

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF EAMON CS

[Note: this document is a work in progress]

Now that work on the Eamon CS game engine has been completed, it's time to turn to the documentation set once again. This document is called WorkingDraft, but in fact it will be a giant brain-dump of information – everything I can think of will go in here, complete with screen shots, diagrams, anecdotes, samples, etc.

Please be aware that it will be stream-of-consciousness with little or no attention paid to grammatical correctness, sentence/paragraph structure, or clever segues between topics. It will also be lacking a formality found in most polished documentation sets. You may find that topical material has been duplicated or sprawled across different sections. The scope being discussed may switch abruptly, from wide-angle flyover of the terrain down into the dirt at the source code level, then back again.

The hope is that you will get the information conveyed and the fit and finish can be left for later when all the factual bits are written down. To allow you to keep up with the progress of the document, which may grow quite large, I will try to avoid making changes within it to already-written text and instead append all new changes to the end with appropriate timestamps.

I'll start off by adding the text of the now-superseded README.htm document:

This minimal document is intended to describe the various facets of Eamon CS. The real documentation will be a formal set: full source code commenting, a Player's Manual, a Dungeon Designer's Manual and a Class Reference. It will take quite a while to put all that together, so in the mean time, this document will have to suffice.

Eamon CS (ECS) is a port of the Eamon roleplaying game to the C# programming language. It is the production version of a prior system called Eamon AC (EAC), an ANSI C prototype intended to extract Eamon out of BASIC. If you have EAC on your system you should uninstall it before using ECS, as it is now obsolete.

This system is a hybrid of Donald Brown's Classic Eamon and the most modern BASIC Eamon available, Frank Black Production's Eamon Deluxe. It is also directly based on the EAC prototype. Eamon CS borrows liberally from and bears a strong resemblance to all these sources in various areas.

The game has evolved rapidly over its short lifespan, first making the leap to a plugin-based architecture unique to this branch of Eamon, then into the various flavors of Unix, and most recently into the Android mobile device space. Along the way, a small but growing collection of custom-built adventures has been created, and the game engine has improved with each one produced. The different facets of Eamon CS share a common code base, but where necessary it will be distinguished as Eamon CS Desktop for traditional workstations and Eamon CS Mobile for mobile devices.

PROGRAMS, LIBRARIES AND PLUGINS

The plugin-based architecture used by Eamon CS extends to the Main Hall, the Dungeon Designer and all adventures. They are managed by a Plugin Manager program specific to either Desktop or Mobile environments:

System\Bin\EamonPM.WindowsUnix.dll	Eamon CS Windows/Unix Plugin Manager
System\Bin\EamonPM.Android-Signed.apk	Eamon CS Android Plugin Manager
System\Bin\EamonDD.dll	Eamon CS Dungeon Designer Plugin
System\Bin\EamonMH.dll	Eamon CS Main Hall Plugin
System\Bin\EamonRT.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\Eamon.dll	Eamon CS Library
System\Bin\Polenter.SharpSerializer.dll	SharpSerializer.Library

Additionally you have some adventures:

System\Bin\TheBeginnersCave.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\BeginnersForest.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\TheTrainingGround.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\TheSubAquanLaboratory.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\ARuncibleCargo.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\StrongholdOfKahrDur.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\TheTempleOfNgurct.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin
System\Bin\WrenholdsSecretVigil.dll	Eamon CS Adventure Plugin

Conceptually, each plugin can be thought of as a discrete program; it exposes a Program class with a Main method that takes a collection of arguments, much like any C-based program. The difference is that the Plugin Manager is what "executes" the plugin, not the calling C# environment. At the bottom of the software stack, you have Polenter.SharpSerializer.dll which handles loading and saving of the game's textfiles and Eamon.dll which holds code common to all ECS plugins. The EamonRT.dll contains the vanilla game engine used by all non-customized adventures. For customized adventures, the game plugin (eg, TheBeginnersCave.dll) contains custom code specific to that game, built by leveraging EamonRT.dll. It is a "modded" version of the game engine.

This implementation allows the logic for any plugin to be shared with any other plugin. For example, an interesting idea would be to create a "campaign library" that contains common code for multiple derived adventures.

The source code for Plugin Managers and system plugins resides in the appropriate directory under System; for adventures, it resides in the adventure-specific directory under Adventures.

The Main Hall textfiles reside in System\Bin, making them easily accessible to all plugins, while game-specific textfiles (both original and save game) reside under Adventures in their respective game directories.

A final note on the architectural differences between ECS Desktop and Mobile. For Desktop, the plugins reside in the System\Bin directory and are loaded by EamonPM.WindowsUnix.dll only when needed (and reused once loaded). In contrast, when EamonPM.Android-Signed.apk is built, all plugins are statically linked in and all textfiles are embedded, producing a monolithic application. When the .apk is delivered onto the mobile device, only the textfiles are replicated (when appropriate) to the device's file system - the plugins remain part of the application. In spite of this, the plugin managers are very similar internally.

BATCH FILES

The plugins take a variety of command line parameters (which will be described below). However, to get you up and running quickly, there is a QuickLaunch folder (since there is no formal ECS installer, you may want to manually create a shortcut to it on your desktop). Inside this folder is a set of batch files that can be run directly. The batch files are organized into sub-folders based on the underlying plugin they invoke:

EamonDD\EditAdventures.bat	Edit the flat Adventures database
EamonDD\EditCatalog.bat	Edit the adventure category Catalog
EamonDD\EditCharacters.bat	Edit the Characters file
EamonDD\EditContemporary.bat	Edit the Contemporary adventures category
EamonDD\EditFantasy.bat	Edit the Fantasy adventures category
EamonDD\EditSciFi.bat	Edit the Sci-Fi adventures category
EamonDD\EditTest.bat	Edit the Test adventures category
EamonDD\EditWorkbench.bat	Edit the Developer's Workbench
EamonDD\EditWorkInProgress.bat	Edit the Work-In-Progress adventures category
EamonDD\EditARuncibleCargo.bat	Edit A Runcible Cargo
EamonDD\EditBeginnersForest.bat	Edit Beginner's Forest
EamonDD\Edit[AdventureName].bat	Edit [AdventureName]
EamonMH\EnterMainHallUsingAdventures.bat	Enter the Main Hall using a flat adventure database ¹
EamonMH\EnterMainHallUsingCatalog.bat	Enter the Main Hall using a hierarchical adventure database ¹
EamonRT\ResumeARuncibleCargo.bat	Resume A Runcible Cargo ²
EamonRT\ResumeBeginnersForest.bat	Resume Beginner's Forest ²
EamonRT\Resume[AdventureName].bat	Resume [AdventureName] ²

¹Run these batch files to create a new character or send an existing one into the Main Hall. The only difference between the two batch files is the nature of the adventure database loaded (the same characters will be available regardless).

²Run these batch files to return to an in-progress adventure.

You can study the batch files to see how various programs are launched; you can also create your own batch files using these as templates if you decide to try your hand at adventure writing, or if you want to run the system in a non-default manner.

Eamon CS Mobile mirrors this QuickLaunch hierarchy using a series of ListViews to provide a similar experience.

QUICK ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW

The entire Eamon CS system was written from scratch and aggressively exploits the C# language. This is no port, more like an expansive toolkit used to build games based on the Eamon ruleset. It has more in common with traditional Interactive Fiction systems like TADS or Inform. Eamon CS games are built by subclassing existing classes (in any library/plugin, but especially Eamon.dll or EamonRT.dll) and overriding their behavior, calling back into base classes where the default behavior is needed. Every class in the system can be subclassed, and generic improvements made to individual adventures can be pushed back into the base framework for use by all games. As time goes on, the system will grow in flexibility and power.

