

Project Postmortem

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Module Code & Title: Creative Practice 2

Project Title: Deserter

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Introduction

Deserter is a top-down shooter set during the height of World War One. I created the idea with the intent of pushing myself into a medium I had not attempted to use before, top-down. I worked alone on this project, except for some of the assets used in the final level design.

Research Evaluation

I went about my research with a heavy focus on studying the contextual side of the setting I wanted to explore, the Great War. I began by beginning the process with a wide scope and, with each iteration of my research, narrowed that scope. This worked excellently for the contextual side of things, but I found myself confused on gameplay, I ended up following my instinct on the mechanics for the game, trusting myself to be able to generate interesting and relevant ideas.

Games Design Theory

I looked at games set within the same setting and the tools they used to make their environments feel chaotic and deadly. I added these ideas within my plans (For instance, use of lots of noise) but failed to implement them into the final project.

Technical Research

A personal goal I set myself for this project was to receive as little help as possible and really push myself to solve the issues that arose myself. Excluding one or two exceptions I stuck to this goal and succeeded.

Contextual Research

I watched a comprehensive series on the subject of World War One, from which I learned much about the notable battles, people, politics and tactics. I was able to use this information to ground the game in a real setting. However, I had to set aside factual considerations and make the best game that I could, for instance, I placed the opposing trenches much closer to each other than would have been factual.

Game Research

I researched games set during the important battles of the first world war, Tannenburg, Verdun and also more narrative focused games, Valiant Hearts. I also looked at strategy games such as the Hearts of Iron series, but nothing productive came from that research bar telling me what I did not want to do or had the time to do with this project.

Research Conclusion

My research was successful in terms of the contextual, I should have set aside more time for researching similar games and levels. That would have made the level design process easier and I would have accomplished more with my project.

Technique Evaluation

With each project I undergo, I intend to push myself to try something new. This time I wanted to try a top-down game. This was both a new direction, presenting unique problems that were difficult to identify, but also familiar enough from my previous project that I was able to make quick technical progress.

Identification & Suitability of Production Methods

I worked solely in Unreal Engine and worked to improve my usage of it. I would not have been able to accomplish what I have managed to do inside any other software.

Development of Techniques & Skills

I used Unreal Engine's blueprints system for the code, pushing myself to create more difficult lines of code and I attempted to do this without following tutorials. I relied on the knowledge I had required and my problem-solving skills. This pushed my knowledge further and I feel more adept at the blueprints system because of it.

Overall Quality of Work Produced

I am only satisfied with certain elements of the project. I am happy with the code I created, but it is not perfected nor streamlined due to gaps in my knowledge. The game is not functional, as in there are no enemies and there's only a couple of ways you can accidentally lose. The quality of my level design feels as though it has dropped. Top-down level design presented some large obstacles to overcome, largely the level had to be flat and two-dimensional, leaving it feel a little barren. For my next project I will work with three-dimensions again and rely more on the knowledge I have already acquired.

Technique Conclusion

This project presented the perfect opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone which taught me many valuable lessons, not only in technical skills but also in terms of what games I like to create. I feel as though I have learned the fundamentals of character control, pickups and HUD, next I want to explore AI.

Development Evaluation

At the start of the project I worked efficiently, creating a Game Design Document and beginning to code the concepts into the game. Unfortunately, then the process fell apart for a while. I managed to get back on track later into the project and prioritise the important elements and finish the project.

Creativity

I stepped completely outside my comfort zone with this project, attempting to create a Top-Down Shooter with a focus on gameplay with zero story involved.

Relevance to the brief

I began the project with the brief in mind, removing mechanics that were too difficult for me to create. I do not believe I have deviated from them.

Working Alone (individual projects)

I showed the project to only a few close friends and family members to get feedback on the idea and gameplay mechanics.

Iterative Design Practice

At the start of the project I designed numerous complicated assets. Throughout, I refined and shortened the list of mechanics to those that are both fundamental to the game and within my skill range for creation. I repeatedly tried to improve upon my lines of code.

Time Management

I managed my time where I could. Unfortunately, lots of issues in my personal life restricted me from working on the project and the deadlines I set myself at the start of the project were missed. When all said issues were finally resolved I prioritised the fundamentals, abandoning certain pursuits I had wanted to attempt (AI) and focusing on the necessities. The deadlines I set myself were realistic and if the project had been at any other time in my life, I would have hit them.

Development Conclusion

My development was successful in terms of the final results. But the process itself was a mess. I began strong and ended strong, but everything in-between was a personal failure. I seek to ensure next time that a similar situation does not occur. Luckily, the issues which caused so much strife have been resolved and it is not likely that next time I will have such issues.

Analysis

Contextualising your work within a wider theoretical practice

I used theoretical ideas to create a few risk vs reward areas within the level. There are shorter routes you can take, but these routes are more dangerous and cost health if you have not acquired the necessary equipment. I created a large open level with a few close quarters areas for diversity. However, I still feel like the player is adequately directed through the level. I do believe I could have studied more top-down games to see what makes their levels good and implemented my findings. This is an issue I intend to fix with my next project.

Critique of the work you have produced

I solved many issues with the game through repeated personal testing. One main issue still remains, the sprint function is broken, and I was unable to solve the issue.

