

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



James J. Bourke

by **Michael O'Dwyer**

James J. Bourke was born on 15 February 1884 at Spittal Street, Tipperary town. He was a son of Daniel Bourke, a baker, and Kate Bourke (née Ryan). When 'Jim' Bourke was aged three the family moved to Cappawhite. At the time of the 1901 census they were still living at Cappawhite but the 1911 census shows they had then moved to Ardfinnan. Like his father, Jim was a baker by trade and lived for a number of years in Dromcollogher, County Limerick. He represented Ireland in Rome at the Papal sports which formed part of the celebrations held to mark the golden jubilee of the ordination of Pope Pius X. Held on the Vatican grounds, Jim Bourke won the high jump with 6 ft 3 in.¹ (1.90 m), an Italian all-comers record. On his return to Ireland, it was reported in the *Cork Examiner* on 2 October 1908, 'In a short interview, Mr. Bourke said he would have done better in the high jump but he had to discard his ordinary spiked shoes and jump in rubber-soled shoes owing to the nature of the surface. He appears fit and well, and was very pleased with his trip. The promoters did not evidently calculate on any jump being over 6ft. 2ins., for that was the height of the stands, and boards had to be attached to it to make the cross-bar high enough.' He also came second in the 150 yd hurdles.¹ The previous month, on 30 August 1908, he recorded 6 ft 4 in. (1.93 m) to win the high jump at the Newcastle West sports. In the national championships he won the 120 yd hurdles in 1905 (defeating Tom Kiely), 1908 and 1909. He was the high jump champion in 1908 and tied with Limerick-native Tim Leahy in 1909. Jim Bourke died in St Joseph's Hospital, Clonmel on 12 June 1930 from a head injury after falling off his bicycle near Newcastle a few days earlier. He was aged forty-six, and is interred in Lady's Abbey Cemetery, Ardfinnan.

¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, 30 September 1908, page 5

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

Gaelic Athletic Association Championships

1905	120 yd Hurdles	16.8		
1908	120 yd Hurdles	16.8		
1908	High Jump	5 ft 10 in.	(1.78 m)	
1909	120 yd Hurdles	16.8		
1909	High Jump	6 ft 1 in.	(1.85 m)	TIE