

HOW I CONVERTED A BARCLAY TOY SOLDIER TO A WOUNDED WORLD WAR I GERMAN SOLDIER (PART I)

By Roger Dubois

In the 2006 summer issue of *Old Toy Soldier* journal, I wrote an article that described six ways to convert a Dimestore toy soldier. As was noted a Dimestore figure may be converted by (1) repainting it with colors not used by the manufacture, (2) attaching equipment to it, (3) removing some part from it and repairing the holes and/or scratches left behind, (4) changing the position of one or more body parts original to it, (5) removing something intact or broken from a figure and replacing it with a new part not original to the figure, and (6) combining two or all three processes explained in categories 3 through 5.

Although many readers may have found this article informative, others with a desire to convert may have wished that the article had included description on how I convert a Dimestore figure. Therefore, for those of you with that wish, I will describe in this article how I converted a Dimestore soldier to a wounded World War I German Soldier.

The figure that I chose to convert is the Barclay (711) short stride Drum Major. When I bought it, the upper extended portion of the baton was broken off, the tin helmet was missing, and most of the paint was gone. In that condition, the figure was a prime candidate to undergo conversion.

Materials:

Two-part epoxy putty will be the important material that I will use to convert this figure. It is manufactured by a number of firms, and can be purchased on the Web, at military miniature shows, from some hobby stores, and from many hardware stores.

Based on what I hear at shows, *A+B* and *Milliput* are popular brands among hobbyists. For this article however, I will use *Oatey Epoxy Putty*. I chose this product because it is readily available, and can be found in the plumbing department of The Home Depot store.

Oatey comes in a roll consisting of a dark gray core surrounded by a white outer coat. To use this putty, I cut off a slice from the roll and knead it until all of it turns a light gray color. It will harden in about three minutes, so I must work fairly fast.

Besides epoxy putty, I will use paint remover, a hobby knife, toothpicks, needle files, super glue, and a cup of water.

In addition, I will also employ a miniature razor saw, a 1/16-inch drill bit with a split point that drills on contact (I use a Craftsman bit), motor tool to drill with, and 1/16-inch diameter brass rod that can be purchased at most hobby stores in one foot lengths.

Finally, I will need a tube of gap-filling putty that once again can be purchased at a hobby store. For filling small gaps and scratches, I use Bondo Glazing & Spot Putty that I buy from an automobile supply store. The product works well, and I get a lot of putty for my money.

Safety Precautions:

As you know, Dimestore figures are hollow casts made of lead, and lead is a toxic substance. Therefore, I take the following precautions to protect my love ones and myself.

Before sanding, grinding, or cutting into a lead figure or epoxy putty attached to it, I put on a dust mask that covers my nose and mouth so that I do not accidentally inhale or swallow some of these particles.

I wear safety glasses to protect my eyes.

And when finished for the day, I remove my work apron, brush myself so that I do not transport lead particles to other rooms in my house, vacuum my workspace and wash my hands.

Finally, I do not allow food, drink, or children in my workspace at any time.

Converting Process:

The first thing that I want to do to this figure is to remove all of its paint with paint remover purchased from a hardware store (Photo 1). Once this is done. Im ready to begin.

The following is a list of steps explaining how I converted a Barclay figure into a wounded German Soldier.



Photo 1. Barclay 711 without paint.

HOW I CONVERTED A BARCLAY TOY SOLDIER TO A WOUNDED WORLD WAR I GERMAN SOLDIER (PART I) (Cont.)

1. Removing the baton and adding a walking staff: I cut the parts of the baton that extend from the arm with a miniature razor saw. Then I file the remaining part of the baton that rests on the figure's arm until the arm surface is flat.

With a 1/16-inch drill bit, I drill a hole through the figure's right hand that once held the baton. From my 1/16-inch diameter brass rod, I cut a 3 1/2-inch length and insert this rod segment through the hole in the hand. The figure is now walking with a staff (Photo 2).

2. Making a backpack: A backpack of a World War I German Soldier primarily consisted of a pack that contained personal items, a mess kit attached to the back, and a roll tied to the right, top, and left sides of the back. Each of these three items is relatively easy to construct with epoxy putty.

I make the pack first by slicing about 1/4-inch from the putty roll and kneading it into the shape of a ball. Once the putty has turned a light gray, I set it down and go wash my hands with soap and water using a scrubbing pad. Fresh putty is fairly easy to remove with soap and water. When it hardens on thumbs and fingers, however, it takes some scrubbing to remove it. Better yet, you might consider wearing thin latex gloves when kneading putty. Dust the fingers with baby powder to prevent sticking.

With clean hands, I am ready to apply the putty ball to the back of the figure. But before we do so, I wet the back of the figure to prevent the putty from adhering to it. When completed, the full backpack will be easier to paint if it is separated from the figure. I will glue the backpack to the figure after it and the figure have been painted.