Critique of your own practice (and action taken)

Lots about my own working practice during this project could have been improved. Better time management, contingencies for if other things got in the way of my work, a better understanding of the type of game I was creating. I see this project now as a learning curve, I know what caused the problems with this project and now I know how to avoid them. I intend to do myself justice with my next project and make up for the failings of this one.

DESERTER

WW1 TOP-DOWN SHOOTER

Fenn Ingram - 1806379

CONTENTS:

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 - VISUAL STYLE
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- USER INTERFACE
- GAMEPLAY
 - MECHANICS
 - PICKUPS
 - HAZARDS
- ASSETS

OVERVIEW

Shellshocked is a fast-paced top-down shooter set during two of the bloodiest battles of the first world war. The player is a British soldier who has given up on the war and wants to escape. But the soldier is caught in No Man's Land. The soldier has to travel the length of the western front whilst avoiding being caught between the two sides. Both sides threaten to kill him for opposition or desertion. The soldier will manage to reach the sea and in the last level must escape out onto the english channel and attempt to return to the British Empire.

TARGET PLATFORM:

The game will only be available on PC.

VISUAL STYLE:

ENVIRONMENT



SETTING

The game will be set midway through the first world war, in 1916, on the western front during both the battle of Verdun and the battle of the Somme.

VERDUN

The location of Verdun will be used throughout the first half of the game.



SOMME

The location of the Somme will be used throughout the second half of the game.



NO MAN'S LAND

The bulk of the game's environments will be set in the No Man's Land between the French/English lines and the German lines in the north of France, 1916.



TRENCHES

These will change the dynamic of the game, creating a tense, difficult segment of close quarters combat. Trenches will appear periodically throughout the game to help split up the segments of wide open no man's land battles.



LADDERS

Ladders allow access from the trench segments to the no mans land above.



AUDIO STYLE:

lots of overlapping sounds to make the player feel in the midst of utter chaos.

STARTING OUT

GAME START - MAIN MENU

Simple menus.

GAME START AND INTRO

Players division hit by artillery fire. Player is only survivor.

IN-GAME HUD AND MENUS

Simple inventory on side of screen. Pause menu. Firing line appears when character aims.

USER INTERFACE

MAIN MENU

Simple menu

IN-GAME HUD

Simple inventory

Health bar

Firing line for weapons and grenades

GAME OVER SCREEN

Character death animation followed by crimson overlay filter.

LEVEL SELECTION

Ten levels or so.

LEVEL TYPES:

LEVEL LIST:

Intro

Verdun

Somme

Finale

GAMEPLAY

MECHANICS:

PICKUPS

KNIFE

The knife will provide the player with a short range melee attack



BAYONET

The bayonet will only be useable if the player has a rifle. The bayonet acts as an upgrade for the rifle allowing the player to use a strong melee attack.



PISTOL

The pistol is one of the players basic attacks.



SHOTGUN

The shotgun is a strong close range weapon.



RIFLE

The rifle is a more precise weapon that can be upgraded with a bayonet.



TORCH

The torch will allow the player to have minimal vision in dark areas and night time levels.



RATS

Rats will run around the battlefield. The rats can trigger landmines and be killed with gunfire.

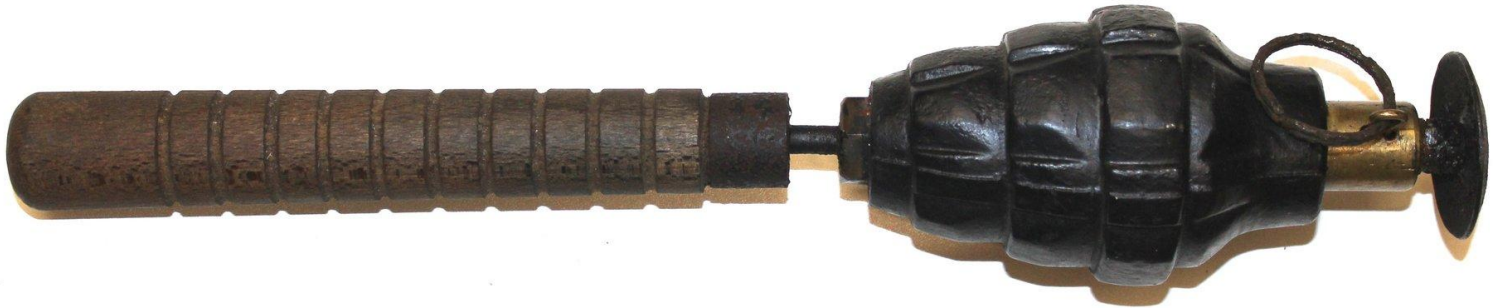
FIELD DRESSING:

As the player takes damage the character will slow down.
Field Dressings repair lost movement speed.



GRENADES

Grenades are very limited. The player can throw these to create an explosion that kills whatever is caught in the radius. It completely obliterates rats.



GASMASK:

The player can use these to pass through areas of gas. Does not protect against Mustard Gas but slows it's damage.



HAZARDS

LANDMINES

Landmines will explode upon contact, killing whatever touched it.



BARBED WIRE

Barbed wire slows movement significantly.



FIREFIGHTS:

These are lines of gunfire between both sides of the battle.
The player will have to dodge these by using cover and timing their movements.

GAS

Gas will gradually kill and actor within its radius without a gasmask.

