# Neil Mackenzie FREEMAN

Born in April 1890 at Geelong, Neil Freeman attended Geelong College before undertaking his law studies at Trinity College, Melbourne University. He completed his articles with the Geelong firm Pincott & Co. and was admitted to practice in May 1912.

Freeman enlisted at Geelong in March 1915 and applied for commission as an officer. He left Melbourne in November 1915 with the commission of second lieutenant with the 24th Battalion.

After reaching Egypt, he transferred to the 58th Battalion and was made a full lieutenant in April 1916. He arrived in France at the end of June 1916, in time for the battle at Fromelles in July. He survived this battle and was made a captain in September 1916, and a major the following April. In May 1917, the 58th Battalion was involved in the fighting at Bullecourt. From July to September 1917, Freeman attended senior officer training at Aldershot in England. After this he was the 58th Battalion's liaison officer with the 5th Division Headquarters.

In February 1918, he was placed in command of the 31st Australian Battalion with the rank of lieutenant colonel. The 31st Battalion were involved in the August 1918 battles around Amiens and were part of the offensive actions around Mont St Quentin.

Freeman was awarded a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his actions with the 58th Battalion in 1917, at Polygon Wood, when defending his position "*his courage and devotion to duty were beyond all praise*". A fuller account of Freeman's role in the battle of Polygon Wood can be found in Bean's *Official History* Vol IV.

After the 31st Battalion was disbanded, in March 1919, Freeman returned home to Australia in May 1919. He began his own legal practice in Geelong, and continued to serve with the army, rising to the rank of brigadier with the 21st Battalion. He sought active service with the army during World War Two, but remained in Australia in charge of the army camps.

From 1910 to 1914, he had played with the Geelong Football club and, in later years, was a committee member at the club. He was also involved in local politics and the Returned Soldiers club. He died in 1961.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL                                                                E01425

Neil Freeman is third from right on horseback, photo taken in France in December 1917.