

oblemen

Version 0.8.6.5

Age 12+

3 to 5 players

90 minutes

Setting:

Mid-sixteenth century England. Queen Elizabeth I rules over England without an heir. This leaves some room for some maneuvering. If you have played the game well there might be opportunities. Powers throughout, including you, believe that a family with great presence, wealth, and nobility might find itself in the right place at the right time.

Overview:

You are the head of an old and noble family. In this game you will grow your family's estate, earn the queen's favor, bear witness to scandalous behavior, gain influence with the church, and push around your political weight during masquerade balls, all in an effort to ensure your family's rightful place in history. The winner is the player with best family name at the end of the game.

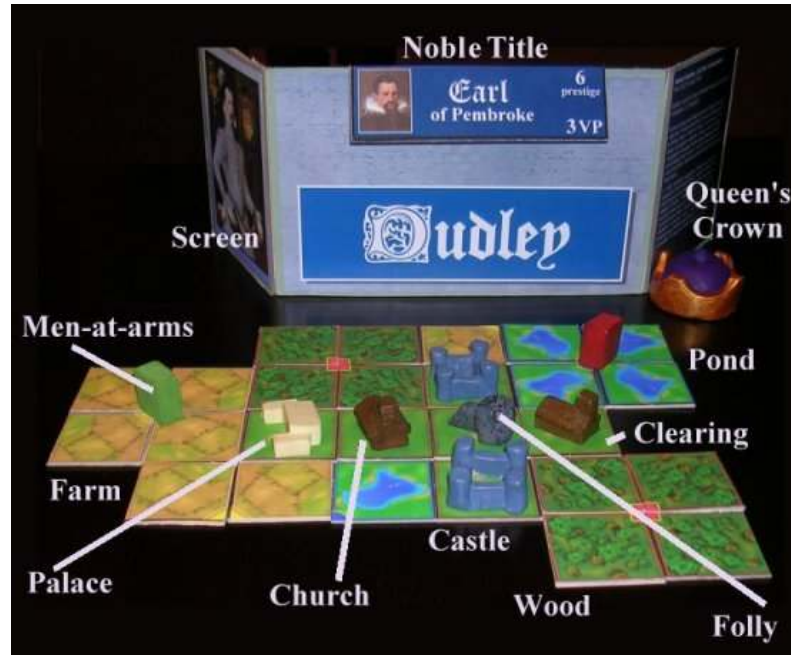
This is a game of several races all going on at the same time. Players race the clock and each other. They race to build cheaper buildings or to be the first to reap the benefits of one of their goals.

During the game players will build their estates one piece at a time. You will play four types of land tiles and then place buildings or follies on them in an effort to out-manuever the other players. There are three areas to concentrate on; lands, wealth, and prestige. Each component will help on your path to victory.

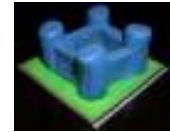
Playing land tiles is the beginning: Playing woods will help gain more land. Playing farms will help gain more money. Playing ponds will gain you more prestige. Playing clearings allow you to place more structures.

Contents

Family screen: Stuart, Howard, Seymour, Dudley, and Grey. *These will conceal your family's private holdings: money, scandal cards and land tiles. These screens have a summary of the game play and the actions you can do. They also have some history of your family.*



Castles; *Surround them with land before the scoring round.*



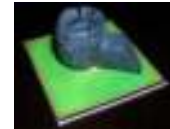
Churches; *each church adds to the value of a castle or palace during a scoring round.*



Palaces; *these will give 2 prestige during a Masquerade ball and they are worth more than castles during scoring rounds.*

