



# Army

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The soldiers' newspaper

Pte Tautau Peleseuma, of 2RAR, assaults a pit during a platoon attack at Pohakuloa Training Area as part of Exercise RimPac.  
Photo: Cpl Kyle Genner

**2RAR conducts live-fire exercise perched between two volcanoes**  
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# LAVA FIRE



**Providing a bridge in Thai cave rescues**

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**ADF-led course wraps up in Iraq**

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# Lessons from the Great War

**Sgt Dave Morley and Cpl Sebastian Beurich**

UNLOCKING the secrets of the Battles of Hamel and Amiens was the focus of the 10th of 11 *Firepower – Lessons from the Great War* history seminars hosted by the RAA Historical Company (RAAHC) at ADFA on July 26.

Firepower seminars have been held since May 2015, with each of them timed to coincide with anniversaries of significant Great War battles or events.

Australian War Memorial Summer Scholar Ellen Cresswell spoke on technological testing at the Battle of Hamel.

She said the significance of the Battle of Hamel lay in its role in effectively introducing new technology and tactics to the battlefield.

“Seen against the grand and decisive battles of WWI, the Battle of Hamel appears to be a relatively small event,” she said.

“However, even in its preliminary stages the proposal for Hamel introduced highly experimental methods. “The flawless execution of the operation resulted in Hamel becoming a model for future combined arms operations, on a larger scale.”

Australian War Memorial historian Meleah Hampton spoke about the artillery tactics used throughout the battle.

She said the guns were armed with more than 130,000 rounds for the operation.

“A slick operation like Hamel was only possible through the constant

The artillery provided the overarching firepower for the attack at Hamel.

– Meleah Hampton, Australian War Memorial historian

development of artillery since the war began,” she said.

“Artillery employment earlier in the war was seriously hampered by poor quality ammunition and little understanding of calibration and wear difficulties of the guns.

“This had been greatly improved by 1918.

“The artillery provided the overarching firepower for the attack at Hamel.

“It came before and after it and it dictated the timing and movement.”

Maj-Gen Paul Stevens (ret), who served as a lieutenant with 1 Fd Regt RAA in South Vietnam, addressed the gathering on some of the command and control challenges faced during the Amiens offensive.

Maj-Gen Stevens said the Australian Corps’ advance throughout the offensive was a mixture of set-



Presenters at the 10th *Firepower: Lessons from the Great War* seminar, seated, from left: Air-Cdre Mark Lax (ret), Maj-Gen Paul Stevens (ret), Meleah Hampton and Ellen Cresswell, take questions from the audience. Photo: Cpl Sebastian Beurich

piece battles and mobile warfare.

“At the set-pieces, artillery command was centralised as far as practical, with techniques focusing on creeping barrages,” he said.

“Command was decentralised in mobile warfare, with the gunners reliant on wire and visual signalling, which inhibited their ability to provide responsive support when the front was fluid.

“Providing responsive communications between guns, observers and infantry, as well as the change of mindset required for mobile warfare,

were the biggest difficulties faced by the gunners.”

Air-Cdre Mark Lax (ret) addressed the seminar on the role of the Australian Flying Corps and Royal Air Force in the battles of Hamel and Amiens.

He said the aircraft provided ammunition air drops and aerial spotting throughout the battle, as well as fighting off opposing aircraft.

“While the aces and air-to-air combat took the headlines, it was the hard slog of reconnaissance, aerial photography and artillery spotting which really assisted the fighting on

the ground,” he said.

“It was the enemy artillery barrages which did the most damage to allied lines, so finding and countering the guns was key to winning.”

The final seminar of the series will take place on November 8, again at ADFA, involving an expert panel who will debate the enduring firepower lessons from the Great War.

The seminars are podcast on the RAAHC website ([artilleryhistory.org/history\\_seminar\\_series/podcasts/podcasts.htm](http://artilleryhistory.org/history_seminar_series/podcasts/podcasts.htm)) and ADFA website for those unable to attend.



Stretcher bearers of 11 Inf Bde bringing back a wounded man, past RE8 Serial B5073, which was shot down near Hamel, during the battle on July 4. This aircraft was used for ammunition drops to the forward troops. Photos: AWM

18-pounder guns of the 6th Battery of Australian Field Artillery in action near Villers-Bretonneux, on the morning of the offensive.



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