



1 July 1916:
The Somme

1918

THE BRITISH ARMY'S STEEP AND BLOODY 'LEARNING CURVE'

which facilitated the AIF becoming such an effective
fighting force on the Western Front in 1918

1916

1 Sept 1918:
Mont St Quentin



Our understanding of the past is often clouded by myths. This is especially the case with the First World War. This lecture sets out to investigate (and dismantle) two of those myths. There is the myth, especially dominant in Britain, that the war fought on the Western Front was essentially a futile exercise, with minimal skill and much poor British generalship involved. And for Australians, there is the myth that our 'Diggers' had been ideally equipped to fight in that war by the rural lifestyle they experienced growing up in Australia – that was why they turned out to be such superb troops, needing very little by way of formal military training. Fighting was simply second nature to them – they were 'naturals'.

However, reality was very different. Rather than being a totally futile conflict devoid of military skill, it will be argued that the British Army learned from the set-backs it experienced on the Western Front, particularly during the 140-day Battle of the Somme, to emerge a finely-tuned, battle-winning force in their 1918 Hundred Days Offensive, forcing their formidable German opponents to seek an Armistice. And, being an integral part of the British Expeditionary Force, the Australian *Imperial Force* acquired the state-of-the-art battle-tactics the British were perfecting. It will be argued that, in significant part as a consequence of being drilled in those British tactics, the AIF developed into an extremely effective force.

Public Lecture: Speaker – Dr David Martin

Dr David Martin is a member of the Military History Society of NSW. He holds a PhD in history from the University of New England NSW. His interests in history are broad ranging. He has written on various aspects of Nazi Germany, and is the author of *Germany 1918-1945*, Oxford, 2001. For a lifetime, he has been interested in Australia during the period of the First World War. Originally from Armidale in northern NSW, he has conducted research into how that community was affected by the war. Dr Martin has contributed to the History Teachers' Association of NSW *Modern History Study Guide*, including on Germany 1918-1945 and profiles of Albert Speer, Leni Riefenstahl and Ho Chi Minh. He has written numerous articles on modern history and book reviews for various journals.

Public Lecture: Time and venue

10:30AM Saturday 6 May 2023 at The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, Hyde Park South, corner Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets, Sydney CBD. Admission is free of charge but a donation would be appreciated. For information call 0419 698 783 or email: president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au

Our Venue

