Casualties of War.

Rules for Non-Player Civilians in Bolt Action (from Warlord Games).

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Some example civilian figures: Warlord Games' 'Dads Army' figures in Civvies. Painted and photographed by Jim O'Neil

Introduction.

As I have finally finished my novel and published it, I now have a little more time on my hands than I have had for the past few years. This has enabled me to spend more time enjoying my hobby of wargaming, specifically playing Bolt Action by Warlord Games.

Over Christmas 2014, I've played a few games where we have added non-player civilians, primarily to throw another aspect into the game. It's been pretty successful and, though the rules we've used are definitely a work in progress, I think they are now developed enough to present them to other BA gamers who might wish to use them.

So before I start, a disclaimer. To my fellow BA gamers. This is my first attempt at writing rules for BA or indeed any wargame since I was about fourteen. It isn't meant to be set in stone. It's simply how I've played them so far and found to be fun. Feel free to use in your own games, customise to suit your own tastes or, of course, ignore altogether. I'd also be delighted to hear your opinions/suggestions.

Civilians in a Time of War.

It's a brutal fact of life that, in battles, not all civilians are fortunate enough to flee the area before hostilities commence. Yet, for obvious reasons, Bolt Action games concentrate on the two or more forces that players are fielding. Any civilian models on the board are there effectively for decoration.

However, with a few simple rules using existing Bolt action conventions, it's easy to make them an active non-player aspect of the game. Civilians within the battlezone create an extra dimension to games, forcing players to make interesting and potentially game changing decisions.

One thing that I decided early on is that like the troops in a real battle, our tabletop troops would find themselves facing some moral decisions when it came to civilians. I wanted to portray the soldiers our models represented as ordinary decent men forced into an abnormal situation. Or to put it another way, I wanted the rules I made to penalise against the death of civilians and reward their salvation. I'll explain how I've done that below, but firstly let's look at civilian units and their placement.

Setting up Civilian Units.

Civilians from the ranges by Musketeer Miniatures and Artizan Designs. Painted by Tim Corbett. Terrain and photography by Mick Allen.

A unit is made up of one or more civilian figures. So far, I've tried games with about five models per unit. At the end of this article, you'll find some links to various model makers that do ranges or figures that serve well to represent civilians.

You can, of course, add as many civilian units into the game as you wish, but I been playing 1000pt games and found that four civilian units works well. Once you have decided how many units you plan to have set them aside and continue setting up the game as normal. Civilian units are placed *last,* after all player units on the board, including snipers and observers, are placed.

It is also important that each civilian unit has an order die. These dice need to be a separate colour from those being used by the players. The dice are placed in the dice bag and drawn out during the course of a turn in the usual fashion.

Once all the player units are placed, it comes the time to add in your civilians. Here is where we make a few assumptions:

Firstly, because we want the units to affect the game, we want our civilians to be mostly in the centre of the board where the action will often be. I'm playing on an eight foot by six foot board. I want to get the units at least a foot from the long sides and at least two feet from the short sides. Or to put it another way, within a central four foot by four foot section.

To start placing the units, I roll a four-sided die for the 'x' and 'y' coordinates. This gives me a 1 foot square where that unit will be placed. I have a roll playing background, so have some old D&D four sided dice knocking about. If you were not like me and actually spent your teenage years hanging out with members of the opposite sex, you may not. You can easily use two six sided dice to get the same result. Roll both and add the total. Between one and three equates to one, four to six equates to two, and so on. It's not quite as random (of course you'll never be able to roll a one on two dice), but it does the job.

The net result of the rolls is that you will have a square foot within which you can place your civilians. You could now randomise to a couple of inches with D6s and put your models there and that's always a fall back option. However, I have played it by allowing the terrain and a little judgement to dictate final position.

So look at two aspects in the square. Firstly, is there reasonable cover? If so, our civilian units will always try to be in cover. We assume that they have heard the rumble of opposing forces arriving and have just had time to get to a place they think is, at least initially, safe. Place them in buildings, against hard cover, within wooded areas and so on. They are trying to be out of danger and will use the board terrain to do so.

For purposes of placement, we assume civilians are neutral- wishing to be as far away from all troops. Any player units that are within 12 inches *of the square* are considered 'dangerously close'. Thus, the second rule is to place them as far away as possible from dangerously close units. If you have three buildings on the square, for example, put the civilians within the one that's furthest from the troops.

If the players don't agree on a particular placement, then by all means use the dice rolling fall back. Using this, you can choose between two different buildings or two different bits of cover. It's also useful for those occasions where civilians are in open ground and have no dangerously close troops to guide the placement.

Once you have your civilian units placed on the board, add their dice to the dice bag and you are ready to start playing.

CIVILIAN ACTIONS DURING A TURN.

