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Renegades, Rebellion and Discontent: Jamestown's Early Years

by

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Abstract

Renegades are important figures in the history of the early years of the Jamestown colony, yet there is a significant lack of material on this topic. Research can be found that covers renegades over the whole of the colonial period, however very little of this is written about the Jamestown renegades in the period 1607 -1622. This thesis will build upon existing research by examining a wide variety of contemporary sources including official documents and personal accounts and letters written by the colonists at Jamestown. This will help to uncover as much as possible about the men who ran away from their fellow colonists at Jamestown to live amongst Native Americans, and also provide a better insight into rebellion and discontent within the early colony. This work will draw conclusions on what type of men were more likely to turn renegade, and what caused Jamestown colonists to feel the need to abandon the colony. It will be argued that the poor conditions within the colony during this period were the cause for the high level of renegades, counteracting the debate that it was the appeal of Native society and culture that lured men away from their fellow Englishmen.

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Introduction

The Jamestown colony was England's first permanent settlement in America, King James I described it as such in the charter he signed giving the Virginia Company permission to settle in America. He stated that the colony they created would be 'called the firste Colonie And they Shall and may begynne theire saide firste plantacion and seate of theire firste aboade and habitacion'.¹ Jamestown was the beginning of over a decade of English colonisation, in America. What isn't widely known is that in its early years, the Jamestown colony was not a success. Living conditions were miserable and on numerous occasions the colony was brought close to destruction. This thesis will focus attention on the often overlooked aspects of Jamestown, the negative side of life in Virginia and the ways in which the first colonists reacted to living in the New World.

The main focus of this research is to uncover all that can be found out about one particular type of colonists at Jamestown; renegades. Renegade is a term that has been coined to describe English settlers who chose to leave their colonies to instead live within a Native American community. This happened more regularly in Jamestown and later English settlements than contemporary English writers wished to admit. Renegades often go unnoticed in the research of Americas' colonisation, especially during the early years of the Jamestown colony; it can be argued that renegades have been ignored by both their contemporaries and modern historians. There are a limited number of sources that openly admit to the existence of renegades from the period that we are examining. There are brief mentions in personal accounts and memoirs of life in Jamestown by figures such as Captain John Smith and George Percy, but no great detail can be discovered. There is no official mention of English men running away from the Jamestown colony to live amongst the local Native American tribes until 1612, when a law was put in place to stop colonists from running away to 'Powhatan, or any sauage Weroance' upon pain of death.² The introduction of a law with such a strict punishment suggests that renegades posed quite a serious problem during the early years of the Jamestown colony despite the lack of records that we have on them. There are a few reasons that can be suggested to explain the lack of contemporary information around renegades. Firstly, the Virginia Company's embarrassment of having men run away from the colony may have led them to try and prevent the release of any information being leaked into public knowledge, at this time they relied heavily upon the money of investors and

¹ 'Letter Patent to Sir Thomas Gates and Others (10 April 1606)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 25-26.

² 'Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall (1612)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...* (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844), p. 16.

would not have wanted to risk losing their support. Benjamin Woolley submits the theory that there was a 'conspiracy of silence' regarding renegades at the time amongst the colonists left behind at Jamestown. He suggests that this stemmed from the resentment and envy the remaining colonists would have felt towards the renegades who managed to escape the hardships of life in Jamestown, and for undermining the belief that the English were culturally and technologically superior to the Native Americans.³

Renegades have also been largely ignored in modern research, as Colin Calloway states they have been 'persistently neglected by serious historians' due to greater focus being placed upon the white winners and red losers of American westward expansion.⁴ Historians such as Colin Calloway, Bernard Sheehan and James Axtell explore renegades in relation to the whole English colonial period, however renegades have been significantly ignored during the early years of the Jamestown colony.⁵ The reason for this lack of research and writing on renegades may be due to the absence of contemporary sources that we have just discussed, however it could also be due to focus being placed on more popular topics and historical figures. The aim of this thesis will be to try and fill some of the gaps that have been left regarding renegades in the early years of Jamestown, primarily 1607 to 1622. Through examining the limited contemporary accounts and records regarding the Jamestown renegades, a clearer understanding of who they were and their motives for leaving Jamestown will be discovered.

This research will also argue that despite the suggestion that it was the attractiveness of native culture that drew men away from Jamestown, it was far more likely that the poor conditions in the colony forced them to flee for their safety. Some have suggested the attractiveness and pull of native society was the main cause of renegades leaving their fellow Englishmen. James Axtell's work focuses on this argument, that desertion resulted from the lure of the local natives. He makes the point that most, if not all, of the Indians who were educated by the English chose to return to their tribes, whereas there were large numbers of Englishmen and women who chose to live within the Native American tribes and adopt their culture and traditions. These English people either ran away to join Indian society, did not try to escape after being captured, or decided to remain with the natives after peace treaties were signed that would have allowed

³ Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: Virginia and the Founding of English America* (London: Harper Press, 2007), pp. 95-96.

⁴ Colin G. Calloway, 'Neither white nor Red: White Renegades on the American Frontier', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 17 (1986), p. 43.

⁵ Colin G. Calloway, 'Neither white nor Red: White Renegades on the American Frontier', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 17 (1986). Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (North Carolina: Cambridge University Press, 1980). James Axtell, 'The White Indians of Colonial America', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 32 (1975).

them to return to their homes.⁶ Other historians support the idea that the attractiveness of Native American culture was enough to turn colonists into renegades. David D. Smits argues that the sexual attraction of the native women 'lured' English colonists to run away and live in native communities.⁷ His work seems to suggest that this would have been the biggest temptation for the early Jamestown colonists, who had travelled to America without any women.

However, when faced with the reality of life in Jamestown during this period it is easier to understand that the settlers were more likely to have been forced to abandon the colony to preserve their lives, and that they ended up with the local native communities who would frequently welcome and accept English colonists into their tribes. Quitt supports this idea when he argues that the desperate need for Indian food, the shortage of English women, the sickness of the English coupled with unstable leadership may have led settlers to believe that they would have a more comfortable life and better chance of surviving if they ran away to live with the natives.⁸ Despite the laws that were put in place to prevent colonists from deserting their fellow English settlers, the leakage of colonists continued. This is a clear indication that notwithstanding the harsh punishments they would face if caught living with the Natives, the miserable existence Englishmen would have had at Jamestown, with forced labour, harsh discipline, a lack of food and constant sickness and death, seemed worse. This thesis will support the argument that it was the poor conditions and wish for self-preservation that led colonists to leave Jamestown by exploring how settlers did not only run away to Native American tribes, but also to other locations. Highlighting cases where colonists abandoned their home and fellow Englishmen at Jamestown and escaped back to England or to other groups in America demonstrates that survival was their main motive when running away.

When looking at contemporary sources, this thesis brings together official documents such as the Virginia Company records, laws, treaties and colonial papers, with more personal sources including accounts and memoirs of individual colonists lives in Jamestown, and letters to friends and family members back in England. This has been done to help highlight the conditions in the colony, and more importantly to find as much about renegades as possible. With the scarcity of contemporary sources on renegades at this time, it is important to use as many types of sources as possible to uncover the truth about these colonists.

⁶ James Axtell, 'The White Indians of Colonial America', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 32 (1975), p. 56.

⁷ David D. Smits, "'Abominable Mixture": Towards the Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage in Seventeenth-Century Virginia', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 95 (1987), p. 170.

⁸ Martin H. Quitt, 'Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), p. 232.

Through the examination of official documents, we are faced with a more formal view of life in Jamestown and the renegade problem. Often, these types of sources only allow us to scratch the surface of what was happening during the early years of the Jamestown colony. For example, we know that a series of laws were put in place in 1612. From looking at the contemporary source we can find out what the individual laws were, but not what the events were that caused them to be enacted or thought of as necessary, or what the colonists' reactions were to them. Although official documents contain important information about the founding of Jamestown and its early years, they sometimes lack crucial personal details.

By combining the official documents with the more personal, and arguably more interesting sources such as memoirs, accounts and letters of the men and women actually living in Virginia at the time, we get a wider picture from which to work. The most valuable information that we have on renegades during this period comes from personal accounts written by colonists who lived in Jamestown at the time. These types of sources allow us to see how the colonists viewed the men running away to become renegades, who they were, and the impact that it had on life in the colony. We can even use accounts written by men such as William White, a colonist who turned renegade but returned to Jamestown, to establish what life was like for English settlers that had been accepted into a native community.

This thesis consists of four chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter one will explore the reasons and motives behind exploration of the New World and will attempt to answer why Jamestown was chosen as the location for England's first colony in America. This chapter will highlight the motives of the King, James I, by examining the charter he signed in 1606 giving permission for English colonisation in America. The Virginia Company's objectives will also be examined to help understand what they hoped the colony would achieve.

Chapter two will look in depth at the conditions at Jamestown between 1607 and 1622. It will argue that the conditions the colonists had to endure were harsh and that life at Jamestown was difficult. By exploring the environmental, socio-political and economic conditions in detail a succinct understanding of the colony's early years will be established. Topics such as the climate, leadership, the relationship with local tribes and food production will be explored. By bringing the poor conditions to light, this chapter will help to reveal why some settlers thought that abandoning the colony was a better choice than remaining at Jamestown.

Chapter three will focus on renegades at Jamestown. The aim of this chapter is to uncover as much as possible about renegades during the early years of the Jamestown colony, and to gain a better understanding of the men who were deciding to run away from the colony to live with

Native Americans. A number of questions will be explored; these include 'what was a renegade', 'who were the people who turned renegade', and 'what caused colonists to become renegades'. This chapter will also briefly look at the practice of using child interpreters, another group of Jamestown settlers who encountered hostile attitudes and are now often overlooked by commentators.

In chapter four, rebellion will be explored. Building upon themes in chapter three, the aim of this chapter is to show that there were many different ways that the Jamestown colonists responded to the discontent and misery of life in Virginia. Not everyone chose to turn renegade, other acts of rebellion can be found when examining the accounts and official records regarding Jamestown's early years. This chapter will start by looking at the ways in which the colonists expressed their displeasure through rebellion within the colony. It will then proceed to explore how colonists attempted to escape Jamestown, and how some tried to return home to England while others went in search of a better life in other parts of America. This will help to strengthen the argument that the conditions in the colony led many to run away and turn renegade rather than this being an active choice due to the pull of the native culture and way of life. Part of this chapter will also explore rebellion amongst the colonists who were shipwrecked on the Bermuda Islands on their way to Virginia in 1609, comparing their similar reactions to different circumstances.

The research that has been conducted in these chapters will help to uncover what life was like in Jamestown from its foundation in 1607 until 1622. This will help to reveal as much as possible about Jamestown's renegades and will also show that it was the poor conditions that the colonists had to face that not only led to renegades, but also to rebellion and general discontent.

Chapter One – Why Jamestown?

England had not formally attempted to create a permanent settlement in America since the failure of the colony at Roanoke in 1587, during the reign of Elizabeth I. England had been a late comer to expansion, but during the Elizabethan period exploration to America began to flourish. Interest in the New World exploded and it was believed that colonization would bring a number of benefits for both the individual explorers and the country as a whole. But due to political and economic factors, England's efforts to create a permanent colony in America was no longer a matter of importance. Focus instead was placed upon exploring other areas such as the Iberian Peninsula, the Netherlands and France.¹ Therefore, the significance of the Jamestown colony needs to be explored, why after twenty years of inactivity regarding American exploration was it decided in 1607 to sail to the New World? Why was Virginia chosen as the location for England's first settlement?

Catherine Armstrong and Laura M. Chmielewski suggest a number of motives for English exploration during this period in their book *The Atlantic Experience*. These motives include: international rivalry between European powers; improved naval and military technology; the desires of individuals for fame and wealth; state willingness to sponsor explorations and the desire to spread religion.² Although these motives are true, they are not specifically focused on Jacobean expansion to America but cover a wider time span and a variety of locations. To truly understand the motives behind the founding of the Jamestown colony, we need to look more closely at the intentions of the Virginia Company and James I himself.

This chapter will explore the reasons behind the decision to set up the first permanent English settlement in America in 1607. It will look at why the King and the explorers believed that the time was right, and why they chose Virginia as their location. It will try to establish the crown's motives behind the colonisation of America, as well as those of the Virginia Company and the individual men that supported the venture. By doing so, we can establish what the aims were for the colony and what the people involved hoped to achieve from creating a permanent English colony in America. By highlighting these aims and hopes, it makes it easier to distinguish whether the colony accomplished them or not in the following chapters.

¹ Frank E. Grizzard, D. Boyd Smith, *Jamestown Colony: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), p. XV.

² Catherine Armstrong, Laura M. Chmielewski, *The Atlantic Experience: People, Places, Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 18.

Interest in North American exploration started to become popular again in the early seventeenth century, even before Elizabeth's death and James' accession to the throne. A number of voyages were commissioned to explore the coasts of North America. From around 1600 onwards, Sir Walter Raleigh sent ships to America to search for the lost colony of Roanoke, and to form trading links with the Native Americans of the region. This trade was mainly in furs, cedarwood and medicinal plants such as sassafras.³ Sassafras was a shrub native to America which was believed to be a remedy to a number of diseases.⁴ Around this time, in early 1605, Captain George Waymouth was sent to explore the coasts of North America. Waymouth returned to London with Native Americans that he had captured during his journey.⁵ The arrival of these exotic men and the trade links that were being formed may have been enough to spark the interest of a number of Englishmen into wanting to continue the project of building a permanent settlement in America.

