



**Trooper William Joseph CAHILL**  
**3084 – 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Regiment, 23<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Machine Gun Squadron**

**Born:** 1881, Cumnock, NSW.

**Parents:** William Patrick & Bridget Cahill

**Occupation:** Grazier

**District Connection:** Molong, Cumnock.

**Enlistment Date:** 15 Mar 1916,

**Enlistment Age:** 35 yrs 3 mths

**Embarkation:** 3 Feb 1917, Sydney, *RMS Karmala*

**Served:** Egypt, Palestine

**Fate:** RTA 21 Jul 1917

**Honour Boards:** Cumnock War Memorial Gates; Molong WW1 honour board.



### **Biography:**

William Joseph Cahill was born in 1881, registered at Molong, NSW. He was a son of William Patrick and Bridget Cahill.

William Patrick Cahill immigrated from Tipperary, Ireland with his sister, Sarah, and arrived per the ship *Hornet* at Sydney, Australia on 25 January 1865. His stated age was 28 years. William married Bridget Durack at Young in 1870. They had eleven children, 3 sons and 8 daughters.

Bridget's parents, Margaret and Darby Durack, had immigrated from Ireland on the ship, *Duke of Roxborough*, in 1849. Their first child, Bridget, was born during the voyage, one of 18 children. Darby's eldest brother, Michael Durack, his wife Bridget and seven children arrived at Sydney in May 1853. Michael joined Darby to work at Kippilaw, near Goulburn, for James Chisholm. Unfortunately, Michael, aged 44yrs, was killed in an accident when a horse and cart ran over him in August 1853. Michael's eldest son, 18-year-old Patrick Durack was now the head of the family and responsible for his mother Bridget and seven siblings, another son having been born since arriving in Australia. (Patrick - known as Patsy - Durack was the grandfather of Mary Durack who wrote "Kings in Grass Castles," the history of the Durack family in Australia)

Patsy and his uncle Darby Durack obtained land on Dixon's Creek in the county of Argyle, near Goulburn in the 1855. Darby and his family moved to a property near Boorowa in 1867. Darby Durack died as the result of sunstroke in 1872 at Binalong, near Yass. He left a widow and family of thirteen children with very little to survive on after a period of drought. By 1878 Margaret Durack had moved to Molong and was the publican of the Courthouse Hotel, on Hill and Edward Street, Molong. Margaret Durack died at Sydney in 1905.

William Patrick and his wife Bridget (eldest child of Margaret Durack) Cahill had bought land at 'Burgoon,' Cumnock around the late 1870s. *The Australian Town & Country Journal* – 18 Aug 1877, p19, The Molong District, reported on a reporter's journey to Burgoon: "*I crossed the Burrawang Creek, and in a little more than a quarter of a mile I reached Tipperary Flat, the residence of Mr William Cahill. This is also a selection of 600 acres, a good stock-yard, a cattle pasture and a nice cottage... Mr Cahill is only in possession about twelve months...*" William Patrick Cahill took over as publican of the Courthouse Hotel in 1889 and later became the publican of the Royal Hotel in Molong in 1897.

Local newspaper reports showed that William Joseph Cahill enjoyed debating and lecturing. He was a member of the Cumnock P. A. & H. Association and the *Molong Argus* – 20 Sep 1907, p9, reported on "*An interesting lecture was delivered by Mr WJ Cahill upon 'Wool v Wheat,' at Cumnock on Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.*" The *Farmer and Settler, Sydney* – 3 Jul 1908, p11, published a long, illustrated article about "Flocks and Herds", by W.J. Cahill, 'Burgoon,' Cumnock.

As a member of the Farmers and Settlers Association, William Joseph Cahill wrote a letter to the Editor of *the Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 11 Sep 1915, p2, which commenced: “Sir, - I would like a little space in your columns to say a few words on what I call suicidal lack of interest taken by the farmers of Cumnock in matters that vitally concern them. On Wednesday, August 25, a meeting of farmers was called to hear an address from the recently appointed organiser of the F.S.A., and with the object of joining a branch of the F.S.A. at Cumnock. I left important work to be present, and to my surprise, I was the only farmer that turned up at the meeting...”

William Joseph Cahill enlisted in the AIF on 15 Mar 1916. His medical examination on 3 May 1916 at Menangle Park, stated that he was 35 years old, 6 feet 1½ inches tall, had hazel eyes, light brown hair, a fair complexion and of the Roman Catholic religious denomination.

