Old London Bridge

By Gabriele Bubola & Leo Colovini

2-4 | 10+ | 45 min

Game Concept and Object of the Game

A great fire has destroyed the large wooden bridge across the river Thames.

To help with the planned reconstruction you assume the role of an architect. The new foundation will be made from stone, meaning that it can support buildings on the bridge itself. You must compete to have the most pristine section of the new bridge.

By constructing chapels, bridge gates, hostelries, guild houses, haberdashers, and parks in the proper order, and by utilizing the special actions to your advantage, you will become the wealthiest builder at the end of the game and be declared the winner.

Components

- **1 Game board**

- **1 Rondel**

- **76 Coins** *(£ = Pound Sterling)*

38× £1 20× £3 12× £10 6× £25

- **15 Game round markers**

5 each, numbered "1," "2," and "3"

- **55 Character cards**

"4"×10: Nobleman | *"3"×11: Cleric* | *"2"×15: Noblewoman*

"1"×15: Merchant | *"0"×4: Peter de Colechurch* | *Reverse side of cards*

- **24 Bonus tiles**

3 each of 8 different actions

3 different reverse sides for easy sorting

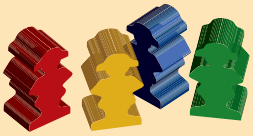
- **72 Buildings,** *12 of each type*

House numbers (1-60) & 1 of 4 crests | *4 Crests* | *No house number*

Chapel | *Bridge gate* | *Hostelry* | *Haberdasher* | *Guild house* | *Park*

- **4 Pawns**

1 of each player color



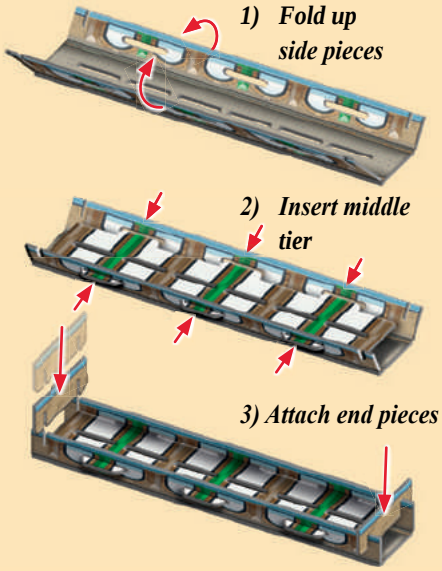
- **8 Player markers**

2 of each player color

- **8 Bridge segments**

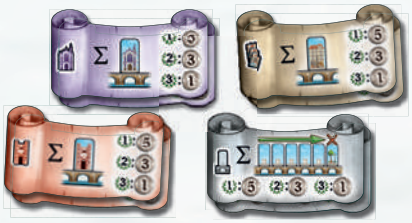
2 of each player color

Assembly instruction:



Expansion: Experienced builders

- **8 Scoring tiles,** *double-sided*



Historical Background

London, 1136:
A great fire destroys the wooden bridge across the river Thames. The cleric Peter de Colechurch, who has been assigned to the reconstruction project, proposes not only to build a new bridge, but a special stone one where buildings can be built on the bridge itself.

After much planning the reconstruction starts in 1176. The stone bridge is supported by numerous pointed arches and protected by wave breakers. One arch is even upgraded with a drawbridge to allow larger vessels to pass under.

Setup

1) Place the game board in the center of the playing area.