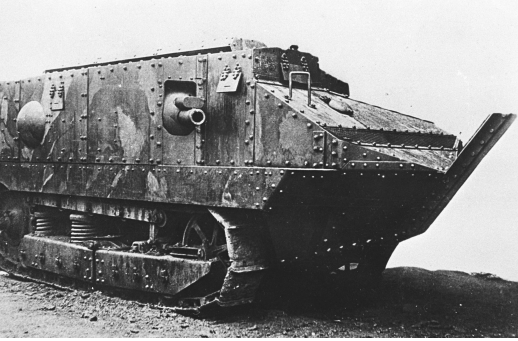
Also obscures visibility



MUSTARD GAS:

These are yellow patches of gas that negate the effect of the gas mask.





TANKS:

Occasionally these will pass through no mans land crushing any actors caught in its path.



WGB-GW-108

Mark IV (male), British WWI tank



ARTILLERY

Artillery causes explosions on the battlefield that kills any actors caught within its radius.

WINNING THE MATCH

Reaching the end of the level.

ASSETS

CHARACTERS

- Player
 - German Soldier
 - French Soldier
 - English Soldier
 - Rat
 - Tanks
-

WEAPONS

- Knife
 - Rifle
 - Rifle with Bayonet
 - Pistol
 - Grenade
-

EQUIPMENT AND UPGRADES

- Field Dressings
 - Torch
 - Gasmask
-

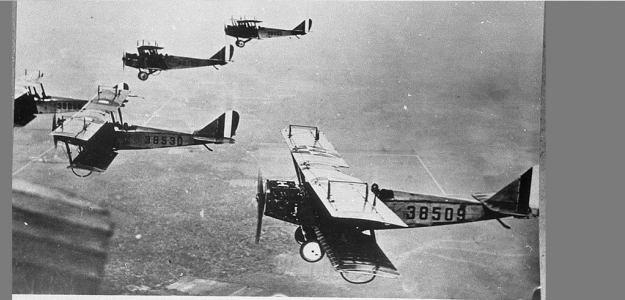
Deserter Production Diary

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Research:

I began by using a simple google image search and examining and selecting images of specific pieces of equipment and environments I may want to include within the game.

WW1 ARTILLERY AND AIRCRAFT

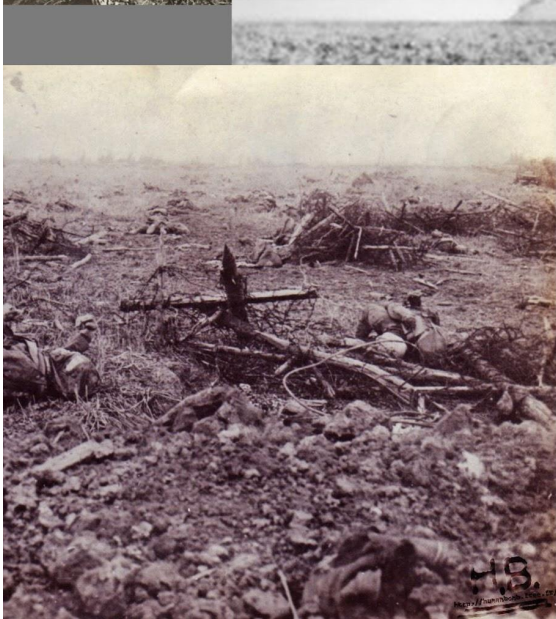


WW1 CAVALRY AND

GAS WARFARE



WW1 NO MANS LAND AND TRENCH LINES





Games:

I also looked at pre-existing games set within the first world war. The most notable of which I could find were Verdun, Tannenberg, Valiant Hearts. These all present a chaotic environment by having lots of noise and by making it very easy to die. I intend to implement these into the final game.

GAMES SET IN WW1



THE
GREAT



VERDUN
1914 - 1918



Museum:

I went to a Museum dedicated to the Second World War. I took images of anything I thought could be useful for the project. The museum also had a section designed to look like a Great War trench.

I have provided a link to a dropbox of all the photos I took. However, a few examples are shown on the following slides.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/l6aqqra2632gm2d/AACy1ZCW6saKLteC_TDKFYzVa?dl=0







AIR RAID STATUS
DAILY PASSWORD
WEEKLY PASSWORD

AMBER
RICE PUDDING
APPLE PIE

DUTY CLERK
Cpl Williams
Cpl Jones
Cpl Smith
Cpl Brown
Cpl White
Cpl Black
Cpl Grey
Cpl Gold
Cpl Silver
Cpl Bronze
Cpl Copper
Cpl Iron
Cpl Lead
Cpl Tin
Cpl Zinc
Cpl Nickel
Cpl Cobalt
Cpl Manganese
Cpl Magnesium
Cpl Calcium
Cpl Strontium
Cpl Barium
Cpl Radium
Cpl Actinium
Cpl Thorium
Cpl Uranium
Cpl Plutonium
Cpl Neptunium
Cpl Americium
Cpl Curium
Cpl Berkelium
Cpl Californium
Cpl Einsteinium
Cpl Fermium
Cpl Mendelevium
Cpl Nobelium
Cpl Lawrencium
Cpl Rutherfordium
Cpl Dubnium
Cpl Seaborgium
Cpl Bohrium
Cpl Hassium
Cpl Meitnerium
Cpl Darmstadtium
Cpl Roentgenium
Cpl Copernicium
Cpl Nihonium
Cpl Flerovium
Cpl Tennessine
Cpl Oganesson





Videos:

I had been watching this in depth series on the first World War before the beginning of the project, so I finished watching the series to get a sense of historical elements to add to the game. This series led to the decision to base the game in 1916 during the battles of Verdun and the Somme.





