

ONE FOURTH OF THE WHOLE OF VIRGINIA

Transcribed by Lynn Willies

Abstract: A document is transcribed concerning an attempt to exchange the lead duties of the Soke and Wapentake of Wirksworth for the rents of the Northern Neck of Virginia about 1708. The exchange did not take place.

INTRODUCTION

This short contribution is based on photocopies of documents sent many years ago to the transcriber, by a correspondent whose name has been lost. As a result the source of the documents is also unknown and it is hoped that the correspondent will establish a new connection so that proper acknowledgement can be given.

Basically (my correspondent wrote), Thomas Lord Fairfax and the Dowager Lady Culpepper are trying to swap the rents of "one fourth of the whole of Virginia" for the lease from the Duchy of Lancaster of the lead mining duties (Lot and Cope) and the Office of Barmaster in the Soke and Wapentake of Wirksworth, Derbyshire. The reason for this was that Fairfax was having grave difficulty in collecting the rents in Virginia, which the Crown's troops would more easily enforce, whilst Fairfax was sure he could gain more than the existing Duchy rent for the lead duties.

The value of the quarter of Virginia represented by the Northern Neck in 1706 was £1200, of which the rent collected was only £584 : 13 : 2. The deal included the Tobacco Estates which, presumably, were owned by Fairfax. A later document tells us the deal was not successfully concluded.

The document clearly illustrates the difficulty in enforcing rents on a distant colony with, no doubt, independently-minded colonists. But it is also an indication of the high returns anticipated in the early 18th century in the Soke and Wapentake of Wirksworth. The Soke and Wapentake includes important mining liberties such as Cromford, Matlock, Middleton, Bonsal, Elton, Hopton, Carsington and Brassington as well as Wirksworth itself.

Some years ago I did try to re-open these negotiations with historically-minded friends in Virginia, at "Colonial Williamsburg", but, alas, their view was that present-day real estate values in Virginia made it impossible to proceed further.

The document is as reprinted opposite is as close as I can get to the handwritten original, most of which is easily readable, but with occasional severe difficulties in interpretation - produced "errors excepted" - as the enclosure ends.

Lynn Willies.

May it please yo.^r Lor[dship]

Mr Blackwayt's Report upon the Proposall I made to her Ma.^{tie} in behalf of my Lady Culpepper & myself, for Exchanging our Estate in Virginia for the Lott & Cope in Derbyshire having sometime since been Layed before your Lo[rdship]. and having lately obtained a cobby thereof, I humbly Crave leave by this Memorial (my long indisposition preventing my personall attendance) to answer some Difficulties that seem to arise in the said Report.

Mr Blachwayts Computes my Estate at ab^t One fourth part of all Virginia, (the Quitt Rents whereof clear of all charges he Values at £1200^{lb} p Ann) and Conceives that my Estate may be Estimated at 300^{lb} p Ann), besides the Benefitt w^{ch}. will accrues to the Publick and the Tobacco Trade in those parts.

But your Lor[dship] will finde upon pursuing the Annex^t Acc^t. for the yare 1706 lately delivered my Mr Perry (Coll^l Carter's my Agent's Correspondent here) & signed by him that the Meats Produce of the Quittrents of my Estate there amo^{nt}. to clear of all charges £504 : 13 : 2, w^{ch} is near double the Turne it is Valued at, and Considering the great charge I am at in collecting these Rents and Remitting them hither (w^{ch} will be in as great Measure Taxed to the Crown and that noe Rent Roll or Regulation has been attempted to be made of this estate till a.^{bt} yares since, and what Improvem^t the same is Annually capable of. It will be most Conspicuous to yo.^r Lor[dship] that this estate will be of farr greater Value and Advantages to the Crowne, than ever the same can be to any Subject. For whence alsoe it will be most Apparent That the sending to Virginia for any Survey to be taken thereof is altogether unnecessary.

As to that part of the Report wherein Mr Blackwayt setts forth his not being able to Informe himself of the value of the Lott & Cope & d I humbly acquaint yo.^r Lor[dship] that I did Send him a Certificate under the hand of the Register of the Duchy (a Duplicate whereof is hereto annex^t) for w^{ch} it appears the present possessors of the said Lott and Cope and Office doe pay -----

Mr Blackwayt alsoe Reports That this Estate is proposed to be Exchanged for a Lease of the Lott & Cope & [Office].

But your Lor[dship] will see by the Proposeall itself (a Cobby whereof is hereto annex^t) That the said Proposeall was made for a Grant of the said Lott & Cope & Office by such ways and means as are necessary in the Law & for such Estate or Estates therein, as my Lady Culpepper & myself now have in our said Estate in Virginia. Nor is it reasonable to Suppose That an Estate in Fee of such a value and carrying such a Prospect of Advantage in it, should be Exchanged for a Terme of Yeares only.

Therefore I humbly desire your Lor[dship] to Lay our Proposeall before her Ma.^{tie} And does most humbly pray her Ma.^{tie} to make this Exchange in such Methods of Law as her Ma.^{tie} shall be pleased to direct being

March 12th 1708^o,
My Lord
Yo.^r Lor[dship's]
Most humble Servant
[unsigned]

ENCLOSURES

These are to Certify whom it may concerns that I finde by the Records in the Office of the Duchy of Lancaster, remaining now in my custody, That the present Possessors of the Lead Mynes Lott & Cope with the Office of Bergma^r. within the Soake and Wapentake of Wirksworth in the County of Derby doe Pay or ought to Pay to the Queen's Ma.^{tie} for the Farme of the premises the Rent or Sume of One Hundred Forty Six pounds and Thirteen shillings & fourpence p Ann. Given under my hand this 12th day of Mar 1708.

Benja^o Aylofffe Deput

The Proprietors of the Northern Neck in Virginia

Carried in their Sev^{ll} Acco^{ts} the bottom of the Acco^{ts} p Contra the 7th July 1707

C^{rs}.
By Sev^{ll} Remittances by Coll^{re}
Rob^t Carter, for the Quitt Rents
for the Northern Neck for the
yare 1706 as by particulars
As by Acc^{ts} delivered
£ s d
584 : 13 : 2

Errors Excepted
Merajah Perry