FR JOHN HENEGHAN

B/W photograph (reproduction).
Dated: c. 1910
BCDHC archive collection.

Born in County Sligo in north-western Ireland, Fr John Heneghan was only 24 years old when he arrived at Port Fairy in December 1907. Appointed curate to the late Fr James O'Regan in March 1908, he held this position for over two years. He was very popular amongst the children and young people due to his focus on sport. On April 22, 1910 he went as curate to Fr O'Sullivan Goidanich at Charlton, afterwards going to St Arnaud, Casterton, and then to Ballarat. In 1915, Fr Heneghan applied for (and was denied) permission to become a Chaplain with the A.I.F. Determined to assist in the war, he joined the ranks of the Australian Medical Corps under the name of Heneghan and became a stretcher-bearer. Although not officially recognised as a Chaplain, he possessed those faculties under "Canon Law" which allowed him to practice his ministry to the dying. Furthermore, with the special faculties granted by Pope Benedict XV to soldier priest, he was able to celebrate Mass and administer Sacraments.

Private Heneghan assisted with the 14th Field Ambulance, 5th Division, in France on January 12, 1917. He would, be seriously injured in his left thigh by a bullet and sent to 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station to recover. He was then, evacuated to 32nd Stationary Hospital in London. Upon recovery, he re-entered and during action received a final bullet to the head in France on March 22, 1918. His body was buried in the Military cemetery Dranoutre (Dranouter) in Belgium. He was 34.

For nearly 75 years his family in Ireland did not know where he had been buried but in 1992 through the support of Fr Nolan and Sr Teresina Connolly from the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, confirmation of his burial site was given to his family by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.