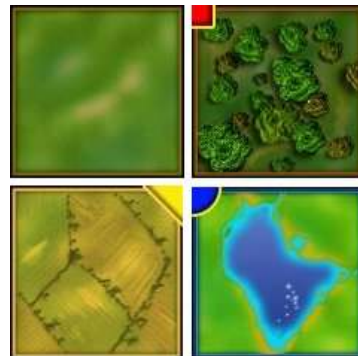


Follies; *Add Follies to your estate for extra victory points.*



Land Tiles

- Clearings: *This is where players can put their castles, palaces, churches, and follies.*
- Wood: *Woods provide land. 2x2 woods make a forest. Forest will provide you more land.*
- Farms: *Farms give the player money. 2x2 farms make a plantation for more money.*
- Ponds: *Ponds give the player prestige. 2x2 Ponds make a Garden. Gardens give a player more prestige to use during Masquerade Balls.*



Men-at-Arms; *two per player, these are used to extract pounds, land, or prestige from another player through force.*



Noble Title signs: *these hang on the shields and give extra victory points during Masquerade Balls.*



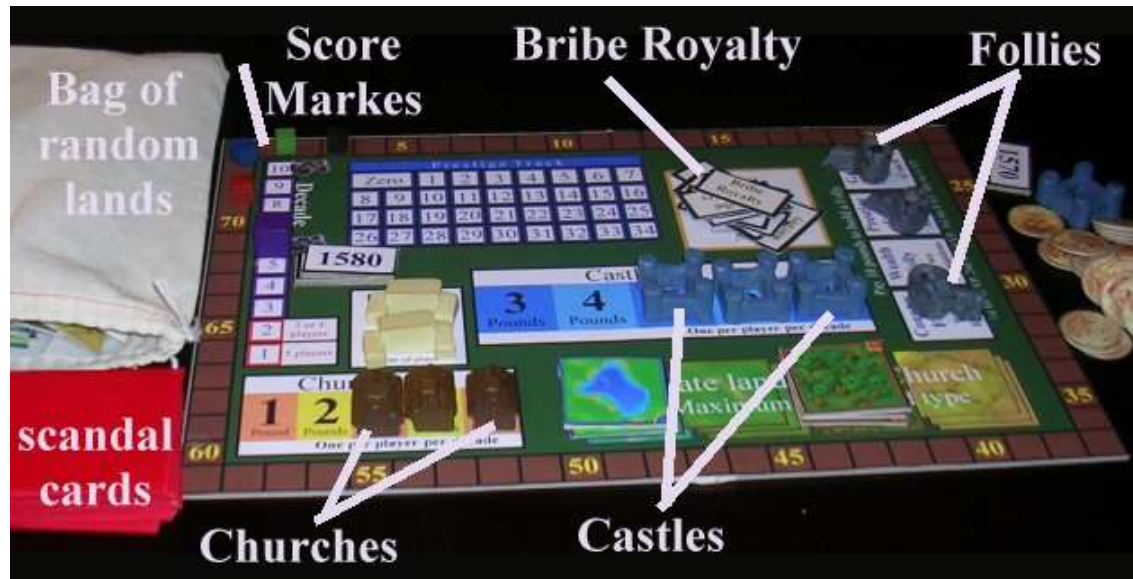
Queen's crown; *the player with this is said to have the Queen's favor. The Queen's favor will give victory points and move the decade marker.*

Contents

Cloth bag; *During the game all lands will live in the bag waiting to be drawn for play.*

Deck of Scandal cards; *(See Scandal Cards below for details)*

Pounds *Players use money to buy castles, palaces, churches, follies, and bribe royalty*



Action-board; *Most of the actions a player can do.*



Score marker; *one per player, these are used to indicate a players score.*

Bribe Royalty chits; *12 chits, players buy them for victory points and then to redeem for land, prestige, or money.*

Prestige markers; *one per player, these are used to show who has the most prestige during a Masquerade Ball.*

Taxes token; *One per player, players spend these to do a Taxes action.*



Acquire Land token; *One per player, players spend this to do an Acquire Land action.*



Decade Marker; *When a player ends his turn with the Queens crown the decade marker moves.*