GDD:

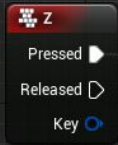
Having amassed information on the historical and visual elements of World War One, I created a draft GDD to begin creating ideas for the game's mechanics. Once I had a list of mechanics I gathered images of the specific equipment assets I would need for the complete game. (These can be seen alongside the mechanic descriptions in the GDD)

Coding:

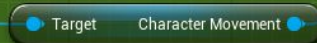
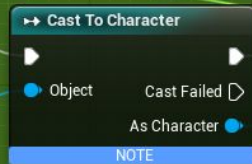
Using the Top-Down Character template in Unreal Engine I began to code in the specific movement controls and environmental hazards.

After finishing the basic hazards I added the fundamental equipment into the game, (e.g. weapon pickups)

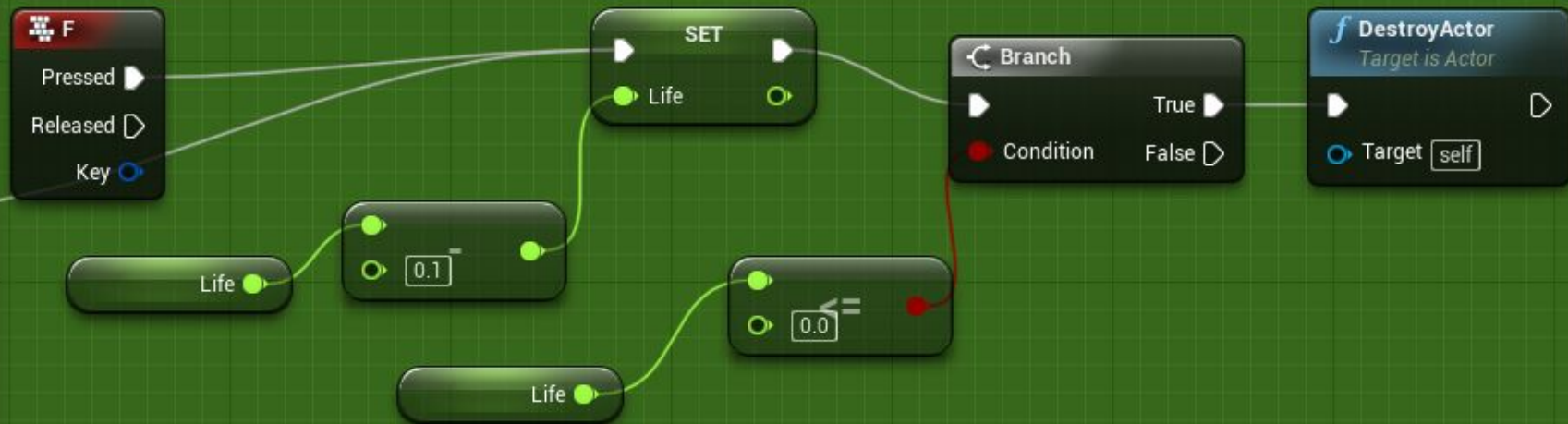
Below are screenshots of a large portion of the code I created for the game. There was more code, but the blueprints not shown here are very similar or identical to the other images.