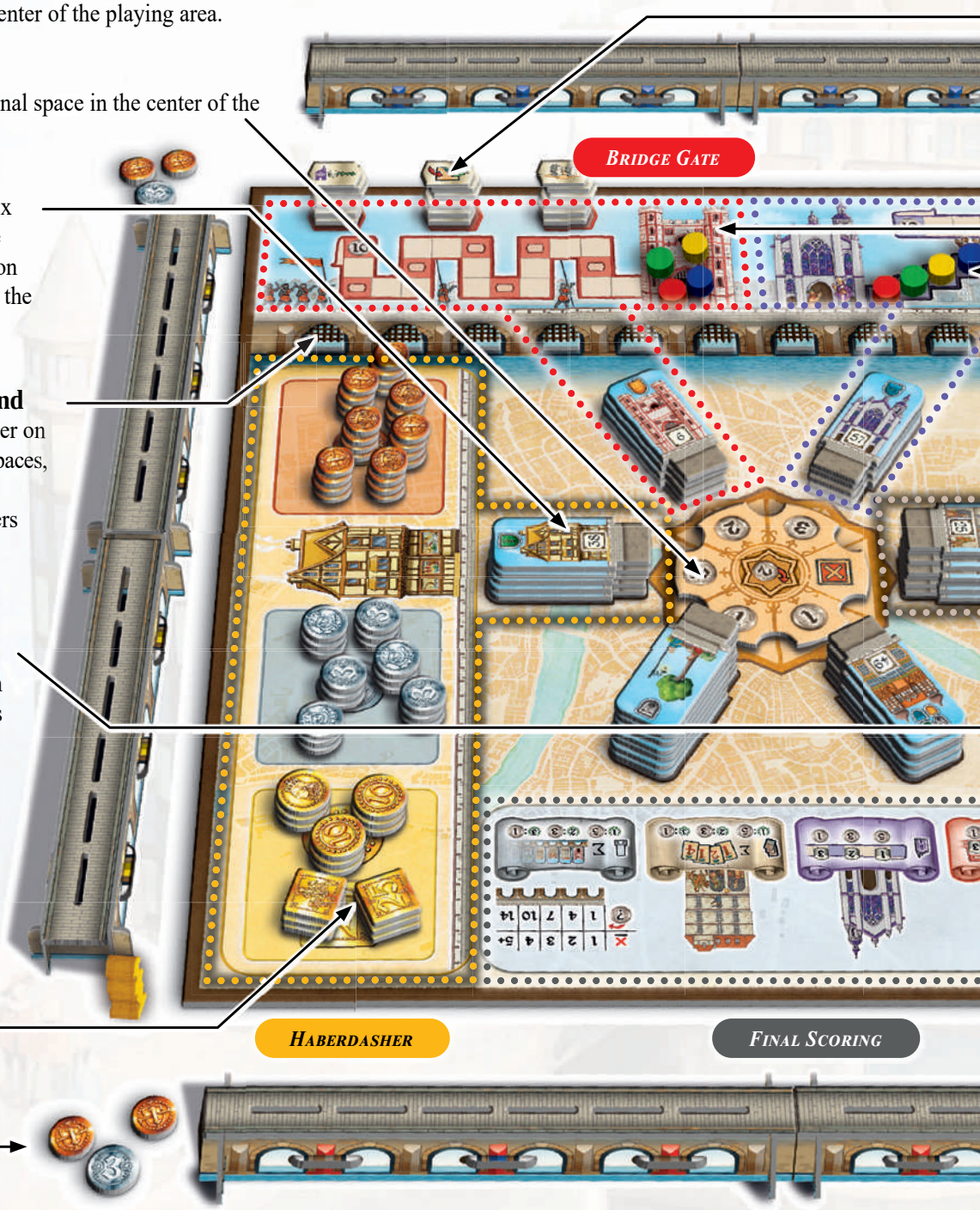
2) Put the **rondel** on the hexagonal space in the center of the game board.

3) Sort the **buildings** by their six different types. Mix each type separately and stack the tiles on their designated space around the rondel.

4) Randomize the **15 game round markers** and place one marker on each of the 12 corresponding spaces, numbered side face down. Return the remaining 3 markers unseen to the game box.

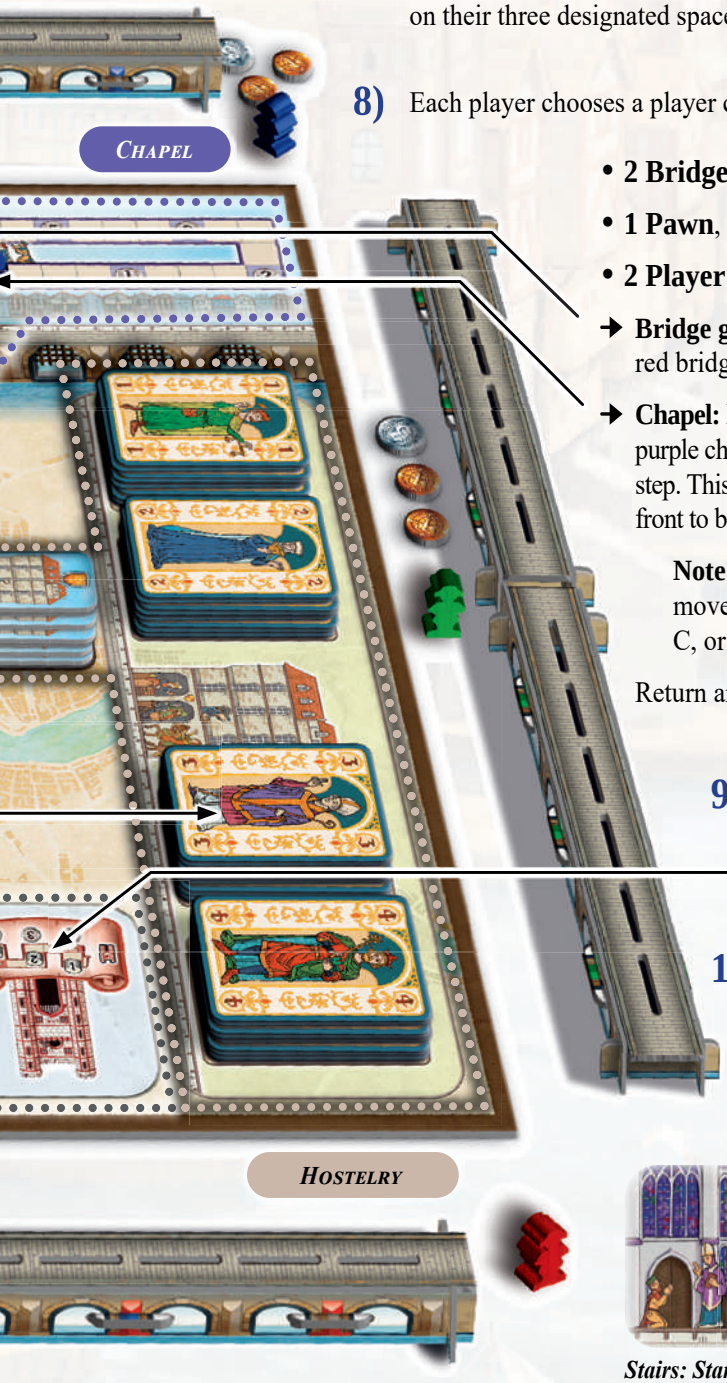
5) **Hostelry:**
Sort the **character cards** by numbers. Stack the cards with number "1–4" on their spaces next to the hostelry as a common supply.
Each player takes one card with the number "0" (Peter de Colechurch) as part of their starting hand.