With wet fingers, I press the putty ball against the center back of the figure until the putty is about 3/16's of an inch thick. Then with the wet blade of a hobby knife I cut off the edges so that the pack is about 1/2 an inch long and about 3/8's of an inch wide (Photo 3). Once this is done, I carefully remove the pack from the figure and let dry.

Now comes the roll. Using the smallest amount of super glue, I tack the dried pack to the back of the figure. I knead more putty, wash my hands, and roll the knead-ed putty back and forth on a clean surface until the roll is about three inches long with a thickness of about 3/16's of an inch. With the wet blade of a hobby knife, I cut one end of the roll to make an even surface.

I wet the back of the figure again, and using the side of a wet knife blade, I lightly press the cut end to the bottom right or left side of the pack and continue to lightly press the rest of the roll onto the pack.

When the roll is secured to the pack, I cut off the remaining excessive portion of the roll (Photo 4).



Photo 2. Figure with walking staff.



Photo 3. Shaping the pack with hobby knife.

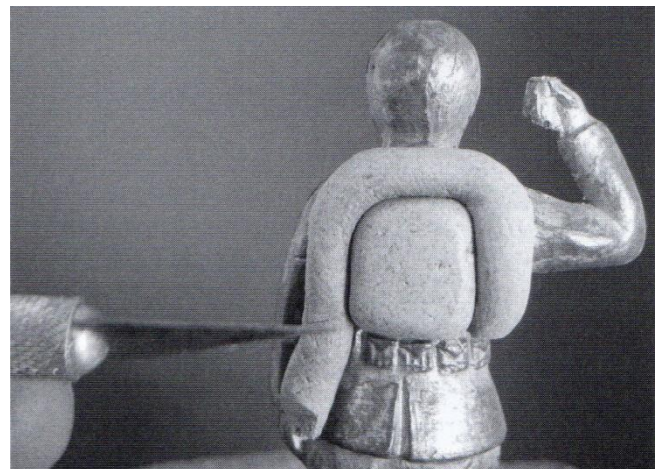


Photo 4. Trimming the roll.

HOW I CONVERTED A BARCLAY TOY SOLDIER TO A WOUNDED WORLD WAR I GERMAN SOLDIER (PART I) (Cont.)

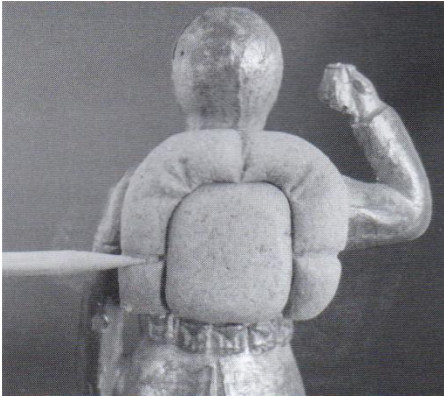


Photo 5. Making the impressions.



Photo 6. Trimming the mess kit.

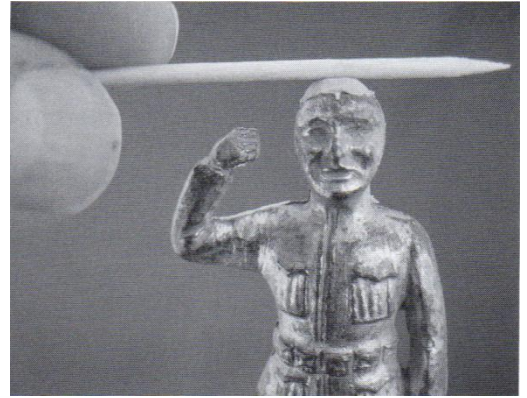


Photo 7. Flattening the hole cap.

While the putty is still soft, I use a toothpick to make indentation marks along each side where the ties would be located (Photo 5). I also make indentation marks on the inside bends of the roll along the top of the pack to show wrinkles (Photo 5).

The last piece of equipment to make is the mess kit. I knead enough putty so that when it is rolled out it will be no more than an inch long with a thickness of about $\frac{3}{16}$'s of an inch.

Next I slice the roll in half lengthwise with the blade of a wet knife. I place one of the halves across the top of the pack and lightly press the half roll onto the pack with the wet side of a knife blade. I trim the roll so that the mess kit will be about $\frac{3}{16}$'s of an inch in length (Photo 6).

Once the kit has dried, I gently pry the backpack from the figure with my knife. The backpack is now finished and ready for painting.

3. Capping the head opening: Because the helmet is missing, the hole in the top of the head needs to be capped. I begin by kneading a small amount of epoxy putty into a ball.

With clean hands and wet fingers, I flatten the ball to the size of a dime. Then I carefully place the flattened putty over the hole.