The decision to send English explorers to America in 1607 could have been due to a number of reasons, although arguably the most important factor was the end of the war with Spain. England and Spain had been enemies for many years, and at war since 1585. With Elizabeth's death in 1603, and the accession of James I, there was a possibility of reconciliation between the two countries. In 1604, peace was agreed upon, and the Treaty of London was signed. This treaty called for peace between England, Spain, Austria and Burgundy. It was agreed that 'from this day forward there be a good, sincere, true, firm and perfect Friendship and Confederacy, and perpetual Peace to be inviolably observ'd'.⁶ The signing of the Treaty of London gave James and England more freedom, and free commerce and trade was agreed upon between England and Spain. Despite England's attempts during the treaty to make Spain acknowledge that England might legitimately colonise areas of America discovered by them, Philip III would not accept these terms. Spain refused to allow England to colonise in America, however by this point she was weak and did not have the power to guard all of her territories in America, or expand further into the country.⁷ James and English explorers took this opportunity, while Spain was weak, to try and

³ Frank E. Grizzard, D. Boyd Smith, *Jamestown Colony: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), p. XXII. David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1990), p. 346.

⁴ Alan G. R. Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 130.

⁵ Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 13.

⁶ 'A Treaty of perpetual Peace and Alliance (1604)' in Stephen Whatley (ed.), *A General Collection of treatys, Declaration of War, Manifestos, and Other Publick Papers relating to Peace and War*, (London: Printed for J.J and P. Knapton and others, 1732), p. 134.

⁷ J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton, E. A. Benians (eds.). *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 77.

settle themselves in Virginia. After years of war and conflict between England and Spain, they had finally come to an agreement of peace, therefore it is unlikely that Philip III would have wanted to jeopardise this new relationship by attacking English colonists, making it the perfect time for the English to set up a permanent settlement.

Philip III was not pleased with England's decision to form a colony in Virginia. In 1607, the Spanish ambassador, Pedro de Zuniga sent a series of letters to the Spanish king regarding the voyage to Jamestown. In a letter dated October 5th he informed the king that 'up to a hundred and twenty men' had been sent to America, and how he believed that the motive for their journey was 'only to test how Your Majesty takes it'.⁸ From examining a letter sent a couple of days later on October 8th, we can get a better understanding of both King Philip and King James' views towards English expansion in America. In this letter it is stated by Zuniga that he passed on a message to James from Philip, that the Spanish king believed it to be against 'good friendship and brotherliness' to send English vessels to Virginia as it was a region that belonged to Castile.⁹ This shows that Philip was displeased by the information that he was receiving from his ambassador, he was so dissatisfied that he warned James that his decision to colonise in America would lead to "inconvenient" results'.¹⁰ The letter records James' response to this warning, his reply suggests that he had no regard for Spain's claim over America. According to Zuniga, the English king claimed that 'he had never known that Your Majesty had a right to it [Virginia], for it was a region very far from where the Spaniards had settled'. James also references the Treaty of London in this letter, arguing that 'it was not stated in the peace treaties ... that his subjects could not go [where they pleased]'.¹¹ It is suggested by A. P. Newton in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* that the combination of the conclusion of the war with Spain and the attitudes of the government during the peace negotiations made the 'time propitious for a revival of activity by the advocates of colonisation'.¹²

English explorers did not necessarily wish to colonise the Chesapeake region of America, however they were faced with little choice. The earlier explorers, primarily Spain and Portugal, had taken control of the preferred locations in the New World, namely the Caribbean islands and South America, and the French were moving into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Canada. This left England

⁸ Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III (5 October 1607), in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.116

⁹ Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III (8 October 1607), Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 117.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 117.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 117.

¹² J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton, E. A. Benians (eds.). *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 77.

with the rest of North America to explore and colonise.¹³ James divided America between two companies, the Virginia Company of London and the Plymouth Company. He allowed the Virginia Company to settle between the 34th and 41st lines of north latitude, and he allowed the Plymouth Company to settle between the 38th and 45th lines of south latitude. However, the colony could only be set up if the land was 'not nowe actuallie possessed by anie Christian prince or people'.¹⁴ As England had formally created a settlement in this area of America, it makes sense that they would return to a nearby location, especially as a number of men involved had been part of Elizabethan exploration. These men included Sir Richard Hakluyt, a prominent promotor of American exploration during both the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, and Sir Thomas Smythe, an English merchant who funded a number of voyages during the Elizabethan period and became the treasurer of the Virginia Company in 1606.

As mentioned earlier, during this period Spain was unable to control all territories in the New World, Spanish power did not expand into North America above the latitude of St. Augustine.¹⁵ This was the region in which James gave permission for the two companies to colonise in. Settling in this region would mean that there was a lower chance of conflict between the English and the Spanish, preventing tension from being caused so soon after the agreement of peace and giving the English colonists more of a chance to create a permanent base from which they could expand. The colonists who travelled to Virginia picked the specific location for the Jamestown settlement due to instructions they had been given by Hakluyt, called 'Instructions given by way of Advice'. The settlers were advised on where best to locate the new colony. They were told to anchor the fleet in a 'safe port in the entrance of some navigable river', a location with fertile land, and were told not to settle where 'any of the native people of the country' could block their escape route to the coast'.¹⁶

James I's motives for American colonisation were very different from his predecessor, Elizabeth I. Whereas Elizabeth's foreign policy largely focused on opposing Spain and making money through attacking and plundering Spanish galleons, James objected to piracy and believed in creating

¹³ Frank E. Grizzard, D. Boyd Smith, *Jamestown Colony: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), p. XV.

¹⁴ 'The First Charter (April 10, 1606)', in Samuel M. Bemiss (ed.) *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company of London, with Seven Related Documents; 1606-1621* (Virginia: Virginia's 350th Anniversary Celebration Corp, 1957), p. 1.

¹⁵ J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton, E. A. Benians (eds.). *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 77.

¹⁶ Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: Virginia and the Founding of English America* (London: Harper Press, 2007), p. 31-2. 'The London Council's Instructions given by way of Advice (Between 20 November and 19 December 1606)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 49-50.

peace between the two countries. However, he had no plans to give up England's claims to America.

We can get a better understanding of some of James I motives for expansion in America by examining The First Charter, the document he produced in 1606 giving permission to both the Virginia Company and the Plymouth Company to settle in America. From this charter, we can see that James had religious motives for sending English men and women to America. He expresses his wish for English colonists to spread 'Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkenesse and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worshipp of God', and to bring the 'infidels and salvages' to 'humane civilitie'.¹⁷ James I is known for being highly religious, so therefore it is not surprising that he had religious motives behind expansion in America. Throughout his reign he had a number of conflicts regarding religion, primarily with the Catholic population of Britain. James believed strongly in the divine right of Kings, he expressed his views on the subject in a speech he gave on the 21 March 1610 to parliament. The king voiced that in the scriptures kings are justly called gods, as 'they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth', and that kings were 'accountable to none but God only'.¹⁸ It has been argued that James feared the power that the Pope had, especially the power he had to depose a king from their throne. James would not have wanted Catholicism to thrive in England, as it would mean that the pope would have more support if he made the decision to dethrone him. Therefore, due to this fear James put in place a way of allowing Catholicism in England, but making sure that the Catholic population supported his right to remain as the king of England. James would tolerate Catholics, as long as they were willing to reject the deposing power of the pope, therefore he introduced the Oath of Allegiance in 1606. The oath openly challenged papal authority, and those taking the oath were made to deny that the pope had any power to depose James:

'I A.B. do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify, and declare in my conscience before God and the world, That our Sovereign Lord King James is lawful and rightful king of this Realm and of all other his Majesty's dominions and countries; and that the Pope, neither of himself, nor by any authority of the Church or See of Rome, or by any other means with any other, hath any power or authority to depose the king, or dispose any of his Majesty's Kingdoms or dominions'.¹⁹

¹⁷ Samuel M. Bemiss (ed.) *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company of London, with Seven Related Documents; 1606-1621* (Virginia: Virginia's 350th Anniversary Celebration Corp, 1957), p. 2.

¹⁸ James Harvey Robinson (ed.) *Reading in European History: A Collection of Extracts from Sources*, vol II (London: Ginn & Company, 1906), pp. 219-220.

¹⁹ Joseph Robson Tanner, *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I, A.D. 1603-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 90.

Despite his tolerance of the Catholic population, it is not surprising that James would have wanted to encourage the spreading of protestant Christianity in the New World. Christianity was his chosen religion, and by converting Native Americans he would be creating a larger support base for his kingship and preventing the spread of Catholicism in America.

James was not the only English monarch to spread religion in other countries, spreading Christianity was also one of the Elizabethan motives for expansion. Armstrong and Chmielewski suggest that 'as the Crusades ended, the desire to take Christianity to other parts of the world motivated those crossing the Atlantic or travelling down the coast of West Africa'.²⁰ It was also common practice for other European countries to spread their religion during expansion. The Catholic church were very successful in converting natives to Catholicism, this started as early as 1493 when the church issued the papal bull which divided America between the Portuguese and the Spanish. The Catholic church issued these territories to Portugal and Spain under the agreement that they would send settlers to convert any native populations that they discovered while there.²¹

The charter also talks of the monetary gains expansion in America was thought to create. James encourages the settlers to 'digg myne and searche for all manner of Mynes of Goulde Silver and Copper'. However, it was set out in the charter that the colonists were to yield a percentage of their finds to the English crown on a yearly basis. James asked for 'Fifte parte onelie of all the same Goulde and Silver', and he also wanted 'Fifteenth parte of all the same Copper'.²² It seems James planned on making money for himself when he signed the charter in 1606, it was a clever money making scheme, James was not investing any money into the voyages but would be making a monetary return regardless. By giving the voyages his patronage, he was ensuring the advancement of trade for England in new foreign locations, yet he would have none of the responsibility.²³ Frank E. Grizzard argues that 'James was deeply involved' in the voyages to Virginia, and that he was willing to defend the colony.²⁴ This might have been the case during the founding of the colony, but the king had little involvement with the Jamestown colony between 1607 and 1624 when the Virginia Company collapsed due to increasing financial issues, made

²⁰ Catherine Armstrong, Laura M. Chmielewski, *The Atlantic Experience: People, Places, Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 30

²¹ Ibid, p. 25.

²² 'Letter Patent to Sir Thomas Gates and Others (10 April 1606)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 28.

²³ Susan Kingsbury (ed.). *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1906), p. 12.

²⁴ Frank E. Grizzard, D. Boyd Smith, *Jamestown Colony: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), p. XXIII.

worse by the loss of their licence to raise funds through lotteries in 1621 and by the Virginia Massacre of 1622.²⁵ Susan Kingsbury suggests that the only occasions in which James did become involved with the Jamestown colony in these years was when there was a chance of making profit. By the time of the charters of 1609 and 1612, the king had surrendered to the Virginia Company full rights to trade in Jamestown, suggesting that James had lost interest and no longer wanted any part in the governance of the colony. However, in 1619 when the colony showed signs of improvement and it was thought it would be able to produce revenue, the king once again became involved with the affairs in Jamestown.²⁶ This suggests that James I's main motive for colonising in America was largely to do with monetary gain.

Many of the men involved in the creation of the Virginia Company had been merchants in the previous reign of Elizabeth, this meant that they had an understanding and link to America. Due to the dormant period of exploration in Elizabeth's reign, a number of merchants had been able to stock pile capital. These funds would once again have an outlet in overseas expansion and trade.²⁷

The Virginia Company had no plans for long term settlement when they sent out the first colonists to America. It could be suggested that the aim of the first voyage was to rediscover Virginia and to take possession of the area for the English. Rather than sending out men to build an agricultural base, conquest of the land was the primary objective of the first voyage to Virginia.²⁸ They did not create a setting for permanent living, women and children were not sent to Virginia on the first voyage, and the majority of the settlers had military backgrounds, not any farming or building skills, suggesting that Jamestown was not initially intended for family life.²⁹ The individual settlers also saw life in Virginia as semi-permanent, they signed on with expectations of returning to England within a couple of years having hopefully made their fortune and spent time exploring an exotic foreign land.³⁰

For the Virginia Company and many of the individuals involved in the first voyage to Virginia, their main motive was profit. Unable to make a living through privateering due to James' peace with

²⁵ Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Sandys, and the Virginia Company', *The Historical Journal*, 24 (1981), p. 300.

²⁶ Susan Kingsbury (ed.). *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1906), p. 24.

²⁷ Alan G. R. Smith (ed.). *The reign of James VI and I* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 124.

²⁸ Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 9.

²⁹ James Horn, *A Land as God Made it: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), p. 41-2.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 41.

Spain, perhaps they saw the creation of a permanent base in America as the best option for making money. The gentlemen who volunteered to travel on the first voyage to Virginia had to pay their own way and were expected to recruit settlers from their estates. In return, these men of rank were given a share in the profits of the Virginia Company. By looking at the instructions that were given to the colonists before their departure, we can identify some of the ways that the Virginia Company planned to make revenue through the colonisation of Virginia. The colonists were advised to send men away from the camp to discover 'the River above you' and to 'Cross Over the Lands and Carrying half a Dozen pickaxes to try if they Can find any minerals'.³¹ Similar to the Kings motives, it seems that they hoped to find valuable commodities in the surrounding land such as gold, copper, medicinal ingredients and spices which they could trade and sell.³² By creating a permanent settlement, they would have a base from which to search the land and trade with the local native Americans. Merchants would also be looking to import commodities from America that they would usually have to import from Southern Europe, reducing their dependence on foreign traders.³³ The Virginia Company also pushed the colonists to search for a passage 'towards the East India Sea'.³⁴ They were hoping to find a sea passage which would allow them to transport goods easily.

When trying to answer the question of why was it decided in 1607 to restart English colonisation in America, it is clear that relations with Spain had a huge influence. Despite growing interest in American exploration and colonisation in the early seventeenth century, it was only once the Treaty of London had been signed in 1604 and peace was agreed upon that any real progress was made towards creating a permanent English settlement in the New World. It could also be argued that England's choice of location for colonisation was influenced by relations with Spain. James allowed the Virginia Company of London and the Plymouth Company to settle in areas away from Spanish occupation, perhaps to avoid unnecessary tension and conflict with his new ally, Philip III. The King, the Virginia Company and individual colonists had their own selfish motives and reasons for wanting to travel to America. Despite other suggested motives for exploration such as

³¹ 'The London Council's Instructions by way of Advice (Between 20 November and 19 December 1606)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 51.

³² Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: Virginia and the Founding of English America* (London: Harper Press, 2007), p. 24.

³³ James Horn, *A Land as God Made it: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), p. 35.

³⁴ 'The London Council's Instructions by way of Advice (Between 20 November and 19 December 1606)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 51.

the wish to convert the 'savages' of the new world to Christianity, international rivalry between England and the rest of Europe and the desire to discover new areas of America, it is clear that the main motive for all parties involved was money. Both the King and the Virginia Company's first interests were in mining the land and searching for valuable commodities, less focus was placed upon creating a permanent, comfortable living space for the first colonists to build a working community. These short sighted motives may have, to some extent, led to the poor conditions during the early years of the Jamestown colony that will be explored in the next chapter.

On the 20 December 1606, three ships; the Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery quietly set sail for Virginia. After being at sea for four months, the English settlers finally arrived in Virginia in late April 1607. Following the instructions that they had been given, a location was chosen for England's first colony 36 miles up the James River, which the colonists names Jamestown after their King.

Chapter Two – Conditions at Jamestown from 1607-1622

In 1608, George Percy, a member of the Council of Jamestown gave a dismal view of the colony: 'There were neuer Englishmen left in a forreigne Countrey in such miserie as wee were in this new discovered Virginia'.¹ His account highlights the negative views that many of the colonists had towards life in Jamestown, even from the very start of its existence. The colonists faced many problems that made their lives in Virginia desolate, including a lack of food and clean drinking water, extreme weather conditions, conflicts with the local natives and leadership issues. These conditions led to discontent, and as we will see in this chapter and the following ones, made the colonists more likely to partake in mutiny and to abandon the colony altogether as renegades.

When reading about Jamestown and the conditions that the colonists were made to live in, most historians agree that everyday life was harsh. Martin H. Quitt lists a number of reasons he believes would have made men dissatisfied with their lives at Jamestown. These include the desperate reliance on Indian food to stay alive; the lack of women in the colony; sickness and disease that quickly spread through the settlement; and the unstable English leadership.² J. Fredrick Fausz takes a different view, and argues that the main issue that resulted in poor conditions in Jamestown was the war with Indians. Fausz claims that the fact that the English were at war with the local Powhatan tribe from 1609 to 1614 resulted in colonists going through the Starving Time, where many died in the winter of 1609. According to Fausz, war and epidemic explains why the colony's presidents felt that it was necessary to put in place strict martial law, which restricted the colonists daily lives.³ There were a number of main areas of dissatisfaction that have been established, these included leadership issues, labour problems, relationship with the local natives and food supplies.

Although it has been established within early Jacobean historiography that conditions at Jamestown were bad and life was difficult in this period for the newly established colony, the reasons for this have not before been broken down and explored in detail collectively. This chapter will establish the reasons for these poor conditions through a thorough examination of the environmental, socio-political and economic conditions in Jamestown. This approach of a

¹ 'George Percy's Discourse (1608? Before 12 April 1612)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 144.

² Martin H. Quitt, 'Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), p. 230.

³ J. Fredrick Fausz, 'An "Abundance of Blood Shed on Both Sides": England's First Indian War, 1609-1614', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (1990), p. 8.

collective overview of early colonial life is unique, as it has not effectively been done before. Focus is usually placed upon one element of discontent in the colony, for example Karen Ordahl Kupperman concentrates on mortality rates, or Edmund S. Morgan's exploration of labour problems in Jamestown from 1607 to 1618.⁴ By exploring the conditions in this way, I hope to create a more succinct understanding of the colony's early years and establish a clearer understanding as to why some English settlers were not content with the life that the Virginia Company of London had sold to them. More importantly, I intend to demonstrate the reasons why many thought that abandoning the settlement was better than staying at Jamestown.

This chapter will explore the conditions at Jamestown between 1607, when English colonists first landed in Virginia, and 1622, the year of the Virginia Massacre. This will be done by categorically going through the environmental, social, political and economic conditions individually, and how they influenced the Jamestown settlement and the colonists who lived there. Each section will highlight the main areas of discontent, and explore what effect they had on the colonists. Contemporary sources will be used to create a better understanding of how the colonists felt about life in Jamestown, and what their main concerns or fears were. Finally, the chapter will explain how the poor conditions were a central factor behind the reports of discontent, mutiny and runaways that the Virginia Company faced at Jamestown in its early years.

When the settlers first arrived at Jamestown in 1607, environmental conditions were not as bad as they quickly would become. The land seemed plentiful and they believed that they had found the perfect plot of land on which to build the first English permanent settlement in America. Francis Perkins, a colonist at Jamestown, wrote a letter to a friend in England in March 1608 in which he described the climate when they first arrived saying, 'we had warm weather all the time'. He also described how not too far from where they were staying there was 'a great abundance of wild swans, herons and cranes, geese, wild ducks, mallards, and many other birds' which would have been a good food source. However, conditions soon deteriorated, and in the same letter, Perkins tells his friend that their circumstances had worsened, 'it got so very cold and the frost was so sharp that I and many others suffered frozen feet'.⁵ Contemporary sources reveal that descriptions about the weather and climate tended to be negative. In a piece of writing commissioned by the Virginia Company, the report blamed the problems at Jamestown on the

⁴ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown', *The Journal of American History*, 66 (1979), Edmund S. Morgan, 'The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-1618', *The American Historical Review*, 76 (1971).

⁵ 'Francis Perkin [s] in Jamestown to a friend in England (28 March 1608)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.160.

‘vnholesomness of the climate’.⁶ This indicates the weather caused dramatic problems for the colonists, and their standard of living in Virginia.

A major environmental cause affecting the life experiences of the colonists was their arrival during a period of unprecedented cold temperatures deemed by scholars as the Little Ice Age. The Little Ice Age was a period that is thought to have broadly lasted from the middle of the fifteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. In this period the average worldwide temperature is thought to be one degree centigrade lower.⁷ This drop in temperature caused many problems for the English colonists in Virginia. When the settlers arrived in Jamestown in 1607, it was one of the coldest years in the last thousand, and the change in temperature meant that they faced warm springs that led to flooding, hot summers that resulted in droughts and bitterly cold winters. From examining tree rings from the Jamestown area, scientists have discovered that the colonist arrived at the beginning of a seven year drought, which is thought to have lasted from 1606 to 1612, the driest period in 770 years.⁸

These environmental conditions caused a number of problems for the colonists concerning food production. With such poor conditions, neither the English nor the local native tribes were able to produce the amount of food necessary to keep themselves alive. The Indian population decreased during this period and the lack of food meant that the colonists at Jamestown soon began to starve, with disease becoming rife in the settlement. Although the Indians tried to help the settlers by providing what food they could, their reliance on the natives for subsistence, which was often abused or taken by force, soon caused conflict.⁹

A lack of food was not the only concern for the English colonists at Jamestown, they also did not have a big enough supply of drinking water. The lack of drinking water was caused by two problems: first the drought meant that there was a lack of water; and second, the settlers had unknowingly constructed the colony on a location where the exchange between fresh and salt water was at a minimum. The English chose their location because of its defensibility against any Spanish attacks and its deep water that meant that they were able to anchor their ships close to

⁶ ‘True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie (1610)’ in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...*, (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844) p.9

⁷ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ‘The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period’, *The American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), p. 1264.

⁸ Brendan Wolfe, “The Little Ice Age and Colonial Virginia” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, (2014), http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Little_Ice_Age_and_Colonial_Virginia_The (Accessed 18 March, 2016). Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate made History 1300-1850* (New York, Basic Books, 2002), p. 96.

⁹ Brendan Wolfe, “The Little Ice Age and Colonial Virginia” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, (2014), http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Little_Ice_Age_and_Colonial_Virginia_The (Accessed 18 March, 2016).

the shore.¹⁰ Moreover, they had picked land that was unsuitable to live on, with a swampy peninsular where many perished by 'drinking the brackish water of *James fort*'.¹¹ J. Frederick Fausz draws attention to the positive benefits of the colonists selected location. He claims that because the Indians did not see the location of Jamestown as a suitable one to farm or live on, the English had accidentally found the one spot where the local Natives would not feel like their land was being threatened and would for some time leave them in peace.¹² Although it can be argued that the environmental conditions that the English colonists arrived in would have made life difficult, blame cannot be completely placed on this alone.

When considering the social conditions in Jamestown, it is best to start by examining the people who were travelling to America. John Smith recorded a list of the original settlers in his *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*, which was published in 1624. According to Smith, one hundred men travelled to Jamestown in 1607, six being Council members, the rest being either gentlemen or labourers. The list reveals that there was a much larger proportion of gentlemen sent to Jamestown than labourers. Forty-eight of the men listed by name were recorded as being gentlemen, who would have largely been the youngest sons of wealthy land owners. Compared to the forty-eight gentlemen, there were only thirty named men listed as labourers. A few of these men have specific professions recorded, including a blacksmith; barber, bricklayer, mason and drummer. There were also four colonists who were recorded as being boys, which tells us that they were also sending children out to Jamestown from the very beginning.¹³ The lack of labourers being sent to Jamestown was negative for the colony, as they did not have enough people with the skills necessary to create a long lasting and functioning settlement. Although the Virginia Company could boast that they had wealthy and influential gentlemen interested in Virginia, these were not the kind of men that were needed in the tough conditions that were found at Jamestown. The divide in social classes also caused tension between the colonists, as English social hierarchy was expected to be maintained across the Atlantic with labourers being expected to do the heavy work in the colony and the gentlemen tasked to serve as leaders. As the Virginia Company became desperate for new recruits to send to Virginia, they began to allow anyone to sign on, enticing them by offering them a share of Virginia Company stock. However, this did not attract the type of people that were needed for survival in

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 'True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie (1610)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...*, (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844) p. 17.

¹² J. Fredrick Fausz, 'An "Abundance of Blood Shed on Both Sides": England's First Indian War, 1609-1614', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (1990), pp. 11-12.

¹³ John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*, (London: Edward Blackmore, 1632), pp. 43-44.

Jamestown. Consequently, the Company appealed for tradesmen but few experienced artisans could be persuaded to leave the comfortable situations that they had in England, meaning that those who did sign up were not at the highest levels of their respected trades.¹⁴ This suggests that the Virginia Company were not able to attract the right kind of people needed to make the colony thrive in its early years. Instead, the colony was filled with gentlemen who saw themselves as above others, and incompetent craftsmen.

The Virginia Company published a series of promotional literature in an attempt to encourage people to invest in Virginia and to attract colonists. This propaganda often misled the men and women who decided to come to live in Virginia. One of these pieces of promotional literature was called *Nova Britannia* and was written by Robert Johnson in 1609. The aim of the pamphlet was to encourage investors to help finance the exhibitions and to educate potential colonists of the benefits of moving to Jamestown. Virginia was described as a 'pleasant land' and as being 'much warmer then England, and very agreeable to our natures', which at this time was known not to be true. The text also largely focused on the resources that Virginia could provide. Readers were told of the strong soil that was good for growing products and that the 'land is full of mineralles'. Johnson also suggested that there was a possibility that gold and silver would be found. All previous searches for gold in Virginia had found no hint that any valuable metals would be discovered, but this suggests that the Virginia Company were trying to attract English people to Jamestown by making them believe that they had a chance of discovering precious metals, when in reality there was none. In addition, it described the Native Americans in Virginia as being 'generally very loving and gentle', however in 1609 the English and Natives did not have a good relationship with one another, which soon resulted in war.¹⁵ It is not surprising then, that when these English men and women arrived at Jamestown, filled with ideas of plentiful land, good weather, and friendly native neighbours, that they would be disappointed by what they found.

It was not just externally that problems existed, but also in the internal political makeup of Jamestown. Problems within the town itself included leadership issues, harsh laws, and wars with the Native Americans. A number of issues arose when it came to the leadership of Jamestown, including factionalism, a lack of political experience, lack of loyalty and abuse of power. Even before they arrived at Jamestown in 1607, there were issues among the leading men of the colony. While on board the *Susan Constant*, rumours began to spread that Robert Hunt, who was

¹⁴ Hobson Woodward, *A Brave Vessel: The True Tale of the Castaways Who Rescued Jamestown*, (London: Penguin Books, 2009) p. 19.

¹⁵ Robert Johnson, *Nova Britannia: Offering Most Excellent Fruits by Planting in Virginia*, (New York: Printed for J. Sabin, 1867).

the mission's chaplain, was involved in a religious plot and was a Catholic working for the Spanish. Smith defended Hunt causing friction with Edward Maria Wingfield and George Percy, who believed him to be guilty. This argument came to a head when the colonists were forced to stop at the Canaries for supplies, Smith and some other passengers began to threaten mutiny highlighting the political and religious tensions prevalent amongst the hundred colonists. Smith ended up causing such a disturbance that Captain Newport ordered him to be locked up as a prisoner in the belly of the *Susan Constant*.¹⁶

In the first seventeen months of Jamestown's existence there were three different leaders, Edward Maria Wingfield, John Ratcliffe and John Smith. Compared to the local native tribes, the leadership at Jamestown was very unstable. The local chief, Powhatan, had been a dominant figure in what we know as Virginia for many decades, when the English arrived he had 'sixteen Kings under his sway'.¹⁷ He had won his position through inheritance, ability and loyalty, whereas the leaders at Jamestown were nominated by the Virginia Company thousands of miles away in England, and held no respect or loyalty from the men that they were trying to govern. Edward Maria Wingfield's *Discourse*, written in 1608, clearly highlights the discord that went on among the council members at Jamestown. In this text, Wingfield was defending himself from accusations made against him by other members of the council, including John Ratcliffe and John Smith. In his *Discourse*, Wingfield describes his deposition as the President of Jamestown, on 10 September 1607. He was deposed because the other council members viewed him as 'very unworthy to be either President or of the Councell'. Wingfield was brought in front of the council and accused of a number of misdemeanours, including not fulfilling his duties as a member of the council; starving the colony; and of being an atheist. Wingfield argues that most of the accusations were caused by rumours that were spread by other leaders, such as a claim spread by Smith that while the colony starved, Wingfield feasted himself and his servants out of the common food store. Wingfield claims that Smith's intent was to 'have stirred the discontented Company against me'.¹⁸ John Ratcliffe took over as President of Jamestown while Wingfield was imprisoned. This suggests that rather than working together to improve the conditions of the

¹⁶ Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom, Virginia and the Founding of English America*, (London: Harper Press, 2007), pp. 35-37

¹⁷ 'Francis Maguel's Relation of the First Voyage and the Beginnings of the Virginia Colony (1 July 1610)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 -1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 153

¹⁸ 'Edward Maria Wingfield, Discourse (1608, Finished after 21 May)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 -1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 219-231.

colony, the council members of Jamestown would rather accuse each other to gain power for themselves. There seems to have been little loyalty or friendship between them.

