

# Archaeologists Preparing for Dig on WWI Site Concerned Over UXO

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Mesen, Belgium Trenches once occupied during WWI by Australian troops in the infamous Battle of Messines will be excavated for the first time in over 90 years in hopes of uncovering military history including the remains of missing soldiers. The week-long archeological dig scheduled to begin in July, is being staffed by a team of archaeologists from Britain's Ministry of Defence with participation from Australian Defence Force personnel. The Belgium military will be providing technical EOD support to the dig team because of the concern for UXO at the site.

The team expects to encounter a significant amount of weapons and UXO based upon the history of the site and finds at other WWI site digs. The Battle of Messines was one of the major battles and great allied success of WWI. During the 3-month battle, British, Australian, and Canadian soldiers fought against the German Army for control of the Belgian village. The battle claimed the lives of over 500,000 soldiers including some 2,500 Australians. Although similar digs on WWI sites have occurred in the past, this is the first time an Australian occupied trench will be dug.