I use a wet toothpick or a wet knife blade to smooth the top and edges of the putty (Photo 7), trying to avoid pressing the putty into the hole. If I do, I don't worry about it because after the putty has dried, I can backfill with fresh putty.

Once the cap has dried, I file the top and edges until the head looks natural.

4. Making a head bandage: My conversion is of a wounded soldier. I could place a bandage any place on the body, but I chose the head.

I knead and roll out a small amount of epoxy putty. Using a wet tool, I press one end of the roll against one side of the forehead and continue pressing the putty around the head. I remove excessive putty with a wet knife blade.

I flatten the upper and lower edges of the bandage with my knife, and file the rough edges once the putty has dried. When painting begins, the bandage will be painted white and a spot of red paint will be applied to the forehead to depict the location of the head wound.

5. Making a collar: I'm not satisfied with the configuration of the figure's collar because it is part of an American uniform. I want a collar that looks more like its part of a German uniform.

I knead and roll out a small amount of epoxy putty. Using a wet tool, I press one end of the roll in front of the figure where a corner of a collar would be located and continue to press the roll about half way around the figure's neck (Photo 8). I then remove the excessive putty above and below the collar with a knife, and shape the collar edges and corner. Once the collar is dried, I then return to finish the second half. When the putty has dried, I file rough edges (Photo 9).

This two-step approach for making a collar is taken because shaping the two collar corners in close proximity to each other is a difficult task for me. I complete shaping one corner and as I work on the second, I often damage the first. So I construct a collar in two stages.

HOW I CONVERTED A BARCLAY TOY SOLDIER TO A WOUNDED WORLD WAR I GERMAN SOLDIER (PART I) (Cont.)



Photo 8. Applying putty roll to form collar.



Photo 9. The finished collar.



Photo 10. Filing-and-filling putties.

I learned to construct collars because I frequently rotate or replace the head of a figure. After I glue the head to a body, a seam exists between the body and head that needs to be covered. With the seam hidden by a collar, the figure takes on a more realistic look.

6. Removing the puttees: I want my figure to wear boots, not puttees. To remove them I file the puttee ridges and fill the valleys with gap-filling putty (Photo 10).

After drying, I file the putty and inspect the results. I may need to continue to fill-and-file until I am satisfied with the appearance of the figure.

7. Making a mustache: The facial expression of many short-stride Barclay figures is not to my liking. I alter the expression, in a positive way from my point of view, by making a mustache, which I do by adding a small amount of rolled epoxy putty in the space between the upper lip and the cheekbone.

Once again with the wet side of a knife blade, I press down on the rolled putty and trim the edges. With the tip of the blade, I cut short vertical lines in the putty to give the mustache texture.

8. Prime the figure: I prime the figure and when dried, I check my work, I may find that the bandage or the puttees need more work, more filling-and filing. I do whatever needs to be done to make the figure look pleasing to me.

After inspecting my German figure, I find the work is acceptable (Photos 11 and 12) and now I'm ready to paint. Soon I will paint the wounded German, and a photo of it will appear in my next article where I will offer some tips on painting Dimestore conversions.

In summary, I wrote this article to show readers how I converted a Barclay figure to a wounded German soldier of the Great War. For those of you who convert toy figures, I hope that you have found some useful bits of information.

If you have never attempted to convert a Dimestore, you might give it try. You need not convert the Barclay model figure that I have used in this article. Use your imagination and try another figure.

If you make a wounded conversion, you may decide to change the location of the bandage or add more bandages to arms and/or legs. Instead of a German soldier, you might just make an American soldier walking with a staff. In the end what you do or how you do it is totally up to you.

Finally, I wish to thank Lou Steinberg for taking time to review this article and for offering constructive comments and encouragement. And I also wish to state that I do not profess to be an expert in the art of converting Dimestore toy soldiers. However, if you have questions, e-mail them to me at dubois@umbc.edu and I'll do my best to help you. In addition if you feel that there is a better way of executing one or more steps that I have described or that I failed to mention something important in the section on Safety Precautions, please e-mail me your thoughts. Good luck converting toy figures, and see you at the shows.



Photo 11. Front view of finished figure.

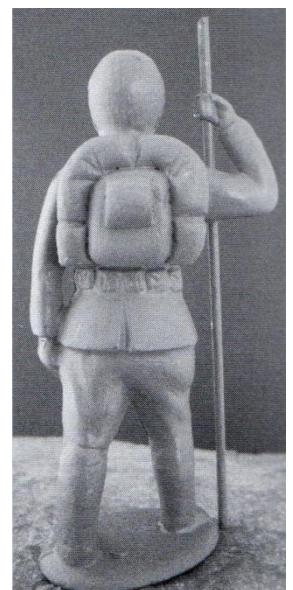


Photo 12. Back view of finished figure.