6) **Haberdasher:**
Sort the **coins** by denomination and place them on their spaces next to the haberdasher.
Give each player **£5** as their **starting capital.**



It took 33 years before King John would declare the imposing structure complete in 1209. Sadly, Peter de Colechurch would not live to see its completion, as he had passed away four years earlier.

The Medieval "Old London Bridge" was 6 meters (20 feet) wide and 273 meters (about 900 feet) long. It featured access gates on both ends with bridge guards, as well as a chapel where Peter de Colechurch was buried. Also built on it were shops and residences for rent, as well as a water mill to produce flour. The number of people living on the bridge was high enough that the Old London Bridge was a self-governing borough with its own principles all the way till the 18th century.



7) Bridge gate:
Sort the **bonus tiles** by their colored reverse sides and mix each stack separately. Stack them facedown on their three designated spaces, then reveal the top tile of each stack.

8) Each player chooses a player color and takes the following components in their color:

- **2 Bridge segments** (from now on simply referred to as a "bridge").
- **1 Pawn**, placing it in front of them.
- **2 Player markers:**

➜ **Bridge gate:** Place 1 marker on the **bridge gate**. This is the starting space of the red bridge gate track.

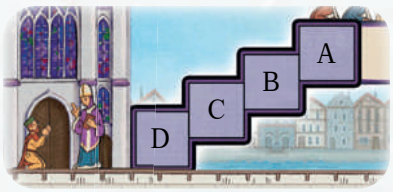
➜ **Chapel:** Place 1 marker on the stairs of the **chapel**, which are the starting spaces of the purple chapel track. Draw them randomly to determine which marker to place on which step. This track is crucial to break ties during the game, with ties being broken from front to back or top to bottom on the same space of the track.

Note: When a player moves their first step on the chapel track, their pawn moves to the first space after the staircase, no matter which starting step (A, B, C, or D) on the staircase their marker started.

Return any unused player components to the game box.

9) If this is your first session, you do not need the **8 scoring tiles**; leave them in the game box. When playing the basic game, you use what is printed on the game board for **final scoring**.

10) Finally, players form their starting hand by adding cards in addition to their "0." Players should take the following cards based on their starting step:



Stairs: Starting space of the chapel track

A	2	1	1	1
B	1	2	1	1
C	1	1	2	1
D	1	1	1	2

The buildings of the Old London Bridge

This chapter serves as reference to the main elements of the game.

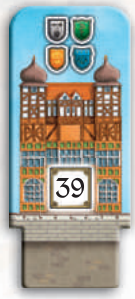
There are 6 types of buildings, each of which grants a specific action when constructing it on the bridge.
Here is a short summary of the building actions:

Chapel – Determines turn order and breaks ties.

Bridge gate - Grants one-time abilities.

Hostelry – Gain new character cards.

Haberdasher – Gain money.



Guild house – Boosts future actions.

Park – Resets the numbering of buildings.

The strength of each **building action** varies based on the crest of the building that is being constructed. The player counts **all crests of the same color** on their buildings, including the one just constructed, with the total counting as the strength of the action (e.g. 3 orange crests would give a strength of 3 in the example below).

Each game round all players will build one building on their own bridge. Buildings are always constructed from **left to right**.

All buildings have a unique **house number from 60–1**, except parks. You may build a new building on the next empty site of your bridge only if its **house number is lower** than that of the building to its left.

You may always build a park because it has no house number. This starts a **new line of buildings**, so the next building to the right may have any number.

Playing The Game

Old London Bridge is played over 12 game rounds. The game ends after the twelfth game round, after which final scoring takes place. Each game round consists of the following three phases, played consecutively:

1. Game round preparation **2. Determine turn order** **3. Build buildings**

1. Game round preparation

First, reveal a game round marker. In the first round, this is the first marker furthest left on the game board. In the following rounds these markers are revealed from left to right, one for each game round.

Rotate the rondel clockwise as many spaces as shown on the revealed marker (1 to 3 spaces).

Example: The game round marker shows a "2." Rotate the rondel 2 spaces clockwise.

2. Determine turn order

Each player chooses one of the cards in their hand and places it **facedown** in front of them.
Players **reveal** the selected cards **simultaneously** and keep them in front of themselves.