The textfile format used by Eamon CS deserves an explanation. The game produces ASCII XML files that represent C# object graphs. This is radically different than any other Eamon, and plays a critical role in the development of customized adventures. Take a look in the MONSTERS.XML file in Test Adventure (a non-customized adventure) and you will see the serialized class is Eamon.Game.Monster (from Eamon.dll). But in The Beginner's Cave, you will see it's TheBeginnersCave.Game.Monster (from TheBeginnersCave.dll). These are two different classes, the second is a subclass of the first, and implements custom code that is used specifically by The Beginner's Cave. Now compare the batch file EditTestAdventure.bat, which contains the command line argument "-pfn EamonRT.dll" with EditTheBeginnersCave.bat, which contains "-pfn TheBeginnersCave.dll". In the first the flag instructs EamonDD to load the base engine, while in the second it loads TheBeginnersCave.dll and uses any customized classes it finds (like the Monster class) when creating new objects. This whole topic is fairly complex and begs to be part of a formal document set, but at least this gives you an idea of how it works.

With BASIC Eamons that use files containing just data, you can bypass the Dungeon Designer program completely and build these files by hand. You should avoid this practice in Eamon CS due to the specialized textfile format. The EamonDD program is instrumental in producing textfiles of the correct format and you should rely on it to do so. However, you can still manually tweak the textfiles with your favorite editor. Just be very careful to ensure the file format is not violated, as the Polenter.SharpSerializer.dll library can be picky.

The EamonRT.dll base adventure runtime takes the form of a Finite State Machine (FSM). For those unfamiliar, this is a technique used to model complex program behavior. The main game loop is 15 lines long; all complex behavior has been delegated to subclasses of the State class. Player commands are derived from the Command class, which itself is derived from State. Customized adventures will almost always subclass various States or Commands to provide special behavior. It is also very easy to create new States or Commands and link them into the FSM if needed. Finally, if you look through the code you will see that special care has

been taken to avoid the use of GOTO except in specific circumstances (goto Cleanup). This gives the game engine a clean, deterministic quality.

PREREQUISITES

[20180716]

As mentioned in the README.md, Eamon CS has no formal installer. There are good points and bad points to this. On one hand, it is a simple matter of unzipping the Eamon-CS-master.zip file downloaded from GitHub to set up for play (if you did that, as opposed to doing a Git Clone). Also, it means there is no installer to maintain, which frees time up for other things like engine enhancements, or developing content.

A disadvantage to this approach is the ECS developer/gamer is responsible for ensuring that all prerequisites are installed on their system; otherwise, ECS will not run when you double-click on any of the .bat or .sh QuickLaunch files. This is typically manifested by a console window popping up and then disappearing quickly... caused by a missing dotnet.exe program. If you find that you cannot get Eamon CS to run on Windows, your first order of business should be to download and install the following files (in order):

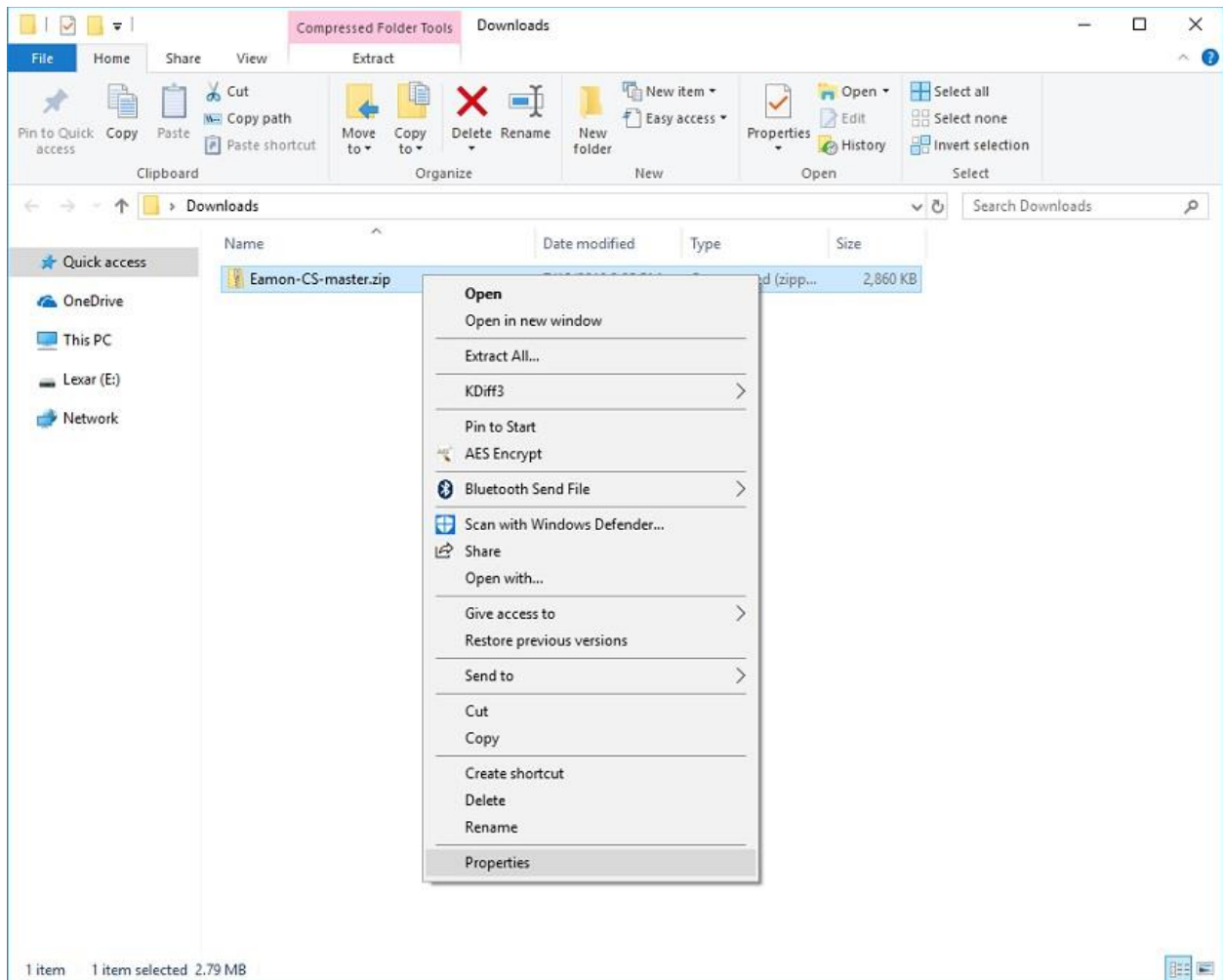
Developers who want to play, step through and/or develop the source code:

