

Miles was born in Young, NSW, the son of Miles Blake and Rosina Burns. Blake Snr was a retired police inspector and was credited with, as a sergeant, shooting the bushranger Thurston (William White) and capturing his partner in crime, Thomas Angel, in the 1880's.

Miles joined D Company, AN&MEF on 11th August 1914, stating that he was a Law Student, single, and gave his father, then living at John St, Lidcombe, as his next of kin. He was promoted Colour Sergeant on 17th August and reverted to private at own request on 22nd September 1914. He was apparently ill at the time, probably with malaria and was discharged shortly afterwards on 12th October 1914 as medically unfit.

On 8th April 1915 Miles enlisted in the AIF as part of the 1st Reinforcements of the 18th battalion. He was promoted sergeant before departing Sydney aboard the THEMISTOCLES on 12th May 1915. He landed at Gallipoli on 5th August and remained there until the battalion was withdrawn in December.



Miles Blake Burns (identified as c1917, this would have been when he was in the South Irish Horse)

On 31st July 1916 at Pozieres he received a gunshot wound to the shoulder and was repatriated to the UK where on 24th November 1916 he went AWOL. It was not until he gave himself up in December 1918 that the story of his period of AWOL was explained. Miles faced a court martial in Feb 1919 and although found guilty of AWOL only suffered a reduction in rank and forfeiture of pay.

His story was that whilst convalescing from his wound he met a young lady and they lived together for three days. He had returned to hospital and on a subsequent visit to his lady friend discovered that someone had been blackmailing her. He identified the person and during an altercation shot the man in the neck. Fearing he had killed him, he ran off to Dublin where after a further short term in St George's Hospital there, he enlisted in the South Irish Horse on 21st July 1917, under the name Miles Blake O'Byrne (service number 3177). On his enlistment he stated he was a journalist and had no prior military service. He served in Ireland and France and was appointed a Lance Corporal. It was when they had invited him to go to Officer School that he confessed to who he really was. About the same time, he had received a letter from his lady friend telling him that there was no one looking for him as the man had not died.

It was because he had served on that he was treated fairly lightly by the Court Martial, and it would appear that no civil action was taken in respect of the shooting.

Miles left the UK aboard the WARICKSHIRE on 5th April 1919 and was discharged on 15th July 1919.

His older Brother Gerald Joseph served in the 2nd Battalion, regimental number 821, joining on 19th Aug 1914 and returned to Australia on 15th August 1915 after being wounded on Gallipoli which resulted in him having a paralysed right arm.

In 1921 he married Emily Cawley in Sydney.



Miles and Emily in 1921

In 1939, Emily died and in 1940 Miles married Agnes May Fields in Lismore, NSW.

During World War11, Miles and Emily's son, Miles Blake Vincent Burns enlisted and served as a gunner in the 2/8th Field Regiment from 2nd August 1944 till 18th Jan 1946, service number NX178636. He was just 19 at the time of his enlistment.

Miles died on 17th May 1967