

# VIRGINIA BROADSIDE

by *Philippa Glanville OBE FSA*

This Jacobean broadside, issued in February 1615/6 and today surviving only in this single copy, is bound with other rare British broadsides in 12 volumes given to the Society by Thomas Hollis in 1757.

When the Virginia Company published this plea for the English to buy tickets in their lottery, it had already been open for almost three years. As the sheet regretfully noted, “the adventures came in so slackly, with such poor and barren receipts of money at the Lottery house for this twelve months past”, that Sir Thomas Smith, Treasurer of the Company, was being forced to emphasize the incentives. One, mentioned in the final paragraph, was a silver spoon, worth six shillings and eight pence, “or the same in ready money”, for anyone investing three pounds in cash at his house in Philpot



Lane in the City. He also announced the final draw of the lottery, to take place on 26 June 1616. “Prizes, Welcomes & Rewards shal be paid in ready Money, Plate, or other goods reasonably rated”; the two showy silver cups depicted, one a fashionable Nuremberg pineapple design, are flanked by bags of coin. Items of silver, from spoons to drinking vessels, were typical of the prizes offered to buyers of lottery tickets in northern Europe from the mid-16th century. This was only England’s second lottery; the first, in 1567/9, had offered plate, tapestry and cash as prizes.

Although the wretched situation of the settlers at Jamestown in Virginia was well known to Londoners, money was short everywhere. The King was desperate for colonial investment in both Ireland and Virginia, even though the returns were uncertain. In 1604 he had secured peace with Spain, allowing the English to settle in the Chesapeake Bay area, but could not give any practical support. Simultaneously he was calling upon the livery companies to finance the Londonderry settlements in Ireland, and had lavished money both on the funeral of Prince Henry and the marriage in 1613 of his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to Prince Frederick of the Palatine. In 1614 the Addled Parliament was dismissed, after it failed to grant him any new taxes.

The printer Felix Kyngston encouraged buyers of lottery tickets with two fine images of Chesapeake Indians with their hunting bows, accompanied by tortoises. They were familiar figures to Londoners from those brought across the Atlantic in the previous decade. In St James Park, the king had a small menagerie of American birds and deer, with an American Indian keeper, which were depicted in the watercolour album of a Dutch traveller Van Meer in London in 1614/15.

Despite propaganda from the Virginia Company and the Crown, tempting offers to potential artisan-emigrants and the well-publicised marriage in 1613 of Master John Rolfe and Pocahontas, daughter of Powhatan (the chief of the local tribe), there was widespread awareness of starvation and disease, not to mention rumours of Indian attacks.

One stated objective of the Virginia Company was to convert the Indians to Christianity, although most settlers were more concerned with survival and making enough money to return to England as soon as possible. As it happened, the fortunes of the Virginia colony were to improve in the next decade, as John Rolfe had introduced that valuable cash crop, tobacco, which flourished for the next 400 years.

**Further Reading:**

*Making History: Antiquaries in Britain 1707-2007*, Royal Academy of Art and Society of Antiquaries of London, 2007, no. 45, p 78.

*Silver in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, Philippa Glanville, V&A, 1990.