Damage System

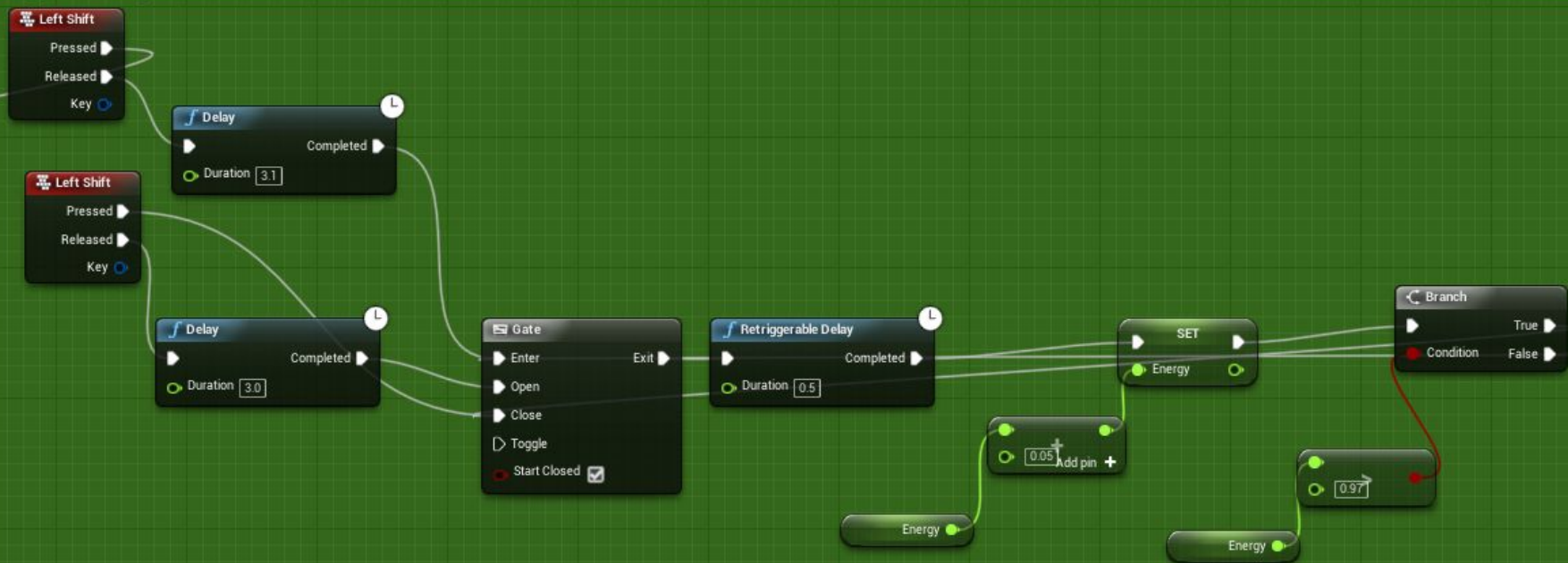


Health System





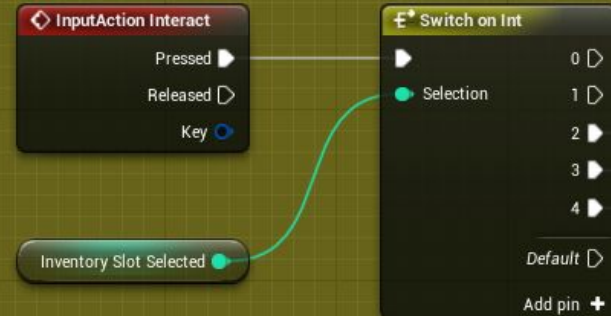
Energy Recharge



Select Inventory Slot

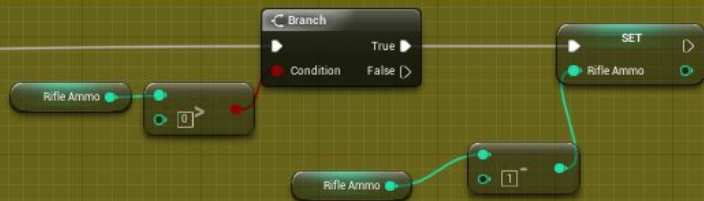


Comment



Use Ammo

Use Ammo



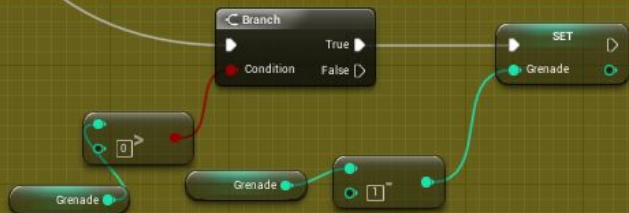