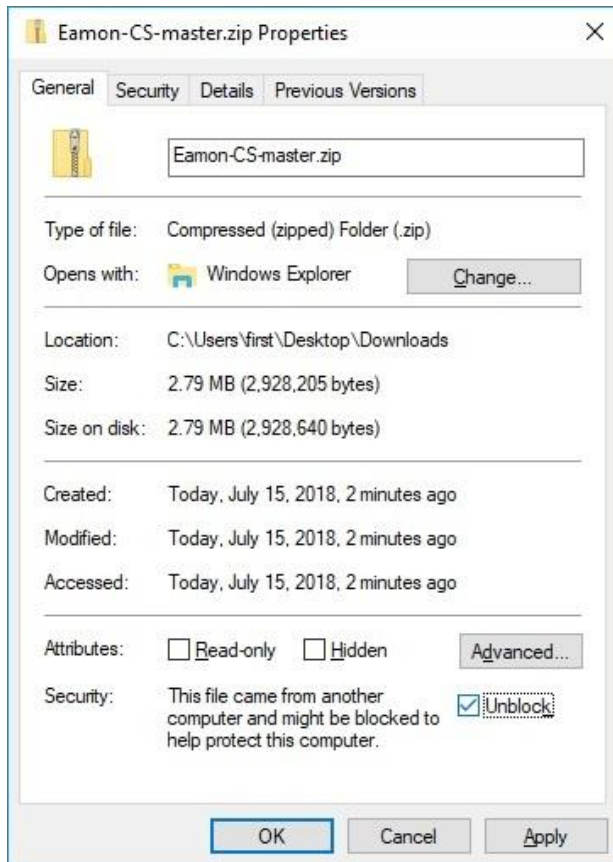
<https://visualstudio.microsoft.com/thank-you-downloading-visual-studio/?sku=Community&rel=15>
<https://www.microsoft.com/net/download/thank-you/net472-developer-pack>
<https://www.microsoft.com/net/download/thank-you/dotnet-sdk-2.1.302-windows-x64-installer>

Gamers who simply want to play:

<https://www.microsoft.com/net/download/thank-you/net472-offline>
<https://www.microsoft.com/net/download/thank-you/dotnet-runtime-2.1.2-windows-x64-installer>

A second disadvantage on Windows leads to a useful tip regarding the downloaded .zip file. You should always right click on the .zip file and select "unblock" to avoid the annoying security warnings, as shown below:





The prerequisites on Unix are similar: a version of Mono that is .NET Framework 4.6.1+ and .NET Core 2.0+ compatible. The means to satisfy these requirements varies from platform to platform, and is left as an exercise for the reader. I have personally gotten the system working in Ubuntu Linux and FreeBSD. There is no reason it shouldn't work perfectly in OS X, though I haven't tried it. This course of action should only be pursued by those who are confident enough to see it through via their own devices.

USING THE VISUAL STUDIO DEBUGGER

[20180716]

Eamon CS was built using Visual Studio 2017, a powerful, modern integrated development environment used by programmers world-wide. If you would like to debug or step through the game's source code to better understand its inner workings, you can install VS 2017 Community Edition, provided by the link in the Prerequisites section. There are many tutorials on the web that go into detail on using Visual Studio in general; that topic is way outside the scope of this document. If you do some research on your own, make sure you focus on using the debugger, which will be the point of this section. Note: this discussion assumes VS 2017 on Windows, if you're using a different development environment or a different OS the steps may vary.

To step through the Eamon CS source code, do the following:

1. Make a backup of your repository directory if you downloaded a .zip file. If you Git Cloned the system, you can probably make a new development branch and focus your work there so the original branch (or your gameplay branch) remains pristine.