The card's value determines the order in which the players will build their building during **3. Build buildings**.

- The player with the **highest value goes first**.
- The other players follow **in descending order** of their played value.
- In case of **identical values** the position of the player markers on the **chapel track** breaks the tie. The tied player whose marker is further ahead, or on top (if on the same space) goes first.

Example:
Leon has the card with the highest value (3) and is the first player in Phase 3, followed by Lisa (2) as the second player. Tim and Paula are tied (both 0). Their positions on the chapel track break the tie: Tim is ahead of Paula, who still has not left her starting space. Tim is the third player and Paula is fourth.

3. Build buildings

The active player performs the following 3 actions one after the other:

a) Select a building **b) Construct the building on your bridge** **c) Perform the building's action**

a) Select a building:

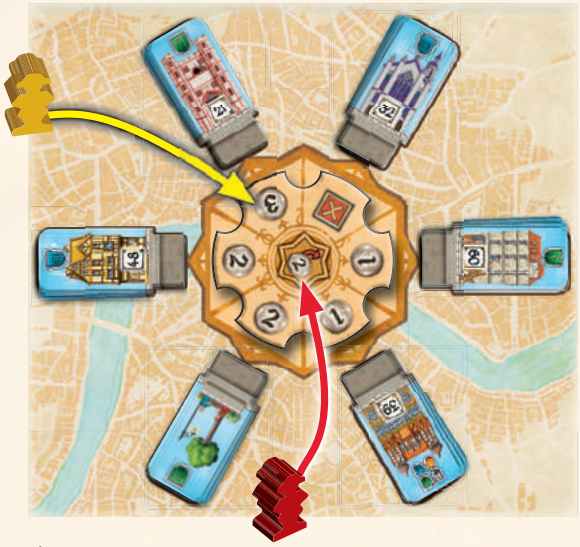
First, the player **returns** their **played card** to the common supply on the game board.

Exception: A "Peter de Colechurch" card (0) is always returned to your hand.

Then, the player selects one building by **placing their pawn on an unoccupied space of the rondel**. They have a choice between two options:

a) A player may place a pawn on one of the **outer spaces, gaining £1, £2, or £3** and taking the topmost building of the stack adjacent to this space. A pawn may **not be placed** on the space marked with an **"X."**

b) They place their pawn on the **center space** of the rondel and **pay £2.** This allows the player to freely select the topmost building of any one of the six building stacks, even the one next to the space marked "X". However, they do not gain any money.



Example:
Leon has played the card with the highest value and goes first. He places his pawn on the space adjacent to the bridge gate and gains £3, then builds that building on his bridge and performs the building's action. Lisa is next (second highest value). She pays £2 and places her pawn on the center space. She may choose any building, even a bridge gate (the space Leon took), but decides to take a chapel, which is adjacent to the space marked with an "X."

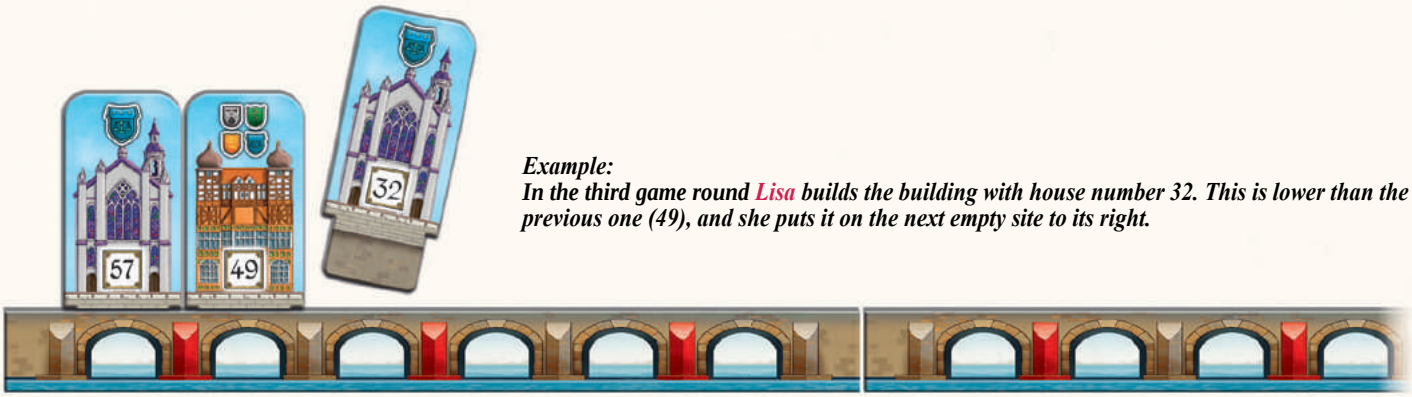
Important: Only **one pawn** may be placed on each space! If a **stack of buildings is depleted** during the course of the game, players may **not place** their pawn on the outer space of the rondel currently adjacent to the empty stack.

