

# A VERY ENGLISH MURDER

## MURDER AT WOODPERRY HALL

A card game of murder, love, money, revenge, secrets ... and tea.



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# A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall

Ages 13+   3–8 players   30–60 minutes

## Table of Contents

- 2   Game Components
- 3   Overview
- 3   How It All Ends
- 3   Setting Up The Game
- 5   Characters
- 6   Motive and Special Ability Cards
- 6   How to Play
- 7   Turn Sequence
- 9   Game End
- 9   A Killer Revealed
- 9   Motives For Murder
- 10   Example: End Of Game
- 10   Example: A Turn
- 12   Strategies
- 12   Characters of Woodperry Hall
- 17   Optional Rules
- 17   Frequently Asked Questions
- 18   Designer Notes
- 19   Credits, Contact



It is the summer of 1955 and everything seems quiet in the village of Thornbury and its most famous residence, the stately—yet slightly run-down—Woodperry Hall. England has been at peace for a decade, the family and guests are at the Hall for a evening meal, the staff have arranged the summer’s mauve and white flowers in crystal vases in impeccable fashion, and the cook has prepared a delightful supper (cocktails, avacado canapes, kidneys saute au madere, summer rabbit casserole and vegetables, and strawberries au maraschino with fresh cream). Everything is simply tip-top ... except for the still-warm body found on the grounds of Woodperry Hall. Was it murder or suicide? Was it an accident, or something far more sinister? Oh, without a doubt it’s murder alright, and now Oxford City Police detectives will arrive and dramatically solve the case. Who will be revealed to have committed the crime?

## Game Components

24	Character cards	60	Motive cards (30 Guilty, 30 Innocent)
48	Question cards	9	Red Herring cards
12	Special Ability cards	20	Question cubes (blue)
1	Detective cube (white)	1	Rulebook



*Left-to-right: character, special ability and question cards (poker-sized); two motive cards and a red herring card (smaller-sized).*

## Overview

*A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall* is a three- to eight-player murder mystery game set in the fictional village of Thornbury, near Oxford, England in 1955. It is a narrative game where players cooperatively construct a story about a murder that takes place by answering questions and trying to appear innocent. Each player assumes the role of a character who is frequently found in classic English murder mystery novels. Every turn, one player assumes the role of an Oxford City Police Detective to question the other players who, in turn, build a case against each other to make sure another character is responsible for the murder that took place. At the end of the game, the Detective will solve the crime and—in dramatic fashion—reveal who the murderer is. Will *you* turn out to be the one who committed the murder?

## How It All Ends








On the final turn of the game, the player who has the largest total of black cubes showing on their collected Motive cards will be revealed to be the murderer.

## Setting Up The Game

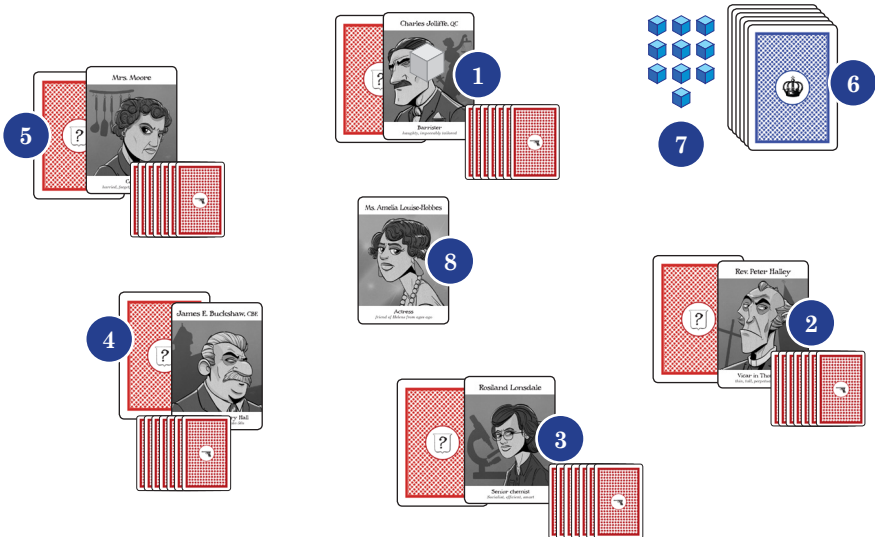
1. Shuffle the 24 Character cards. Deal one of these cards to each player. Place these face *up* in front of the player. Players should introduce their character. Draw and reveal a Victim from the remaining Character cards.
2. Shuffle the 12 Special Ability cards and give one to each player. These cards are kept hidden from other players and may be used during gameplay.
3. Shuffle the 60 (smaller) Motive Cards and 9 Red Herring cards into a single deck and deal each player the number shown in the table on the next page. Optionally, players may use the Drafting mechanic as explained in the **Optional Rules** section.
4. The last player who read a murder mystery is the start player (or determine a starting player in some other agreeable fashion). Give the white detective cube to the start player. This player will assume the role of the Detective on the first turn.
5. Place the 20 blue Question cubes into a pile where players can all reach them.
6. Shuffle the 48 Question cards and place them in a face *down* deck in the middle of the table.