Decade Tokens; *3 decades per game.*



Give each player -

- A family screen. *The screen is placed near you such that other players cannot see behind it. Leave space in front to build your estate.*
- A Baron title to hang on their screen. Place the following other Noble Titles near the board: for a 3 player game; 1 Duke, 1 Marquess, 1 Earl, and 1 Viscount; 4 player game add one more Viscount; for a 5 player game use all 12 titles including the 5 Barons.
- 10 pounds. They are placed behind the screen. Place the remaining pounds near the board.
- Two Men-at-Arms markers, one Prestige marker and one score marker of their color. Each player will place their score marker on the zero space of the scoring track of the action-board.
- One Taxes token and one Acquire Land token of their color.
- Starting lands.

Starting Lands:

Each player gets two of each type of land tile; clearing, wood, pond, and farm. Place one of the two clearings out in front of your screen and the rest behind it. Give all players one Castle to go on the clearing.

Mix all the remaining tiles and place them in the bag. This will be the random lands. Give each player 4 land tiles from the bag adding them to the tiles behind their screen.

Players may try and improve their allotment of land one time. Each player chooses as many of their 11 land tiles they have and set them aside face down. They can then draw random replacements from the bag of the same amount. Then place the set-aside tiles into the bag. *It is recommended that new players keep their woods.*



SET UP -

- Place the Action-board in the middle of the players.
- Put the follies on the main board. These are never replenished at the start of a new decade.
- Put all three Decade tokens on the board. They go in order on top of the 1600 with 1570 on the top.
- Give the Queen's crown to the player playing the Dudley family if there is one. Otherwise give the crown to someone randomly. The crown sits in front of the screen.
- Shuffle the Scandal Cards and place them near the board.
- Place the decade marker on '2' of the decade track for a 3 or 4 player game and '1' for a 5 player game.

Game Play Overview

The game is played in 3 Decades.



At the start of each new decade the main board is replenished and players get their tokens back.



During each decade players take turns until the Decade marker reaches the end of the decade track.

The decade track shows how much of the decade has gone by and estimates how many turns you have remaining.

The decade marker starts on '2' for a 3 or 4 player game and on '1' for a 5 player game.

At the end of each turn if that player has the Queen's crown the decade marker moves up the decade track one space. If it moves to 6 or 10 a Masquerade Ball immediately starts. (See Masquerade Ball below)

After the second ball **all players get one more turn** and then a **scoring round** happens.

At the end of the decade remove the top decade token. *IE remove the 1570 token after the first decade.*

After three scoring rounds the game is over.

Start New Decade Here

At the start of each new decade there are a handful of set-up steps:

- Players get back any spent Acquire land or Taxes tokens.
- Deal three Scandal Cards to each player. Each player will choose one and return the other two to the bottom of the deck.
- Put Castles on the action board from supply. When done there will be one castle per player. Place Castles on the most expensive areas first filling in from right to left.
- Put Churches on the board from supply. When done there will be one church per player. Place Churches on the most expensive areas first filling in from right to left.
- Put Palaces on the board. When done there will be one less Palace than number of players.
- Remove all the lands in the Donate land area returning them to the bag.
- Place the decade marker on the appropriate space of the decade track. On '2' for a 3 or 4 player game and on '1' for a 5 player game.

The player to the left of the player with the crown always begins a new decade and play always continues to left after each player finishes their turn.

Turn summary

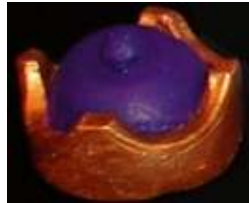
You may do **one** of the following actions:

1. Play up to 3 lands
2. Build a structure: Castle, Palace, Church, or a Folly.
3. Acquire land
4. Taxes
5. Donate land to the church
6. Bribe Royalty

If you do not want to do an action you may score one victory point instead.

Anytime during your turn you may play 1 **Scandal card**.

