



British Sea Dogs, issued in 1928 by John Sinclair. Current value, £285 set of 50.

Swapping cards for an insight into past times

Mike Hicks remembers the days when collecting and trading cigarette or tea cards was popular with people of all ages.

Cigarette and trade cards are as popular today as they were 60 years ago by the dedicated band of collectors. The urge to collect or hoard items still thrives in today's computer age.

What is more satisfying than searching for an item (whatever it may be) and finding it to complete a set? Cigarette and trade cards satisfy the basic need felt by many collectors.

Cigarettes may not be the socially acceptable habit they were, but from the turn of the century until the 1990s most people smoked.

The cards came about in the late 1890s when cigarettes were sold in flimsy paper packets and were forever being crushed in the pockets, so a card was inserted to act as a stiffener.

These were soon seen as a way of advertising the cigarettes and then very soon used to entice smokers to buy those cigarettes to complete a set of flags or military uniforms.

Sets mostly comprise 25 or 50 cards and can suit all pockets for today's collectors. With prices from 50p to £500 there is something for everyone.

Away from the monetary value they are a mine of information and almost any subject can be found on a cigarette card; together they give us an excellent insight into life 60 or 70 years ago.

Collectors normally specialise in particular areas of interest, ie sport, with cricket, football and golf being the most popular, but there are many other themes.

Today's collectors have developed their interests into other areas of cartophily, such as chewing gum cards and sweet cigarette

We used to give the gum away, throw the wrapper away (a mistake because they are making good money on eBay today) and carefully remove the Elvis, Beatles or football card to add to our collection and then arranging a swap with a friend. We did the same with Brooke Bond tea cards. All our family members collected them for us and we carefully sorted them out into sets. The range of subjects covered by Brooke

Bond was vast, and some 750m sets were produced by them between 1954 and 1984. This has seriously devalued them for modern collectors, and financially they are worth very little.

It is good to know that the biggest cigarette card club in the country meets every month in the village of Roydon, near Diss, with an average attendance of 85 members.

East Anglian Cigarette Card Club details can be found on their website: www.eaccc.co.uk along with a monthly newsletter and auction lists.

Otherwise, ring the chairman, Colin Fawcett, on 01945

583656 for more information.

Opportunities abound to buy cards from national dealers or the amazing 200-lot auction, swap tales or cards, plus the social chit chat that goes with a successful club. The club is about to celebrate its 450th meeting in 40 years – a milestone for any club. There could be a significant saving on the prices of the illustrated cards by being a member of the club. It is possible to save up to 50 per cent.



The Beatles, issued in 1964 by A & BC Gum: current value, £270 set of 60.