

UK team returns to famous Iraqi archaeology site

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British archaeologists have returned to Ur in Iraq where a famous British excavation was carried out 90 years ago.

Today's team, with 16 local staff, have survey equipment including geophysical tools and will use environmental analysis and satellite imagery. It's a far cry from Leonard Wolley's original dig at the site, which used hundreds of people to uncover the ancient city.

Jane Moon, Robert Killick and Stuart Campbell are leading the latest investigation at Tell Khaiber, around 13 miles away from Ur. Their work has uncovered evidence that the site was occupied up to 2,000 years before the second millennium BC.

Ms Moon told Reuters: "This part of southern Iraq, ancient Babylonia, Sumer and Akkad before that, is probably the most important place in the world from the point of view of the origins of civilisation.

"No significant excavation has taken place here since the 1940s. Because of all the troubles of the last few years, no one has worked here. We thought it was time to come back."

The new dig has international support from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the University of Manchester and the Iraqi State Board for Antiquities and Heritage. Anything found by the archaeologists must remain in Iraq, under laws passed to safeguard the country's heritage.