

FR WILLIAM (BILL) NEISON CLOSE



B/W photograph (reproduction).

Dated: c. 1915 & 1950s

CDHC archive collection

Born in County Limerick, Ireland on October 20, 1878, Fr Close trained for the priesthood at the Society of Jesus College, Mungret. He entered All Hallows Missionary College in Dublin in 1895. On his ordination in June 1902, he left for Ballarat and worked at St. Patrick's Cathedral where he remained for many years.

He enlisted in the A.I.F. on July 1, 1915 being ranked as Chaplain (4th Class) entering the Chaplain's Corps. He embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on board HMAT A64 *Demosthenes* on July 16, 1915 and saw service in many theatres of operation. Fr Close wrote of his experiences to his close friend Mr Chris Carroll of Ballarat. This letter was later published in the *Advocate* newspaper on Saturday, October 14, 1916:

You see that I am once more in new quarters, this time close up to the line. You will be pleased to learn that three of your letters, with the Shamrock postcard, all arrived together recently. Thanks for all the news you sent me. The recent defeat of the Austrians by Russia and Italy may put her out of the ring, and if this should happen the end would come within a year from now. I am in good health. The Australian boys have again distinguished themselves in arms. With bomb and bayonet they dug the Huns out of Pozieres — the strongest fort held by them on the Somme, and as I write the Light Horse are knocking poor Abdul about on the sands of the desert. The Australians hold the pride of place amongst the British troops in France. I am always glad to receive Ballarat news and pleased to hear that St. Alipius' choir has made such splendid progress during my absence, and their rendering of Gounod's 'Messe Solennello' on Easter Sunday was something for the members to be proud of.

He returned to Australia on January 31, 1918 and in August 1919 returned to the diocese. Fr Close worked at Ararat and later became Parish Priest at Stawell. He died on December 17, 1949. He was 71. Fr Close is commemorated in the Ballarat Avenue of Honour tree No. 3280.