# Player Count, Motive Cards, and Question Cubes

The game is played over a fixed number of “turns”. On a turn, one player acts as the Detective and asks one other player (the “suspect” for this turn) a question. The other players give the suspect a Motive card from their hand based on how factual/credible they want (or believe) the suspect’s answer to be. The table below shows: The number of Motive cards each player receives at the start of the game (Step 3 on the previous page); and the maximum number of Question cubes each player can acquire during the game. Blue question cubes indicate the number of times each player has been asked a question by a Detective player during the game.

Players	Motive Cards / Player	Max. Question Cubes / Player
3 *	11	
4 *	10	
5 **	7 or 10	 or 
6	9	
7	6	
8	7	

**Notes:** \*With three and four players, the detective will also give the suspect one of their Motive cards. \*\*With five players, you can decide to play a short game or longer game. For a short game, deal out 7 Motive cards to each player. If you want to play a longer game, deal out 10 Motive cards to each player.



Example of Set-Up

A five-player game that has been set up on the bottom of previous page. The players decided to play a short game, and receive a hand of seven Motive cards. Brenda (1) is the starting player with the detective cube. The other players are George (2), Luke (3), Megan (4), and Tom (5). Each player has a face up Character card, a hidden Special Ability card, and seven Motive cards. The 48 Question cards have been shuffled and placed face down on the table (6) and the blue Question cubes are placed within easy reach (7). The victim is Ms. Amelia Louise-Hobbes (8).

Characters

Each player is “roleplaying” one of the characters who was at Woodperry Hall at the time of the murder. The character types will be very familiar to fans of classic English murder mystery novels: the Lord and Lady of Woodperry Hall, their adult children, close or distant relatives, business acquaintances, staff at the Hall, typical village residents, etc. Each player is dealt one Character card at random at the start of the game.

There are 24 Character cards included in *A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall* and each shows: The person’s portrait, name, and some brief words describing what sort of person they are (for more intimate details about each character see the section, **The Characters At Woodperry Hall**). Character cards are placed face up in front of a player so that everyone knows who everyone else is.



*An example of Character cards. The cards show: the character’s portrait (1), name (2), and their role and a few words describing the character (3).*

The Victim

After the players have drawn a Character from the 24 available, randomly select one more and place that character face up near the centre of the table. This should be accompanied by a cry, “Good heavens, so-and-so has been murdered!” The players should express appropriately feigned shock or dismay at this news. The starting player (who has the white detective cube) may now announce in what macabre fashion the victim was killed (to get the narrative started). Optionally, players may choose to leave this information to be revealed as the story develops, during play.



## Motive and Special Ability Cards

Each player is dealt a number of the smaller Motive cards as indicated on the table on page 4 during set-up. For example, in a six-player game, each player will receive 9 Motive cards. These cards show a number of cubes that indicate a character's guilt (black cubes), innocence (white cubes), or a possible distraction in the investigation (red cubes, aka "red herrings").



*The black cubed Motive card (left) adds two to a character's guilt at the end of the game (1). White cubed Motive cards (middle) are used to break ties (2). Red cubed Motive cards (right) are red herrings and do not affect guilt or innocence (3).*

Players must give one Motive card *from their hand*, face down to the player who is being asked a question by the Detective (the suspect for the turn), after they have answered the Detective's question. Players can *not* examine the Motive cards they are being given during the game. Players will be left with one Motive card in their hand at the end of the game. The suspect becomes the Detective on the next turn.

## Special Ability Cards

Each player will randomly draw one Special Ability card at the start of the game. These cards are kept hidden from other players. Special Abilities allow a player to perform one action that usually break the game's normal rules, i.e., examine one's face down Motive cards. Follow the instructions on the card, *then discard that card*.

## How To Play

The game is played in turns. At the start of each turn the player who has the detective cube secretly looks at and reads the top three face down Question cards, and then reveals one of these Question cards to all players. The Detective will then ask **one** other player—referred to as the "suspect" for this turn—that question.

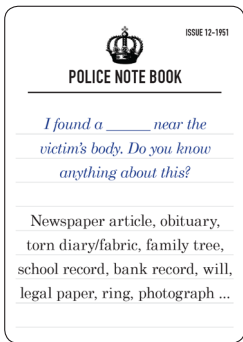
The suspect must answer the Detective's question, and then *every other* player will place one Motive card from their hand *face down* in front of the suspect's Character card. The Detective does *not* contribute a Motive card from their hand to the suspect (*except* in three- and four-player games). The suspect will **never** place a Motive card after answering the Detective's question.

## Turn Sequence

The following steps are completed, in the order shown, each turn:

1. The player with the detective cube *examines three* and *reveals one* Question card, and asks one other player (the suspect) that question (*exc. first turn, see below*).
2. The suspect takes one blue Question cube, places it in front of them, and then does their best to answer the Detective's question.
3. In sequence, moving clockwise around the table from the player to the left of the suspect, each player gives the suspect one of the Motive cards they are holding.
4. When all players have given the suspect a Motive card, pass the white detective cube to the suspect.
5. Check for game end condition (a number of blue Question cubes/player). If the game is not over, start again at Step 1. If the game is over, conclude the investigation and proceed to the **Game End** step.