At the end of your turn, if you have the Queens crown then you have the Queen's favour and you immediately get 1 Victory Point. Also the decade marker moves one space up the track.



Things to remember -

- At any time you may trade any two land tiles for any one tile of your choice from the bag of tiles.
- A Castle cannot go next to or diagonal to a Castle or Palace.
- A Church cannot go next to or diagonal to a Church.

1 - Play up to 3 lands

You may play up to 3 land tiles from behind your screen as your action this turn.

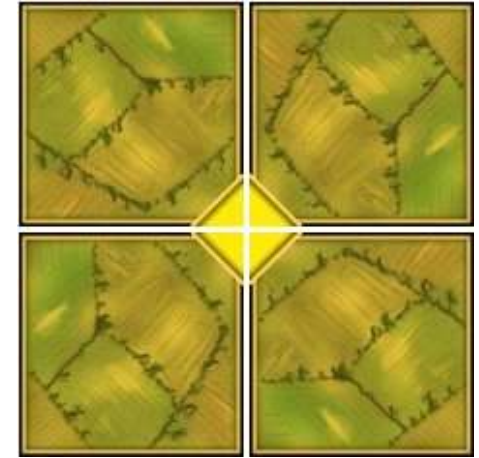
Playing a land tile

When playing a land you have to place it squarely next to any other land you have.

When you make 2X2 groups of like lands tiles you form special groups.

Plantation is four farms in a square. Farms can only be part of one Plantation.

Forest is four woods in a square. A Wood can only be part of one forest.



Garden is four ponds in a square. Ponds can only be part of one Garden. When you play the fourth pond you immediately get the Queen's Crown.

Woods and farms immediately pay when played:

- Collect 1 land from the random lands for each wood played plus 2 for each forest you completed. All lands are collected after you have played your lands.
- Collect 1 pound for each farm played plus 2 pounds for each plantation you completed.

Remember - You need to surround your Castles and Palaces with land to score them.

2 – Build a structure

You may build one of 4 structures: Castle, Church, Palace, or Folly as an action.

You may only build a structure if you have a clearing available to place it on.

If you are an Earl or higher you may discount how much you pay for a structure. The

amount to discount is on the far right of the noble title. The Duke provides a discount of 3 pounds, Marquess 2 pounds, and the Earl will provide 1 pound discount. You can never pay less than zero pounds to build a structure.



Build a Castle

You may build a Castle only if there are Castles remaining on the Action board. Take the left most Castle and immediately pay the price shown under it discounting if possible. Place the Castle on an open clearing tile.

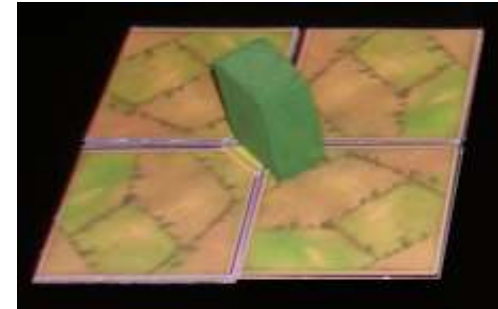


You may not build a Castle if you have no open clearings. You may not place a Castle next to or diagonal to a Castle or Palace.

After each new castle you may also take a Men-at-arms action if you choose.

Men-at-arms -

To dispatch your Men-at-Arms place or move one marker on a Plantation, Garden, or Forest. There can only be one marker per Plantation, Garden, or Forest.



If you place it on your own estate you **may** displace other players Men-at-arms. Yours may then not be displaced. Return the previous one to its owner.

When playing on another player's estate you **may not** displace any. You will immediately get something from the player owning the land you played it on:

- 2 land from behind the screen of the owner's choice if placed on a Forest. Also you receive the two bonus random lands when they do an Acquire Land action instead of them.
- 2 pounds if placed on a Plantation. Also you will receive the two bonus pounds when they do a Taxes action instead of them.
- The Queen's Crown if placed on a Garden. Also you receive the two bonus prestige instead of them during a Masquerade Ball.