The accusation made against Wingfield of starving the colony was not the only case that can be found of a President of Jamestown hoarding food for themselves. Michael A. Lacombe explores the connection between food and leadership at Jamestown. Lacombe argues that leading Council members misused their authority when it came to food and the wellbeing of the settlers. He argues that due to the shortage of food in Jamestown's early years, it became a symbol of status and political power. He highlights occasions when leaders of Jamestown were thought to have misused their responsibility when it came to food. Along with Wingfield, George Percy also made sure his status and office were represented on his table, viewing a well laid table as part of his office, even John Ratcliffe was accused of riotously consuming the food stores when elected as president.¹⁹ The way in which the leaders of Jamestown handled food supplies provides us with an idea of their main concerns. It would seem that it was not the wellbeing of the people that they were supposed to be protecting and leading which directed their activities, but instead supporting their own individual interests and making sure that their status was known. Lacombe is the only historian who has drawn a connection between food and leadership in Jamestown. His observations highlight that the ideas of class and status were just as important in colonial America, as they were in England at this time.

There were not only disagreements between the council and leaders within Jamestown, but also within the Virginia Company of London itself. In late 1608, a letter sent by John Smith to the Virginia Company highlights the disagreements that emerged during his presidency. The Virginia Company seem to have accused the colonists at Jamestown of being 'so set vpon faction' and of being 'idle', as well as not following the instructions sent to them by Captain Newport. In response Smith defended himself, by pardoning his 'rude Answers' and claiming that on the topic of factions, he made many men stay that would otherwise have run away. In response to following Newport's instructions, Smith claimed that he was against them, however, he 'was content to be overruled by the major part of the Councill'.²⁰ Relations with the Virginia Company were further complicated by the fact that they did not fully understand the conditions at Jamestown despite continued communication. This meant that they sometimes made mistakes with the instructions they sent to the colony, and did not always put policies in place that were in

¹⁹ Michael A. Lacombe, "A continuall and dayly Table for Gentlemen of fashion": Humanism, Food, and Authority at Jamestown, 1607-1609', *The American Historical Review*, 115 (2010), pp. 675-679.

²⁰ 'Captain John Smith to the Treasurer and Council of Virginia, London (Between 10 September and early December 1608)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 -1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) pp.241-242

the best interests of the colonists. Their aim for Virginia was to make money and their main focus was on the search for gold and other valuable commodities, as well as finding a river passage through North America to allow them access to trade in India and China.

As early as 1607, some were questioning how the law was being enforced in Jamestown by the colonists which reveals an additional area of discontent within the settlement. Wingfield wrote in his *Discourse*, 'wear this whipping, lawing, beating, and hanging in Virginia knowne in England I feare it would driue many well affected myndes from this honourable action of Virginia'.²¹ Due to the unsteady leadership at Jamestown in its early years, the Virginia Company decided to send men to Virginia who they believed would bring control to the settlement. Sir Thomas Gates was the first of these leaders to arrive in Virginia. He left England in 1609, but was shipwrecked off the Bermuda's and did not arrive at Jamestown until May 1610. The second leader that was sent to Virginia was Sir Thomas Dale. His arrival in 1611 marked a turning point at Jamestown, as he installed a set of strict laws known as the Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall, in a hope to bring discipline to the settlement. The laws that he put in place added to laws that had already been set down by Sir Thomas Gates. However these new laws were seen as extremely harsh, and caused discontent in Jamestown as well as criticism in England. When considering the laws themselves, it is possible to understand why the colonists would have been unhappy with their content. There were laws forbidding murder or rape under pain of death alongside a number of laws put in place with unjustified punishments. For example, if someone was to speak out or criticise the council or the intentions of the colony, the punishment for their first offence was 'to bee whipt three seuerall times', the second offence would mean the accused would be 'condemned to the Galley for three yeares', and if they committed the same crime a third time they would be 'punished with death'. Similarly, if someone was to 'give any disgracefull words, or commit any act to the disgrace of any person in this colonie' they would be tied head and feet together, every night for a month. Thomas Dale strictly enforced these laws which led to discontent amongst the colonists.

During the period that we are focusing on, the English and Powhatans were at war with one another, this lasted from 1609 until 1614. From 1607 until 1609 the relationship between the colonists and the local natives was unsteady but mostly peaceful. An account by Francis Maguel, a Jamestown colonist, tells us how Powhatan 'and all his vassals deal peacefully with the English, and attend a market which the English hold at their fort daily' where they would trade with each

²¹ 'Edward Maria Wingfield, Discourse (1608, Finished after 21 May)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 -1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 225.

other for items such as food and trinkets.²² This peace lasted because the tribes trusted John Smith as the leader of Jamestown, but due to the Virginia Company's interference this relationship broke down. John Smith's authority was undermined by the Virginia Company and the Natives stopped trading or cooperating with Smith. This resulted in Smith resorting to violence to get what he wanted from the Powhatan tribe. John Smith was soon deposed as President of Jamestown, and due to injuries he acquired in an explosion, was forced to return to England. Without Smith's military knowledge and negotiation skills, the colonists began to take violence towards the Natives too far. George Percy records a number of occasions when the English attacked the local Natives in a letter he wrote to his brother, the Earl of Northumberland, titled *A Trewe Relacyon*. In it he reported how, when two messengers who had been sent to the King of Mancemonde did not return in the time expected, they sent half 'our men to take the Island' by force. The men 'Beate the Salvages out of the Island burned their howses Ransaked their Temples Tooke downe the Corpes of their deade kings from their Toambes'.²³ On another occasion, Captain Ratcliffe was sent to procure supplies from the Indians 'by the way of commerce and trade', however he took Powhatan's son and daughter, and 'freely suffered them to depte'. It was acts of violence like this that forced the local Native tribes to turn to war, and they began openly attacking Jamestown and the settlers. In response to the death of Powhatan's son and daughter, the natives captured Ratcliffe and while he was still alive, 'his fleshe was skraped from his bones wth mussel shelles'.²⁴ Powhatan's people 'cruelly muthered, and massacred' English colonists and he 'sent none of his *Indians* to trade with vs, but laied secret ambushes in the woods'.²⁵ These activities caused great fear and misery for the colonists at Jamestown. They were attacked regularly and as the Indians provided a large proportion of their food, their standard of living would have quickly decreased.

Through poor leadership, the Jamestown colony was almost brought to a premature end during the winter of 1609. Due to the poor decisions made by the leaders of Jamestown, Powhatan decided the best way to deal with the English was to trap them inside their own settlement until

²² 'Francis Magnel's Relation of the First Voyage and the Beginnings of the Virginia Colony (1 July 1610)', in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 -1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 153.

²³ George Percy, "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 3 (1921-22): pp.262-263.

²⁴ George Percy, "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 3 (1921-22), pp. 265-266.

²⁵ 'True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie (1610)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...*, (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844) p. 17.

they died of starvation and disease. This period became known as the Starving Time and many of the colonists perished. Accounts from this period reveal the horrors that the colonists faced during this time. In Percy's letter, he reported that the colonists began to feel 'the sharpe pricke of hunger' and how they were forced to eat horses, dogs, cats, rats and mice. Conditions worsened and the men started to eat boots, shoes and anything leather. Finally the colonists were forced to 'digge up dead corpses out of graves and to eate them'. On one occasion a man murdered his pregnant wife and chopped her up 'into pieces and salted her for his food', when this was discovered he was sentenced to death.²⁶ This shows how horrific the conditions were in Jamestown and how badly it affected them during war with Powhatan. It was not only starvation that killed off the colonists during the Starving Time, but also the spread of disease. Living in such close quarters meant that many also succumbed to the foul water they were being forced to drink, diseases spread easily and many were picked off by the native enemies who waited outside of the settlement. These details were chronicled by William Strachey, who arrived in Virginia in 1610 with the men who were shipwrecked on the Bermudas led by Sir Thomas Gates. In his description of the conditions he found Jamestown in, Strachey reported how he found palisades torn down, ports open, and empty houses caused by the high level of death. Strachey described the scene as one of 'desolation and misery', while also commenting on the Native attacks, particularly how 'the Indians killed as fast without, if our men stirred but beyond the bounds of their blockhouse, as famine and pestilence did within'.²⁷ The war with the Natives had a devastating effect on the colonists and their position in Jamestown during their early years in Virginia, however, this was not the end of warfare. The Jamestown colonists made it through the Starving Time, and they responded by increasingly attacking the Natives. Peace only came with Pocahontas's marriage to John Rolfe in 1614.

Unfortunately, peace was not constant, and on 22 March 1622 the Natives attacked the English in what became known as the Virginia Massacre. After years of growing tension caused by the arrival of an increasing number of English colonists, the natives began to fear that they would be forced off of their own land, and this resulted in an overall mistrust of the English. The natives believed now was the time to put an end to the colony. They attacked the colony at Jamestown and other surrounding settlements, where they 'basely and barbarously murdered, not sparing

²⁶ George Percy, "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 3 (1921-22), pp.266-267.

²⁷ William Strachey, 'A True Reportory of the Wreck', in Louis B. Wright (ed.), *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609: Two Narratives, Strachey's "True Reportory" and Jourdain's Discovery of the Bermudas*, (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), pp. 23-24.

either age or sex, man, women or child'. Accounts reported how 347 men, women and children were killed, and how the natives 'fell after again upon the dead ... defacing, dragging, and mangling the dead carcasses into many pieces'.²⁸ This was a devastating blow for the colonists, more than one fourth of the population in Virginia was murdered in one go. This massacre led to more violence, as the English responded by declaring open war against their native neighbours.

Perhaps the biggest reasons for discontent in the colony were caused by economic conditions in this period. As already mentioned there were a number of factors that impacted on the colonies ability to trade and produce food, including environmental conditions, leadership issues and the relationship with the local Native tribes. During this period the colony suffered from terrible food shortages that led to many deaths caused by malnutrition and famine.

Food production was a major problem in the early years of Jamestown. There was a labour issue, where the colonists were not producing enough food to feed themselves and were only working very short hours each day. William Strachey's account of the conditions at Jamestown noted that the colonists 'by ten of the clock have done their morning's work: at what time they have their allowances set out ready for them, and until it be three of the clock again they take their own pleasure, and afterward, with the sunset, their day's labor is finished'.²⁹ For many years it has been believed that the reason for this was due to the colonists being lazy and idle, this is the traditional explanation provided in contemporary writing. In a piece of writing commissioned by the Virginia Company of London in 1610, called a *True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie*, the colonists idleness was continually mentioned, where they were described as having 'intemperate idlenes' and being so lazy that 'they eat their fish raw, rather than they would go a stones cast to fetch wood'.³⁰ However, this report was written to try and promote exploration to Virginia, so would have tried to focus the blame for the colonies failings on the colonists rather than the conditions in Jamestown. More recently, this view of the colonists' laziness has been questioned. The fact that Jamestown colonists seem to have neglected producing their own food was often put down to the fact that many of them were gentlemen and noblemen, who would have never had to do menial labour before arriving in Jamestown. They saw certain tasks as demeaning to their status and were reluctant, therefore, to complete them. For example they

²⁸ Edward Waterhouse, "Race War in Virginia", Susan Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, 1933, pp. 550-51, 556-557.

²⁹ William Strachey, 'A True Reportory of the Wreck', in Louis B. Wright (ed.), *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609*, p. 70.

³⁰ 'True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie (1610)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...*, (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844), pp. 14-15.

saw themselves as being above planting corn, and menial farm work.³¹ However, it is unlikely that this was the main reason behind the lack of farming and labour in the settlement. If you examine the archaeological evidence unearthed by William Kelso at Jamestown, it makes it hard to believe that the colonists were idle. As Kelso's evidence reveals, the colonists quickly constructed the fort, they dug a one thousand foot long trench and built a fourteen foot palisade.³² It was more likely that they were unable to perform long working days due to malnutrition, disease and depression that would have set in after a few months of living in the terrible conditions of Jamestown.³³

George Percy documents many of the colonist's deaths in his observations of Jamestown, for example:

'The sixt of August there died Iohn Asbie of the bloudie Flix. The ninth day died George Flowre of the swelling. The tenth day died William Bruster Gentleman, of a wound giuen by the Sauages, and was buried the eleuenth day'.³⁴

The way that Percy lists the people who died helps us to understand the scale of death in the colony, and the reasons for these deaths. Although Percy recorded how some died from cruel diseases, burning fevers and war, his letter reveals additionally that 'for the most part they died of meere famine'.³⁵ Clearly, evidence highlights how the economic situation in Jamestown was dire.

The mortality rates speak for themselves when considering the living conditions at Jamestown. By 1608, after only a year of being in America, only thirty-eight of the original 108 colonists remained alive. These rates did not get any better in the following years. After the Starving Time of 1609, the population was reduced from five hundred to sixty in only six months. The mortality rates once again became a drastic problem in the years 1619-1622, when the Virginia Company began to rapidly send unprepared men and women to Virginia. With these added people, the number of colonists reached 4,270, however three thousand of these settlers died.³⁶ Therefore it

³¹ Martin H. Quitt, 'Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), p. 233, Edmund S. Morgan, 'The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18', *The American Historical Review*, 72 (1671), pp. 596-597.