His youngest brother, Bede Durack Cahill, aged 20 years, enlisted in the AIF at Sydney on 22 April 1916. Private Bede Cahill – 2386 served with the 54<sup>th</sup> Btn, 5<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements. He embarked at Sydney on 30 September 1916 on *HMAT A60 Aeneas*. On 15 May 1917, Pte Bede Cahill was wounded in action in France with gun shot wounds to the right thigh, knee and ankle during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Bullecourt. He was permanently disabled and returned to Australia on 13 Dec 1917. He spent many months recovering from his injuries and was discharged from the AIF on 30 May 1918. He married Sarah MacLean, a member of the nursing staff of the Military Hospital, Randwick, in 1923 and they had 4 children. He died on 9 Nov 1941 at Sydney, aged 46 years.

*The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 5 Aug 1916, p9, reported: Trooper W.J.Cahill, late of ‘Burgoon,’ Cumnock, is the victim of a run of bad luck. He had been encamped at Menangle for some length of time when a tent mate contracted diphtheria, and he and all the other occupants of the tent were quarantined. The authorities then mislaid the papers relating to them, and they had to be re-examined, and though Trooper Cahill successfully passed the doctor when he volunteered, this time he was turned down owing to varicose veins, and had to enter a military hospital for the purpose of having them removed. Then while awaiting the operation, he developed an aggravated form of mumps, from which he is still suffering.”

Trooper William Cahill eventually embarked at Sydney on the *Royal Mail Ship Kamala* on 3 Feb 1917 via South Africa to disembark at Port Suez on 11 Mar 1917. He was transferred straight to an Isolation Camp at Moascar, so most likely contracted an infectious disease during his voyage. He joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Training Regiment (LHTR) at Moascar on 26 March and then attended a School of Instruction at Zeitoun, near Cairo, from 3 – 18 Apr 1917. In May he was transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Machine Gun Squadron (MGS) and attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> LHTR at Shellal.

On 27 Aug 1917, Trooper Cahill was sent to a Rest Camp at Maraket while recovering from treatment of an abscess. He re-joined the 1<sup>st</sup> MGS at Kilo 9 on 17 Sep 1917. The 1<sup>st</sup> LHR took part in the Battle of Beersheba on 31 Oct 1917.

*The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 9 Feb 1918, p4, published a letter from Trooper Cahill written from Palestine on 6 Nov to his brother, Mr J Cahill, of Molong. Extracts from the very long letter:

“We have had a very strenuous time and have made an attack on Beersheba and are now in part of it. We (the Anzac Division) including the Zealanders worked round the right flank of the enemy by a series of night marches, and on the 31<sup>st</sup> October came on to the enemy about 7.30am. After putting up a big fight all day the enemy retreated just at dusk, and by 8 O’clock at night we were in full possession of the town...”

We stayed at Beersheba for two days, and on the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> we moved out to attack a position ten miles out. This proved to be a tougher fight than the Beersheba one; a terrible lot of men were lost and ‘Jacko’ got the best of the deal... The 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment were sent to attack this very formidable post and they had a terrible lot of casualties. Two of the 33 of our reinforcements were killed that day. Our section attached to the 1<sup>st</sup>, and we also had a lot of casualties. I was terrible lucky and had ‘close shaves’ to no end. Our guns got up to within 300 yards of their redoubt, and about midday their ammunition was spent, and I being No. 1 pack-leader had to take a load of ammunition across about half-a-mile of open country, right under the Turkish post on top of the ridge of hills. They were shooting at me all the way across, but I was going as fast as the horses could gallop, and got up and back safely...

Every officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> was either killed or wounded, and there were dead men lying all over the place. We had three casualties in our little section...

*"It is now several days later. Ever since we attacked Beersheba we have been constantly on the move and have been 'boxing on' nearly all the time. We are now up to 20 miles or so behind Gaza and have been having great victories... Both men and horses are just about done up. Don't think I ever so tired in my life as I was last night and we had nothing to eat for two days and have not been able to make a drop of tea for nearly a week.*

*Have had several more 'close squeaks' since writing the first portion of this letter... Had a horse standing alongside of me killed by a shell the other day when we were trying to water our horses at a Turkish watering place. One man and two horses just behind me were wounded. Another day while riding along a bullet from a sniper passed my face, hitting the bank on the other side of me. another day, when we were supposed to be under cover, a bullet went through the man's leg next to me and into the horse I was holding. You get quite used to these 'mere details' as they are called...*

On 16 Nov 1917 Trooper Cahill wrote: "We are constantly on the move and have been capturing the enemy in thousands. We are now up past Jerusalem and only about seven miles from Jaffa.... We are badly in need of reinforcements now, out of 33 men who started in our section only 21 remain; four of them wounded and the rest of them had to go away on account of sickness. In regard to horses, matters are about the same..."