## 1. The Detective Asks A Question



The player who holds the detective cube *secretly* examines the top three face down Question cards (***five cards on turn one***). That player selects one of these cards, and then places the unselected Question cards face down on the bottom of the Question deck. The Detective turns the selected Question card over to reveal it to all players. The Detective then asks the question they have chosen, filling in the blanks on the card, to *one* of the other players. (The two extra cards drawn on turn one help ensure that the game begins with a good question.)

The detective fills in the \_\_\_\_\_ (blank spaces) on the cards using the example words shown or, *preferably*, making up their own word(s) that are similar to the examples, to ask the suspect a question that is relevant to the investigation and story that has developed so far. The selected Question card is now put aside in a discard pile.

The Detective may only ask a player a question if that player has ***less than*** the number of maximum blue Question cubes in front of them, as indicated on the table on page 4.

At the end of the game, all players will have an equal number (a maximum) number of blue Question cubes in front of them. This means that each player will have been asked the same number of questions—and will have been the Detective the same number of times—over the course of a game.

## 2. The Suspect Answers

The suspect takes a blue Question cube from the pile and places it in front of themselves. The suspect then answers the Detective's question however they like, doing their best to contribute to, and continue, the narrative established to date.

Answers consist of a few sentences that logically respond the question the Detective asked. Players are encouraged to answer using facts from the narrative and story that have been established in previous turns to their benefit. A suspect's answer can add new facts to the story, try to incriminate other characters, attempt to deflect suspicions away from themselves, or perhaps feign innocence or stupidity.

3. The Other Players Decide

In clockwise order—starting with the player to the left of the suspect—each player *must* secretly select *one* of the Motive cards they have in their hand and place it face *down* in front of the suspect’s character card. Players can *not* examine the Motive cards they are given during the game. Players will have one Motive card left over at the end of the game.

When giving the suspect a Motive card players are encouraged to add comments such as “I don’t believe him/her” or “That’s what I remember too”. These comments indicate your belief or doubt about the suspect’s answer ... unless your character is, perhaps, lying for some nefarious reason.

Players have a limited number of Motive cards to play, and must decide when it is the best time to play—and how to distribute—the Motive cards in their hand.

The Detective does *not* contribute a Motive card from their hand to the suspect *except* in three- and four-player games. The suspect will *never* place a Motive card after answering the Detective’s question, regardless of number of players.








At the end of the game, the player with the most highest total number of black (guilty) cubes in front of their character will be arrested for the murder. The total number of white cubes will be used to break ties.

Motive cards with red cubes represent *Red Herrings* (false clues), and do not count for either guilt or innocence at the end of the game. Players should think of them as “junk” cards that are cluttering their hands, but that they still need to give to another player during the game.

4. Pass Detective Cube

The player currently holding the white detective cube passes the cube to the player who was the suspect this turn (i.e., the one who answered the Detective’s question). The player who was Detective this turn is now their regular character again, and can be the suspect on the next turn (assuming they have *less than* the number of maximum blue Question cubes in front of them).

5. Check For Game End

Players	Max. Question Cubes / Player
3	
4 *	
5	 or 
6	
7	
8	



Compare the number of blue Question cubes in front of *all* players to the number shown on the previous table. If *all* players have the maximum number of cubes in front of them, proceed to the **Game End** phase. If not, the new Detective now starts a new turn.

## Game End

At the end of the game, every player will have one Motive card left in their hand. The player who holds the detective cube now indicates the player to *either* their left or right. That player gives their remaining Motive card to any other player (including the Detective) face down. The player who just received a Motive card now does the same thing—gives their remaining Motive card to another player. This pattern repeats until everyone has received a **single** Motive card from some other player. The game is now over and the murderer will be revealed.

## A Killer Revealed

All players now reveal all of the face down Motive cards that are in front of their Character cards.

Players now add up the total number of the black “guilty” cubes on the Motive cards in front of them. The character with the highest total number of black guilty cubes has been revealed to be the murderer. At this point, the player who is the Detective (i.e., has the white detective cube) should explain *why* the killer committed the crime—using the story and facts established during the game—and what motive that character had for murder from among the four **Motives For Murder** below; again, based on the story the players have constructed during play.

## What Happens If Two (Or More) Players Are Tied?

In the unusual case where two (or more) players have an equal number of black guilty cubes on their collected Motive cards, determine the guilty character by using the following tie-breaking checks in the following order:

1. The player with the *lowest* total number of white “innocence” cubes showing on their collected Motive cards is the *guilty* character; if a tie still exists, then
2. The player with the *highest* total number of red herring cubes showing on their collected Motive cards is the *innocent* character; if a tie still exists, then
3. *All* tied players are guilty of the murder (gasp!, see Multiple Killers, below)

## Multiple Killers

If, after considering the first two tie-breaking steps above, there are still multiple players tied, then the Detective will announce that they are jointly guilty! Maybe two or more characters were acting together, or perhaps one character did push the Victim off a balcony, but another had also been slowly poisoning the Victim.