If the owner doesn't have enough of the requested payment you only get what they have.

Build a Church

You may build a Church only if there are Churches remaining on the Action board. Take the left most Church and immediately pay the price shown under it discounting if possible. Place the Church on an open clearing tile.



You may not build a Church if you have no open clearings. You also may not place a Church next to or diagonal to another Church.

Each time you buy a church you also get a **Scandal card**. Take the top three, choose one, and put the other two on the bottom of the deck.

Build a Palace

You may build a Palace if there are Palaces remaining on the Action board. Immediately pay **8 pounds** discounting if possible. Replace one of your castles with the Palace. The Castle then goes back to the supply near the board.



When you build a Palace you immediately get the Queen's Crown and therefore the Queen's favor.

A Palace will give you two prestige during a Masquerade Ball.

Build a Folly

You may build a Folly if there are Follies remaining on the Action board and if you meet the requirements of that Folly:



- Country Folly – Requires two Forest anywhere in your estate
- Wealth Folly – Requires two Plantations
- Prestige Folly – Requires two Gardens
- Grand Folly – Requires one each Plantation, Garden, and Forest

Immediately pay the 10 pounds, discounting if possible, and place the Folly on an open clearing tile. You may not build a Folly if you have no open clearings.

The first player to build a Folly will get 12 victory points, the second Folly built will yield 10 Victory Points, the third will yield 8, and the fourth will yield 6 Victory Points.

The player will immediately move their score marker to reflect their new victory points.

*A **Folly** is an extravagant, frivolous or fanciful building, designed more for artistic expression than for practicality. In the 16th century the rich would commission these structures to help decorate their grounds.*

3 - Acquire Land

Once per decade you may acquire more land by spending your Acquire Land token.

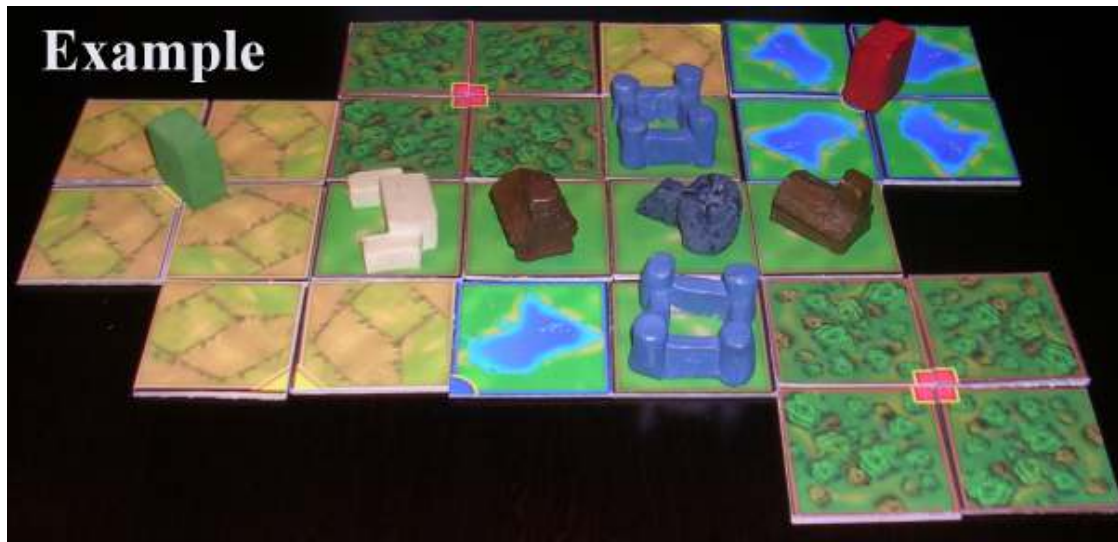


Draw random lands from the bag. The number of lands you get from the bag equals 1 for each wood plus a bonus of two for each forest.