³² Tony Horwitz, *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2009), p341.

³³ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown', *The Journal of American History*, 66 (1979), pp.24-27.

³⁴ 'George Percy's Discourse (1608? Before 12 April 1612)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 143-144.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown', *The Journal of American History*, 66 (1979), p. 24.

is not surprising when looking at these figures that many men decided that they had a better chance of living if they abandoned the colony, be that to live with the local natives or to try and return home to England.

In conclusion, by exploring life in Jamestown categorically it has been established that the conditions that the English settlers were living in were horrific. The environmental conditions that they arrived in meant that they were placed in a difficult situation from the very start, the socio-political conditions led to tension, mistrust, and poor leadership, and the economic conditions meant that food was limited and mixed with disease and war, mortality rates were extremely high. It becomes easier to understand why the colonists at Jamestown made the decisions they did when it came to running away from the settlement. The percentage of the population at Jamestown that did decide to run away were doing so in an attempt not only find a better lifestyle, but also a better chance of survival.

Chapter Three – Renegades

Renegades on the European continent were described as being ‘Disloyal and traitorous’ by an author in 1607, the year that the colony was founded at Jamestown.¹ It did not take much time before the men in England’s first permanent colony in America abandoned their fellow settlers and turned renegade themselves. In this chapter, Jamestown’s own disloyal and traitorous renegades will be explored, and it will be argued that it was the poor conditions that the men and women were forced to live in that turned them into renegades. The years that will be covered are 1607 until the year of the Virginia Massacre of 1622. The date of the Virginia Massacre is a fitting time to end research into renegades at Jamestown as any connection between the English and the local native tribes was halted. There was open warfare between the two, and English settlers were no longer able to safely run away to live with the natives. During the period after the massacre, there is little, if no evidence of renegades in Virginia.

Renegades have been largely overlooked when it comes to the history of English expansion in America, especially during the early years of the Jamestown settlement. James Axtell and Colin G. Calloway’s research is helpful in providing an overview of the history of renegades in colonial America, however, very little information about the renegades of Jamestown is explored in their work.² Information on renegades in Jamestown and early English colonial America is usually brief and lacking in detail. Benjamin Woolley’s research on the renegade William White, while interesting, raises questions about desertion within the colony; the extent to which this was a common occurrence in this period; and the identity of other renegades aside from White.³ Bernard Sheehan takes a different approach when examining renegades and considers ideas surrounding desertion, such as the concept of betrayal. This prompts further investigation about who this betrayal was against – the state, the colony, or both. He focuses on the relationship and misunderstandings between the white men and native societies in America. While examining this relationship Sheehan talks about the men who ran away as renegades and how the English viewed this as the greatest betrayal as they were choosing to turn their backs on civilisation for

¹ Rene de Lucinge and Sieur des Alymes, *The beginning, continuance, and decay of estates vvherein are handled many notable questions concerning the establishment of empires and monarchies*, (London: Printed at Eliot’s Court Press for Iohn Bill, 1606).

² James Axtell, ‘The White Indians of Colonial America’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 32 (1975), Colin G. Calloway, ‘Neither White nor Red: White Renegades on the American Frontier’, *Western Historical Quarterly*, 17 (1986).

³ Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: Virginia and the Founding of English America* (London: Harper Press, 2007).

the lifestyle of a savage. Once again this is an evaluation of renegades as a whole, and is not focused on any particular place or time during colonial American history.⁴ A concise evaluation of the Jamestown renegades is missing from the historiography which this chapter will address.

This chapter will explore renegades in depth to try and provide a greater understanding of the colonists who decided that life would be better with the natives than with their fellow English settlers in Jamestown. This will be achieved first by exploring the definition of 'renegade', something that has not been effectively accomplished in other texts on this topic. A number of questions will also be answered as effectively as possible through the examination of contemporary accounts, letters and records, these will include subjects such as who the renegades were, where, how were they treated, and, what caused them to run away from Jamestown.

A clear and definitive definition of the word renegade has not been thoroughly achieved regarding seventeenth century colonisation in America. Contemporary definitions include words such as turncoat, rebel and deserter, however, to fully understand what was meant in contemporary writing when the term was used, we need to examine the Jacobian definitions as well. From examining uses of words such as renegades, renegado, and renegates in texts from this period, we can get a better idea of its contemporary meaning. In Edmund Bolton's *The Elementa of Armories* (1610), there is a short definition of the word 'Renegado'. Bolton was an English poet and historian born in 1575, he noted that a renegado was 'one that renyes, or renounceth the faith, that is (in this receiued sense of the word) the CHRISTIAN faith'.⁵ This suggests that the word renegade had a religious connection. When looking at early uses of the word more broadly during the Jacobean period, it is common for it to have a religious connotation, suggesting someone who has abandoned their faith or decided to convert to another. In a sermon preached by John Hoskins at Hereford in 1615, we get an idea of how renegades were viewed by the church. In the sermon, the question is raised as to what punishment a renegade deserves. The answer given, is that although someone who runs away from their master should be punished by the whipping post or by the house of correction, for a renegade this is not a severe enough punishment, 'There must be no whipping post for such a Renegado'.⁶

⁴ Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism & Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (North Carolina: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 110.

⁵ Edmund Bolton, *The Elements of Armories* (London: Printed by George Eld, 1610) EEBO.

⁶ John Hoskins, *Sermons Preached at Pauls Crosse and else-where* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Nathaniel Butter, 1615).

The term renegade was used to describe English colonists who ran away to live amongst the Indians, for example, by Edwards Maria Wingfield in his *Discourse*, written in 1608. Wingfield talks of 'our men runnagates' when describing men who had run away from the colony. Yet, the word did not originate in an English or colonial context, but can be traced to 1599 North Africa, where the word renegade was an accepted term to describe Britons in North Africa who converted to Islam. Richard Hakluyt, a famous Elizabethan and Jacobean writer whose work mainly focused on promoting English colonisation, uses the term renegade in this way. In his work, *The Principle Navigations*, it states that a renegado 'is one that first was a Christian, and afterwards becommeth a Turke'⁷. Other contemporary texts use the word renegade in connection to Englishmen in Turkey. In Anthony Nixon's, *The three English brothers Sir Thomas Sherley his travells, vvith his three years imprisonment in Turke* (1609). There is a chapter on the manners and fashions of the Turks. In this chapter, the reader is told that there are two types of Turkes, 'the natural Turke, and the Renegado', the author then continues by describing the 'Renegadoes' as being 'rougues', 'skum' and 'villaines'. Once again there is a religious connection used, the renegades are said to be 'Atheists, vnable to live in Christendome, and fled to the Turkes for succour, and releefe'.⁸ The word renegade seems to have had a negative implication no matter the context it was used in. It is commonly used as a derogatory word, with the aim of being disrespectful and insulting.

Despite there being a strong connection between the term renegade and religion in the seventeenth century, during early English colonisation in America this does not seem to be the case. In Jamestown the word renegade does not seem to have such strong religious associations. The term seems to have more of a social meaning, the renegades were not turning their backs on religion but on English civility and society. It could be argued that the colonist's reasons for abandoning Jamestown were based more on their fear for their own survival, rather than any anti-Christian feelings they may have had. An alternative definition of the word renegade is 'A person who deserts, betrays, or is disloyal to an organization, country, or set of principles; a turncoat, a traitor'.⁹ This meaning of the word was used during the seventeenth century, and

⁷ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principle Navigations, Voyages, traffiques and discoveries* (London: By George Bishop, Ralph Newberie and Robert Barker, 1598-1600).

⁸ Anthony Nixon, *The three English brothers Sir Thomas Sherley his travells, vvith his three yeares imprisonment in Turke* (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1607).

⁹ "renegade, n. and adj.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/162410?rskey=xLG5Je&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed 8 June 2016).

shows that a renegade did not always have to be motivated by religion, and is closer to the renegades found at Jamestown in this period.

Through exploring modern conceptions of the term 'renegade', it is clear that Colin G. Calloway comes the closest in giving a definition of what a renegade was in colonial America. As Calloway states 'a renegade was someone who abandoned white society to live with Indians and who was prepared to fight with them against his own kind'. According to Calloway the term was used loosely, and was often applied to men living with Native wives, English captives who chose to stay living with native tribes and people of mixed Anglo-Indian parentage.¹⁰ This suggests that the term renegade may have been used for many different people, in many different situations, meaning that there is not one definitive definition. Therefore, to avoid any confusion, I will offer my own definition of the term purely on its meaning during the early years of the Jamestown settlement. Drawing upon Calloway's ideas, as well as contemporary uses of the word, the term 'renegade' will be used to describe English men and women who ran away from the colony at Jamestown to live amongst the Native Americans. They are people who have abandoned their fellow countrymen and turned their back on English society in an attempt to improve their chances of survival in the New World.

This definition provides a means by which to explore who precisely were the renegades of Jamestown. However, it is worth noting that any analysis of the identification of individuals classed as renegades is hindered by a lack of sources on the topic. There are a few reasons for this lack of sources, the first being that renegades were seen as a negative problem in Jamestown. If it was discovered back in England that men were choosing to run away to live with the natives, who were seen as uncivilised savages, rather than in the Christian civilised colony of Jamestown, it would have been a disaster for the Virginia Company. Questions would be raised as to why the men were leaving, and perhaps Jamestown would have been seen as a failure and investors would have backed out of funding the project. This meant that the Virginia Company would not have wanted any work published that spoke of the renegades who were leaving the colony. This would have been counterproductive to their aim of attracting the interest of potential colonists and investors.

Another reason that may have resulted in the lack of sources on renegades was that the majority of accounts that we have on early Jamestown were written by members of the council. They would not have wanted to admit that men were choosing to run away under their leadership as it

¹⁰ Colin G. Calloway, 'Neither white nor Red: White Renegades on the American Frontier', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 17 (1986), pp. 43-44.

may have suggested that they were incompetent and not suitable to be running the colony. Nicholas Canny argues that John Smith did exactly this, and down played the seriousness of the problem in his works when it came to runaways during his presidency. Benjamin Woolley suggests that the 'conspiracy of silence arose out of a combination of envy and resentment. When they slipped from the settlement, the renegades entered into the feverish imaginations of those left behind'.¹¹ This implies that the remaining colonists, not only members of the council, would have preferred not to talk about those who left the colony.

A further factor undermining a clear definition of who the renegades actually were, is that a large number of records no longer exist. This loss of information hinders our research into early Jamestown. Indeed, as Susan Kingsbury points out, it is thought that if the papers of the private plantations and other records were added to the already absent documents, that the number of missing records would be very great.¹² The large number of missing documents before 1619 has led some to believe that the crown may have ordered the destruction of the records in an attempt to hide the mismanagement and poor conditions in the colony between 1607 and 1619.¹³ Conservators point to the impact that the continual conflict with the Native Americans had on the preservation of original documents. It is also shocking that any records survive considering that the palisade fort and the church where the Jamestown records of the Virginia Company were held was burnt down several times during the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Knowledge of renegades exists on account of the men who either returned to Jamestown and were accepted back into the colony, or were brought back to be punished. We still do not know much about the renegades at Jamestown, for example how many renegades ran away and never returned, or what would have happened to them once that had been accepted into a native tribe, purely because these records do not exist.

Although it is difficult to find detailed information about the people who decided to turn renegade and run away to live within the local native tribes, there are a few common traits that seem to appear. The contemporary sources that we have from the early years of Jamestown usually only give brief mentions of the people who chose to abandon the colony, usually they are

¹¹ Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: Virginia and the Founding of English America* (London: Harper Press, 2007), p. 95.

¹² Susan Kingsbury (ed.), *The Records of the Virginia Company of London, Vol 1.* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1906), p. 107.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹⁴ Sylvia R. Albro and Holly H. Krueger, 'The Jamestown Records of the Virginia Company of London: A Conservator's Perspective', Library of Congress (2000), <https://www.loc.gov/collections/thomas-jefferson-papers/articles-and-essays/the-jamestown-records-of-the-virginia-company-of-london-a-conservators-perspective/> (accessed 12 June 2016).

not named at all, but sometimes a surname or full name is given of an individual. By using these names, we can get an idea of the people who decided that life with the Native Americans was better than life at Jamestown. What we do learn is that most of the renegades who were mentioned by name in sources seem to be of lower social order, either labourers, sailors or soldiers. There is also a lack of women recorded as renegades, but this could be caused by the low numbers of women at Jamestown during its first few years. There was no serious effort to recruit female colonists before 1620. However this information needs to be viewed with caution, as we only have material regarding renegades from a small number of contemporary sources. The men who wrote these accounts were usually members of the council at Jamestown and we do not know what their motives would have been behind recording this information.

By looking at the colonists that have been named as renegades in these sources individually, we can get a better idea of the positions that they would have held at Jamestown, and the reasons why they decided to leave the colony. Not all of the people recorded can be examined in detail as in some cases there is not enough information, however there are a few where enough sources can be found, these include William White, Robert Markham, and a group of renegades referred to as 'Dutchmen'.

William White was a colonist who arrived in Virginia on the first charter in 1607, he is recorded by Smith as being a labourer in a list of the first planters to arrive at Jamestown.¹⁵ He quickly slipped away to live with the Natives at Quiyoughcahannock, which was the centre of native religion along the James River. Details about White's life as a renegade exist as he returned to the colony, and recorded his experiences. From his writing we get an insight into the Powhatan tribe's ways of life, such as 'their ceremonies of honoring the Sunne'. White claimed that in the morning before the sun rose, the men, women and children go to the water and wash. When the sun came up, they would make sacrifices to it, by spreading tobacco on the land and water, and repeating this ritual at sunset. However we can also see some of the misconceptions that the English had towards the natives, for example White writes that 'In some part of the Countrey they haue yearely a sacrifice of children'. He records how he witnessed boys being 'cast on a heape in a Valley, as dead', but it is thought that White misunderstood what he witnessed and in reality the children were taking part in a ceremony and were unharmed.¹⁶

¹⁵ 'John Smith, The General History: The Third Book (1624)' in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Company, The First Decade: 1607-1617* (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001), p. 229.

