

Maps show changing importance of towns and villages

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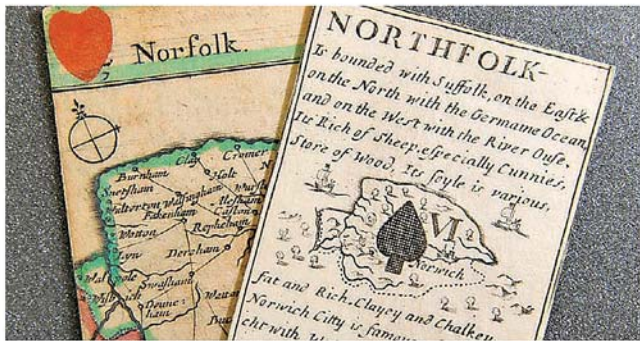
Some months ago, we saw in the EDP that a rare first edition set of playing cards was sold at Sotheby's in London, for £15,000. This greatly surprised the auctioneers, who were expecting no more than £4,000.

The cards were drawn and produced by a famous London cartographer and book-seller called Robert Morden, and published by him in 1676 – during the reign of King Charles II.

The interesting thing for us was that each of the cards in the pack presented a map of a particular English county. The card which had the map of Norfolk on it was the five of hearts: the EDP reproduced a picture of it to accompany their article.

One important thing about the playing cards was that, as Sotheby's had announced, for many counties these cards were the first-ever maps to actually show any roads. On our map, you can see the Norwich-Cromer road, the Norwich-Thetford road, and the Fakenham-Lynn road, among a number of others. The main rivers are also portrayed.

The maps also showed what were, at the time, each county's most important towns, and it's interesting to see what they were in Norfolk – Morden based this aspect of



■ Playing card maps by Robert Morden (1676) and William Redmayne (1677) were donated by Raymond Frostick to the Norfolk Record Office.

Picture: SIMON FINLAY

his maps on information received from local informants in each county. Norwich, Lynn, Dereham, Swaffham, and Yarmouth are there of course. But Cley, which was a major port at that time, is also shown on the map, and so is Worstead, as an important producer of textiles. Towns just over the border into neighbouring counties are also shown: Wisbech, Brandon, Bungay, Beccles and Lowestoft.

Wisbech is given as Wisbich on the map, and Beccles appears as Beckles. A number of the other spellings are also very interesting. It is clear that Morden's informants had used spellings which represented the way in which the place names were actu-

ally pronounced at the time. Wymondham is spelt Windham, which makes very good sense to us; and so does Aylsham as Alesham. Lynn is Lyn, Diss is Dis, and Worstead is Wursted.

There is also important material here for people interested in the correct pronunciation of those local place names which there has been a certain amount of uncertainty about in recent years. It's good for people who favour our traditional local pronunciations to see that, three and a half centuries ago, Lowestoft was spelt Lowstof, and that Cley was spelt Clay. That is, of course, how these names should still be pronounced today.