

# PORTRAIT OF A FIRST WORLD WAR HERO

Commander Rowland Bourke V.C., D.S.O. 28 November 1885 – 29 August 1958



Commander Bourke's Medals (l to r):

- Victoria Cross
- Distinguished Service Order
- British War Medal
- Allied Victory Medal with Mentioned in Despatches emblem
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- War Medal
- 1937 Coronation Medal
- 1953 Coronation Medal
- Chevalier, Legion of Honour (France).

His medals are held at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.



Bourke commanded a Motor Launch, much like this one, to bravely rescue 41 men in two different battles near Belgium in April and May 1918.



his rescue efforts during two separate battles off the coast of Belgium, while serving as Lieutenant in Command of Motor Launch 276.

Commander Bourke, by most accounts a reserved and introverted man, is one of only four Canadian naval Victoria Cross recipients. According to Sir Roger Keyes, he was the "bravest of all holders of the Victoria Cross."



Commander Bourke at his CFB Esquimalt office in 1941. He served as Commander of HMCS Givenchy and HMCS Burrard in the 1940s.

At the outbreak of World War I, Rowland Richard Louis Bourke volunteered to enlist in the Canadian military. He was rejected by all three arms of service because of poor eyesight. Undeterred, Bourke went to England at his own expense, where he successfully joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

Commander Bourke was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Service Order for



With his wife Rosalind, Commander Bourke lived at 1253 Lyall Street in Esquimalt from 1932 until his death in 1958.



Bourke died in August 1958 and is buried at Royal Oak Burial Park in Saanich. Thanks to volunteer efforts, his gravesite is now marked with a Commonwealth War Grave Commission marker. In his honour, Bourke Rock southwest of Bella Bella on the BC Coast, and Mount Bourke near Hot Springs Cove north of Tofino are named for him.



Early days in Nelson B.C. circa 1905: Rowland Bourke, far right, known as Rowley to his family, with cousins Cecil (centre) and Crozier (left). Cecil was killed in a farm mishap near Nelson that also resulted in Rowland losing sight in one eye.