Like any unit on the board, a civilian unit takes an action when a civilian die is taken from the bag. At the end of its action, the dice is placed next to it. In most instances, it will remain there until the end of the turn (see below). Unlike player units, when a choice is made by the player as to which unit they use, we need to randomise which civilian unit us activated each time. Again use the rolling methods mentioned above to choose the unit.

Once you have a unit that is in play, you can use the following chart to determine their actions. The chart attempts to represent the actions a panicked group of civilians depending on where they are and the proximity of perceived danger. You use it by rolling the order dice and cross referencing the unit situation with the die result. Note, you'll also need to take note of which way the arrow on the top face is pointing– that will become important later.

	Run	Advance	Fire	Rally	Ambush	Down
Unit is in building. Player troops over 24" away.	Advance	Down	Down	Down	Down	Down
Unit is in building. Player troops over 12" away.	Run	Advance	Down	Down	Down	Down
Unit is in building. Player troops over 6" away.	Run	Advance	Advance	Down	Down	Down
Unit is in building. Player troops under 6" away.	Run	Run	Advance	Advance	Down	Down
Unit is in cover. Player troops over 24" away	Run	Advance	Down	Down	Down	Down
Unit is in cover. Player troops over 12" away	Run	Advance	Advance	Down	Down	Down
Unit is in cover. Player troops over 6" away	Run	Run	Advance	Advance	Down	Down
Unit is in cover. Player troops under 6" away	Run	Run	Run	Advance	Advance	Down
Unit is in open ground. Player troops over 24" away.	Run	Run	Advance	Advance	Advance	Down
Unit is in open ground. Player troops over 12" away.	Run	Run	Run	Advance	Advance	Down

Unit is in open ground. Player troops over 6" away.	Run	Run	Run	Run	Advance	Down
Unit is in open ground. Player troops under 6" away.	Run	Run	Run	Run	Run	Down

There is one special rule to go with the chart that I am currently playing. If a civilian unit is in a building entered by a player unit, the civilian unit will *always* run.

So as you can see from the chart, much of the time, if there is no immediate danger, civilians will be more likely to stay in cover if they have some. If they are on open ground, they will be more liable to try to move on rather than going down.

There are two times when a civilian unit may move *outside* of the normal turn sequence. Both cases are triggered if a player unit passes within 6 inches or ends within 6 inches of a civilian unit. In such a case any unit that has not yet been, immediately takes its turn. Take their order dice from the bag and play out their action straight away. Likewise, any civilian unit that has already been, but has *gone down*, rerolls. This is to represent their reaction to a sudden, immediate danger. Reroll their order dice based on the new end position of the player troops and play out accordingly.

An unusual set of civilians to find in a warzone! Morris Dancers from Woodbine Design, painted and photographed by Jim O'Neil

DETERMINING DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT.

In order to work out which way a civilian unit moves, we refer to the arrow on the top face of the order dice rolled.   In a perfect world, the arrow will point in the direction that they move. However, I found that the arrow doesn't often reside in a perfect world. If, for example, the arrow is pointing directly at troops, it's not logical that the civilians would run straight towards danger.

Thus, we have played a few modifiers that work pretty well. The first is simply to imagine a straight line in both directions from the arrow on the die. i.e. where it points and the exact opposite way. So, if your civilians can't run in the direction of the arrow because that's where the biggest threat is, they can as a second option run the exact opposite way. So the basic move they will make is whichever direction along the dice arrow axis represents the safest escape route.

In addition, our games assumed civilians will always be running from cover to cover where they can. Thus we allow a variance of 30 degrees if there is an obvious next bit of cover they would make for. If there is more than one, the option to make a dice roll to choose is always available.

Some other rules. When in a building, the unit must exit by an appropriate door / window / hole in the wall and then run in the direction. And of course if there is anything in the way that is not passable, the route should be set to get around it then veer back to the original direction.

Once a civilian unit is on route to a new bit of cover, they will continue toward that cover over multiple turns (if they get a run or advance order) until they reach it. The only time that they would change direction (again determined in the above way) is if player troops get within 12 inches of their route.

Finally, if any civilian unit is 'behind troops' (i.e. has one side empty of danger or a gap of over 24 between troops, through which the civilians can run to the edge of the board), ignore the arrow on the dice – they will **always** move towards the edge of the board. Once 'off board', they are out of play.

CIVILIANS IN COMBAT.

In the games I've played, it's taken as read that civilians are trying to avoid a fight and thus it would be entirely illogical (not to mention suicidal) for them to attack troops. Likewise, as mentioned at the start of the article, our games have assumed that all our troops are decent human being s who would not directly attack a civilian group. So the only time that we worry about civilians in combat is when they are between two opposing units.

