on the site and are the first to be placed on the east side of the church building. James Dick does not have a headstone at All Hallows, although he asked to be buried there in his will:

In the name of God, Amen. I James Dick of London Town... I resign my soul to almighty God who gave it in all humble hope of its future happiness as in the hands of an infinity gracious good & merciful being, my body to be buried in my burying ground in *All Hallows Churchyard* in a private manner.

(MSA 1782)

The 1763 deed that recorded Dick's donation is the first land record that helps place the church property (in reference to other tracts) and document its size. The churchyard was only a little more than one and a half acres until two church members donated contiguous properties in 1868 and 1926. The current property, including the graveyard, is just less than four acres.

The Ground Penetrating Radar Survey

In December of 2000, *The Lost Towns Project* conducted a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey with a Pulse Echo 1000 GPR system using a 450-megahertz antenna. The GPR "looks" into the ground and delineates disturbances in the natural soil layers without damaging the graves. Using historic land records to establish a grid, an

area twenty-five by forty-five feet was surveyed (1,125 square feet) in the part of the graveyard donated to the church by James Dick in 1763. The GPR survey consisted of ten lines at five-foot intervals on a north/south axis parallel to the church building (Figure 3).

The results indicated that James Dick (or someone) was indeed buried next to his wife. The images from the ground penetrating radar show the existence of at least one additional grave directly next to and to the left of Mrs. Margaret Dick. Similarly, there are as many as five additional unmarked graves in the Dick family plot (Figure 4). Mary Dick McCulloch also requested to be next to her mother, but there is no headstone for her grave. James had other children and grandchildren, and they may have been buried in the family plot.

Conclusions

This project's combination of historical research and non-invasive archeological study helps reconstruct the colonial community of London Town by associating exist-

ing structures and sites with their past context and use. This research helps to show that London Town was part of a larger community of plantations and a community church. As long suspected, it also shows that All Hallows churchyard is home to more dead than is apparent to the eye. *The Lost Towns Project* hopes that projects such as this not only contribute to our knowledge of London Town, but also provide a larger framework to help better understand our colonial past. This type of historical research, married with archeological techniques, puts the history in historical archeology.

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FIGURE 3. Ground penetrating radar survey of the graveyard.

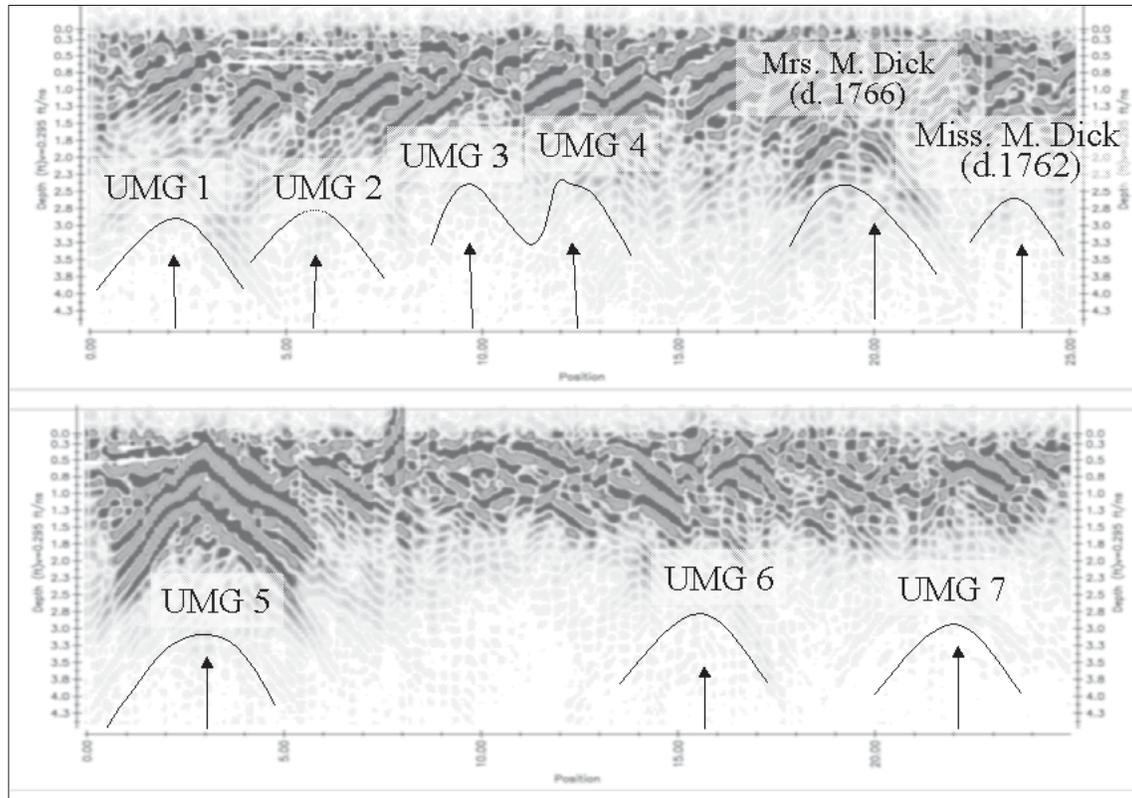


FIGURE 4. Radar profiles of Lines 1 and 5.

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