If someone else has a Men-at-Arms on your Forest they get the two land bonus from the bag instead of you.

If you have bribe chits you may redeem them during this action for 1 more land each. All redeemed chits go back to the action-board.

Example - During the blue players Acquire Land action: The blue player will get 12 random lands from the bag; 8 for the 8 woods plus 4 for the two forest.



4 - Taxes

Once per decade you may collect taxes from your peasants by spending your Taxes token.

You will collect one pound per farm plus a bonus of two pounds per plantation.

If an opponent has a Men-at-Arms on your Plantation they receive the bonus of 2 pounds instead of you.

If you have bribe chits you may redeem them during this action for 1 more pound each. All redeemed chits go back to the action-board.

Example - During the blue players Taxes action: the blue player will get 7 pounds for the 7 farms. The green player will also immediately will get 2 pounds from the Men-at-arms on the one Plantation.

5 - Donate land to the Church



Players can donate land to the Church as an action any time if there is room in the Donate land to the Church area of the action-board. The donate area can hold three of each type for a total of 12 lands.

You get one victory point for each land placed. Each player can place as many lands as he would like in a single action up to the maximum.

Immediately move your score marker to reflect the new victory points.

At the start of each new decade the donate land area is cleared returning all lands to the random land bag.

6 - Bribe Royalty

There are always wayward royalty that can use some spare monies in exchange for some political positioning. Players may Bribe Royalty as an action any time there are Bribe Royalty chits available.



The player selects as many chits as they would like and pays 2 pounds each for them. The chits go behind the screen to be used later.

Immediately move your score marker one space forward per chit bought.

You may redeem any or all the bribe chits you have during one of three events; Taxes action, Acquire Land action, or a Masquerade Ball:

- When you do a Taxes action you may redeem chits. You receive one pound per chit redeemed.
- When you do an Acquire Land action you may redeem chits. You receive one land per chit redeemed.
- When there is a Masquerade Ball you may redeem chits. You receive one prestige per chit redeemed.

All redeemed chits return to the action-board.

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Masquerade Ball

Twice per decade the Queen throws a Ball not to be missed. All players may partake in this social event. It's an opportunity to convince higher nobles into joining your family.

First all players return their current titles to supply.

The player with the Queen's Crown goes first and players in turn add their Prestige markers to the prestige track. To do this, first add up all your prestige from your estate you get:

- One for each pond plus a bonus of two for each garden. If another player has a Men-at-Arms on your garden they get the bonus 2 prestige instead of you.
- And 2 prestige from each Palace you own.

Also players **may**:

- Redeem bribe chits to add to their prestige. They receive one prestige per chit redeemed. All redeemed chits return to the action-board.
- Add to this any prestige they can from scandal cards. Each card is worth one prestige. If they use the prestige from their scandal card(s) the cards are returned to the bottom of the deck.

While placing your marker you can not put your marker on the same space of another players' marker. You have to muster more than them or place yours on the first open space behind theirs.



Prestige Track							
Zero	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
32	33	34					

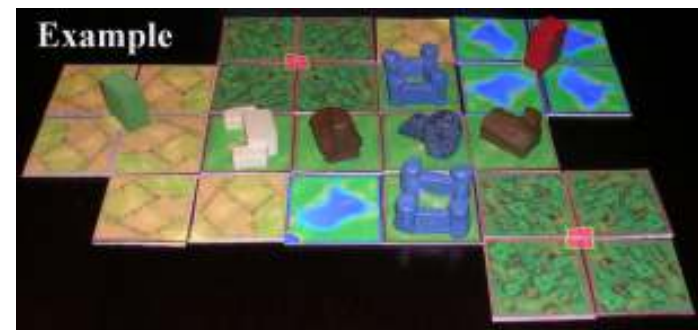
Once all markers are on the track, players may begin selecting their new Noble titles signs. In order of highest prestige players take the highest Noble title sign remaining in supply and place it on your screen. The highest title you may take is equal to or less than the prestige indicated on the title.

