



The Somme campaign between July and November 1916 is widely regarded as one of the greatest tragedies in British and Imperial military history, costing a total of 420,000 casualties, around 57,470 of those on the first day alone.

The causes of the disaster have been examined and re-examined ever since, but a few myths persist in the popular imagination.

Having studied the offensive closely, Major John Hitchen (Australian Army Reserve) will challenge some of the common misconceptions.

Amongst other things, he will discuss governance of the British Empire's defences, omissions of political and military leaders, foibles of some officers at General Headquarters (GHQ), lost opportunities to monopolise the acquisition of Maxim machine guns, techniques to clear barbed wire obstacles, recruitment and training of personnel in the use of artillery, and British training in general, particularly of officers.

Time & Venue: Saturday, 5 October 2019, 2:00pm – 3:00pm, Goulburn Room, Level 4, City of Sydney RSL, 561-567 George Street, Sydney CBD. Admission is free of charge but a gold coin donation would be appreciated. For further information call 0419 698 783 or email president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au

John Hitchen – Biography

John Gware Hitchen was born in Sydney and attended the University of New South Wales where he gained a BSc in Pure and Applied Chemistry.



He worked for the Sydney Water Corporation for over 32 years where he provided technical advice and for over seven years as a chemist for CSR Limited.

John served in the Army Reserve for over 37 years rising to the rank of Major. His initial training was with the University of New South Wales Regiment. He was awarded the 'Tolnay Trophy' for scoring the highest marks in the examination for appointment to commissioned rank in 1973.

He commanded companies at Vacluse, Merrylands, Sutherland and Arncliffe. He was the Second in Command of 4th/3rd Battalion the Royal New South Wales Regiment and Second in Command of the Officer Cadet Training Unit. He commanded the Audit Team of 2nd Training Group at Ingleburn and later at Moorebank.

He is on the executive of the University of New South Wales Regiment Association and was honorary Treasurer of the Royal New South Wales Regiment.

He is a member of:

- Military History Society of NSW
- Naval Historical Society of Australia Inc
- Western Front Association (NSW Branch)
- The Gallipoli Association

As a member of the Royal United Services Institute of NSW, he has presented at the Institute for Defence and Security Studies NSW Inc (RUSI NSW) military history seminars:

- ANMEF 1914 operations
- Gallipoli August 1915 Offensive
- Australian participation in Somme battles 1916

As a member of the Royal United Services Institute of NSW, he has prepared a number of book reviews of military history books. These reviews have been published in the RUSI Journal.

His battle field touring includes:

- 75th Anzac Day at Gallipoli
- 100th Anniversary Anzac Day on the Gallipoli Peninsula
- Centenary of the capture of German New Guinea at the Battle for Bitia Paka
- 2nd Division's 90th Anniversary tour to both Gallipoli and the Western Front

- Western Desert Libya and Egypt
- Greece-Crete
- 75th Anniversary Fall of Singapore
- Centenary of Beersheba
- Western Front