## Motives For Murder

There are four common motives for murder: **Love**, **Money**, **Revenge**, and **Secrets**. During the game, these four motives should be the main points in the narrative and story that the players create during play.

**Love?** It may not have been love, exactly, that finally drove the murderer (*you?*) to the ultimate act of violence. It's sometimes just misguided lust. Or perhaps the suspect was the victim of an unrequited passion or a scorned desire. It could have been a suffocating love or overwhelming loyalty that drove the murderer to act. Perhaps it was raging jealousy, or nothing more than a passionate sexual encounter gone very wrong.

**Money?** Could the murder have been the result of nothing more than greed? A personal vendetta that got out of hand? A valuable object that was taken by another? Did the murderer's debts catch up to them, or was there a property dispute or lost inheritance that drove the killer to such a desperate end?

**Revenge?** Was the murder committed out of a frustration or hatred that had festered and built up for years? Was it to avenge the death of a loved one? Was it a momentary act of madness when someone said something cruel? Was the murder political or driven by class conflict? Or were there much darker addictions, felonies or crimes from long ago behind it all?

**Secrets?** What secrets did the Victim discover that could never be allowed to see the light of day? What lies and dark histories drove the killer to act, or the Victim to become a blackmailer? What whispered salacious history might cause someone to lash out and protect themselves from scandal. Is that what drove the murderer?

## An Example Of The End Of The Game

Assume we have finished the five-player (short) game example shown set up on page 4, the end of the game now looks as shown on the top of the next page. Who killed the ravishing and scandalous actress, Ms. Amelia Louise-Hobbes?

At the end of the game each character has a total of seven Motive cards in front of them that are turned over and revealed; six that have been played on them after answering a Detective's question, and one card after the last Detective (*Megan*, playing James Buckshaw) (1) announced left or right.

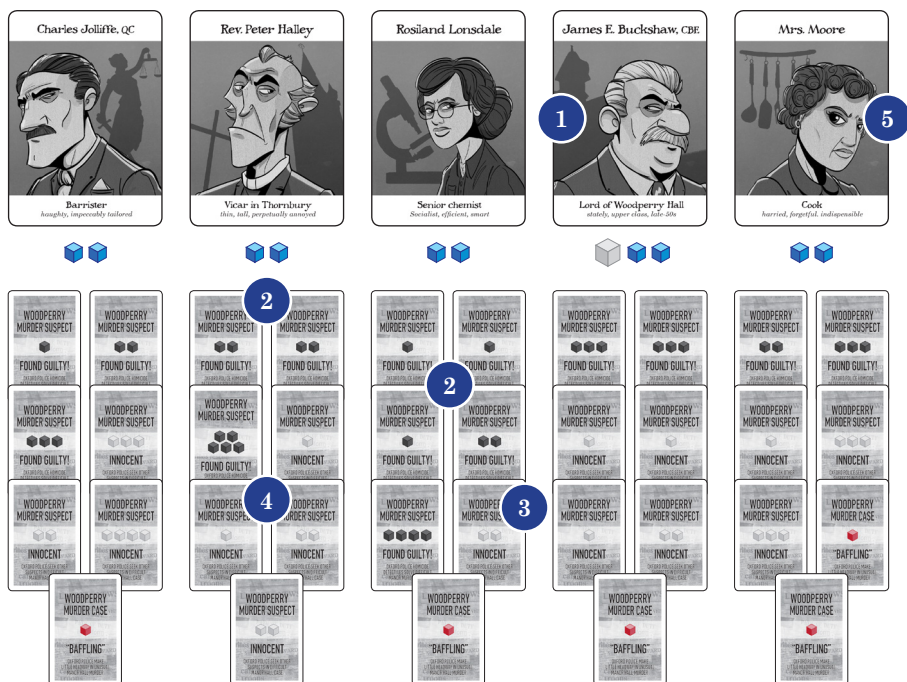
Adding up the total black cubes we see that both Reverend Halley and Rosiland Lonsdale each have a total of 9 black cubes (2). That means they both *seem* to be guilty of the murder of Ms. Louise-Hobbes. But the first step of the tie-break (*lowest* total number of white innocence cubes) means that Rosiland Lonsdale is the murderer, since she has only 2 white cubes (3), versus Rev. Halley's 6 white cubes (4).

The Detective explains to the shocked characters that Rosiland Lonsdale had been skimming money from the family's pharmaceutical company in London to maintain an extravagant lifestyle while travelling abroad for conferences. The unfortunate Amelia Louise-Hobbes must have discovered this fact, and Lonsdale decided to poison her wine to make certain she never had a chance to tell anyone what she had discovered.

## Example Turn

Refer again to the five-player example game shown on page 4. We have the following characters in play (and shown on the following page): Charles Jolliffe QC (*Brenda*), Rev. Peter Halley (*George*), Rosiland Lonsdale (*Luke*), James Buckshaw (*Megan*, currently the detective) and Mrs. Moore (*Tom*). Megan (playing James Buckshaw) was passed the detective cube in the last turn and starts a new turn.