2. In the development directory or branch run EnterMainHallUsingAdventures.bat, and send a character into the adventure you want to step through. You can save the adventure if you wish but it is not required; only that the character remain in the adventure. Quit the game, but don't Quit Hall. In this example we'll step through The SubAquan Laboratory.

```
TheSubAquanLaboratory
You see the first of your companions, "Cool Jules," who stands before you in full chain mail armor, and wields a very wicked-looking axe. He's very large in stature, and smiles grimly at you.

[Baron Jemmas]
Another man, somewhat thinner but just as mean looking, catches your eye. The Baron Jemmas, as he calls himself, is clad in leather and carries both a shield and an energized mace.

[Red-Eye]
Standing next to the Baron is a somewhat less-than-trustworthy person called "Red-Eye." He wears normal clothes, claiming that armor "only bogs him down," and is armed with a light crossbow.

[Archibald]
You also see Archibald, a mutated panther. He wears no armor and carries no weapons; he doesn't need any. His natural abilities and dark purple coat of fur are all he needs. He uses his hind legs for movement.

> s

[Stretch Of Beach]
You are on a stretch of seaweed-covered beach. To the south lies the Great Mitchigoom, and a narrow footpath leads north. On either side of you (east and west), the cliff walls reach out almost to the water and then swing back out of sight. You also see Cool Jules, Baron Jemmas, Red-Eye and Archibald. Obvious paths: north, east and west.

> s

You wouldn't make it 10 meters out into that lake!

[Stretch Of Beach]
You see Cool Jules, Baron Jemmas, Red-Eye and Archibald. Obvious paths: north, east and west.

> save 1

[QUICK SAVE 1: Quick Saved Game]

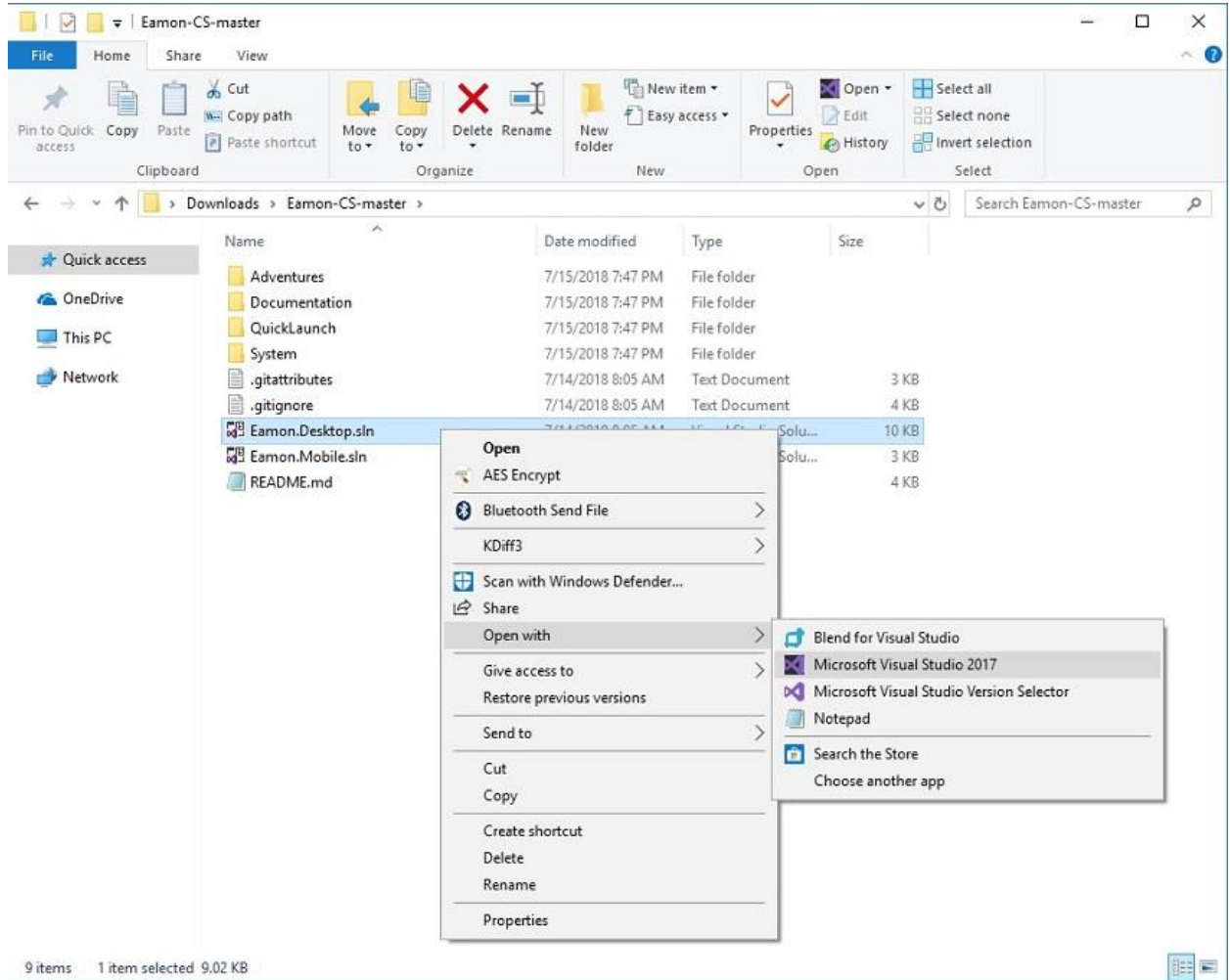
Game saved.

[Stretch Of Beach]
You see Cool Jules, Baron Jemmas, Red-Eye and Archibald. Obvious paths: north, east and west.

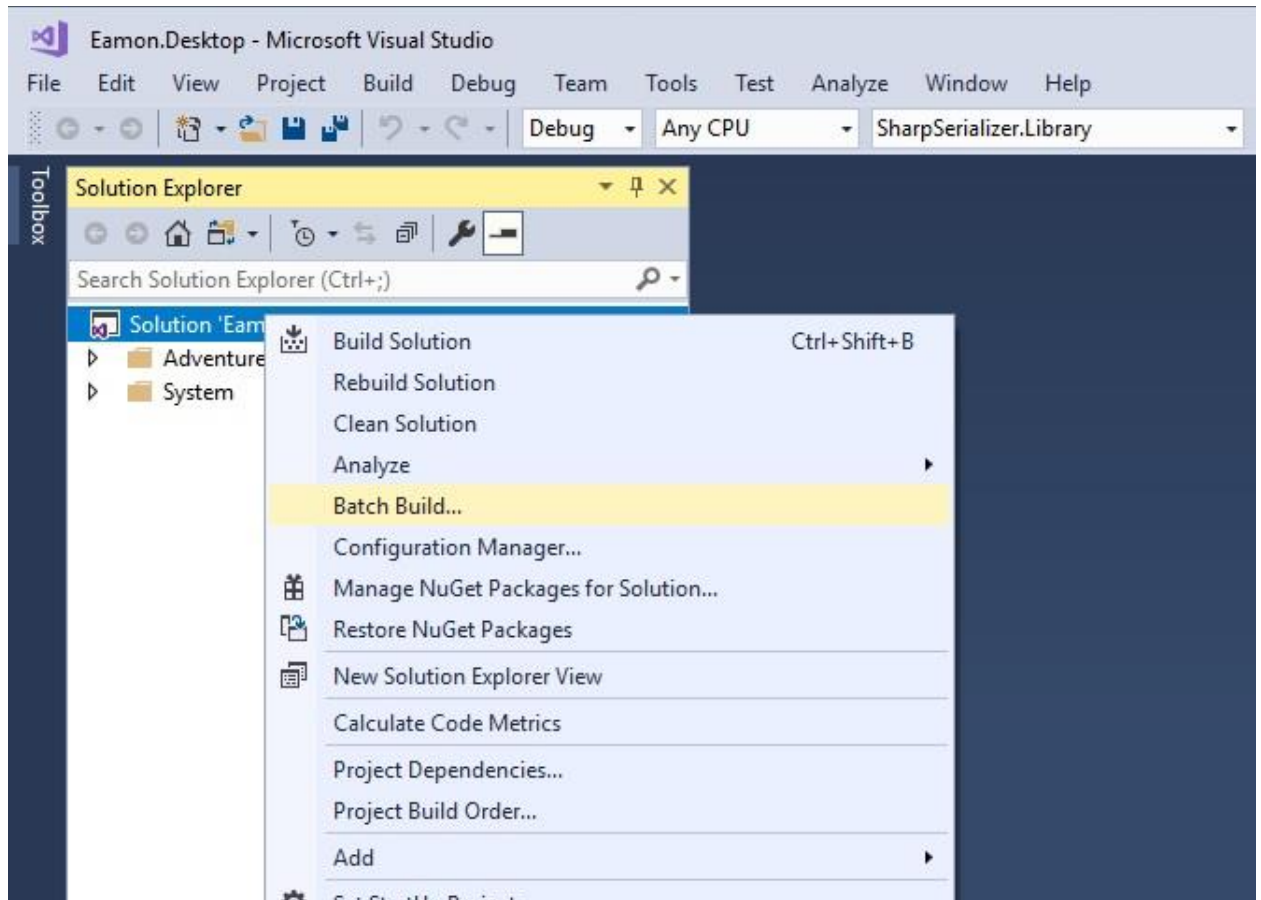
> quit

Do you really want to quit (Y/N): Y
```

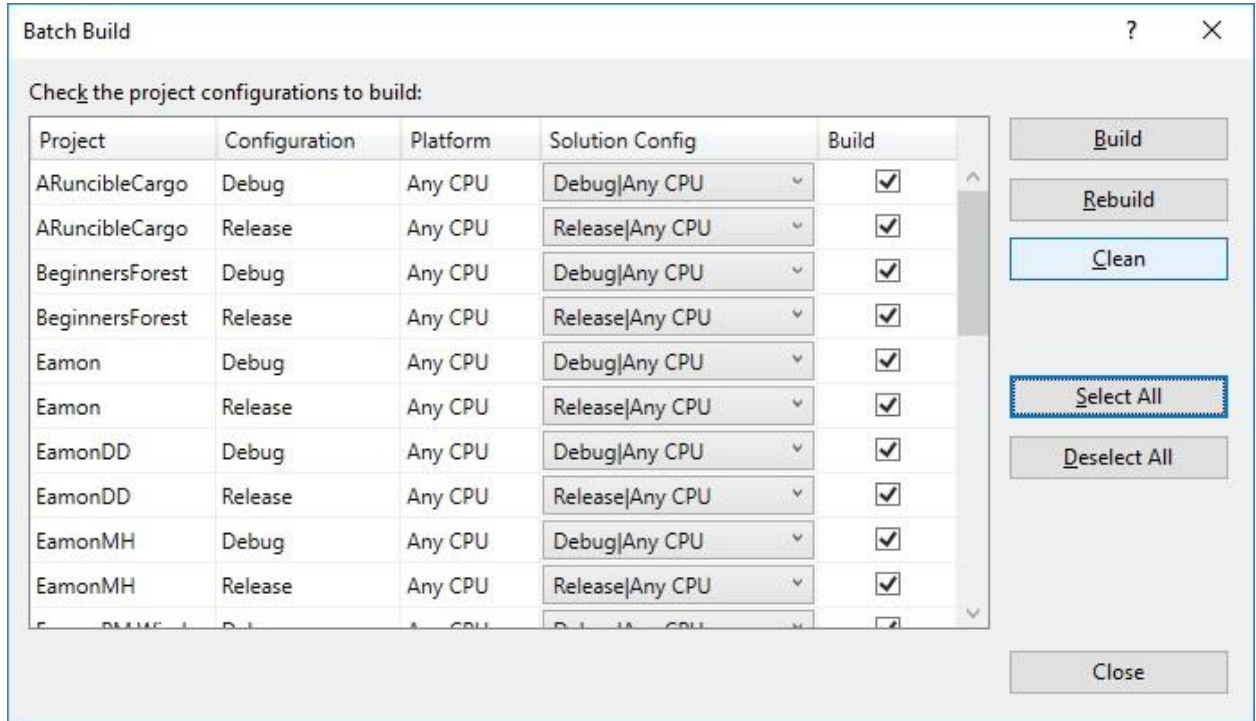
3. Open Eamon CS with Visual Studio.