Once finished players immediately score for the titles they now have:

- Baron / Baroness – Gives no benefit
- Viscount / Viscountess – needs 2 prestige and scores 1 victory point.
- Earl / Countess – needs 6 prestige, scores 3 victory points and gives a 1 pound discount.
- Marquess / Marchioness – needs 10 prestige, scores 5 victory points and gives a 2 pound discount.
- Duke / Duchess – needs 14 prestige, scores 7 victory points and gives a 3 pound discount.

Return to the players all prestige markers.

Example – The blue player will get 7 prestige from his estate; 5 from ponds plus 2 from the Palace. The red player will get 2 prestige from his Men-at-Arms on the Garden. With 7 prestige the highest title he can get will be an Earl for 3 victory points. Earl will also give a discount of 2 pounds when buying structures.



Scoring round

Give each player victory points for their Castles and Palaces.

Each **Castle** that is completely enclosed by land is scored one at a time. A Castle is worth **3 victory points** plus **1** for each Church adjacent to it.

Each **Palace** that is completely enclosed by land is scored one at a time. A Palace is worth **5 victory points** plus **2** for each church adjacent to it.

Churches are scored for all the Castles and Palaces they are adjacent to.

Example – The Castle that is surrounded would score 3 points plus 2 points from Churches. The other Castle will score zero because it is not completely surrounded by land. The Palace would score 5 points plus 2 points for the church for a total of 12 points for this scoring round.

The scoring round ends the decade. Remove the current decade token from the board. If this was the 3rd scoring round the game is over. Otherwise begin a new decade.

End Game

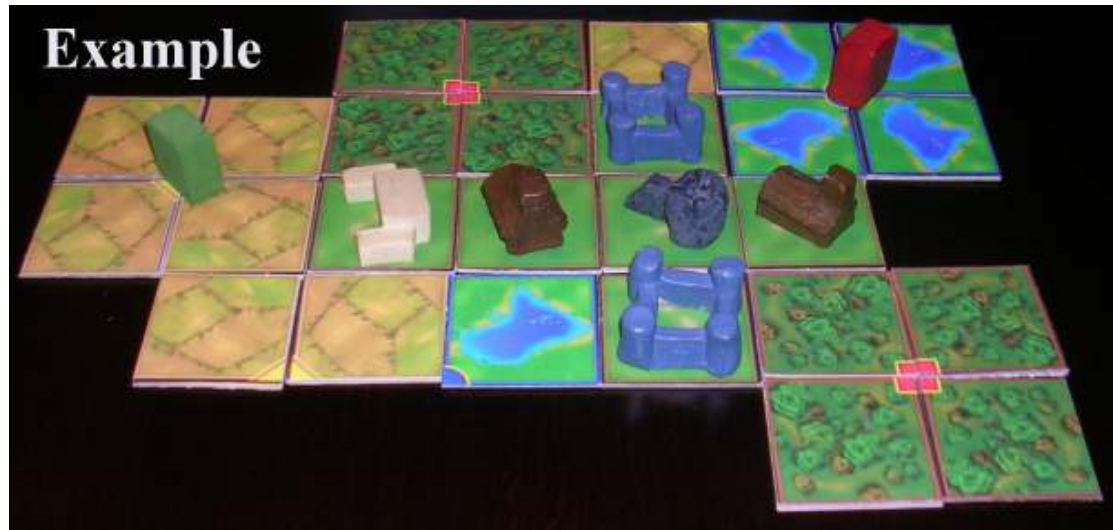
The game ends after the third scoring round.

Players add to their victory points 3 points per **Liaison scandal card** they have.

The winner is the player with the most victory points.

If there is a tie, the player among the tied players, with the most pounds wins.

Good Luck!