Note: You may keep your money hidden behind your bridge.

b) Construct the building on your bridge

After placing their pawn, the player **takes** the appropriate **building** and places it on their bridge according to the following rules:

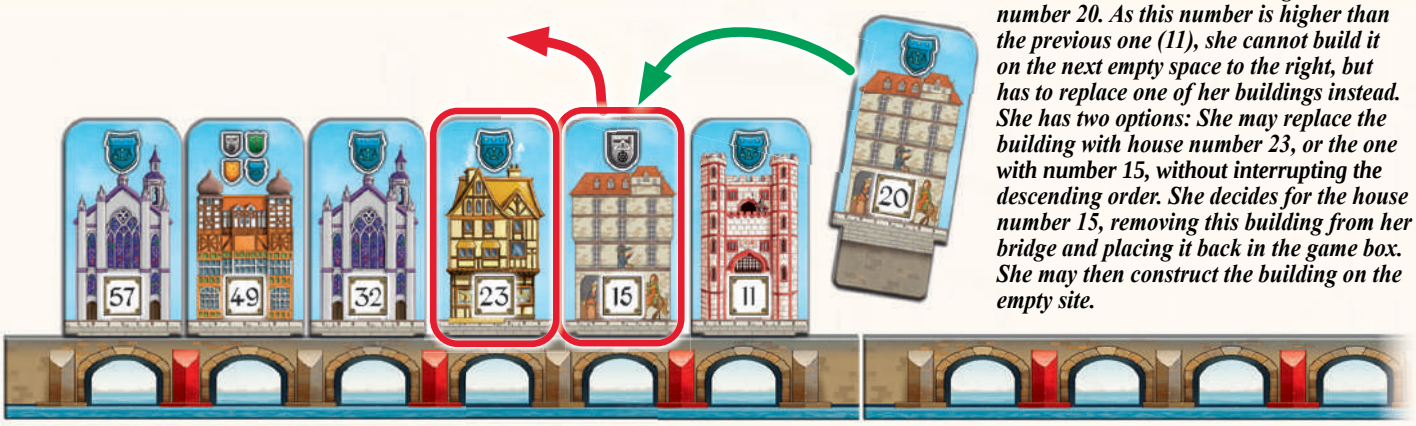
- A player's bridge can hold a maximum of **12 buildings**, which must be built **from left to right.**
- All buildings, except parks, have a unique house number from 1–60. You may build a new building on the next empty site of your bridge only if its **house number is lower** than that of the building to its left.



Example:
In the third game round Lisa builds the building with house number 32. This is lower than the previous one (49), and she puts it on the next empty site to its right.

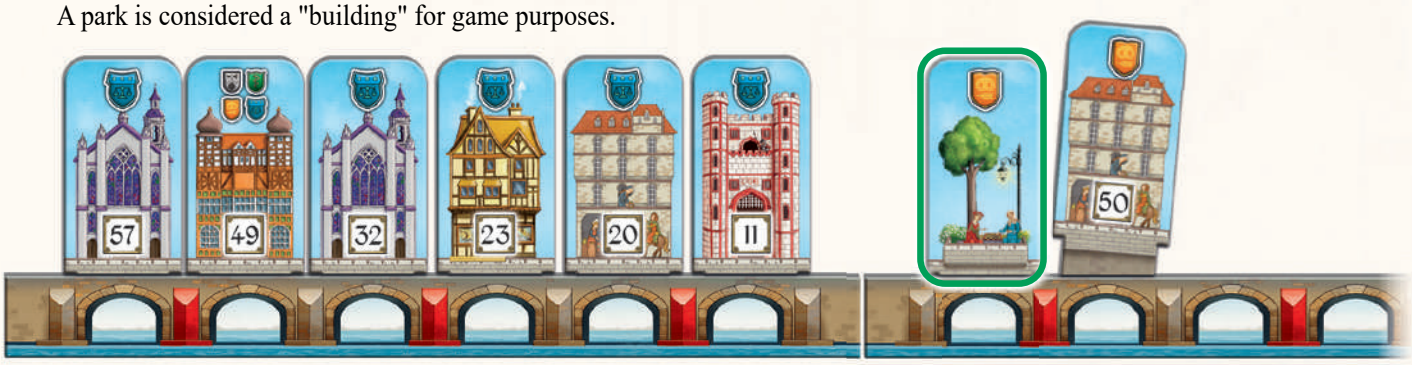
- If the **house number is higher**, you must **replace** one of your established houses with the new one, making sure that the descending order of house numbers will not be broken. Remove the replaced building from the game.

!/ Note: You may never replace a park.



Example:
Lisa wants to build the building with house number 20. As this number is higher than the previous one (11), she cannot build it on the next empty space to the right, but has to replace one of her buildings instead. She has two options: She may replace the building with house number 23, or the one with number 15, without interrupting the descending order. She decides for the house number 15, removing this building from her bridge and placing it back in the game box. She may then construct the building on the empty site.

- You always build a **park** on the next site **to the right of an established building**. The next building to the right of the park may have any house number, as you start a **new line of buildings with descending house numbers**.
  A park is considered a "building" for game purposes.



Example: Lisa had built a park in the previous round. Now she starts a new line of descending house numbers with house number 50.

c) Perform the building's action

Once the player has built their selected building they perform **that building's action**.
Each type of building has its own specific action.