Use Field Dressing

Use Field Dressing

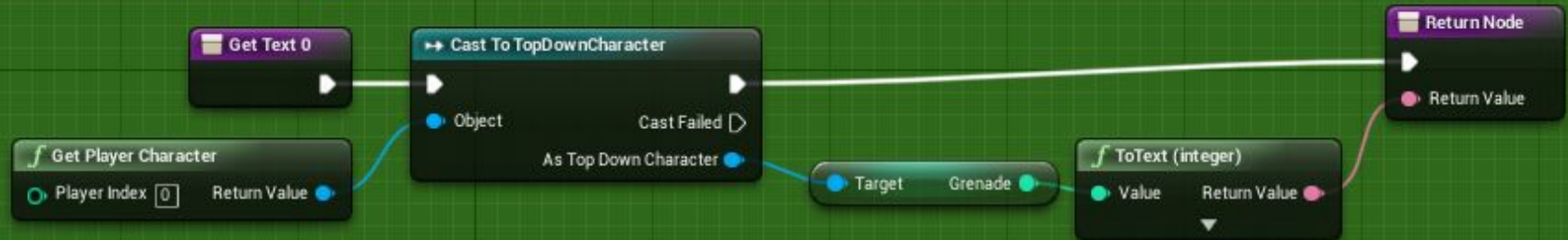


Use Grenade

Use Grenade

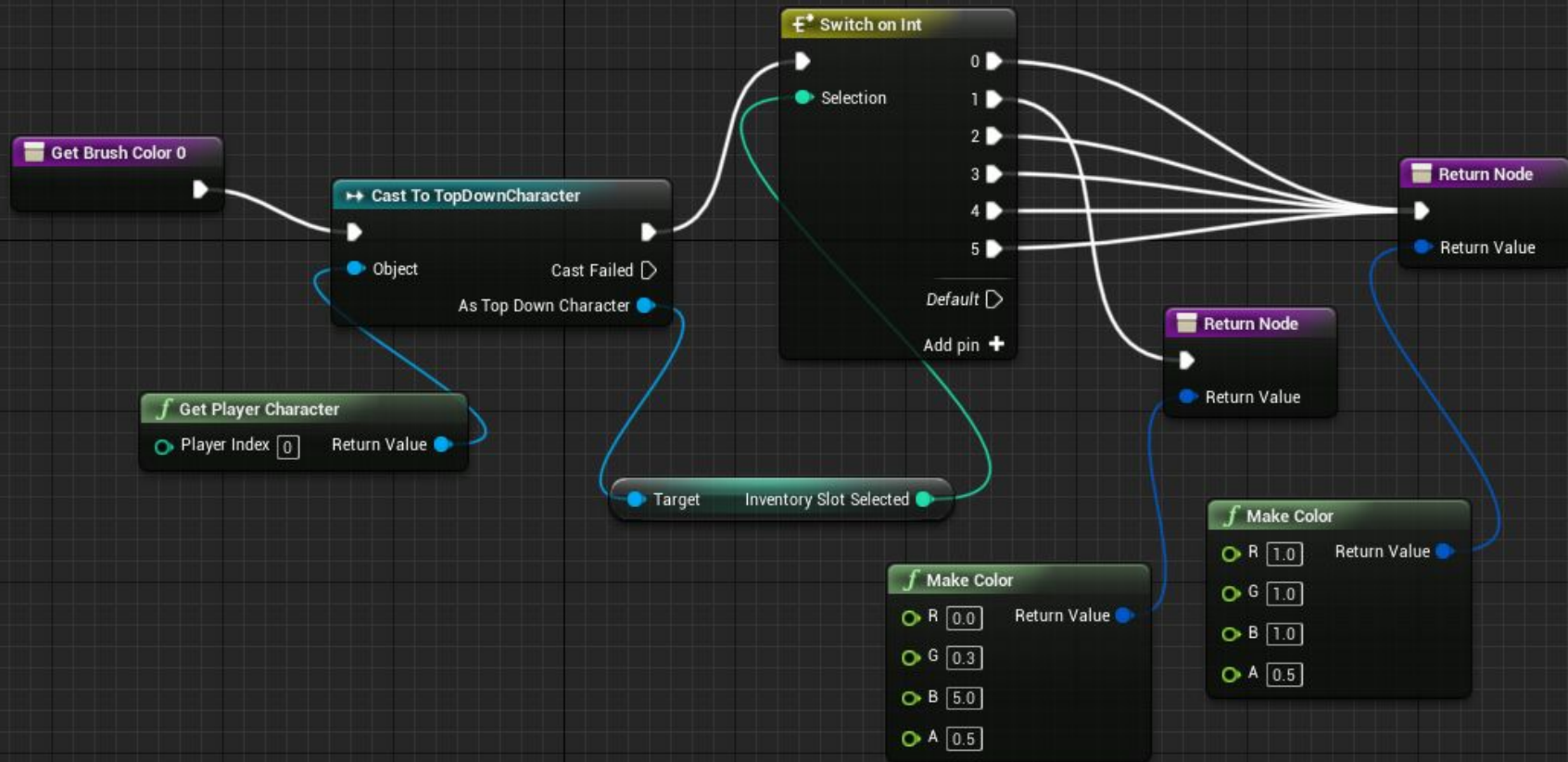


Grenade Number Change



Energy Bar Drain





Level Complete

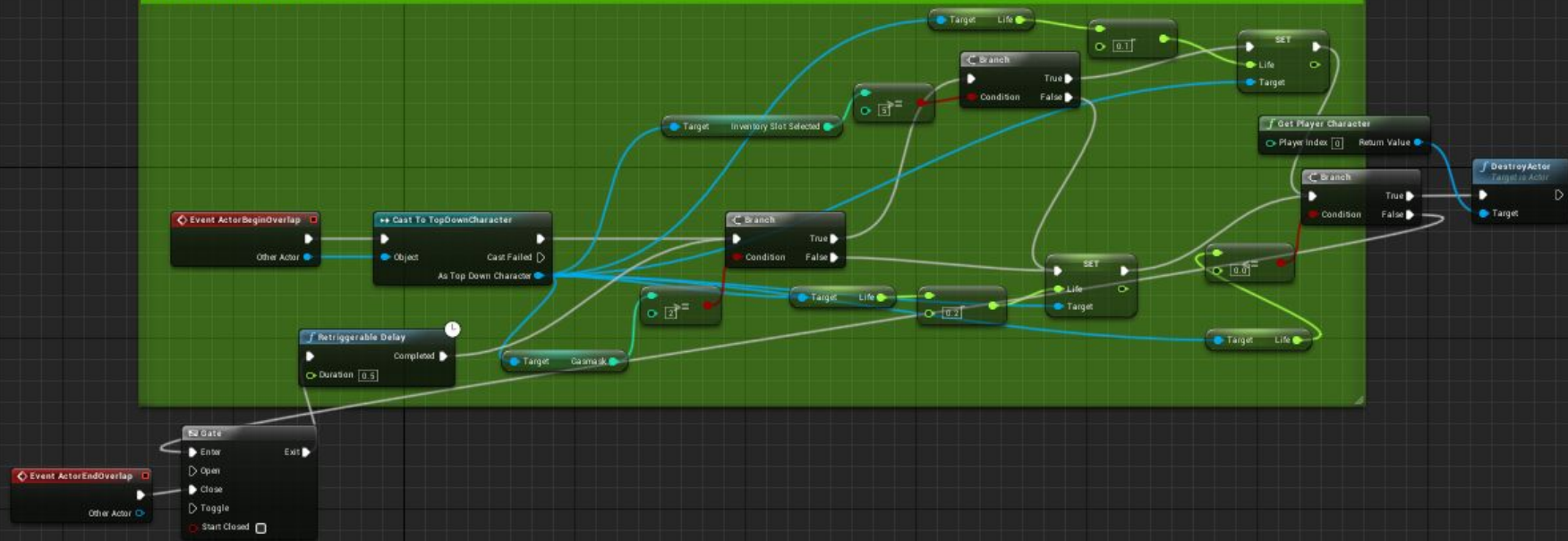