From 27 Nov 1917 – 20 Dec 1917 Trooper Cahill was hospitalised with diarrhoea and shortly after had leave at a Rest Camp in Port Said. He then spent from 12 Jan – 23 Feb 1918 at the School of Instruction, where he was classed as a 1st class gunner. He returned to the 1<sup>st</sup> MGS on 16 Mar 1918.

In February, the British front had advanced eastwards into the Jordan valley and to the western shore of the Dead Sea. The Anzac Mounted Division entered Jericho on the 21st. On 22 March, a bridge was built at Hijla and after twenty-four hours of fighting the main crossing at Ghoraniye was seized and bridged. Es Salt was taken on the evening of the 25th by the 3rd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade). The raid to Amman began on 27 Mar – 2 April but was unsuccessful due to the arrival of more Turkish and German troops and the British forces was ordered to withdraw to the Jordan Valley.

The summer for the Anzac Mounted Division was spent in the Jordan Valley. In September the Division captured Amman and advanced to Damascus. Damascus was captured on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1918. The Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice of Mudros on 30 Oct 1918, bringing the war to an end.

In six weeks between 19 Sep – 30 Oct, the Australian Light Horse was part of an army that captured 360 guns and 75,000 prisoners and moved the front forward 560 km. The only troops to fight in every major action from Romani to Damascus were three Australian Light Horse Brigades: the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade.

Trooper Cahill was admitted to hospital with conjunctivitis on 1 Aug 1918 and then later in August with Influenza before being sent to a Rest Camp at Port Said. He spent from 26 Sep – 5 Oct at the 1<sup>st</sup> AMG Training Squadron and re-joined his company in the field on 11 Oct 1918. He had leave in Cairo in Feb 1919 and on

16 May 1919 he embarked at Kantara on the Hospital Transport *Orari* and disembarked at Sydney on 4 Jul 1919.



*The Molong Argus* – 21 Nov 1919, p4, reported on a Welcome Home at Cumnock for 13 returned soldiers at Leary's Hall. The Shire President, Mr George Bowhay, thanked the soldiers for serving in the AIF for

their country, and said that he was pleased to see them back safe and sound. On behalf of the Cumnock residents he presented inscribed gold medals to Trps W Cahill, RG Bellamy, A Fox; Cpls WH Young, B Hart; L/Cpls C Weston, FT Meurant; Ptes L Lentz, Starr; Drivers TH Holman and CV Hodges.

William Joseph Cahill returned to farming at 'Burgoon,' Cumnock and to being involved with the Farmers and Settlers Association and the Cumnock P. A. & H. Association. In May 1924, he sailed for England with Mr JA Miller, of 'Loombah,' to visit the Empire Exhibition. While he was in England, his father William Patrick Cahill, died aged 90 years, at his home at Lavender Bay, Sydney, on 8 Sep 1924. His mother Bridget Cahill died in January 1935 aged 85 years at Lavender Bay.

In June 1927, William Joseph Cahill, aged 46yrs, married Pansy Mary Breen, daughter of Mr & Mrs TJ Breen, at Coogee, Sydney. They left by the *RMS Aorangi 11* for America for their honeymoon. The couple made their home at Manly but still retained the property 'Burgoon,' at Cumnock coming back periodically to manage it. They had two children, Tom and Patricia. Pansy Cahill died on 11 Feb 1940 at Manly, Sydney.

'Burgoon' was sold by William J Cahill around the end of 1945 to Frances and Richard Wootton, from Condobolin and Sydney. They renamed the property 'Wansey' after Wansey Road in Randwick where they lived.

William Joseph Cahill died, aged 65 years, at Sydney on 7 Apr 1946. He was buried beside his wife Pansy at the Manly cemetery.

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

**Below: Honour board at the Molong RSL Club, Riddell Street, Molong.**