The **strength of the action** depends on the **crest** shown at the top of the building you just have built.
Count all crests of the same color (and shape) on your bridge, including the building just constructed this turn.
The sum determines the strength of the action.

Example:
Paula just constructed the building with the house number 43. It is a haberdasher, which gives money according to the action strength. This haberdasher has an orange crest, so she counts the number of all orange crests of the buildings on her bridge. The total is 4, so she gains £4 from the common supply.

Hint: As guild houses show all 4 crests, they always enhance **each** action!

After **all players** have completed their turn, remove the pawns from the rondel before starting the next round.

The following chapters will explain all different building's actions in detail:

The chapel

When building a chapel, the player advances their marker on the chapel track as many spaces as the strength of the action. If it lands on a space containing one or more other player markers, place the marker on top of the others.

Whenever a player's marker lands on or passes a space with a printed amount of money, they immediately take that amount from the common supply.

Example a):
In the third round Lisa builds a chapel with a blue crest on her bridge. Her current total of blue crests is three, so she advances her player marker on the chapel track 3 spaces. Since she passes the space showing £1, she gains £1 from the common supply.

!/ Do not forget: The position of player markers on the chapel track breaks ties to the advantage of the player whose marker is more advanced or on top. This **applies to all ties**, be it when playing character cards or during final scoring as well.

Example b):
In the next round Lisa and Paula play cards with the same value (2). Because Lisa is ahead of Paula on the chapel track, she takes her turn before Paula takes hers.

The bridge gate

When building a bridge gate, the player advances their marker on the **bridge gate track** as many spaces as the strength of the action. If it lands on a space containing one or more other player markers, place it on top of the others.

Each third space on that track is a **bonus space**. When landing on or passing such a space, the player takes any one of the three face up **bonus tiles** granting a special action. Immediately reveal the next tile of that stack. If the player is entitled to more than one special tile, they may reveal the new tile before selecting subsequent ones.

Example:
Paula builds a bridge gate with an orange crest. As she has a total of 4 orange crests currently, she advances her player marker on the bridge gate track 4 spaces. She passes one bonus space and lands on another one. This allows her to take two bonus tiles, so she chooses the leftmost one, reveals a new one, and chooses to take it as well (she could have taken one of the other face up bonus tiles instead).

The bonus tiles grant special **one-time abilities**. From the next game round on the player may use that tile, but – with an exception for the last two on the right column below* – only during **3. Build buildings** on their **own turn**. Once used, it is removed from the game. A player may use more than one bonus tile during the same game round. Any unused bonus tile is worth £1 at the end of the game (indicated on the reverse of the tile).

The special actions on the bonus tiles are as follows:

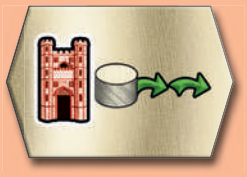
- You may place your pawn on a space occupied by **one** other pawn. You still gain the income for an outer space or have to pay for the central space.

- You may place your pawn on the center space of the rondel without paying £2.

- You may place your pawn on the "X" space of the rondel and build the corresponding building.

- After completing your turn, return your played character card to your hand.

- You may advance two spaces on the chapel track.

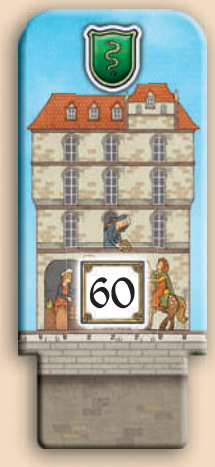


- You may advance two spaces on the bridge gate track.

∗ You may use this tile directly after all cards have been revealed in **2. Determine turn order** in order to affect the turn order: Increase the value of your played character card by +1.

∗ You may use this tile before playing your card in **2. Determine turn order**: Add a "Noblewoman" (2) from the common supply to your hand.

Each player, upon reaching the end space of the chapel or bridge track, immediately receives £10. If this is not the first marker to reach that space, put it underneath any other ones present there. Forfeit any remaining steps.



The hostelry

When building a hostelry, the player may draw one or more **character cards from the common supply** to their hand. The total value of the drawn cards can be up to, but must not exceed, the strength of the action. The player may draw cards in any combination as long as they are available.

Example:
When building the new building with house number 20, Paula must replace one of her buildings and decides for the one with house number 15. She has 6 blue crests now, so the strength of this action is 6. She takes one card with value 3, one with value 2 and one with value 1 from the supply on the game board and adds them to her hand. Instead, she could for example have taken value 4 and 2, or even 6 value 1 cards.

The haberdasher

When building a haberdasher, the player gains as much **money** from the common supply as the strength of the action.

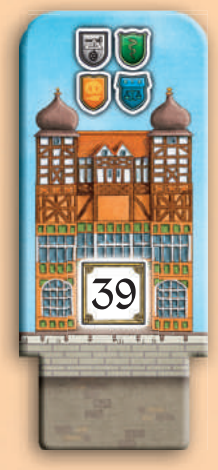
Example:
Paula builds a haberdasher with a gray crest. She has 4 gray crests now and gains £4.

The park

The park has no house number, meaning it is always built to the right of the last building (even if it is a park).

