

## 2 Bernard Cyril Freyberg VC, GCMG, KCB, KBE, DSO\*\*\* (1889-1963) #3174 on the web family tree

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It is believed that in April 1914 Bernard Freyberg served as a Captain Volunteer with the Mexican Carrancistas during the Mexican Civil War. He deserted in late July on hearing of the impending war in Europe, and with a price on his head, he hitchhiked to get a steamer for New York. He eventually arrived in Liverpool on 24<sup>th</sup> August. He caught a train for London in order to enlist in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. (He was born in Richmond, Surrey but brought up in New Zealand). He was told that all officer places had been filled, and he was advised to try the newly formed Royal Naval Division. He approached Winston Churchill, and gained his encouragement to win a temporary commission as a Lieutenant RNVR on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1914. He was allocated to the Hood Battalion to command A Company. He was known as 'Khaki Jack' as he arrived in khaki whereas most officers were still wearing naval blue. His fellow officers in A Company were known as the 'Argonauts', and included Rupert Brooke.



*Lord Freyberg*

Following training in Kent, they embarked to Dunkirk on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1914, and then on to Antwerp. Whilst in the trenches at Antwerp, Freyberg was severely burnt on the hand on the electrified barbed wire system. He was hospitalised at Ostend before returning to Britain. In March 1915 the battalion was deployed to Turkish waters around Gallipoli. Following training at Port Said they prepared for the Gallipoli landings. A platoon from A Company was to land and light flares at intervals along the beach to fool the Turks into thinking a full scale landing was happening. Freyberg believed that it could be done with just one or two swimmers with less risk. Freyberg's request was turned down, but he made the swim alone and succeeded in his mission. For his actions he was awarded the DSO.



*His Medals.*

During the Second Battle of Krithnia on 8<sup>th</sup> May he was wounded in the abdomen and evacuated. He returned in mid-June and was appointed Temporary CO of the Hood Battalion. He was wounded again on 25<sup>th</sup> July and was evacuated to Egypt until August. He left the peninsular on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1916 to head for Marseilles and then England for ten weeks to recover from his wounds. He went to France to rejoin the Battalion on 1<sup>st</sup> May and transferred to the Royal West Surrey Regiment as a Captain and Temporary Lieutenant Colonel on 19<sup>th</sup> May, but remained to command Hood Battalion.

On 13<sup>th</sup> November 1916 at Beaucourt-sur-Ancre, France, after Freyberg's battalion had carried the initial attack through the enemy's front system of trenches, he rallied and re-formed his own much disorganised men and some others, and led them on a successful assault of the second objective, during which he suffered two wounds, but remained in command and held his ground throughout the day and the following night. When re-inforced the next morning he attacked and captured a strongly fortified village, taking 500 prisoners. Though wounded twice more, the second time severely, Freyberg refused to leave the line until he had issued final instructions.

He was evacuated to London where he recovered for three months, and was gazetted for the Victoria Cross. He returned to France in February 1917 and was appointed Temporary Brigadier-General and Commander 173<sup>rd</sup> Brigade from April to September 1917. He was wounded in five places by a shell-burst during an attack on St. Julien, Ypres on 19<sup>th</sup> September and reverted to Major on relinquishing command on 15<sup>th</sup> November.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1918 he received his VC from King George V at Buckingham Palace.