Since she's the Detective, Megan looks at three of the face down Question cards and selects "You're certain you heard \_\_\_\_\_ ? And that would have been at what time?" to



*An example of the end of the game, explained on the previous page.*

play. She places the other two back on the bottom of the Question card pile. She turns this card over, looks at each of the other players and—with some degree of suspicion—asks Tom (who becomes the suspect for the turn), “*You’re certain you heard **someone in the library**? And that would have been at what time?*” As Detective, Megan used the suggestion on the card “noises in the hall” as an idea to use another room in the house. Megan arches one eyebrow inquisitively, and looks defiantly at the cook, Mrs. Moore.

Tom’s character is Mrs. Moore (5), and is startled that the Detective has suddenly focused his investigation on her. She’s a bit frazzled, and seems to take a moment to compose herself. Tom slowly takes a blue Question cube from the pile and places it in front of his character card, then looks at the detective. In a bit of a flutter replies,

“Not some-one, detective. Some-*ones*. A man *and* a woman. Before midnight I think. I was still cleaning up the dishes in the nearby dining room. But I couldn’t make out who was speaking.”

Tom hasn’t directly implicated Rosiland, or any of the other characters, but has opened the story to the possibility that the victim, Mrs. Amelia-Hobbes, was meeting one of the male characters. Or maybe one of the male and female characters in the game were having some sort of clandestine meeting for some unknown reason? Or maybe Mrs. Moore is simply lying to the Detective?

The other three characters (Charles Jolliffe (Brenda), Rev. Peter Halley (George), and Rosiland Lonsdale (Luke)) now secretly select one of their in-hand Motive cards and place it face down in front of Mrs. Moore. Brenda places down a Motive card with two black cubes on it. George places down a Motive card with one white cube; he has a num-

ber of white-cubed Motive cards in his hand that he has to play eventually. Luke places down a Motive card with one black cube. At the end of the game, these cards will be used to determine who the killer is, as shown in the previous example.

## Strategies

Players will not have an equal number of black and white cube Motive cards in their hand to start the game. This is intentional; in every game players will start with a different combination of Motive cards in their hand that they will have to manage.

Players will have to make difficult decisions about which player(s) they want to frame for the murder by playing more black cube (guilty) Motive cards onto those characters during the game, and which players they will have to give out their white cube (innocence) Motive cards to. Furthermore, players may have red herring Motive cards in their hand that are simply junk cards, and are only infrequently relevant as the last step to break a tie at the end of the game. Players will still need to hand those to other players during the game.

But remember, at the same time you're trying to focus the investigation onto the other player's characters by giving them the black cube Motive cards, they are doing the same thing to you.

## Creating The Story

When you are the suspect answering a Detective's question, players are strongly encouraged to use previously established facts and answers other players have given to embellish the narrative and move the story forward.

When you are the Detective, you are responsible for asking questions that may, as best as possible, relate to facts or answers previously established; hence, the mechanic of having the Detective select a suitable one of three Question cards. The Detective's role, like that of the suspect, is to help create and enhance the narrative and story so that it makes sense as it moves forward. At the end of the game, the current Detective is also responsible for announcing which of the characters committed the murder, and wrapping up the story by supplying a convincing and eloquent explanation as to why and how the murderer committed their terrible crime.

## Characters Of Woodperry Hall

The following section provides brief biographies of the game's characters. Players should read their character's biography out loud at the start of the game. Some of what has been noted about each of the characters, however, may *not* be entirely accurate, and players should elaborate, embellish and obfuscate as needed when playing their characters.



### ***Edward Buckshaw***

Stately, upper-class, distinguished, vigorous, late 50s. Inherited Woodperry Hall. Loves the place even though money's gotten tight and the place is not in as good shape as in years past. The modern world encroaches too much in Edward's view. Lost his first and dearest wife Margaret in the Blitz (9 September 1940). Trying to maintain the old ways, in whatever fashion he can, and he's not without a slight ruthless streak and firm hand when needed. He collects rare silver Tudor coinage.

### ***Helen, Lady Buckshaw***

Much younger, second wife of Edward. Early 30s? There is gossip that she married simply for the lifestyle and money that afforded her. Social butterfly, a most elegant and perfect hostess. Yearns for London and its shops and her past there, and may not have been aware of the tight finances that Woodperry finds itself in. Does she regret her decision to marry? Hmm. Finds her step-children at various times either amusing or annoying. And some of Edward's friends? Either very boring or quite wickedly tantalizing.

### ***Franklin Buckshaw***

Oldest son, commanding, conservative, stern. Learned the family business, strict manners, heavy hand, and sense of pride and entitlement from his father. Interested in the parts of the outside world that he can bend to his will, rather unconcerned about the rest of it. Doesn't tend to laugh very much, and is a bit too serious at times. At boarding school (Dustcoughs) he was the smallest child; studious, aloof, and relentlessly picked on.

### ***Theodore (Teddy) Buckshaw***

Second son, middle Buckshaw child, rakish, handsome, tall, charming. Lazy, foppish, thinks his allowance will just keep pouring out of the family coffers. Jealous of his older brother's success, despises his little sister's friends except the more attractive and naive ones who succumb to his charms. Takes advantage of everyone. A bit of a cad. Thinks he might like to race cars, or visit the Continent more, or perhaps lie-in longer in the mornings. Tends to lose things. Has been described as a bully.