A park interrupts the descending order of house numbers; the building to the right of a park may have any number, which starts a new line of descending house numbers.

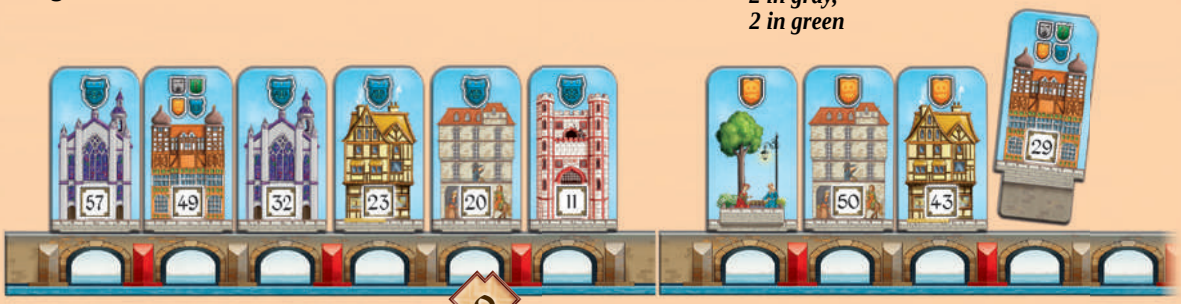
Example:
The line of house numbers 59, 51, 48, 33, 25, and 6 is followed by a park.
A new line of descending house numbers starts with house number 58.



The guild house

There is **no specific action** linked to the guild house.
Its advantage is that it features all 4 crests, thus **adding +1 to the strength of all actions.**

Example:
Lisa builds a guild house on her bridge. Now, her current strength of action is:
7 in blue,
5 in orange,
2 in gray,
2 in green



End of the game

The game ends after the 12th game round, the round in which the last game round marker is revealed.

Exception: In the rare case that 3 stacks of buildings are depleted, the game ends after the conclusion of the current game round.

Proceed to **final scoring** as follows. First, evaluate the four printed scoring tiles on the game board.

!! Do not forget: Any ties are always broken by the positions on the chapel track!

- The player **most advanced on the chapel track** (1st position) gains £5, the player in second position gains £3, and the one in third position* gains £1. A player must leave the starting space to earn any money here.

- The player **most advanced on the bridge gate track** (1st position) gains £5, the player in second position gains £3, and the one in third position* gains £1. A player must leave the starting space to earn any money here.

- Each player adds the **values of their character cards** still on their hand. The player with the highest value gains £5, the player with the second highest value gains £3, and the one with the third highest value* gains £1. You must have at least a value of 1 to earn any money here.

- Each player **counts the buildings on their bridge.** The player with the most buildings gains £5, the player with the second most buildings gains £3, and the one with the third most buildings* gains £1.

*In a **three player game** the third place is **not** awarded!

- Each player must then **pay an amount of money** depending on the number of **empty spaces** they have on their bridge, according to the table below:

Empty spaces:	✕	1	2	3	4	5+
Amount of money to pay:	?	1	4	7	10	14

- For each **bonus tile** a player still owns they gain **£1**.

Finally, players total their money (both that gained during the game and during final scoring).
The player with the most money is the winner of the game! In case of tie, this is broken by the position on the chapel track, as usual.

Scoring example for Paula:

- *Paula is in third position on the chapel track and gains £1.*
- *She is in first position on the bridge gate track and gains £5.*
- *She and Tim only have 1 card with the value of 0. To be able to earn money, it must be at least 1, so both she and Tim do not get anything.*
- *While there are no empty sites on Lisa's and Tim's bridge, both Leon and Paula have 1 empty site. Because Paula is behind Leon on the chapel track, Leon is third.*
- *Paula has to pay £1 for the empty site on her bridge.*
- *Paula still has 2 unused bonus tiles and gains £2.*

Paula has gained a total of £7 during her final scoring. During the course of the game she has collected £30 already.

Her final total in this session is £37.

Rules for 2 players

When playing the game with 2 players only, each player takes 2 turns during each game round. All rules are the same as described above, with the following changes:

Setup

Each player takes 2 "Peter de Colechurch" cards (0) instead of only 1.
Each player only takes 1 pawn.

The game is played over 6 game rounds instead of 12. Therefore you place only 6 game round tiles on the game board, leaving the 6 spaces to the right empty.

Playing the game

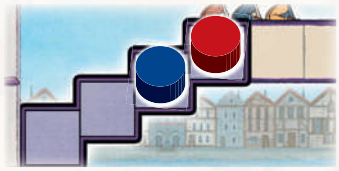
2. Determine turn order

Both players play two cards from their hand. Reveal all four cards simultaneously.

3. Build buildings

The value of the played character cards determines the turn order as usual.
Each card is regarded on its own; do **not add** their values. This means that each player takes two turns during each game round:

- **Player's 1st turn:**
  Place your pawn on the rondel and build the appropriate building.
- **Player's 2nd turn:**
  Relocate your pawn to another space on the rondel and build the appropriate building.



Example:
Paula starts, then Lisa takes 2 turns, and finally Paula takes her second turn.