Landmine Kill



MUSTARD GAS KILL

MUSTARD GAS KILL

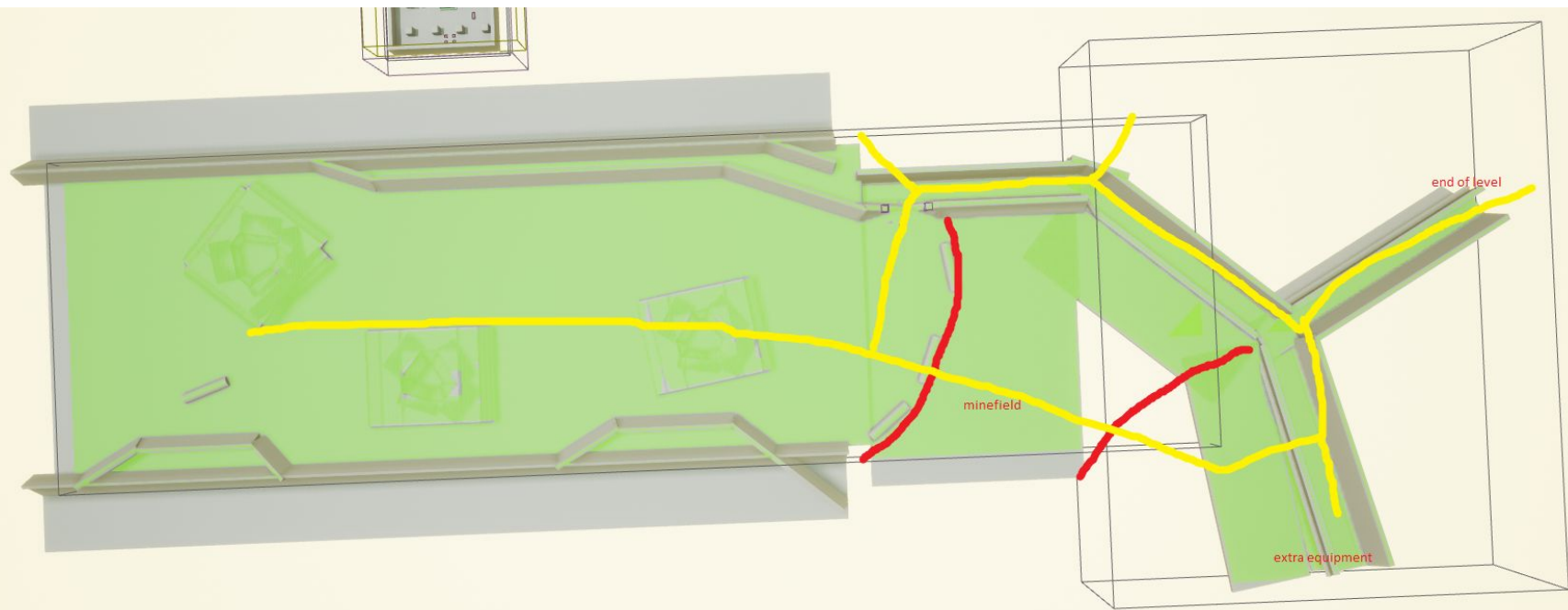


For this project I decided to try and code everything myself, without the assistance of video tutorials. The only outside assistance I received was information on singular nodes.