### ***Daphne Buckshaw***

Youngest Buckshaw child, flighty, flirty, loves the City. Plays the role of a silly yet breathtakingly pretty young woman well, but she's actually very shrewd and manipulative and always seems to rise to the top. Enjoys writers, artists, the stage, and shopping. Her political and social views are a bit too "modern" for her father, but she is his baby and is indulged, perhaps more than is good for her. Not especially interested in the proper things like marriage (to her great-aunt's Victoria's continual displeasure).

### ***Lady Victoria de Havilland***

Late 60s, Edward's aunt, prim, caustic, witty. Born in 1889 and raised in great privilege. Very high society but sometimes willing to use daggers behind your back. Very old fashioned and proper, sharp as a tack, frightfully observant. Keeps her hand in her nephew's affairs too much and is always dressed much too formally. She has many salacious personal secrets she keeps well away from the family.



### ***Oliver de Havilland***

Derring-do chap, botanist, war hero (North Africa and Italy). Victoria's only child. Highly intelligent with a level head on his shoulders. Aware of his cousin Edward's somewhat distant relationships with his three children. Is quite politically savvy and travels frequently overseas. Rumours persist that he remains on the Foreign Office payroll in some capacity, despite his claims to the contrary. Able to defuse any situation. Bit of a drinker and loner? Handsome, and is quite indifferent to staff. Great memory and apparently knows bits about everyone's past.

### ***Rev. Peter Halley***

Typical English village vicar—thin, tall, perpetually annoyed. Upset at the social changes occurring in post-war Britain, likes cats a bit too much, married to a rather plain but happy woman (Agnes Halley, who cooks excellent pies for the church sales). Prattles on about village and County history, always late, likes tea and biscuits. A rare vicar who despises sherry, though he is overly fond of single malts. Blurts out socially inappropriate—but highly accurate—tidbits and gossip in conversations.

### ***Katherine Sinclair***

The village librarian, pretty, young, very smart. Highly observant, loves genealogy. Her family is possibly related to the Buckshaw family in the distant past. Clever, lovely to be around, lights up a room. Can hold her own in any conversation. Everyone who meets her remarks on her classic beauty and sharp intellect. She's been in love but her feelings are never noticed or have never been returned. She speaks three languages and knows the history of Thornbury better than anyone.

### ***William Dorchester***

Ambitious, manages the various family businesses overseas, and brooks no disobedience from subordinates. Frequently visits the family operations in Africa and the south-east Pacific. Fastidious with a military precision and knows the family finances (as they relate to the businesses) like no one else. Has significantly more money than he should, fond of shooting, and has displayed a temper in the past. No one—except maybe Oliver de Havilland—knows what he got up to during the war.

### ***Charles Jolliffe***

Buckshaw family lawyer, always dapper, impeccably dressed, dull as dishwater. Law is his thing and he's a killer when he's arguing in front of the Bench. Became one of England's youngest-ever Queen's Counsel (QC). He has three male children, all lawyers in various cities around the world. Not an especially friendly man. Eats very little. Makes certain, through any means necessary, that anything scandalous about Woodperry or the family never sees the light of day. Oddly, gets on extremely well with the Buckshaw's middle child, Theodore, as he is a bit of a dabbler in art collecting, and relies on Teddy for advice and in-the-know connections in Oxford and London.

### ***Sir Walter Eddington***

Family banker. Older, shorter chap, energetic and animated as hell. Attracts women of all ages like magnets. Confirmed bachelor. Came from wealth, manages it well. By all appearances above reproach. Once described as a cross between GB Shaw, a garden gnome, and the current Exchequer of England. The only blemish in his past may be the dark clouds and rumours that followed him after his dismissal from the Board of Directors at the UK's most prestigious boarding school (Dustcoughs) in the late 1930s.

### ***Amelia Louise-Hobbes***

Actress friend of Lady Helen from days gone by. Ravishing, sensuous woman. Cigarettes and cocktails, fine clothes, scandalous affairs. Rumours follow her everywhere she goes. She's done cinema, stage, and even Hollywood has come calling. A dear friend of Lady Helen from their London days, and a frequent visitor at Woodperry Hall. Loves to ruffle feathers and cause a scene. Delightful woman described by one writer in his review as "deliciously dangerous".

### ***Earl of Woolston***

Local Earl and MP, far wealthier than the Buckshaws, flaunts his money, arrogant and gruff busy-body. He's used to having his way and damn the consequences. Sticks his nose into the business of every (rich) person in the County. Shoots and hunts, drinks fine wine, complains. Treats everyone beneath him badly. Makes Evelyn Waugh seem like an ill-mannered commoner. Intolerable and insufferable. That said, he can make things happen and so he's handy to know at times. His wife, Abigail, is a pale-skinned and thin woman, known to be more condescending and callous than even he is.