End of the game

The game ends after 6 game rounds. During final scoring, when evaluating the scoring tiles, only the first place is awarded.

Expansion: Experienced builders

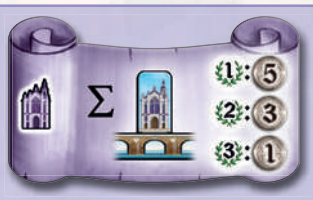
After you have played ***Old London Bridge*** a few times, you may want to add some variation to the game by using the additional scoring tiles. There are four new evaluation options for the buildings "chapel," "bridge gate," and "hostelry," as well as for players' bridges.
Sort the scoring tiles by color and mix them separately. Place one tile of each color on the corresponding scoring space on the game board with a random side up. These tiles replace the base game scoring. The scoring tiles can be used in any combination.

Note: You may also combine the expansion scoring tiles with the base game scoring – just leave the desired space(s) uncovered.

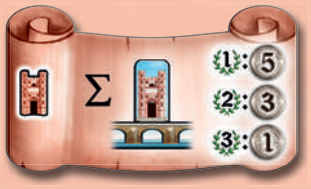
The new scoring options are as follows:

Competitive evaluation

The players compete for the evaluation of these tiles, just like those printed on the game board. For each tile they compare a certain requirement, with the player who is best gaining £5, the second best gaining £3, and the third best gaining £1. As usual ties are broken by the positions on the chapel track. In games with three [two] players, no third [no second & third] place is awarded.



Who has built the most chapels on their bridge?



Who has built the most bridge gates on their bridge?

Who has built the most hostelries on their bridge?

Count the number of buildings in the longest line of uninterrupted house numbers on your bridge (not counting parks). Whose line is the longest?
Example: See p. 12, bottom right.

Once each round evaluation

Evaluate the following tiles once each round. The players compete as well, but only the best gains £1 / £2.

At the end of the round:
The leading player on the chapel track gains £1.

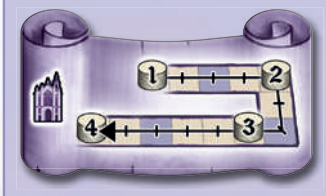
At the end of the round:
The leading player on the bridge gate track gains £1.

After revealing the character cards:
The player who has played the character card with the highest value gains £2. Ties are broken by the positions on the chapel track.
Important: Cannot be influenced by bonus tiles!

At the end of the round:
The player who has built the building with the lowest house number during this round gains £2 (do not count parks).

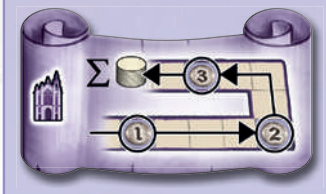
General evaluation

The players do not compete with each other for these tiles. Everybody can gain money if meeting the requirements.



All players (except the last player) gain £1 for each space they are ahead of the last player on the chapel track.

Example:
The players count the spaces they are ahead of Tim:
Lisa gains 10£, Leon £6, Paula £4, Tim 0£.

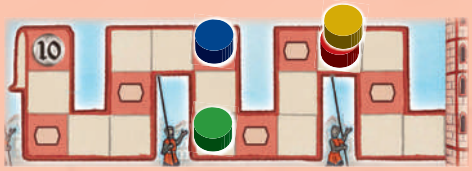


Each player who has reached or passed the spaces showing an amount of money on the chapel track gains the sum of that money again at the end of the game.

Example:
At the end of the game Lisa has reached the space showing £5.
She gains
£5 + £3 + £2 + £1 = £11

The more spaces a player has advanced on the bridge gate track, the more money they gain:

4–6 spaces = £3
7–9 spaces = £5
10–12 spaces = £9
13+ spaces = £12



Example:
Paula has advanced 12 spaces and gains £9. Tim gains £9 for 10 spaces as well.
Both Lisa and Leon have reached the fifth space and gain £3 each.

Instead of the money printed on the reverse side, players gain money for the number of unused bonus tiles they still have:

1 tile = £1
2 tiles = £4
3 tiles = £9
4+ tiles = £16

Example:
At the end of the game Lisa has 3 unused bonus tiles.
She gains £9.

Each player counts the number of character cards still in their hard (including the "0") and gains:

3–4 cards = £4
5–7 cards = £7
8+ cards = £10

Example:
At the end of the game Tim gains £7 for his 5 cards in hand. The "0" is counted here as well!

Certain sets of character cards generate certain amounts of money:

Set of 1+2 = £5
Set of 1+2+3 = £10
Set of 1+2+3+4 = £15

A player may have several sets, but each card can be part of a single set only.

Example:
Leon gains a total of £10 for his 2 sets of 1+2.

Each player counts the number of buildings on their bridge with a house number of 30 and less. They gain £2 for each of these buildings.

For each complete set of all six building types on their bridge each player gains £10 (these buildings do not need to be adjacent or in a specific order).

Example for the upper scoring tile on page 11:
In this example, the longest line of uninterrupted house numbers is formed with 6 buildings (59, 51, 48, 33, 25, 6). The park does not belong to that line.

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