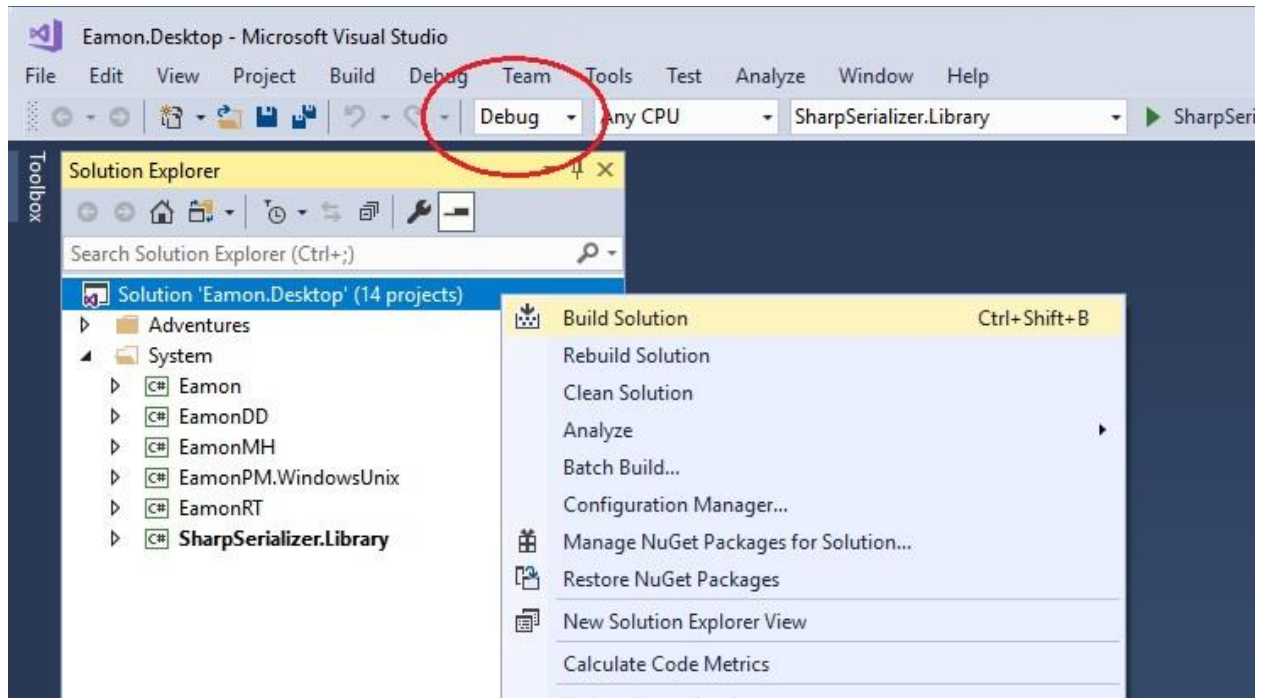
4. Once the game is loaded in Visual Studio, right click on the Solution node and select Batch Build.



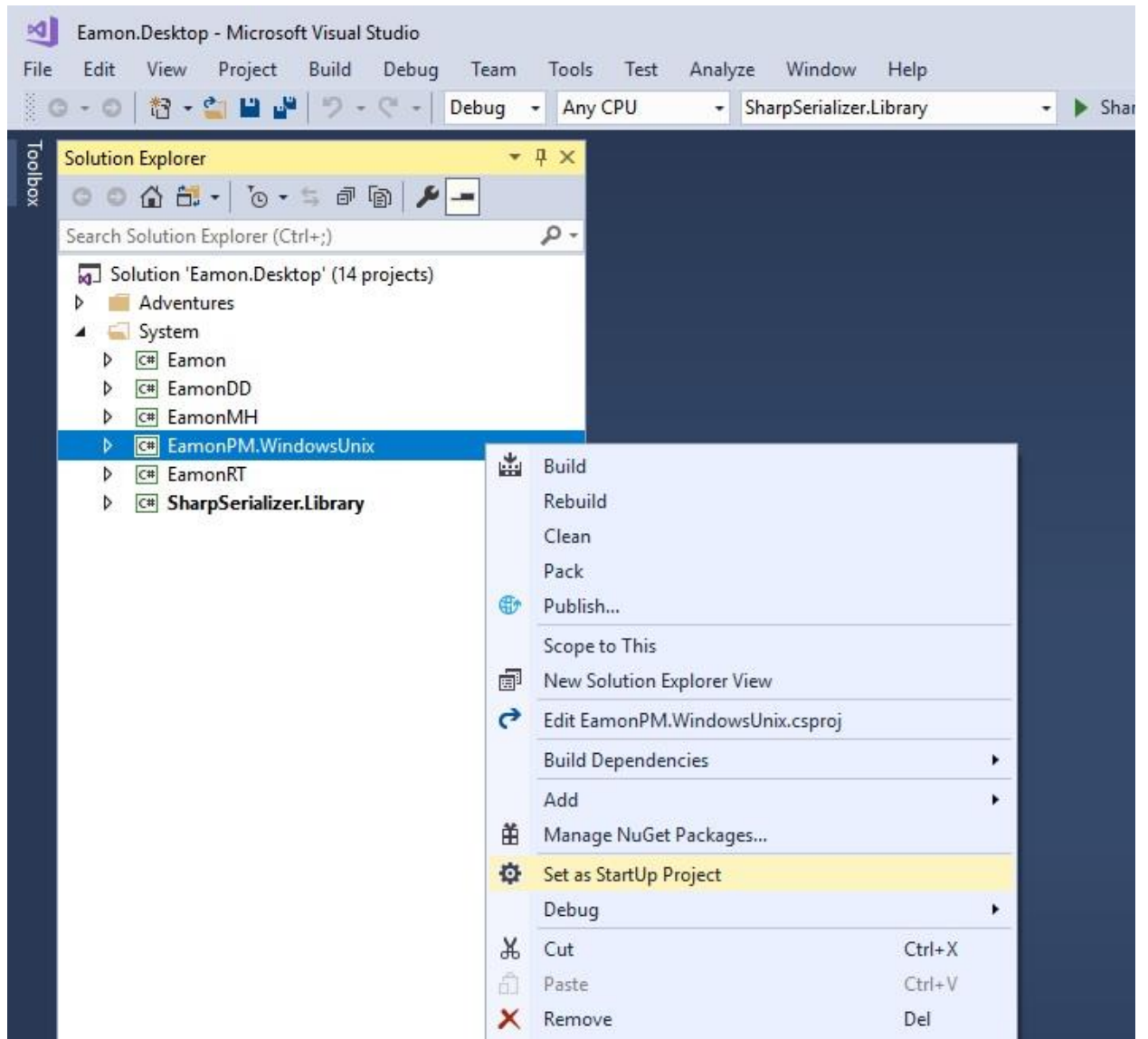
- Click the Select All button, then click Clean.



