

1914 1918  
FIRST WORLD WAR



Explore the  
Trench in  
Augmented Reality

## Trench Experience

Take yourself back in time. It's 30th June 1916, the day before the Somme offensive begins. You are in a trench on what will be the front line. The guns have been firing shells over your head at the enemy in a non stop bombardment for 5 days and nights. It's the biggest, longest bombardment in British military history to this point. Around 1.7 million shells are fired. One British officer, Sir Henry Rawlinson said "Nothing could exist at the conclusion of the bombardment in the area covered by it."

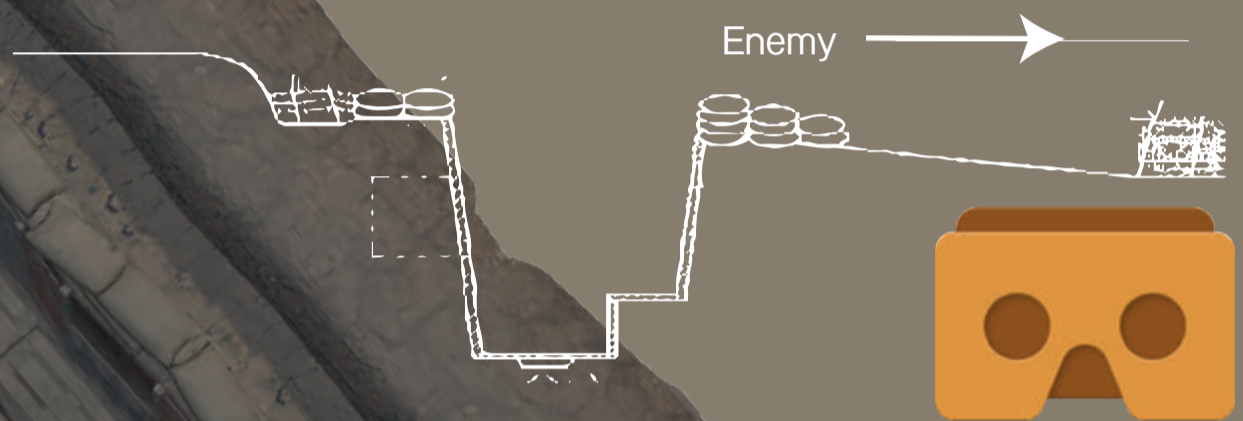
After 5 days of this bombardment surely the General was right? How can anyone still be alive after such a monstrous barrage of shells? You know that soon the guns will stop. Part of you cannot wait to be relieved of the noise and terror of the bombardment, but you know the silence means you must fight.

## Holding the Line

Your life in a trench at the front is full of danger. Enemy attacks, shell bombardment and snipers are constant threats. The conditions are terrible and there are no toilets, no fresh water and food is scarce and not very nice. The trenches are open to the weather and soldiers who dig 'dugouts' in the side of the trench to shelter, risk them collapsing and burying them alive. On top of this, rats are everywhere and lice infest your clothing and body. Bites from lice can cause 'trench fever' that would leave you in crippling muscle pain and a high temperature. The mud and water in the bottom of the trench means your feet are always wet. You never get to take your boots off for very long. This can cause the skin on your feet to 'die' and many of your comrades suffer terrible pain with 'trench foot' and some have even had a foot amputated. Your Lieutenant and Sergeant are always telling you to make sure you keep your feet as dry and as clean as possible. Now as you listen for the bombardment to finish, you look around you and see this terrible, foul smelling trench in no man's land as a place of safety.

## World War One Trench

It is estimated that 25,000 miles (40,234 kilometres) of trenches were dug during world war one, that's enough to stretch all the way the round the world with a bit to spare. Many of those miles of trenches were dug by soldiers using only shovels and pickaxes. Trenches were dug and reinforced to give soldiers some protection against the enemy guns and shellfire. These safe havens became home for thousands of soldiers at a time, along with rats, lice and even the remains of their fallen comrades. By 1916, the design of the trench had changed and they were dug and constructed from a standard design.



If you have Google Cardboard, download the WW1 Trench Experience app and explore the trench to see for yourself how these incredible structures were made. If you don't have a viewer, you can download the Trench **ActiveLens** app to see a trench appear on this page in 3D!

TrenchVR



TrenchAR



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## Over the Top!

Imagine now how it would feel to be in that trench. Put your Google Cardboard viewer on and spend some time listening to the sounds of the bombardment and the noises made by soldiers huddled from the rain. You can look through the trench periscope and also hear 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', a poem written by Wilfred Owen.



Listen carefully again to the sounds in the trench, and think about the soldiers sitting, waiting for the bombardment to end. What are they thinking? What is going through your mind right now as you wait for the bombardment to finish. When it does you will line up with your platoon, facing the enemy. You will climb up the trench ladder, over the parapet and into 'no man's land'. The officer in charge stands and look at his watch, waiting for the exact second he has been ordered to start. With a grim, determined look on his face he puts the trench whistle to his lips. As he does, you know there are only seconds left before you will have to dash towards the enemy and fight. Your heart begins to pound as those precious seconds of safety tick away. Without warning the bombardment stops. The silence is almost deafening as you realise the time has come. The officer looks down the line of soldiers, his face is pale with fear and he looks into your eyes, silently asking you to find courage. He glances down at his watch again and takes a deep breath, 'Right lads!' he shouts, 'This is it!' You can hear other officers shouting from other trenches and suddenly the air is full of the sound of whistles as they yell at the top of their voices **'Over the top!'**