It **is** permissible to shoot through civilians. They count as soft cover for the troops being shot at. They count as soft cover whether they are advancing/running or they are down. Resolve the attack as normal. Once the attack is done, we resolve any collateral damage to the civilians. This is done as follows:

Any shots that **missed** the enemy unit are rerolled as an attack against the civilians using all standard and appropriate modifiers (e.g., civilians are down, civilians are behind cover, etc.) For any hits roll to damage in the usual way. **All civilians** are classed as inexperienced for to damage rolls.

If any civilians are killed as a result of collateral damage, the **attackers** take a pin.   This is to represent the effect on morale that accidentally killing non-combatants would have on the unit.

With regards to the pin. We also played this another way, which you may prefer. Upon accidentally killing civilians, attackers must make a morale roll. If they fail they take an additional pin. This does

tend to mean that those more battle hardened troops can 'get away with it'. Personally, I preferred playing it that the pin is automatic. It makes the player really think twice about risking it and has a much stronger effect on tactics.

You could also play that various troop types don't get the pin. I think this is best agreed by the players at the start of any game. For example, we have allowed that fanatics don't suffer the additional pin marker. Likewise, any bombardments have no pinning effect on any troops.

ASSAULTING THROUGH CIVILIANS.

We kept this simple. We allowed it, (it actually only happened once), but even when the assaulters were under six inches the unit being assaulted still got to react. This was to represent the additional time needed to get through the civilians. Additionally, if a unit needs to get through civilians, the assault is always simultaneous exactly the same way as if it were over a wall.

CIVILIANS AND VICTORY POINTS.

The last aspect that I wanted to mention was using victory points as a way to reward troops that 'save' civilians. Again, working on the concept that our troops are ordinary decent men in an abnormal situation we decided in our games to allow them to perform acts of heroism that are reflected in the final scores.

So, how does one save a civilian unit? It simply means running or advancing *in front of* the civilians in a situation where it puts the civilians 'behind troops' as mentioned above. It's about actively opening up a way for those civilians to escape. If that happens, and if the civilians *do* escape by the close of the game, a victory point is added to that player's total.

The victory point can only be won if the player unit actively moves to get the civilians behind troops. If the civilians themselves get into that situation through their own run or advance order, no victory point can be awarded.

IN CONCLUSION.

So there you have it. As I said at the start, please feel free to take as much or as little from this as works for your games. I sincerely hope that you find the addition of civilians enriches your games and gets you and your opponents into some sticky situations. After all, those situations tend to be the most memorable and enjoyable parts of the game!

One shameless plug: I wrote this for fun and to share with you, but like I said at the start – I've got time because I just finished and published my novel. It's set in WW1 with a heavy sprinkling of Arthurian myth.

"A truly compelling read. Lovers of Diana Wynne Jones, Neil Gaiman, Phillip Pullman and their ilk will take a great deal of pleasure from this finely crafted and dark fantasy. I look forward with great excitement to Scotcher's future works. If this book is found by as many people as it deserves to then it will undoubtedly get the recognition it deserves."
5 star Amazon review from 'Waldorfbooks'

If you've enjoyed this article and you enjoy historical fantasy fiction, please do take a couple of minutes to have a look at it on Amazon. The link is http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Boy-In-Winters-Grasp-ebook/dp/B00R1OI9LK/ref=pd_rhf_gw_p_img_4. There's a Kindle copy available now and should be a paperback in mid-January. Ok, plug over!

APPENDIX - FIGURES.

One thing I have found is that unarmed civilian figures are (understandably) a little hard to come by. However, the pulp fiction error and some of the character figures available from a variety of manufacturers offer some excellent choices. With a little customisation of the figures, you have a wealth of possibility. Here are just a few options...

Of course, one obvious option for civilians is Warlord's own 'Dad's Army' box set featuring the civilian dress versions of all the major characters from the series as well as their 'in uniform' ones. It's hard to resist the figures, but the most of civilian garbed models are in fairly aggressive positions.

Another similar option is the British Characters set from WarGames Foundry's alternative Dad's Army range. The poses on the civilians are in more passive poses.
http://www.wargamesfoundry.com/our-ranges/worldwar2/british

The Pulp Action Figures found at Bob Murch's Pulp Figures offer a few options for civilian models, but you'll likely end up having to buy a few packs to get specific models.
http://pulpfigures.com/products/category/11

RAFM Miniatures offer a comprehensive Gothic Horror range, where some appropriately dressed civilian characters can be found.
http://www.rafm.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=RAF&Category_Code=COCM&view_perpage=all

Artizan Designs' Thrilling Tales packs offer further options if you look carefully. Particularly the 'Department of Paranormal Studies' pack, the 'Household staff' pack and the 'Sleuths' pack. Figures can mostly be bought individually too. http://www.artizandesigns.com/list.php?man=12&page=1

Dixons Miniatures actually manufactures a range of civilians that you may find ideal.
http://www.dixon-minis.com/shop/28mm-wwII/CIV1a. Additionally their 'Resistance with Bicycles' models are another good option.