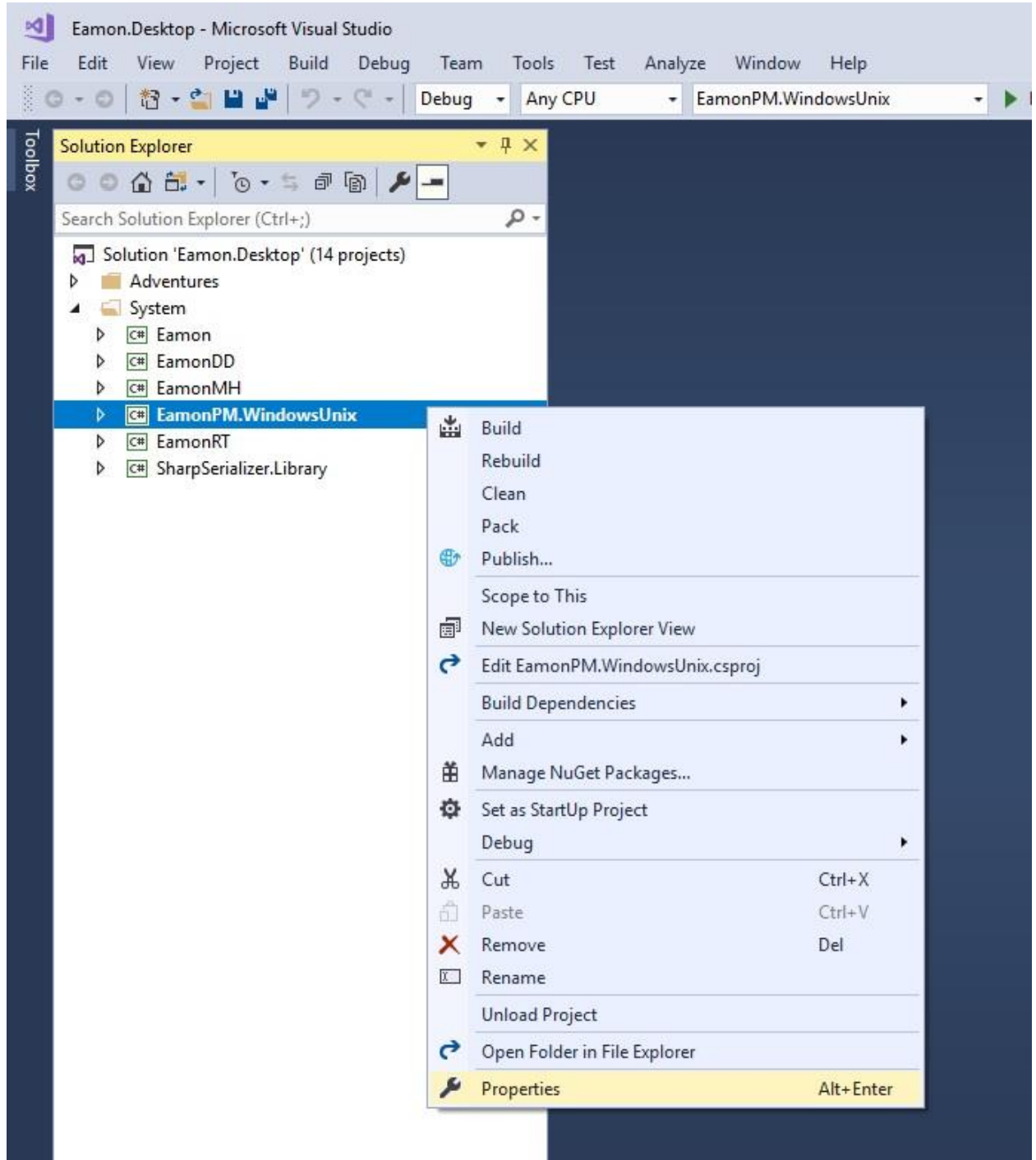
6. Right click on the Solution node and click Build Solution. Be sure the system is in Debug mode (shown inside red circle).



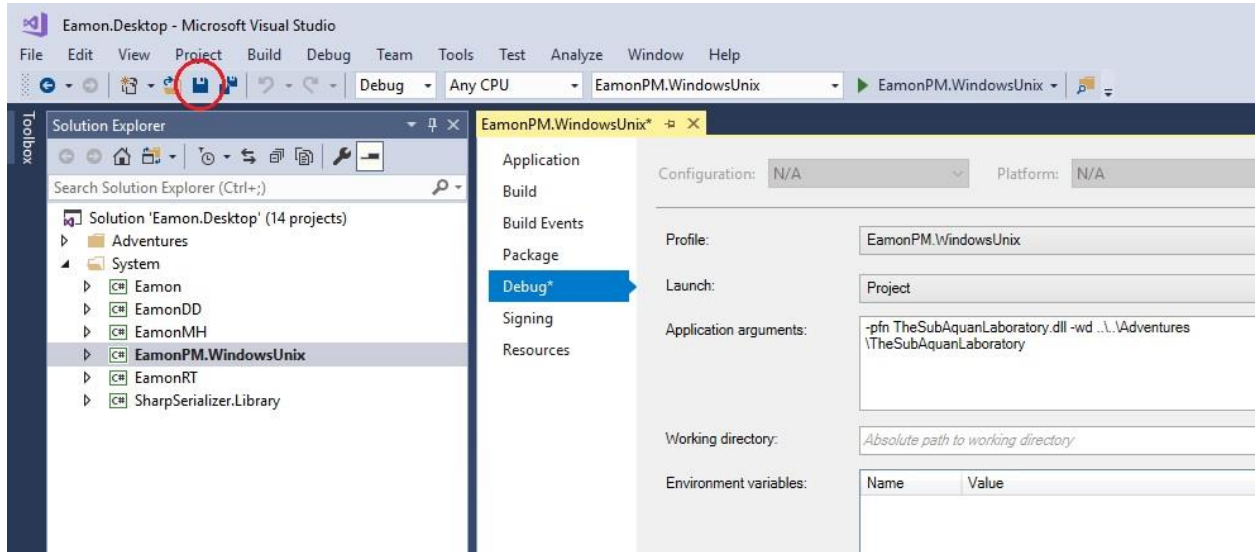
7. There should be no errors in the previous step (see Output Window). Right click on the EamonPM.WindowsUnix project and select Set as Startup Project.