¹⁶ 'William White, Fragments published in 1614 (before 1614)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 – 1609, Vol 1*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 147-150.

From White's writing we also discover the reason for his return to Jamestown, he reports witnessing a fellow English colonist being captured and gruesomely executed by the natives that he was living with. The colonist who was captured by the tribe was George Casson, one of three Cassons who would have travelled to Jamestown with White in 1607. Casson was brought before the tribe, and White records that he was 'stripped naked, and bound to two stakes', and that they then 'rippe him and burne his bowels, and dried his flesh to the bones'.¹⁷ It is not surprising that seeing the brutal execution of a man who White had spent a long period of time alongside on the voyage over from England would make him want to return to Jamestown. Usually the punishment for being a renegade was severe, however at the time that White returned to the colony, it was in such a dire state that the council were too weak to punish him, and believed that his knowledge of native customs and ways of life would be helpful for the colony's survival.

Robert Marcum was another Jamestown colonist who also became a renegade, he embraced Native life so entirely that he changed his name to a native one, 'Moutapass'. In contrast to scholars such as Nicholas Canny who suggest that Marcum turned renegade in 1616, my research suggests that Robert Marcum turned renegade much earlier.¹⁸ From a source written by a gentleman of the colony, thought to be Captain Gabriel Archer in 1607, 'Robert Markhum' went on an expedition with Captain Christopher Newport on a 'Discovery of our River'. The account states that 'Captain Newport (having fitted our shallup with provisions and all necessaryes belonging to a discovery) took 5. gentlemen. 4. Maryners. and. 14. Saylours'. Marcum is recorded as being one of the fourteen 'saylours', which tells us that he was of a lower order in Jamestown.¹⁹ It is believed that none of the fourteen sailors who appeared on this list returned to Virginia. Although we cannot know for sure what the outcome was for these men, the sparsity of evidence is equally revealing. We can surmise that they either died on their journey, were captured by the natives against their will, became renegades or ran away to another location other than a native tribe. However, the fact we know that Marcum became a renegade and chose to live amongst the natives makes it believable that some of the other fourteen men might have done the same. Evidence clearly suggests that Marcum turned renegade during this expedition in 1607, as none of the men returned to Jamestown. A later source written by John Smith also

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 150.

¹⁸ Nicholas Canny, 'The Permissive Frontier: the problem of social control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550-1650', in K. R. Andrews et al (eds.), *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), p. 32.

¹⁹ 'A relation ...written ... by a gent. of ye Colony. [Captain Gabriel Archer?] (1607)' in Philip L. Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606 – 1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 80-82.

mentions that Robert Marcum, who in this text is referred to by the name 'Moutapass', by 1621 had spent five years living amongst 'the northerly nations'.²⁰

Captain John Smith and a number of other contemporary documenters talk about a group of four men they refer to as 'Dutchmen', these men were sent to build an English style house for Powhatan and quickly decided that they had a better chance of survival if they stayed with the natives. Smith states that to gain Powhatan's favour, they 'reuealed to him as much as they knew of our estates and proiects', they also stole weapons and tools from the colony and taught Powhatan how they should be used. In return for their services, the Dutchmen were allowed to live with the Natives and to be free from any miseries that may fall upon the Jamestown colony. Once it was realised that the Dutchmen were stealing from the colony, a man named William Volda was sent 'with pardons and promises to regain them'.²¹

It is thought that John Smith tried to avoid talking about the renegades who left Jamestown under his presidency, as he thought it shone a negative light on his leadership. However, it is possible that he was willing to talk about the desertion of these Dutchmen, as they were not English and therefore would not have been expected to be as loyal to England and the Virginia Company. Nevertheless, Smith in his discussion of the Dutchmen mentions another English colonist by name who turned renegade. Smith talks of sending Volda to 'reclaim the Dutchmen, and one Bentley an other fugitue', suggesting that a colonist called Bentley was also living with the Natives.²² Earlier in Smith's *Travels and Works*, there is a record of a journey to Pamavne on the 29 December 1608, and a list of men who went. Amongst these colonists is a man named William Bentley, although we cannot be certain, it is likely that this is the same Bentley who was referred to as a fugitive. Bentley is listed under the title of 'Sould', meaning that yet again, another of the renegades was a member of the lower order in Jamestown.²³

By looking at the kind of men and women that were being sent as colonists to Virginia, it is possible to understand why so many renegades seem to be of the lower social orders in the early years of Jamestown. A letter from the Council of Virginia to the Mayor of London in 1609, provides details of the type of men and women who were being chosen for English expansion in America. In the letter, the Virginia Council suggests that the Mayor 'ease the city and suburbs' of London by sending the 'unnecessary inmates' who were a 'contynual cause of dearth bad famine,

²⁰ 'John Smith, The General Historie of Virginia; The Fourth Booke (1624)' in Lyon Gardiner Tyler (ed.), *Narratives of Early Virginia 1606-1625*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, INC., 1959), p. 353.

²¹ Smith, John. *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, Edited by Edward Arber* (Edinburgh J. Grant, 1910), pp. 132-158.

²² *Ibid*, p. 158.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 131.

and the very original cause of all the Plagues that happen in this Kingdome' to Jamestown. These men and women were being forced to leave their homes in England to be sent to a foreign land, more than likely against their will, all because a few gentlemen believed it to be 'pleasing to God and happy for the Comon Wealth'.²⁴ It is not surprising therefore that there was a lack of loyalty amongst these people towards the colony at Jamestown and the men who ran it.

Nabil Matar suggests another reason for there being a higher proportion of colonists from the lower social orders becoming renegades. He argues that European aristocracy were more likely to fashion themselves against 'the Other' (the Other in this case being the Native Americans), whereas, those of the lower orders were more willing to transform themselves into 'the Other'.²⁵ There was less of a cultural divide between the labourers and sailors who were sent to Jamestown and the people of the local tribes, meaning that it was less of a cultural jump for them to accept life in the native community. Also, the settlers of lower classes who were sent to Jamestown had less to gain than the gentlemen and aristocracy in America. Therefore, their main focus would have been on their personal survival, not gaining power or wealth, which may have meant that they would have abandoned the colony without much deliberation during times of famine and disease. Life with the Natives would have also granted these men freedom that they may have never experienced before living under the constraints of the English state.

Colin Calloway puts forward the idea that renegades were viewed by fellow colonists as the epitome of evil and as having committed the ultimate act of betrayal in his assessment of white renegades on the American Indian frontier.²⁶ Contemporary writing from those at Jamestown tells us that some renegades that returned to the colony were treated in such a way that would suggest that this was true. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sir Thomas Dale arrived at Jamestown in 1611, and introduced a set of strict laws called the *Lawes, Divine, Morall and Martiall*. One of these laws was introduced to prevent renegades running away from the colony, it stated that, 'No man or woman (upon paine of death) shall runne away from the Colonie, to Powhatan, or any sauage Weroance else whatsoever'.²⁷ Dale was true to his word when it came to punishing renegades, George Percy reports Dale's treatment of colonists that he captured who had ran away to live with the natives. He used severe methods to execute these runaways, 'Some

²⁴ 'The Council of Virginia to the Lord Mayor of London (1609)' in Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964) p. 252.

²⁵ Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 95.

²⁶ Colin Calloway, 'Neither white nor Red: White Renegades on the American Frontier', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 17 (1986), p. 44.

²⁷ 'Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall (1612)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...* (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844), p. 16.

he appointed to be hanged Some burned Some to be broken upon wheles, others to be staked and some to be shott to death'. The reason for these extreme and cruel measures according to Percy was to prevent others from 'Attempteinge the Lyke'.²⁸

In a source by another colonist, Ralph Hamor, we can see how these strict laws brought fear to settlers who had turned renegade. Hamor records the incident of Pocahontas's kidnapping in 1613, and how she would not be returned to her father unless he would 'ransom her with our men, swords, pieces, and other tools treacherously taken'. At this time Powhatan was recorded as harbouring eight renegades from Jamestown that they wanted returned to them. After three months Powhatan returned seven of these men, however when the first opportunity arose they ran away from their fellow colonists to return to the natives. When Powhatan was asked about the missing men, it was discovered that the 'Englishmen lately with him, fearful to be put to death by us, were run away'.²⁹ This suggest that the men knew that if they were to return to Jamestown they would be severely punished for their crimes, and that a life with the natives was preferable to returning to the colony and facing the consequences of their actions.

However, renegades were not always treated in such extreme ways. Evidence suggest that not all renegades were punished when they returned to their fellow English colonists at Jamestown. As already mentioned, William White was not punished when he returned to Jamestown. But there seems to be other cases of leniency towards renegades later on in Jamestown's history. One record that can be found in the Virginia Company's documents shows how two renegades, George White and Henry Potter, who returned in 1617 were excused for their crimes. It states that one 'Geo. White pardoned for running away to ye Indians with his arms & ammunition which facts deserve death according to ye express articles & laws of this Colony' and how Potter was also pardoned for 'Stealing a Calf & running to Indians'.³⁰ It is not clear why these men were pardoned for their crimes, when earlier renegades were sentenced so harshly, and the source refers to the colonies laws. Perhaps by 1617, the reports of the extreme laws and punishments being practiced in the New World were causing such negative criticism that they had to be seen to be lenient.

²⁸Percy, George. "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 3 (1921-22), p. 280.

²⁹ 'Ralph Hamor, A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia (1615)' in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Company – The First Decade: 1607-1616*, (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001) pp. 803-807.

³⁰ 'Governor Argall, Pardon to George White, Arthur Edwards, and Henry Potter (October 20, 1617)' in Susan Kingsbury (ed.), *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, Vol III (Washington: Library of Congress, 1906), p. 74.

Renegades were not the only group at Jamestown to be viewed negatively and treated poorly by their fellow colonists. A few young boys were sent to live with the Native Americans for the purpose of learning the language and becoming interpreters and intermediaries. Three main boys were recorded as being interpreters during the first few years of the colony; they were Thomas Savage, Henry Spelman and Robert Poole. John Smith records how on Thomas Savage's arrival to Jamestown he was soon handed to the natives. As Smith noted, 'a boy named Savage was then given unto Powhatan'.³¹ These children were accepted into the local tribes, but due to the amount of time they spent with the natives, they faced in turn hostility and mistrust from their fellow Englishmen. It was thought that they would be easily manipulated, and would have divided loyalties. These boys were viewed negatively due to their connections and friendship with the Native Americans in Virginia. An example of this can be found in the records of the Virginia Company, where one of the young boys, Henry Spelman, was put on trial at Jamestown in August 1619. He was charged with talking very 'unreverently and maliciously' about the Governor of Jamestown to Opochancono, a paramount native chief who is thought to have been Powhatan's younger brother, and by doing so compromising the governors and the colony's 'honour and dignity'. For this crime, his punishment was to perform seven years' service to the colony by being the Governor's interpreter. Despite this being a far less severe punishment than was given to renegades, Spelman was still being punished for his involvement with the local natives. During this trial he was said to have been 'one that has in him more of the Savage then of the Christian', which echoes the views that were held towards the renegades who abandoned the colony to live as savages.³²

In identifying some of the renegades of Jamestown, it is possible to explore now the motives behind their decision to abandon the colony in favour of native life. In turn, this sheds further light on life at Jamestown in its early years. Martin H. Quitt argues that colonists turned renegade on account of the desperate need for food from the natives; a shortage of English women; disease and sickness in Jamestown; that there was a native numerical predominance; and lastly the unstable leadership within the colony.³³ Most of these reasons were caused by issues within Jamestown, many of which have been explored in the previous chapter.

³¹ Philip L. Barbour (ed.). *The Complete Work of Captain John Smith (1580-1631): In three Volumes* (London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), p.156.

³² 'John Pory "A Reporte of the Manner of Proceeding in the General Assembly Convented at James City" (July - August 1619)' in Susan Kingsbury (ed.), *The Records of the Virginia Company of London, Vol III* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1906), pp. 174-175.

³³ Martin H Quitt, 'Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), pp. 232-243.

Bernard Sheehan explores the argument that it was conditions at Jamestown that resulted in discontented colonists who decided to turn renegade. He states that as soon as food began to run out, many settlers deserted the colony and began to 'drift' towards the local native tribes. He also points out that the numbers fluctuated with the conditions in the colony, such as the 'health and tranquillity'. This indicates that it was the poor conditions at Jamestown that led to renegades, as we see an increase in the number of runaways during periods of distress in the colony. He finishes by describing life in Jamestown as being a 'dismal existence'.³⁴ Yet, it can also be argued that the attractiveness of native culture was also a factor.

When reading contemporary accounts of life in Jamestown, it seems that there is a positive correlation between poor leadership, and the number of renegades running away from the colony. Leadership issues led to an increase in the migration of settlers to the local tribes. The president that seems to have had the most recorded renegades during his leadership is Sir Thomas Dale. George Percy records a time when many colonists decided to turn renegade during Dale's leadership. Due to a number of skirmishes with the natives, Dale ordered the building of a fort, which was to be named 'Henericas foarte' in honour of Prince Henry. The natives tried to prevent the fort from being built and attacked the workers by shooting arrows into the fortification which wounded and killed a number of men. Percy's account states that before the fort was finished 'dyvrs of his [Dale's] men beinge Idile and not willing to take paynes did Runne Away unto the Indyans'.³⁵ Although there seems to be a large number of renegades during this periods, it does not necessarily mean that there were not a large number of settlers leaving the colony when there were other leaders in control. We are just lucky enough to have sources that give examples of renegades during Dale's leadership, where sources about renegades might be lacking or not exist from other periods of leadership.

