



SALEROOM SPOTLIGHT

A Tudor guide to marking swans is one of the highlights of a map and book collection going under the hammer in Essex

Swans—questions about who owns and breeds them has sparked courtroom and bitter arguments since the Middle Ages. To prove the point, one of the highlights of Sworders' 250-lot sale of the late Wisbech dealer Peter Crofts' estate is a rare two-volume Tudor guide to keeping the regal bird. The first volume, dated 1566, contains more than 600



Above In 2019, the Fitzwilliam Museum recreated a feasting table, c.1650, conceived and made by Ivan Day with taxidermy by David Astley © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Top right The second volume is dated 1834 and includes notes on swan marks, followed by 84 pages of swan owners and an index of swan owners

Right Dealer Peter Crofts became a double amputee in 1944

Left The first volume of Laws and Ordinances regarding swan, dated 1566, contains more than 600 swan marks. It has a guide price of £8,000-£16,000 at this month's sale



swan marks, followed by 19 pages of manuscript notes concerning the 'Laws and Ordinances regarding swan.'

Status symbol

Alleged royal ownership of the country's swans – and the idea that only the Queen is allowed to own them – is a popular misconception. The connection may derive from the fact that, from the 12th century onwards, owning swans signalled nobility. The birds were eaten as a special dish at feasts, served as a centrepiece in their skin and feathers.

To maintain their exclusivity, in 1482, the crown ordained that only landowners of a certain income could keep swans. Ownership was recorded by a code of marks nicked into the beak of the bird; any birds that didn't bear a mark were automatically the property of the crown.

This effectively meant that only the monarch, wealthy landowners and some large institutions like trade guilds, cathedrals and universities could afford swan ownership.

A Swan-Master was appointed both to care for the royal swans and to oversee and regulate swan-keeping throughout England. He was assisted by deputies with responsibility for a specific and manageable region. In 1570, the *Order of Swannes*, a legal document setting out the rules relating to the birds, recorded that: "if any person do raze out, counterfeit or alter the mark of any swan [they ...] shall suffer one year's imprisonment." Such is the subject of the 1566 manual up for sale on August 23 at Sworders with an estimate of £8,000-£16,000.

Peter Crofts

The two-volume book is one of 250 lots from the estate of the late Wisbech dealer, Peter Crofts (1924-2001), who became a double amputee in WWII a day before his 21st birthday following a flying accident. After three years in hospital, the Stamford dealer, Major Bernard Edinburg, took him under his wing and Crofts set up in trade. In 1958, he was elected a member of the British Antique Dealers' Association.

Signals manual

Another historic manual from the same collection appearing on the rostrum in Stansted Mountfitchet is Jonathan Greenwood's *The Sailing and*



American interest

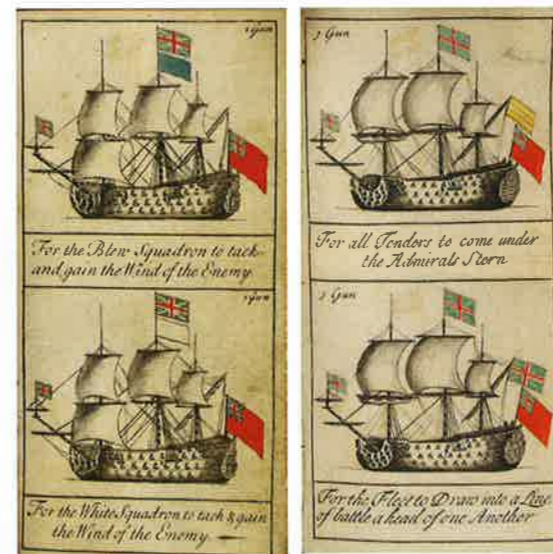
The sale includes a rare example of a watercolour scene painted on the edge of a book. The 1843 copy of Thomas Campbell's *Poetical Works* shows the waterfronts of Boston and Philadelphia depending on the way the pages are flicked. Such decoration was common from the late 17th to 19th century but examples of the double fore-edge technique are rare.

The cities depicted had nothing to do with the book's content but were intended to appeal to east coast American tourists. It has an estimate of £300-£600 at this month's sale.



Fighting Instructions or Signals as they are observed in the Royal Navy of Great Britain. The 18th-century guide is considered the first naval signal book printed in the English language.

The example on sale, with instructions for 'Signalls in fogg' and 'Signalls at night', retains all its 72 engraved leaves, most of them with hand-coloured illustrations. It has a pre-sale guide price of £1,500-£3,000.



AUCTION fact file

WHAT: Books and Maps from the Peter Crofts collection and a few other rare books from selective clients

When: August 23

Where: Sworders, Cambridge Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, CM24 8GE

Viewing: Aug 19

10-4pm, Aug 21-22

10-1pm and the

morning of the sale.

Also online at

www.sworder.co.uk

Left Fanned one way the edge of the book shows a scene of Boston

Below left The book can be fanned the other way to reveal a picture of Philadelphia

Far left Pages from Jonathan Greenwood's *The Sailing and Fighting Instructions or Signals as they are observed in the Royal Navy of Great Britain*

Left The book, dated c. 1715, has a pre-sale estimate of £1,500-£3,000

Right Emerson's evocative photo etching comes from *Marsh Leaves*, which has an estimate of £5,000-£10,000

'A Swan-Master was appointed both to care for the royal swans and to oversee and regulate swan-keeping throughout England. He was assisted by deputies with responsibility for a specific and manageable region'

IN MY OPINION...



We asked Sworders' rare books and maps specialist Michael Kousah for his sale highlights

How much of the Peter Crofts' collection relates to East Anglia?

I would say up to 50 per cent would be of especial interest to readers in those counties. I have lived in Cambridgeshire for 51 years and owned an antiquarian bookshop in Ely for 14 years and, as such, am yet to come across such a comprehensive collection of books and manuscripts relating to the area.

Do you have a personal highlight?

I have two. The first is an 18th-century manuscript by Henry Motz who was the commissary in charge of the eastern district of England from 1797-1799 charged with preparations ahead of a possible Napoleonic invasion. The manuscript is titled *The preparation without expense for repelling the French invasion and concerns the movement & provisions of live & dead stock etc. in case of a French invasion, covering: Lincolnshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire.* It has an estimate of £500-£1,000. The other is a 500-page Ely school teacher's diary, dated 1870-1898, which reflects the county's ruralness. One entry reads: "Only 7 in the first class instead of 15, the other girls assisting their parents to prepare for the Harvest." It is expected to make £200-£400.

From where will interest likely come?

The scope of the collection is so broad I am expecting the interest to be worldwide. For example, the collection includes books by, and about, the leading abolitionist Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) who was born in Wisbech and attended the grammar school.

Any lots for the experienced collector?

The sale has an author-signed, limited-edition copy of Peter Henry Emerson's (1856-1936)

book of 16 photo etchings called *Marsh Leaves*, 1895, containing impressionistic works of winters on the Fens. When researching his books Emerson lived in East Anglia hoping to produce "truthful pictures of East Anglian Peasant and Fisherfolk Life, and of the landscape in which such life is lived."