Scandal Cards

At the start of each decade each player gets one card. Also when a player buys a church they receive one card.

Each time a player gets a Scandal card take the top three from the deck, choose one and put the rest on the bottom.

During a Masquerade Ball Scandal Cards can be returned to the bottom the deck to give the player 1 extra prestige. If used for this the card is not used for anything else.

All cards go to the bottom of the deck after use or discarded.

There are 14 different Scandal Cards and a total of 36 cards in the deck:

Outmaneuver X3 –

Play up to 3 lands from behind your screen.

Blackmail X4 –

Played during a Masquerade Ball; use for 3 prestige to improve your position on the prestige track.

Dowry X3 –

Take 4 random lands from the bag and put them behind your screen.

Favor of the Vicar X2 –

During Donate land to the Church you may play up to five of a type of land instead of three.

Liaison X4 –

Add 3 victory points to your total at the end of the game.

Murder X2 –

This must be played at the start of another players turn. They skip their turn but still receive a victory point and the decade marker still moves if they have the Queen's Favor.

Purloin X2 –

You may trade with the bag of lands 1 for 1 for the lands of your choice for up to 5 lands.

Treachery X2 –

Play or move one of your Men-at-arms to a Plantation, Garden or Forest. Immediately collect a payment if available:

- Two pounds if on Plantation
- Two lands if on a Forest. These are from behind his screen and his choice.
- The Queen's crown if on a Garden

Tariff X3 –

Collect from your peasants 5 pounds.

White Hall X4 –

Take an audience with the queen to gain the queen's favor. Take the Queen's crown.

Secret Marriage X3 –

During a Bribe Royalty action you may pay 1 pound for the first 4 bribe chits bought.

High Treason X2 –

Choose an opponent. For the rest of the decade the chosen player will not receive a victory point from the Queen's crown.

War with Spain X1 –

Play face up near the board. While in play, all players put one pound on the card for each land they play or until there are 9 pounds. Each new War card kicks out any others. War cards go away at the end of the decade.

War with France X1 –

Play face up near the board. While in play, all players put two pounds on the card for each pond they play or until there are 6 pounds. Each new War card kicks out any others. War cards go away at the end of the decade.

Frequently asked Questions:

Q – Can I trade two lands from behind my screen for any land of my choosing?

A – Yes, when you are trading two of your lands for one land from the supply you may dig through the random land bag until you find the land you want.

Q – How can I get the Queen’s crown?

A – There are 4 ways to get the Queen’s crown:

- Complete a Garden with one or more ponds
- Build a Palace
- White Hall Scandal card
- Place a Men-at-arms’ marker on a Garden of the player that has the Crown.

Q – During scoring rounds do I have to have lands diagonal to my castle to call it surrounded?

A – Yes, surrounded means the Castle or Palace must have 8 lands next to it; four on each side, plus four on each diagonal or else you may not score it.

Q – What happens when a player has more than 34 Prestige?

A – The highest you can go on the prestige track is 34. The first person to reach this maximum is guaranteed to select first and be the Duke.

Q – What happens when the bag runs out of lands?

A – If the bag has fewer lands than you want to acquire all you can acquire are what are available.

Strategies:

- There are three main areas to concentrate on. While you need some of each you do not need to excel at all:
 - Farms, Plantations, Ponds, Bribe Royalty
 - Wood, Forest, Lands, Donate land to the Church
 - Ponds, Gardens, Prestige, Masquerade Ball
- You never know how much time you have left because the Queen’s crown can change hands before your next turn more than once. If the decade is coming to a close get done the actions you need most.
 - Make sure your Castles and Palaces are surrounded with land.
 - Remember you are guaranteed to have one turn after the second Ball.
- Do not forget to collect your victory point and move the decade marker if you have the Queen’s crown at the end of your turn.
- Playing too many lands will rob you of other actions you may need to get in.
- In general woods are more important in the beginning of the game than later.