David D. Smits suggest that 'to English males deprived of sexual gratification, Powhatan women were tantalizing if dangerous inducements to visit or dwell in Indian towns'.³⁶ The lack of women at Jamestown would have meant that life in a native tribe, where there would have been many young women, would have been very appealing to the men at Jamestown. A letter from the Spanish ambassador, Zuniga to King Philip III, talks of English men marrying Native women. Zuniga

³⁴Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (North Carolina: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 113.

³⁵ George Percy, "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, 3 (1921-22), p. 280.

³⁶ David D. Smits, "'Abominable Mixture": Towards the Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage in Seventeenth-Century Virginia', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 95 (1987), p. 171.

informs the king that he had heard from a reliable friend that some of the English in Jamestown had married savage women, 'there are already 40 or 50 thus married'.³⁷ This source needs to be viewed with caution, as the Spanish were against English expansion in America so would not have been against spreading negative rumours about the English colonists in Virginia. However, later on more women were sent to Jamestown as brides for the English colonists. For example in 1619 there is a record in the colonial state papers of the number of people sent out to Virginia and for what purpose. In this record it states that ninety young maids were sent to 'make wives for so many of the former tenants'.³⁸ Yet there are still records of men who decided that life would be better as a renegade, even with the increase of available women in the colony.

English colonists who ran away to live with neighbouring tribes were not always accepted, when the Natives and Jamestown colonists were on peaceful terms it was common for runaways to be returned to the colony. The tribe would use the white colonist for menial work and then send them back for punishment. There are a number of contemporary accounts that support this, Edward Maria Wingfield comments on how in September 1607 the Paspaheigh tribe sent back a boy who had run from the colony as a sign of peace.³⁹ A similar story is told later by John Smith in his *Complete Works*. He tells the reader that the Natives were glad of an opportunity to 'testifie their love unto us', and when Englishmen ran away to them, they would tell them that 'who would not work must not eat, till they were neere starved indeede, continually threatening to beate them to death', until they returned them to Jamestown for punishment.⁴⁰ This supports the argument that it was the poor conditions at Jamestown that led colonists to become renegades, and not the pull of Indian society. If there was a chance that they would not be accepted into a tribe and would be returned to face the death sentence, it is more likely that they would be running away for their survival.

From exploring renegades in Jamestown, it becomes clear that despite being largely overlooked, they had a large influence on the colony and its relationship with local tribes. Although some argue that it was the pull of the native culture and way of life that drew men and women to become renegades, this chapter has shown that cultural factors would have only been a small motivation, if any at all. From examining the conditions that English settlers were forced to live in,

³⁷ 'Flores (Zuniga) to Philip III (1612)' in Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 572.

³⁸ TNA, CO 1/1 No 46. 1619

³⁹ 'Edward Maria Wingfield, Discourse (1608)' in Philip L. Barbour (ed.), *The Jamestown Voyages Under The First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 214.

⁴⁰ Philip L. Barbour (ed.). *The Complete Work of Captain John Smith (1580-1631): In three Volumes* (London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 214.

and the punishments they would have faced if caught, it seems clear that their main motive for leaving the colony would have been for their own survival, and to escape from the misery and famine at Jamestown. The next chapter will strengthen this argument by looking at colonists who ran away to other locations during the early years of Jamestown, showing that it was not only the attractiveness of the natives that caused them to abandon the colony.

Chapter Four – Rebellion and Discontent

In a letter written in 1611 by Sir Thomas Dale, the deputy governor of the colony, he describes members of the colony as being ‘so profane, so riotous, so full of mutiny and treasonable intendments’.¹ Clearly, Dale’s account reveals that high levels of discontent and rebellion existed amongst the colonists in Jamestown’s early years. The colonists did not only respond to the poor conditions by turning renegade, some people used different methods to rebel against their leaders and to run away from the misery that they were living in. From thoroughly examining contemporary documents, we can see how colonists objected to life in Jamestown, mutinied against their leaders and ran away from America all together.

In Nicholas Canny’s exploration of rebellion in Jamestown, he refers to the colony’s first years as ‘exceptionally turbulent’². Canny argues that the colony’s failures stemmed from the inability of the organisers of the expedition to maintain control over those that they were sending to Virginia.³ He also believes that it was the type of people that were being sent out to the New World, and the fact that many were ignorant or misinformed about life in Jamestown which led many to quickly act out against authority and the harsh laws of the colony.⁴ The Virginia Company were unable to keep order over the large numbers of disgruntled English colonists thousands of miles away in Virginia, especially with the disjointed leadership we see in the early years of the colony. Virginia Bernhard suggests that although a large amount of discord was caused by personal and political differences, evidence indicates that the distribution of food was a crucial cause of discontent and rebellion within Jamestown.⁵ The lack of a sufficient amount of food from the offset meant that food played a significant role in every colonist’s daily life, making it unsurprising that it was a source of tension during the early years of the colony.

This chapter will explore rebellion and the different ways in which the Jamestown colonists showed their displeasure at life in Virginia. Firstly, by looking at the ways in which the settlers rebelled within the colony, then it will examine how and why a number of colonists attempted to

¹ ‘Thomas Dale, Letter to Salisbury (17 Aug 1611)’ in Edward Wright Haile (ed.). *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, the First Decade: 1607-1617* (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001), p. 557.

² Nicholas Canny ‘The Permissive Frontier: the problem of social control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550-1650’, in K. R. Andrews et al (eds.), *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), p. 28.

³ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁵ Virginia Bernhard, “‘Men, Women and Children’ at Jamestown: Population and Gender in Early Virginia, 1607-1610, *The Journal of Southern History*, 58 (1992), p. 607.

escape Jamestown by any means possible. This will help to strengthen the argument that it was not purely the pull of Native culture that caused men to abandon the Jamestown colony, but the poor conditions that they were forced to endure. A comparison will also be made between the Jamestown colonists and those shipwrecked on the Bermuda islands in 1609 to try and establish why English colonists turned so easily to rebellion and mutiny in the New World.

From looking first at acts of revolt within the Jamestown colony, we can see that turning renegade was not the only act of rebellion that the English colonists turned to. They expressed their discontent in a number of other ways. Some believe that the colonists' disinterest in performing necessary manual labour was an act of rebellion. Canny argues that the colonist's refusal to work was their way of showing their discontent and objection to life within the colony.⁶ As explored in chapter two, from very early on colonists did not perform tasks that were necessary to keep them alive, such as planting crops and building sufficient shelters. This is documented by the Jacobean writer John Chamberlain in a letter to his friend Dudley Carleton in 1612. Chamberlain states that the colonists were more willing to 'die and starve than be brought to any labor', however it is unlikely that such a large number of men and women would risk their lives purely to express their discontent to the colony's leaders.⁷ As we have already explored, the idea that the colonists were experiencing severe depression and health issues which prevented them from working seems more believable. Canny also explores the idea that many colonists turned to alcohol as a form of rebellion. Colonists would drink to drown their sorrows, and make the conditions at Jamestown more bearable, which was frowned upon by the leaders of the colony. The alcohol was purchased from sailors who visited Virginia with supplies and for the purpose of trade.⁸

There was a large amount of unrest and rebellion in the colony when the third supply of settlers arrived in Jamestown in 1609. The new colonists were not pleased with being governed by Captain John Smith, and led by a number of gentlemen including Sir Thomas West, Lord de la Warre, Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers, they opposed his leadership. It is recorded in John Smith's *General History* that although they received the new arrivals as 'our countrymen and friends, they did what they could to murder our president', it is also stated that they attempted

⁶ Nicholas Canny, 'The Permissive Frontier: the problem of social control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550-1650', in K. R. Andrews et al (eds.), *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), pp. 29-30.

⁷ TNA, Chamberlain to Carleton, SP14/70 f.5, July 9, 1612.

⁸ Nicholas Canny, 'The Permissive Frontier: the problem of social control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550-1650', in K. R. Andrews et al (eds.), *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), p. 29.

to raid the food store and 'usurp the government and make us all their servants'.⁹ Evidence suggests that opposition to Smith's authority from the aristocracy at Jamestown was due to his lower ranking status as the son of a farmer. Rebellion against Smith did not stop there, arguably the accident that led to his return to England was no accident at all. Captain Smith was severely injured while he was outside of the Jamestown settlement dealing with some local natives. It is recorded that while he was sleeping in his boat, 'accidentally someone fired his powder bag, which tore the flesh from his body and thigh nine or ten inches square.' The injury was so harsh that Smith was forced to jump overboard to 'quench the tormenting fire frying him in his clothes'.¹⁰ It was thought that perhaps Smith's injuries were not caused 'accidentally', but rather were part of a plan to kill the Captain while he slept. The mutinous colonists had achieved their aim, Smith was forced to return to England and give up his presidency of Jamestown. Smith left Captain George Percy as President of the colony, and when the ship carrying Smith sailed away from Virginia in September 1609, the mutinous feelings in the colony subsided for the meantime.

As examined, a number of men chose to become renegades rather than live in Jamestown. However, colonists did not only abandon Jamestown by running away to live with Native Americans, they also ran to other locations in the New World. Some men thought that running away to live with the Spanish would be better than continuing to live at Jamestown. In 1611, John Smith records that five men, two of which he names as 'Cole and Kitchins', tried to run away to a location where it was known that the Spanish were staying. Smith stated that the men headed for 'Ocanahowan, fiue daies iourney from vs, where they report are Spaniards inhabiting'. However, these men never made it to the Spanish camp as they were caught by Native Americans, who had been hired by the English to find them and return them to the colony so they could 'receiue their deserts'.¹¹ This shows that although the Native American culture might have been attractive and alluring to some members of the Jamestown colony, it was not the only reason for the high levels of desertion. It seems that many colonists took any opportunity that arose to escape the horrors of daily life in Jamestown, and some even wanted to escape the New World all together.

In a *True Declaration*, a text published by the Virginia Company in 1610, it is detailed how a number of colonists ran away to become pirates. 28 or 30 members of the colony 'conspired together' to steal a ship full of supplies obtained from the natives. Their intention was to leave

⁹ 'John Smith, The General History: The Third Book (1624)' in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade: 1607-1617* (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001), pp. 327-328.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 332.

¹¹ John Smith, *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, Edited by Edward Arber* (Edinburgh J. Grant, 1910), p. 508.

Virginia and 'to be professed pirates, with dreames of mountains of gold, and happy robberies'. The author of the text made a point of continually mentioning how by leaving Jamestown they had 'forsooke the colony' and 'wronged the hopes, and subverted the cares of the Colony'.¹² It could be suggested that the Virginia Company were perhaps trying to paint the escaped colonists in a negative light to try and avoid attention themselves. By claiming that the colonists that ran had done so for selfish reasons and personal gain, it might not be noticed that it was in actual fact, most likely the horrific conditions in the Jamestown colony that forced them to flee.

There are a number of recorded incidents of Jamestown settlers being caught trying to abandon the colony and return home to England. This shows that conditions at Jamestown were so dismal that colonists believed that their only chance of survival was to escape America. For example George Percy documents in 'A Trewe Relacyon' how a number of colonists plotted to run away with a bark from Jamestown. However, their conspiracy was discovered and they were severally punished. One of the conspirators was even sentenced by marshal law to be executed. This shows that like renegadism, any plots to try and abandon the colony would not be tolerated, and those discovered would be harshly punished by the leaders of the colony. Percy gives an account of the execution, as he believed it to be 'strange And seldome heard of'.¹³ When the unnamed conspirator was hanged, the 'Roape did breake and he fell upon the grownde'.¹⁴ Because of this, he was pardoned of his crimes, nevertheless, he died from the injuries he sustained during the fall shortly after.

There are a few cases where groups of settlers successfully returned home to England. During the Starving Time, a group of about thirty six colonists, led by Captain Weste, were sent by George Percy to Potomack to trade for maize and grain. These men used violent methods to retrieve supplies from the natives, then instead of returning the food that they had collected to Jamestown, they abandoned their fellow colonists. The men filled a pinnace with supplies then 'hoysed upp Sayles and shaped their course directly for England', leaving the starving colonists back on the settlement in 'misery and wante'.¹⁵ Later in 1612, there is also a record of colonists travelling back to England without permission. In the domestic state papers there is a letter by John Chamberlain that records how ten men who had been sent to fish stole a large amount of

¹² 'True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie (1610)' in Peter Force (ed.), *Tracts and Other Papers ...* (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844), pp. 15-16.

¹³ George Percy, "A Trewe Relacyon of the Procedeings and Occurrentes of Momente wch have hapned in Virginia from ... 1609 until ... 1612". *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 3 (1921-22), p. 273.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 273.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 266.

supplies and gave 'them the slip and run away'. When they arrived back in England they spread 'ill report' of Jamestown and the colony. The Virginia Company were not pleased with the negative descriptions these men were spreading about Jamestown and wanted them to be punished, in the letter it is noted that 'they have taken goode order to have these run-awayes apprehended and punished or at least sent back again'.¹⁶ It is not surprising that the Virginia Company did not want any information about how bad the conditions were in the colony at Jamestown being publicised back in England.

It was not only small groups of rebel colonists that tried to escape Jamestown, after the winter of 1610 when conditions were arguably at their worst, when attacks from native Americans were at their highest and food was so short colonists were forced to turn to cannibalism to survive, the whole colony attempted to leave Virginia. From examining the food stores, it was discovered that at most, supplies would last no more than sixteen days. Therefore, it was decided by Governor Dale and the council that to prevent all of the colonists from starving 'there could be no readier course thought on than to abandon the country'.¹⁷ The plan that was decided upon was to use the ships that they had at Jamestown to travel to Newfoundland in Canada. As it was fishing season, it was hoped that that they would meet many English ships. They could then disperse the colony between the ships and return them back home to England. Dale had to prevent some of the colony from burning down the settlement at Jamestown before they left. The colonists abandoned Jamestown on the seventh of June, however, they had not sailed far before they 'discovered a longboat making towards' them.¹⁸ The longboat turned out to be captained by Governor Lord de La Warr, carrying supplies and new colonists. The colonists consequently returned to Jamestown. With the arrival of food and new blood, the settlers were given a new hope, and it improved their morale as well as briefly restoring order to the settlement.