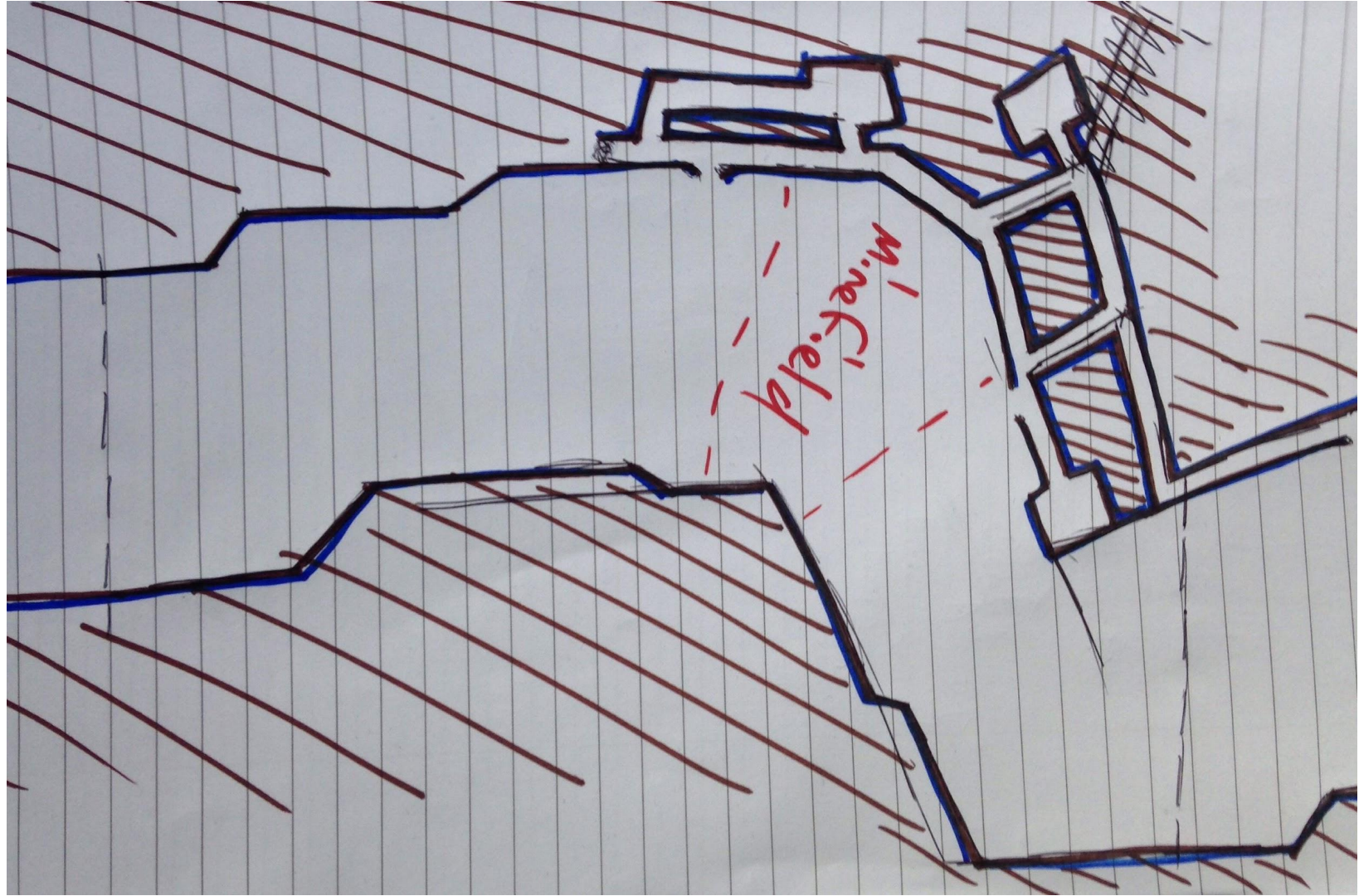
Because of this a lot of my code is messy and I imagine could be streamlined significantly.

First Level

I began by whiteboxing a simple design. A large open area of No Man's Land and a small Trench line, providing the player with a couple of choices for their path through the level. I took a top-down screenshot of that design and used it to plot out the pickups and hazards.



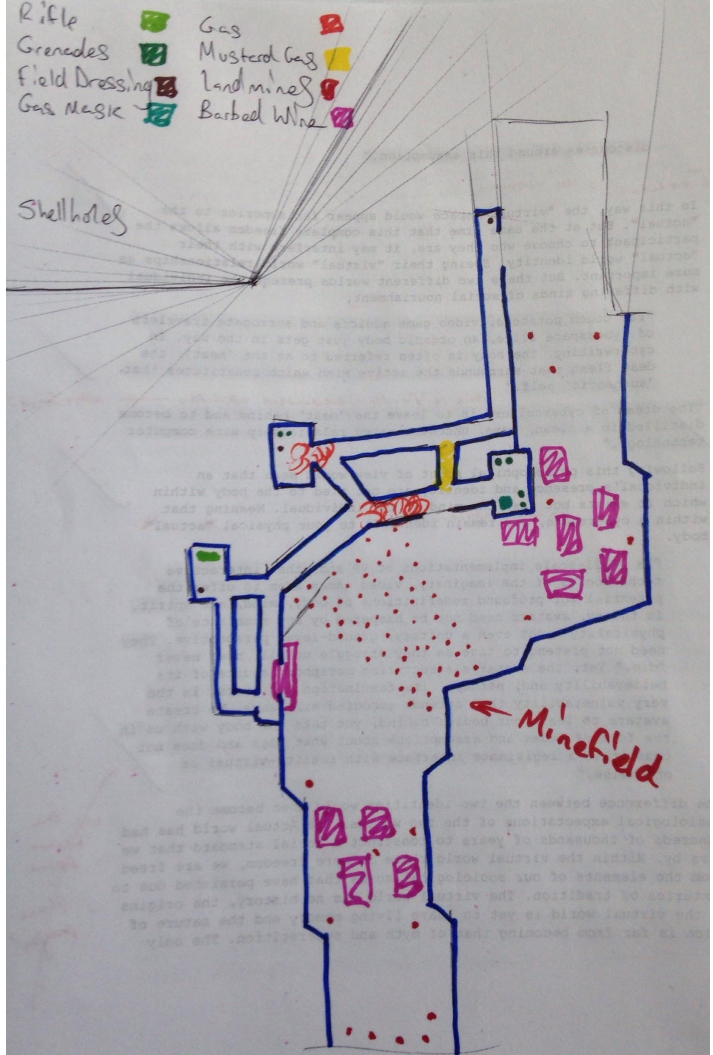
Once I placed the controllable character within the level I realised that the scale of the level was much too big, even for what needed to feel like a wide open space. So I created a second version that was smaller and more suited to the movement controls I had created.



With the layout almost complete I began to add the pickups and hazards I had created to the level. I began this process alongside another draft of the map.

Rifle  Gas 
 Grenades  Mustard Gas 
 Field Dressing  Land Mines 
 Gas Mask  Barbed Wire 

Shellholes



I then followed the drawings I had created and finished designing the level.

