



'Touring England' is not difficult to find, though the small moulded lead motor car tokens are often absent!



Cheapest playing card hobby is to collect Joker cards from sets owned by friends - they're rarely used these days. There are many designs to look out for.



The U-Boat campaign against Britain is the theme of this 1940s German board game.

The Market in Playing Cards and Board Games

By Jack Tempest



During the course of this card game the player aims to collect the right parts to build up a series of figures like this one.

Game playing has been a popular pastime for the young and the old for centuries. Today there is a wide interest in collecting these by-gones. At many toy shows there are stalls offering interesting selections of card and board games from various periods of time. Old games that were once favourites with children can still provide members of the present younger generation with an interesting diversion from the frenetic computer games of today. And the older person can derive much nostalgic enjoyment from collecting and playing these early examples.

Most board games are easily played, commencing with the throw of a dice. Counters are moved along tracks. There are pitfalls and perks along the way. *Monopoly* is still very popular in spite of being invented in the USA over sixty years ago! *Snakes and Ladders* and *Ludo* were meant for younger children. They are said to have originated from a game known simply as *Goose* where the basic

shape of the trails followed originally fitted within the large picture of a goose printed on the board. *Goose* probably originated in France and was once a very popular form of amusement in that country.

The ancient games of *Chess* and *Draughts* are played on the familiar chequered board. These challenging pastimes played with great skill, are believed to have originated in ancient China. Chess figures, many of which are antique intricately carved ivory pieces from the Far East, can be quite valuable. So can European examples that feature colourfully uniformed troops of British and foreign regiments.

Card games have been with us for centuries. Collecting early packs of standard playing cards can be a seriously expensive pastime. Later editions are obviously easier to find and these come in a variety of styles. The Ace of Spades usually differs, even in modern packs, according to the whim of the publishers. So do the Jokers and quite a few people are known to collect only these cards. This is a most inexpensive hobby and anyone purchasing a new pack of cards is generally quite willing to freely hand over the Joker, a card rarely used, to a collector friend. Many packs of playing cards contain advertising and are specially collected for this reason.

A number of novelty card games have appeared across the years. Instead of being printed with the normal suites, they carry novelty illustrations. Popular with young children is the game of *Snap* and that of *Happy Families*. These sets of playing cards are printed with amusing cartoon-style drawings, usually in colour, and featuring comical family members and tradesmen.

The popularity of *Happy Families* led rivals to imitate the game as closely as they dare, without breaching any copyright, and giving the family figures differing identities and names. One such a crib was

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named *Cheery Families!* This adds interest to the collecting hobby! Lots of alternative card games have been published, particularly in the period between the Wars. There was a popular motoring game called *Belisha*, named after the road transport minister of the time, Hoare Belisha. *Lexicon* was also a best seller. The cards, like those of *Belisha*, were of standard playing card size and each one displayed a large capital letter, except the master cards that could be used by the lucky recipient to represent any letter. Later the game of *Kan-U-Go* came along, with letters printed on half-sized cards. Their smallness allowed them to be conveniently used crossword fashion. The much later appearance of *Scrabble*, with small lettered tiles replacing cards, proved to be a far superior word-making game and is still very popular.

Many card games were devoted to well-known storybook characters. Florence Upton's famous Gollywogg story characters were featured on a pack of cards and so were the 1950s *Eagle* comic space-hero Dan Dare and his associates. William Brown, of the *Just William* series of stories by Richmal Crompton is another game in big demand by collectors.

There is something very exciting about unpacking a board game, old or new, for the first time. There is the board itself to gloat over, especially if it is artistically presented, and then all the bits and pieces that go with the game. Motoring and railway games appeared in the early days of the horseless-carriage and the beginning of the Railway Age. These games still often turn up at the toy fairs and collectors markets, but one needs to make sure that they are complete. The excitement of playing these *Goose* game variations lies in the little metallic counters presented in the form of early motor cars or contemporary railway locomotives. Alas, more often than not they are missing. The boards are interesting, illustrating a birds-eye view of a tour, usually through England and Wales or Scotland.

In the Second World War one or two games appeared on the British market dedicated to the fight against Adolf Hitler and his supporters. At the same time the Germans were being offered similar games, but with

the jackboot on the other foot! Examples are rare because, when the Allies victoriously entered Germany, few people wanted to be found with anything that might suggest that they had been Nazi sympathisers.

One boxed game, complete with plastic U-Boats was named *Wir fahren gegen England* (We Sail Against England). Also, under a box-lid illustration of a U-boat was printed *Ein neues kriegsspiel con unserer U-Boof Waffe* (A New War-Game from our U-Boat Force). Inside the box were cards illustrating warships of our Royal Navy. Another war game from Nazi Germany was called *Adler - Luftverteidigungs Spiel* (Eagle - Air Defence Game). The box lid has a fine illustration of an anti-aircraft gun and, sadly, a crashing British bomber. Interesting collectors' items, these! Two games we might, unusually, play to enjoy losing! These games were spotted on a toy fair stall, priced at £120 for the two. Whether or not they would be valued higher or lower at an auction sale I cannot say. It is advisable to check that all components of board games are present before purchase. Replacing a missing dice is one thing, but finding an absent miniature lead early motor-car for a race around England game, is another! Missing items do offer better bargaining power if you think that you may come across missing accessories in due course! The same applies to buying packs of card games - make sure you are getting a full set!

Prices tend to vary such a lot in this field of collecting. Most 1930s card games are available at around £10 or so and a well-preserved set of late nineteenth century playing cards could cost £300-400. Games featuring Richmal Crompton's *Just William* personalities, the Gollywogg characters of Florence Upton, Enid Blyton's *Noddy*, and the Daily Express's *Rupert the Bear*, will tend to be a little more expensive than the normal £10 run of novelty cards. This is because of the great collecting interest in these characters. Walt Disney cartoon figures are eagerly sought after, especially the 1930s games - card, or otherwise! Popular sci-fi characters, even from more recent films such as *Star Wars*, *Batman*, TV *Thunderbirds*, and the *Dr Who* TV series are in big demand.



Some table games offered the players a little more scope. 'Exit-Bunny' by Wells, had moving rabbit targets, and came with a simple pistol to provide players with harmless target practice. Games like these realise higher prices, anything from £25 to £50 - perhaps to £100-plus!



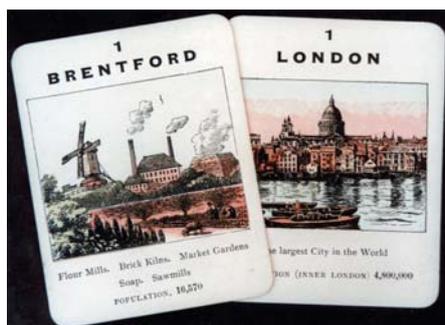
The main interest in these cards is the advertising material they display.



Here's a chance to try your hand as an auctioneer! An early 1900s product, judging by the clothing fashions.



This early game offers a table-top tour of London!



This nineteenth century card game allows players to enjoy visiting towns and seaside resorts of England - and learn a few historical facts during the process.



A rare board game 'Race to the Gold Diggings of Australia' by sailing ship, dates itself! This example is on display at the Liverpool Maritime Museum.