8. Right click on the EamonPM.WindowsUnix project and select Properties.



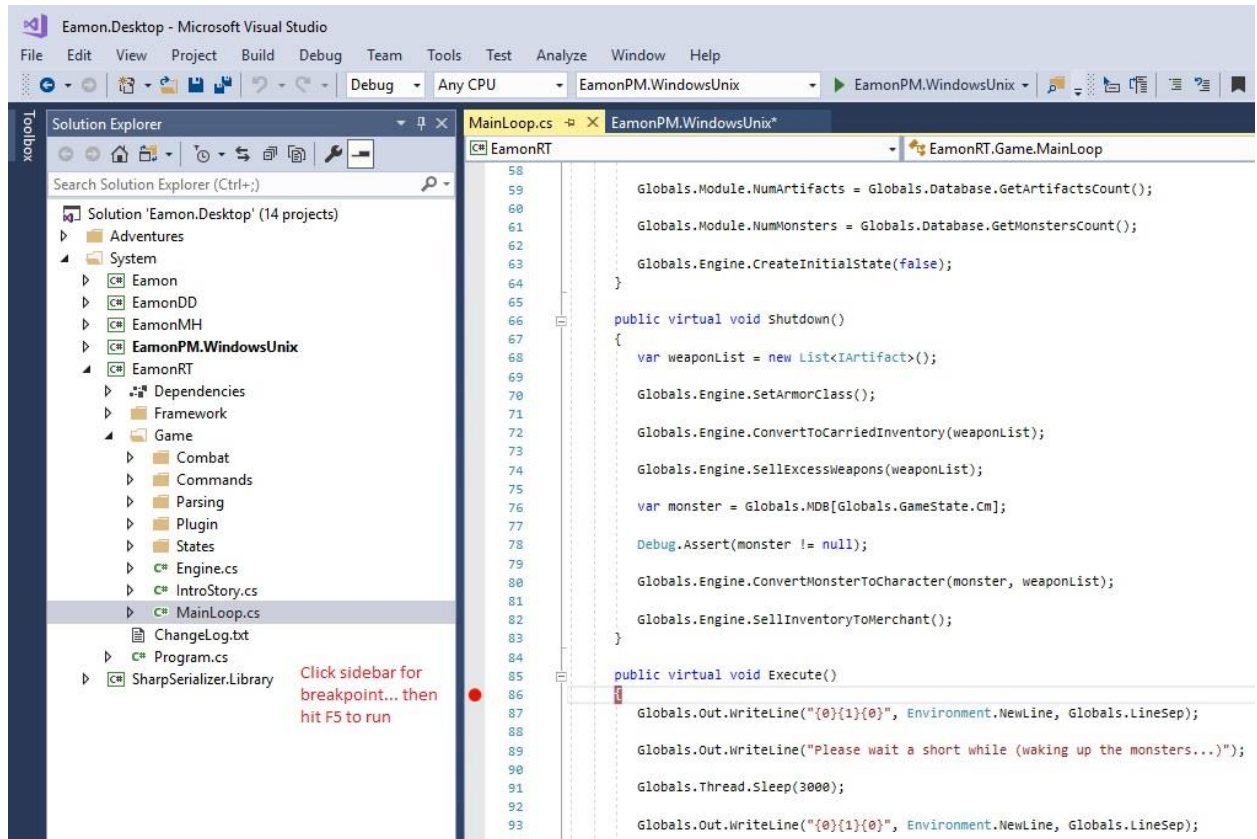
9. Set the Application arguments to the appropriate command line string. In this case, the string was taken directly from ResumeTheSubAquanLaboratory.bat. Make sure you save the changes (click the icon inside the red circle). Side note: you can use any string from any .bat file, depending on which program you want to step through. This includes the Main Hall or the Dungeon Designer. To debug these, you don't need to send a character on an adventure first. See the two examples below.

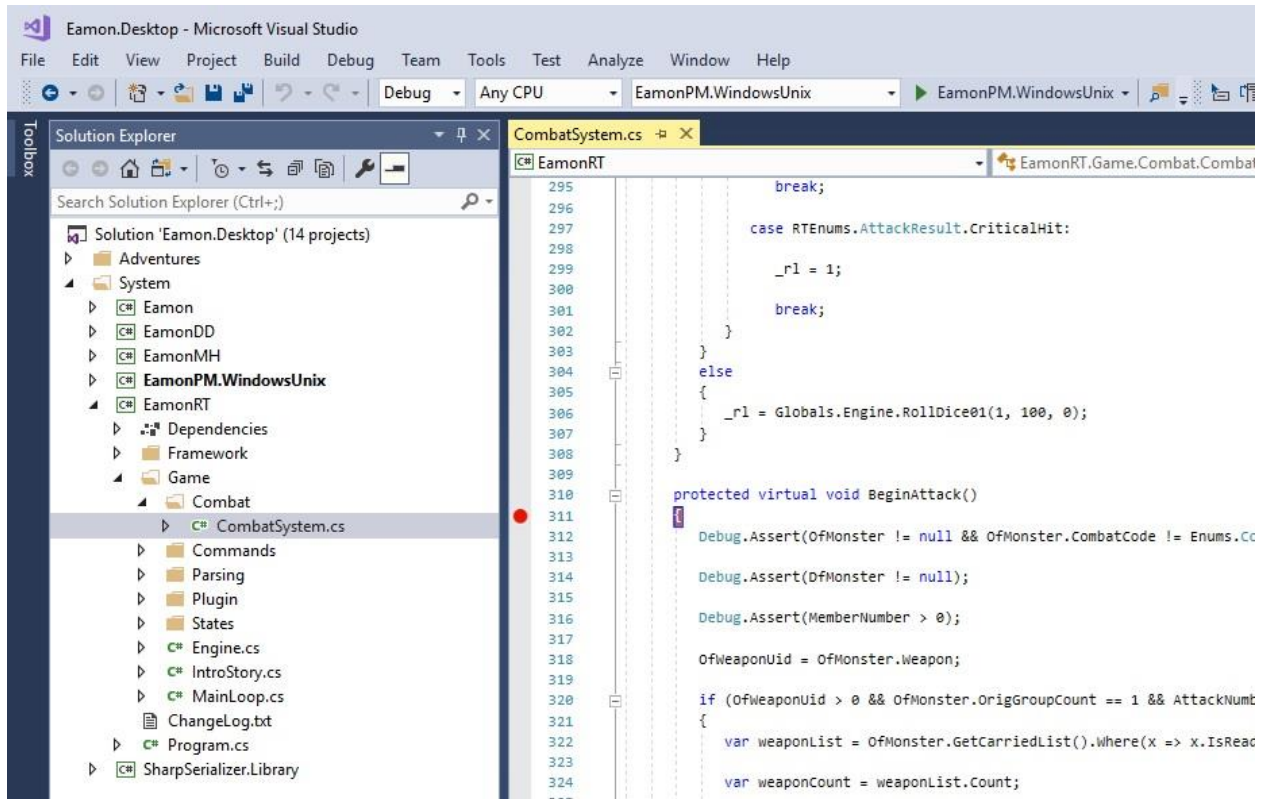


```
File Edit Format View Help
@echo off
cd ..\..\..\System\Bin
dotnet ..\EamonPM.WindowsUnix.dll -pfn TheSubAquanLaboratory.dll -wd ..\..\Adventures\TheSubAquanLaboratory -la -rge
```

```
File Edit Format View Help
@echo off
cd ..\..\..\System\Bin
dotnet ..\EamonPM.WindowsUnix.dll -pfn EamonMH.dll -fsfn ADVENTURES.XML
```


10. Put your breakpoints in the code. In the following examples, the program will break just as it enters the game's main loop, and also as an attack is made in combat. You can put breakpoints anywhere you like in the running program; in our case here, that includes Eamon.dll, EamonRT.dll and TheSubAquanLaboratory.dll.





