

MONS EDWARD O'SULLIVAN GOIDANICH



B/W and sepia photographs (reproduction).
Various date: c. 1910-1915
BDHC archive collection.

Mons O'Sullivan Goidanich was born and educated in Ireland. He arrived in Ballarat in July 1891. He was appointed curate to Fr M Costello of the Charlton mission and often travelled between Charlton, Swan Hill and Mildura. Approximately three weeks after his forty-eighth birthday, Mons O'Sullivan Goidanich enlisted as a Chaplain in the A.I.R. on April 17, 1915. He left for overseas with the 24th Infantry Battalion on board the *Afric* only a month later on May 22. Mons O'Sullivan Goidanich did not speak of the time he spent in the battlefields however his work did not go unnoticed.

Author Tom Johnstone emphasized his achievements in his book *The Cross of Anzac: Australian Catholic Service Chaplains* (p. 52):
(He) had a narrow escape from death when he celebrated Mass in White's Gully one Sunday morning. Shortly after men had dispersed and the Chaplain had packed and moved his portable altar to his dug-out, a large shell, possibly from a notorious gun known as Beachy Bill landed in the gully. The men of the 24th Battalion regarded their escape as little short of miraculous.

Johnstone further testifies in his book before entering action at Pozzières (p. 52):

Fr. E. Goidanich in the 6th Brigade and Fr Francis Clune of the 5th Brigade were almost totally engage in hearing confessions and giving Holy Communion. They affirmed that practically every Catholic in the two brigades received the sacraments before going into the line. Fr. Goidanich considered it was the best day's work he had ever done.

Mons O'Sullivan Goidanich also worked closely with other religious men of faith to support the men on the front line with deep friendship and respect being developed between them as they discussed the difference between their theology. Michael McKernan refers to this in his 1975 thesis titled *The Australia Churches: in the Great War Attitudes and activities of the Major Churches* (p. 201). In it, he highlights the observations made by Captain William Ambrose Cull towards the friendship between Methodist Chaplain Albert Percy Bladen and Fr. O'Sullivan Goidanich. Both Chaplains had worked in Ballarat, Natimuk and Ararat and therefore possibly knew each prior to enlisting:

...men of different faiths but exactly the same immortal type - helpful in difficulties, comforting in sorrow, perennially cheerful in periods of peace. They jibed at, joked with and thoroughly understood each other...in their example, their character, their splendid attitude in all circumstances, hundreds gained a new conception of religion.

Wounded in Gallipoli, Fr O'Sullivan Goidanich was awarded the Military Cross *for devotion to duty in France* on January 1, 1917.