



## Private Michael BOURKE 2130 — 54th Btn, 2 to 5 Reinforcements

**Born:** 22 Sep 1876, Wagga Wagga, NSW

**Parents:** Patrick & Mary Bourke

**Occupation:** Labourer

**District Connection:** Woy Woy/Sydney/Cumnock

**Enlistment Date:** 7 Mar 1916, Cumnock.

**Enlistment Age:** 39yrs & 5mths.

**Embarkation:** 19 Aug 1916 - Sydney HMAT A42 *Boorara*

**Served:** England

**Fate:** RTA 8 Oct 1918

**Honour Boards:** Cumnock Memorial Gates;  
Harbord RSL Sub-Branch – Northern Beaches Soldiers.



Colour patch : 54 Infantry Battalion, AIF

### Biography:

Michael Bourke was the second of three sons born of Mary and Patrick Bourke. The other two sons were John Bourke, born 1875, and James Patrick (1878-1969).

*The Freeman's Journal* – 5 Dec 1912, p25, published the following Obituary of Patrick Bourke:

*"The death occurred in St. Ronan's Private Hospital, Manly, on November 20<sup>th</sup>, after a lingering illness lasting sixteen weeks, of Mr Patrick Bourke, of Mona Vale, through neuritis supervening upon an attack of influenza. Mr Bourke, who was a native of Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, and 65 years old, landed in Melbourne in the year 1866, at the age of 19. He afterwards went to Albury and Wagga, and at the latter place got married, and followed farming pursuits.*

*Eventually he went to Nevertire, where, with his eldest son, John, he took up the well-known property 'Summerfield,' spending fifteen years there, after which, his health breaking down, his medical adviser ordered him to the seaside. Mr Patrick Bourke disposed of the property 'Summerfield' to his eldest son John, and then settled at Mona Vale and went in for fruit growing, besides owning a butcher's shop at Narrabeen. After disposing of these two properties to his eldest son, John, he contemplated settling in Woy Woy, but illness overtook him, and he died fortified by the last rites of the Church, leaving a widow, three sons, and two grandchildren to mourn their loss..."*

Patrick Bourke married Mary Bourke (also her surname) at Wagga Wagga in 1874. In the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* – 9 Feb 1888, p4, Patrick is listed in the Wagga District Stock Returns as P Bourke, Arojoel, 705a 5h, 63c and in the same paper on 25 Feb 1890, p4 there is another entry for Bourke M, Bullenbong, 1800a, 14h, 13c, 1300s, 2p and on 21 Feb 1889, p4 Bourke Ptk, Arojoel, Bullenbong, 705a 6h; Bourke, Michael, Sandy Creek, 2400a, 12h, 12c, 1400s 2p.

Patrick Bourke may have moved to "Summerfield", Brewarrina, around 1890. P Bourke and son are listed in the 1902 and 1904 Sands Directory as living at Summerfield, Brewarrina; and in 1904 had 6 horses 1841 sheep. According to an item in the *Freemans Journal* – 17 Feb 1906, p16:

*"Mr P Bourke of 'Summerfield', Warren, has taken up a farm at Rock Lily, [Mona Vale] outside Manly..."*

Little is known about Michael Bourke due to his name being a common one, and not being able to verify from available record sources if it was the correct Michael Bourke. We could establish from a transcript of his marriage certificate that Michael, aged 36yrs, was married at Sydney on 4 Dec 1912 to his first cousin, Mary Bridget Bourke, aged 39yrs, who was the daughter of Bridget and John Bourke (Michael's aunt and uncle), orchardists of Kincumber, Central Coast NSW. Michael's occupation was listed as a grazier at Mona Vale. Just six months after their marriage, Mary Bridget Bourke died at Sydney, on 4 Jun 1913. Mary's father, John Bourke, died two weeks later, on 18 Jun 1913 at his home in Kincumber. They are buried in the Kincumber South Cemetery, Heritage Section, plot F8.

*The Catholic Press*, Sydney -12 Jun 1913, p30 reported on her death:

*“The death occurred at Lewisham Hospital on Wednesday morning last week of Mrs Michael Bourke, wife of Mr Michael Bourke of Woy, Woy... A couple of weeks ago, acting on the advice of her doctor, Mrs Bourke entered Lewisham Hospital suffering from severe cold. Complications set in, and an operation was deemed necessary, and was performed last week. It was unavailing, however, and she died two days later...”*

Michael Bourke was working as a labourer when he enlisted at Cumnock on 7 Mar 1916. He was medically examined by Dr Ivie Aird of Cumnock and was noted as being 39yrs and 5mths old, 5ft 8inches tall, with a dark complexion, blue eyes, black hair, and of the Roman Catholic religious denomination. He was a widower and gave his mother Mary Bourke of Mona Vale as his next of kin.

There are two records of Michael Bourke in local newspapers as being in the Cumnock district and these were *The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 11 Mar 1916, p12:  
*“Before Mr Paiser, JP, ... on Wednesday [8<sup>th</sup> March] Michael Bourke was fined 5s for being drunk.”*

*The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 18 Mar 1916, p9:

*“The Recruiting Sergeant is doing good work in persuading men to go and tell the Kaiser what they think of him. Recent recruits whom he has been responsible for are WA Derwood, Fred. Grimson, EA Fountain, JG Taylor, M Bourke, and AT Ely. AE King and N Watt also offered their services, but were rejected.”*

Pte Michael Bourke embarked at Sydney on 19 May 1916 on the *Boorara* and arrived at Plymouth, England on 13 Oct 1916. Pte Bourke marched to 14th Training Btn, Hurdcott, on 8 Nov 1916. He was hospitalised with Mumps on 7 Dec 1916 and marched into No 2 Command Depot, Weymouth, on 27 Feb 1917.

Pte Bourke was proclaimed unfit for service with medical debility and returned to Australia from Devonport on 4 May 1917 on board *HMAT Themistocles*. He was discharged at Sydney on 28 Jul 1917 and awarded the British War Medal.

Michael's life after he returned to Australia is unknown. His war dossier states that Michael Bourke died at 41 Belmore Lane, Surry Hills, on 23 Jun 1943. He was 67 years of age.

Thank you to Brian Williams, a descendant of James Patrick Bourke (1878-1969), Michael's brother, who assisted with information for this biography.

© **Dianne Strahan & Val McKenzie, May 2017.**



**Cumnock War Memorial Gates, Obley Street, Cumnock.**