The English settlers did not only object to the treatment that they were receiving at Jamestown, the colonists who were shipwrecked at Bermuda on their journey to Virginia also started rebelling against authority. The best account we have of this shipwreck is one written by a gentleman called William Strachey. He recorded the events that took place over the year that they were stranded on Bermuda in a letter that he sent to a friend back in England, titled *The True Reportory*. No one knows the identity of the recipient of the letter, as Strachey begins the letter with only 'Excellent Lady', and does not give her name. Strachey's letter is closely associated with

¹⁶ TNA, Chamberlain to Carleton, SP14/70 f.5. July 9, 1612.

¹⁷ 'William Strachey, A True Reportory of the Wrack (1610)' in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade: 1607-1617* (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001), p. 426.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 427.

William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. It was argued as early as 1808 that the play was influenced by the colonists who got shipwrecked on their way to the Bermuda islands in 1609. It has been suggested that three main texts were used as inspiration by Shakespeare, these were Sylvester Jourdain's work, the *Discovery of the Bermudas*, the *True Declaration of the State of the Colonie in Virginia* published by the Virginia Company in 1610 and William Strachey's *True Reportory of the Wreck*.¹⁹ Strachey describes in detail the 'hideous' storm that lasted for 'four and twenty hours' that blew them off course and resulted in them becoming shipwrecked on the islands of the Bermuda, or "the Devil's Islands" as they were referred to at the time.²⁰ The account is broken down into a number of sections, including two chapters about their time stranded on the island, and two on their journey to Virginia, and what they found when they arrived. One of these chapters has a large section on the mutinies that took place while they were shipwrecked. From examining this chapter, comparisons can be drawn between the actions and attitudes of the men stranded on the Bermuda islands, and the men at the settlement in Jamestown. There are a number of similarities that can be noted, for example, a number of men decided to run away from the main camp, deserting their fellow shipmates. Strachey documents a conspiracy that was discovered on the first of September, where six men were found to be trying to prevent the building of a ship to carry the shipwrecked crew to Virginia. When discovered two of the chief persuaders of the plot broke 'from the society of the colony and like outlaws retired into the woods to make a settlement' on another island by themselves.²¹

Like Jamestown, authority was also a problem on Bermuda with some colonists opposing the authority of their leader. Opposition to Sir Thomas Gates, a knight who took control of the colony after the shipwreck, was led by a man called Stephen Hopkins who openly questioned Gate's authority, and argued that his 'authority ceased when the wrack was committed'.²² Hopkins and his men believed that when their ship became stranded, they were freed from any agreements that were previously made and that they no longer had to answer to the orders of the Virginia Company. There was also unease amongst the sailors, who were not happy with being governed by Gates as they had never agreed to be subjected to military control. They were hired purely to transport the men and supplies to Virginia. When Gates condemned a sailor named Robert Waters to death for the murder of a fellow colonist, Edward Samuel, the mariners responded by

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, David Lindley, *The Tempest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 30-31.

²⁰ 'William Strachey, A True Reportory of the Wrack (1610)' in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives, Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade: 1607-1617* (Virginia: Roundhouse, 2001), p. 384-390.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 405.

²² *Ibid*, p. 406.

helping Waters to escape, and took him into hiding in the forest. Gates was forced to let Waters get away with the murder of Samuel, and this led to a division between the soldiers and sailors of the colony. The division became so extreme that the mariners and landsmen began to segregate themselves. What started with separate campfires resulted in a group of mariners led by a knight, Sir George Somers who was loyal to Gates, leaving the main colony to go to the main island of Bermuda to build their own barque. As there were no indigenous tribes on the Bermuda islands, it was purely the colonists' dissatisfaction with leadership and their fellow colonists that drove them to abandon the main colony.

During the castaways' time on Bermuda, there was a correlation between leadership and desertion, similar to the renegades' decision in Jamestown to run away during periods of poor authority and leadership issues. Strachey investigates how Gates let men get away with a number of rebellious crimes during his leadership on Bermuda, for example, he pardoned Stephen Hopkins of mutiny and rebellion because he pleaded that his death would ruin the life of his wife and children.²³ He was also lenient when dealing with those who did not support his authority. When it was discovered that a group of men were planning on raiding the storehouse and taking the valuable items for themselves, they were not severely punished, but merely separated, some remaining in the camp with Gates and some being sent to live with Sir George Summers and his men on the main island.²⁴ However, Gate's leniency did not last for long and he finally took action against Henry Paine, a man Strachey described as being 'full of mischief', and sentenced him to death. Paine was known to have not approved of being governed by Gates, and of stealing a variety of tools and weapons to give to the rebels. But he took things too far on the thirteenth of March when he 'not only give his said commander evil language but stuck at him' and refused to take his place on watch. Gates called Paine in front of the whole colony, and condemned him to be instantly hanged for his actions. Paine objected to being hanged, he believed that as a gentleman he was entitled to be shot to death, Strachey poetically documents his death, stating that 'towards the evening he had his desire, the sun and his life setting together'.²⁵ This decision resulted in a number of men who were known to support the mutiny deserting the main group. These men feared that they would be discovered as mutineers and face a punishment similar to Paine's. Therefore they 'forsook their labour and Sir George Summers, and like outlaws betook them into the wild woods'. Like the renegades in Jamestown these men ran away because they feared for their safety and lives. Moreover, like Jamestown, most of the

²³ Ibid, p. 407.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 408.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 409-10.

runaway men returned to the main camp. Only two men stayed living in the woods, the murderer Robert Waters, and one of the original mutineers Christopher Carter.

Despite this similarity there are also a number of differences that can be drawn between the two groups of men when it came to mutiny and rebellion. For example, unlike the settlers at Jamestown, on the Bermuda Islands there was a large availability of food. Strachey spends a long time talking about the abundance of animals on the islands, he lists the fish that they caught, including 'angel-fish, salmon, peal, bonitos, stingray, cavally, snappers', and many more. He also describes the large number of web-footed birds that nested on a number of the islands, nicknamed the 'sea owl', that were caught in great quantities, enough to feed the whole colony. Along with the fish and birds there were thousands of hogs and tortoises that would feed up to six men.²⁶ The men and women on Bermuda had a relatively good diet considering they were stranded and had to fend for themselves with limited tools. In Virginia, it could be argued that one of the main reasons that the colonists turned to mutiny and desertion was because of the lack of food that was available, and the poor conditions that this created. This shows that the mutineers shipwrecked on the Bermuda islands had different reasons for turning against their leaders and fellow colonists. It could be suggested that their acts of rebellion were purely against social order. They were displeased with having to follow orders, be that from Gates, the Virginia Company or ultimately the crown is debatable.

Another difference between the colonists at Jamestown and those shipwrecked on Bermuda is that a number of men on the Bermuda islands wanted to stay, whereas the men in Virginia did all they could to escape. Many of the shipwrecked men believed that they had the right to remain at Bermuda and form a colony of their own. A number of colonists went as far as to conspire to sabotage the progress of the building of the ship intended to deliver them to Jamestown. The men 'promised each unto the other not to set their hands to any travail or endeavour which might expedite or forward this pinnacle'.²⁷ It would seem that the colonists believed that they should be allowed to stay on the Bermuda Islands and form their own colony, rather than travel to Jamestown where it was known that there were issues with the local tribes and a lack of resources. The men who had run away to live in the woods sent Dale a formal petition appealing that they should be allowed to stay on the island while the other colonists travelled on to Virginia. They requested that Dale should 'furnish each of them with two suits of apparel and contribute meal ratably for one whole year'.²⁸ This suggests that the conditions on the Bermuda islands were

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 397-400.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 405.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 410.

more hospitable than the conditions that the colonists at Jamestown had to face. Despite the rebellious actions of a number of the colonists, by the time that the barque was ready to transport the shipwrecked crew to their intended destination, all but two men had returned and been pardoned for their actions. The two men who remained on the island were Christopher Carter and Robert Waters.

From examining both the similarities and differences between mutiny and rebellion in both Bermuda and in Jamestown, we can establish that the men and women who were being sent to the New World easily turned on their leadership, suggesting a lack of respect for authority. However, it should be remembered that these English colonists went through life threatening events, and were unwillingly thrown out of their comfort zones. Both sets of colonists ended up in unknown exotic locations, facing unfamiliar dangers. Therefore, it is not surprising that they preferred to make their own decisions regarding their survival.

Conclusion

Through the exploration of renegades, rebellion and discontent during the early years of Jamestown, this thesis has helped to form a better understanding of life at the beginning of England's colonisation of America. This research has brought together information on renegades, providing answers to questions such as who became renegades, how they were treated and viewed by fellow colonists, and why they decided to run away to live with Native Americans. The main argument of this research is that it was the poor conditions within the colony that resulted in the high level of renegades during Jamestown's early years, not the lure of the local native's culture and lifestyle.

The search for information on renegades dominated the research for this thesis. Through the close examination of contemporary sources, including a combination of official documents and personal writing from this time, such as accounts by the colonies leaders and lists of original settlers, important information had been discovered. Through the limited sources that we have on renegades from this period, we have seen that the majority of those who ran away were of a lower social order, be that a soldier, labourer or sailor. Although suggestions for why this might be the case can be made, it is still unclear exactly why men from lower social orders were more likely to turn their backs on life in Jamestown to become renegades. This study has also shown that during periods of poor leadership and especially difficult times in the colony, renegades were more common. While this is unsurprising, it helps to strengthen the argument that it was the poor living conditions within Jamestown that led settlers to run away to local native tribes and become renegades.

By looking at a combination of personal letters and accounts written at the time, and records such as the death tolls at Jamestown, conclusions can also be drawn about rebellion and discontent in Jamestown and we can see that the colonists were forced to live in terrible conditions. By closely studying the living conditions in Jamestown, and breaking the causes into environmental, socio-political and economical sections it has helped to show that life in the colony was extremely miserable for its inhabitants. These conditions, where the colonists' chances of survival were low, were clearly a great incentive for settlers to leave the colony. A greater incentive than the lure of the Native American lifestyle.

Through the study of both the colonists in Jamestown and the colonists stranded on the Bermuda Islands in 1609, it can be concluded that English colonists turned easily against authority. Despite staggering differences in the conditions that these two groups of colonists were forced to live in,

both quickly turned to rebellion. However, this is not exactly surprising as both groups were placed in life threatening situations with leaders that they did not choose and who they were not loyal to. There were also parallels in the types of people who left England to become colonists, which reinforces this argument. Research into the colonists' reactions to life in Jamestown shows that colonists rebelled in a number of different ways, not just by running away from the colony to live with Native Americans. The Jamestown colonists showed their discontent of life in Virginia and their leaders in a number of ways, for example, through attempted mutiny, alcoholism and running back to England.

Research into renegades in this period is important as it provides information on a group of English colonists who are often overlooked in Jamestown's history. This thesis has brought scholarship on this topic forward by offering a concise evaluation of the Jamestown renegades by using the limited sources available. It offers a number of case studies on individual colonists, collating information from a number of different kinds of source material that have not been collectively explored before. This allows us to get a better insight into the recorded colonists who left Jamestown to become renegades and fills a gap in scholarly research, where before Jamestown's renegades have only been looked at broadly, with little specific focus on causes and in little detail. Although the poor conditions in the Jamestown colony have previously been explored by many scholars, this study looks at them in a new way. Where before certain individual aspects have been examined in detail, such as the labour problem and high death rates, this research breaks down and explores in detail all the reasons for dissatisfaction collectively. This provides a succinct understanding of the colony's early years, and the reasons that caused such poor living conditions and miserable way of life for the colonists.

There are a number of interesting directions in which renegades could be explored further. For example, to solidify the argument expressed in this thesis that renegades were caused by the poor conditions at Jamestown, it would be helpful to explore the incidence of renegades in other early English colonies in America. Other colonies could be researched to see if there was a similar level of renegades, or any renegades at all. It would be interesting to compare Jamestown to a colony such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony that was founded in 1628. Where the main motives for founding the Jamestown colony were largely influenced by the wish for profit and monetary gain by all involved, the Massachusetts Bay colony was started by Puritans and based on religious foundations. Did this difference in ideology influence the happiness of the English colonists? Were living conditions improved and levels of dissatisfaction lowered, meaning that there was a lower level of renegades? Similarly to looking at renegades in other English colonies during this period, it would also be exciting to explore whether other countries colonising in America in this period

had a similar problem. Did colonies founded by other European countries colonising America at the same time, such as Spain, Portugal and France, have a level of renegades greater or lesser than Jamestown? If they did, what caused them to turn their backs on their own people and were these renegades treated as severely as the Jamestown renegades?

It would also be interesting to expand on research by historians such as Nabil Matar, who in his book *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*, compares English renegades in America to English renegades in North Africa who 'turned Turk'.¹ Exploring whether the reasons for English colonists abandoning fellow Englishmen and becoming renegades were the same in such different locations and cultures could be compelling and enable a comparison of whether the renegades in North Africa were viewed as negatively by their fellow Englishmen as the renegades in America. By also considering the level of renegades and types of rebellion in different countries, colonists' loyalty to the English state in this period could also be explored.

In conclusion, I feel that the renegade's role in the early years of the Jamestown colony has been wrongfully overlooked in the past. More than any other form of rebellion, the renegades were influential in the laws that were enacted, and in the relationship between the colonists and the local native tribes. Finally, the narratives of the renegades who returned to the colonies provide us with information and insight into the native life at this pivotal moment in history which would otherwise have been unrecorded.

¹ Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 95-96.

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Abbreviations

OED = Oxford English Dictionary

TNA = The National Archives

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- James I, SP14

Colonial Papers

- CO 1/1

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