

Messines

The Battle of Messines during the First World War was a run-up to the much larger Third Battle of Ypres – better known as Passchendaele – which began on 31 July 1917.

The carefully prepared attack on Messines was a striking success. At 3.10 a.m. on 7 June, huge mines that had been placed under the German lines by hard-working tunnellers exploded. Almost immediately, New Zealand troops of the 2nd and 3rd (Rifle) Brigades left their trenches and advanced towards the ridge in front of them, on which lay the ruins of Messines village. Australian and British troops moved forward on their flanks.



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The New Zealanders paid a heavy price for success: by the time the New Zealand Division was withdrawn on 9 June, it had suffered 3700 casualties, 700 of them fatal.