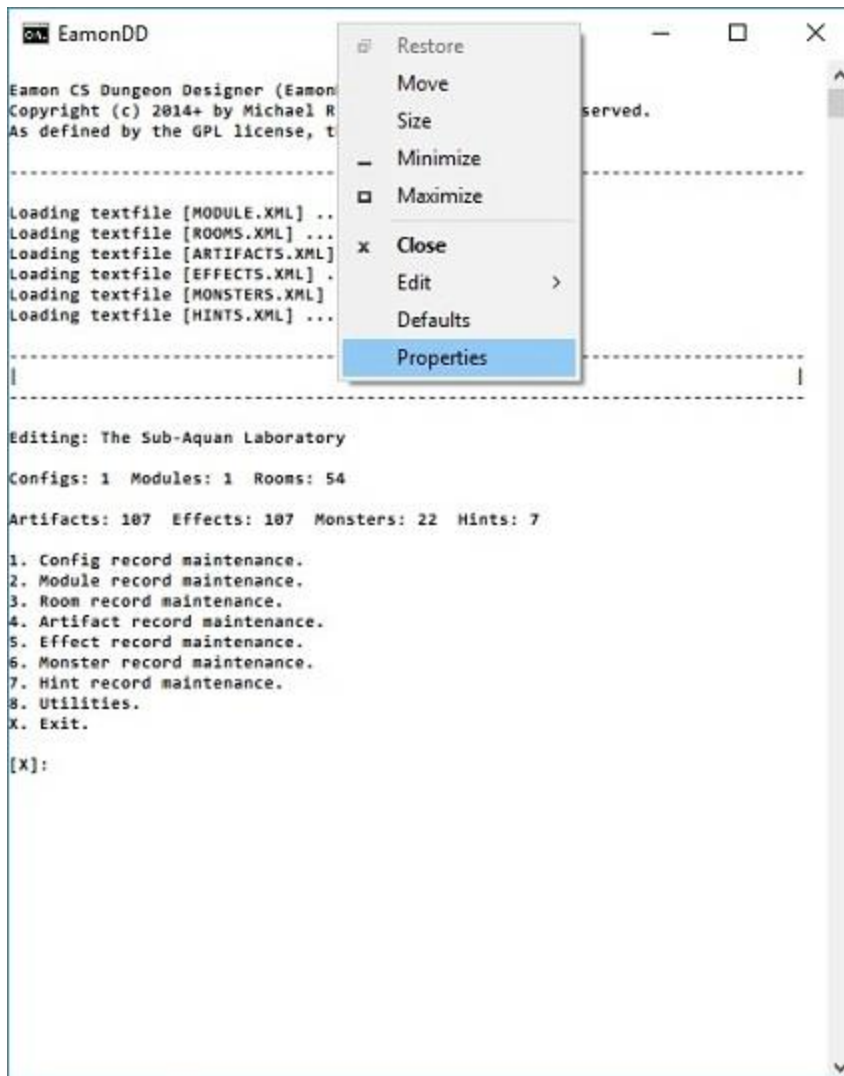
11. Press F5 to run the program. The game will launch just as if you had double clicked the ResumeTheSubAquanLaboratory.bat file. If you saved any games, you can restore them at this point as you normally would. You can also start the program or step through it line by line at any point using F10 (step over) or F11 (step into).

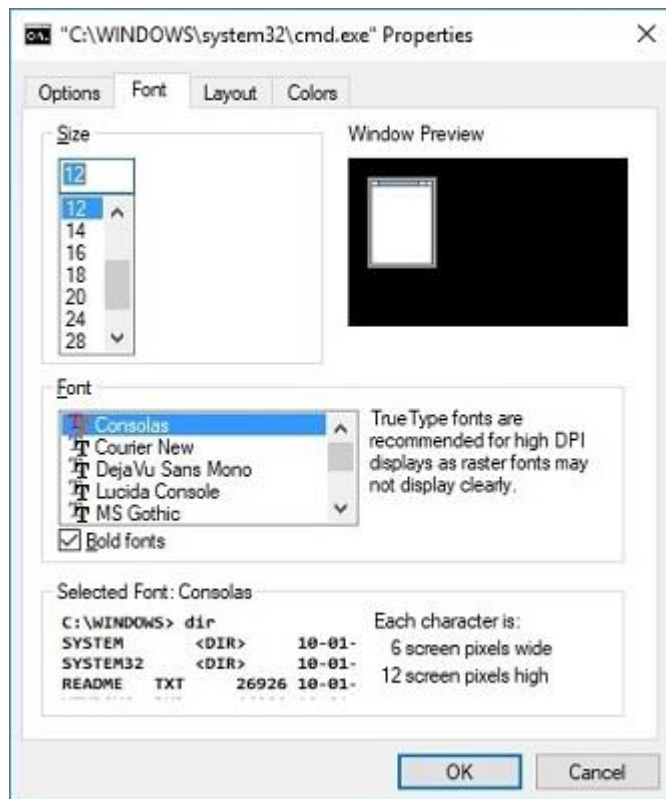
SUGGESTED GAMEPLAY SETTINGS

[20180718]

Eamon CS runs as a set of 64-bit Console applications. It became obvious over the course of development that the default settings for Console windows are not ideal when playing a text-based game. The system tries to adjust the window size to an optimal setting, but you may wish to experiment with the other settings to see what appeals to you. Strangely enough, I've found that these aesthetics make a big difference in the quality of the gameplay as well as the ease of use for tools like EamonDD. Obviously, this entire topic is highly subjective, but the following ideas produced some interesting results:

1. When running ECS, right click on the Console window title bar and choose properties. The following settings are taken from Windows 10; the exact properties available on other versions may differ.





2. Font Tab -

Size: 12-16

Font: Consolas or Deja Vu Sans Mono

Bold: Optional

3. Layout Tab -

Screen Buffer Size –

Width: 80

Height: 9999

Window Size –

Width: 80

Height: 50 (you can adjust this up or down based on screen resolution)

4. Colors Tab -

Screen Text –

Selected Color Values –

Red: 0

Green: 255

Blue: 0

Screen Background -

Selected Color Values -

Red: 0

Green: 0

Blue: 0

Eamon CS tries to set the values on the Layout Tab to those shown above, so you shouldn't need to change them. The Screen Buffer Width and Window Width should always be 80 columns. The Screen Buffer Height is strongly suggested to be 9999. The Screen Text shown above is Green with a Black background. This has a nice, retro-vibe to it, like an Apple II green screen. If you prefer amber the RGB values [255,165,0] might work for you. As time has passed, I settled on a white background with black text, as shown in the various images in this document. Once you have settings you're happy with, click OK and they should persist across ECS programs.

MISCELLANEOUS GAMEPLAY NOTES

[20180718]

The parser of the game has been enhanced to allow more flexible input. You can say stuff like "PUT my sword INSIDE my backpack" or "OPEN that jewelry box" or "ATTACK the rats" or "GIVE the spices TO the hermit". The standard [VERB] [subject1] [subject2] pattern of Eamon Deluxe remains, but ECS will discard the articles before processing further. Even though it is more typing, some players may find it more immersive. Of course, you can always just use the terse syntax if you prefer.

There are a few new commands that have been added to the game engine:

1. "INFO" gives information about the adventure being played.
2. "VERBOSE" [rooms|artifacts|monsters|all] turns verbosity on or off on the appropriate record type (in practice you'll probably only ever want rooms).
3. "HINTS" gives you a list of hints for the current adventure. You should always carefully read EAMON CS 1.4 GENERAL HELP and EAMON CS 1.4 NEW COMMANDS as these hints may be subtly different than their Eamon Deluxe counterparts. Consider the following:
4. "GO" [door] allows you to pass through a free standing non-directional door (eg: the overgrown path in Test Adventure).
5. "INVENTORY" [container] has been added as a parallel to "INVENTORY" [monster]. This lists the container's contents.