### ***Stevens***

The long-serving family butler, loyal, unflappable, devoted to the family. Would do anything to keep Woodperry humming along and the Buckshaws safe. Privately he thinks poorly of Franklin and Theodore, and believes Helen behaves like a spoiled child. Tries to be protective of Daphne, though his gallant efforts often result in failure. Admits to being overly fond of the first Lady (Margaret) Buckshaw and the household staff.

### ***Mrs. Moore***

Woodperry Hall's cook, harried, high-strung, creates amazing meals. Knows all the family gossip. Highly valued and sought after in Oxford for her recipes. Last evening's dinner was cocktails, followed by avocado canapes, kidneys saute au madere, summer rabbit casserole and vegetables, and strawberries au maraschino with fresh cream. It was rather delicious. Walks home late each night to her husband, the village butcher. Fairly observant, but apparently quite forgetful.

### ***Jane Margate***

Maid, sometimes lady-in-waiting, described by most as a "plain" girl, perhaps in her late 30s. Poorly treated, poorly paid, barely noticed. Does Lady Helen makes a mistake in confiding in her too much? Has someone been paying her attention recently? Is there a secret she's keeping? Keeps the house immaculate and notices every detail in every room. Likes the "pictures" on weekends in Oxford with her friends.

### ***Lukas Kopicki***

Gruff, unsociable grounds-keeper. Rarely speaks, keeps too many dogs, post-war refugee, served in the II Polish Corps, perfectly fluent in English and German. Keeps to himself and does what he's told. Deeply misses his family killed in the war. Excellent marksman with any type of gun. Resourceful and smart, under-utilized on the estate. Witnessed terrible carnage in the war, and is sometimes haunted by nightmares. Horses and dogs are quiet and calm near him. He sometimes stares inappropriately at pretty women, and pays somewhat too much attention to them.

### ***Henry Miller***

Famed Oxford archaeologist, currently in charge of a small Roman-era dig on the northwest side of Woodperry lands near the Williams River. Scholarly, well-educated and polite man who loves nothing better than a good chat about digging in the ground, the stuff he finds, and what it all means. A renowned bird-watcher who can be counted on to be out and about at odd hours and places, binoculars and notebook in hand. Currently engaged to a professor of English Literature (Ms. Julia Keenes) who he simply adores.

### ***Madeline Rousseau***

One of the best horticulturists in England, employed by Oxford University to maintain and increase the stature of their renowned botanical gardens. Smiling, pretty, calm, extremely pleasant to spend time with. A world traveller who was born in the Provence region of France to humble estate grounds-keepers, she now has degrees from three universities (her first when she was only 18). Is considered an expert in the poisonous flowers and plants of Europe.

### ***Greta Siegner***

Pretty, blond widow who arrived in Thornbury a few years after the war from somewhere in Germany, for reasons unknown. Well-mannered, well-dressed (but not garishly) and highly cultured. Seems well-off and lives alone in a beautiful English cottage near the village square. Quiet, neat, polite, though slightly cold and distant when meeting people for the first time. Frequents the library in Thornbury and the symphony in Oxford. Is frequently in the company of Katherine Sinclair. Travels to the Continent via London several times a year.

### ***Lloyd Hollingsbury***

Brother of the late Margaret Buckshaw (therefore, Edward's former brother-in-law), owner of England's second largest newspaper. A fascinating and informed conversationalist who likes very good cigars. He spends his time in the City at his Club with politicians, bankers, government employees and civil servants of all stripes. He is considered a "man-in-the-know" about all sorts of newsworthy information. Maintains a strong friendship with Edward Buckshaw and manages to tolerate both the Buckshaw boys with aplomb. He has an encyclopaedic memory, and can recall any information about even trivial events. His sister Margaret was staying in London at his house when it was destroyed in a Blitz raid.

### ***Rosiland Lonsdale***

Senior chemist at the Buckshaw's pharmaceutical company. She's a no-nonsense, extremely smart woman who had to claw her way into the senior chemist's role in a largely male-dominated profession. Lives in London though is frequently at conferences at Oxford. Strong-willed, politically active Socialist and feminist, with efficient work habits. Has a wide circle of friends in all fields.

### ***Major General Melvin Kingward***

Life-long military man. Lauded for his innate skills while learning the “game” at Sandhurst, served in both the Mediterranean and western Europe fronts. Gallant, boisterous, with a loud laugh and penetrating gaze, he enjoys regaling anyone who'll listen with stories of his experiences in the war. Deeply religious (though swears like a sailor) and extremely devoted to every man who served under him, regardless of rank. Despises cowards and bullies and is first to volunteer for dangerous duty. Brilliant tactician who never lost a battle he commanded. His pipe and pungent Middle Eastern tobacco is never far away.



## **Optional Rule: Drafting Motives**

Instead of dealing out Motive cards to players at the start of the game, players can choose to “draft” their hand of Motive cards. To create your hand: Deal out the required number of cards to each player. Have each player pick one of these cards, then pass the remaining cards to the player to their left. Players now select another card, and pass the remaining cards to the next player again, until you receive one final card. The cards each player selected during this process now form their starting hand of Motive cards.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Q. Am I interpreting “X” rule correctly?*

A. The best advice to follow when playing *A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall* is this: Read and follow the text on the cards or the rules exactly as it is written. Do not add or infer anything that is not explicitly stated.

*Q. How many black and white cubes are there on the Motive cards?*

A. There are a total of 72 black cubes on 30 “guilty” Motive cards, but only a total of 60 white cubes on 30 “innocent” Motive cards—this a game about murder, after all. In addition, there are 9 red herring Motive cards.

*Q. Can I write down the types and value of the Motive cards I'm giving out?*

A. No. That just wouldn't be cricket, old chap.

*Q. How far can I stray from the Detective's question?*

A. Your answer to the Detective's question should relate **directly** to the question asked, but should use the previous answers, conversations, story, facts and narrative that have already been established during play as a *basis* of what your character says.

*Q. Can I mention other player's characters in my answer?*

A. Yes. Suppose the Detective asks your character, "Tell me about the argument you overheard when you went for a walk in Thornbury?" Your character might reply, "Most of us were out in the village, Inspector. And it was such a dreadful row." Now you might point at one of the other players whose character is William Dorchester and add, "Mister Dorchester and Ms. Louise-Hobbes (the Victim) were making quite the scene." Other characters can now use this answer to add details, claim you were mistaken or insist they heard it too, when questioned on future turns.

*Q. Can I incriminate myself when answering the Detective?*

A. Absolutely. The other players will have to, at times, give you a Motive card that actually has one or more white (innocent) cubes on them. If you seem to be replying with honesty—to move the story forward at the expense of making your own character seem to be hiding something—you may get some of those white cube Motive cards for being so forthright.

*Q. How do I incriminate other players?*

A. Give them Motive cards with black cubes on them after they answer the Detective's question. The more black cubes they have, the more likely their character will end up being the killer at the end of the game.

*Q. What sort of questions can I ask as Detective?*

A. You must state what's on the card, filling in the blanks from the examples given, or preferably, using the examples as a basis to create your own specific example that is still appropriate with what is suggested on the card. For example, if one of the \_\_\_\_\_ suggests a necklace, you might substitute brooch, cuff links, emerald ring, etc in its place.

## Designer Notes

*A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall* is an experiment to try to combine narrative, interactive, story-telling type experiences found in innovative indie RPGs with a few common board game mechanics.

The initial inspiration came from being an avid reader of classic murder mystery novels and playing board, card and role-playing games over many decades. It evolved from a small mystery RPG I created called *The Woodperry Murder* that was based on a four-page RPG written by Rickard Elimäa, and also a series of murder-themed RPGs I run online. Hopefully people have fun playing the game.



## Inspiration And Thank Yous

The game tries to combine common mechanics found in boardgames such as the cubes mechanic, with story-telling and narration from innovative indie RPGs that are either mystery-driven, or adaptable to that genre of gaming. These include designer Graham Walmsley's utterly brilliant *A Taste for Murder*, *Fiasco* by Jason Morningstar, *The Murder of Mr. Crow* by Rickard Elimää, and *Microscope* by Ben Robbins.

The outstanding community of forum members on Boardgamegeek deserve huge thanks, as do the play testers who helped with the development and polish of this game by providing valuable ideas, comments and constructive criticism over the past few years.

A huge thank you to my kids for being the great gamers they are, and to my fantastic wife, who both encouraged this effort and understands my love of games.

## Credits

Game Design: David Janik-Jones

Game Mechanics: Robert Hahn, Christopher Calzonetti

Graphic Design: David Janik-Jones

Editor: Anita Janik-Jones

Character Illustrations: Wayne O'Connor, David VanTuyle

## Character Illustrations

The 24 character illustrations were done by the superbly talented Wayne O'Connor and David VanTuyle. They took on this project with great enthusiasm and the characters they brought to life for the game wildly exceeded my expectations. I owe them both a huge thank you. Wayne's portfolio is online at <https://www.facebook.com/WayneOConnorillustration> and David's work is at <http://davidvantuyledraws.tumblr.com>.

## Play Testing, Feedback and Important Ideas

Mark Bangela, Chris Boldi, Jared Bydeley, Christopher Colzonetti, David Eicher, Carolyn Ellis, Warren Fitzpatrick, Kim Fitzpatrick, Rebecca Grubb, Robert Hahn, Cal Janik-Jones, Luke Janik-Jones, Dean Liggett, Michelle Mazala, Shaun Morris, Davis Neable, Dan Rahn, Ashton Smith, Patrick Stanzel, Erika Siegner, Todd Warnken.

## Typography

I designed the game *A Very English Murder: Murder at Woodperry Hall* using two main typefaces: *Century Schoolbook* and *Gorey font*. Gorey font was designed by Dame Hex and Daniel Steinberg. Morris Fuller Benton designed the now-classic serif typeface *Century Schoolbook* in 1924.

## Contact The Designer

Want to comment about the game? Have suggestions to make the game better or help create a new setting for the game? Want to suggest new Character or Question or cards? Please contact the designer via email at: [murder@theravenking.com](mailto:murder@theravenking.com) or visit our website.



A Very English Murder. Murder at Woodperry Hall.  
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