

ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

LOCAL WOMEN

MARY MCGINNIS

Sister Mary Agnes McGinnis, known as Molly was born in January 1880 near Ballykelly. She was the fifth child of Patrick and Roseanna McGinnis. After leaving school, Molly trained at the City of Dublin Nursing Institute for three years. When war broke out, Molly was a St John's Ambulance Nurse, she enlisted on the 18th March 1915 and served in the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) Hospital at Horncastle until June 1915. From there she travelled to Newton Abbot VAD Hospital in Devon until January 1916, before being posted with the rank of Sister in February of that year to St Johns Ambulance Brigade Hospital at Etaples, France. During the month of May 1918, the hospital at Etaples and surrounding area suffered sustained bomb raids. On the night of 31st May 1918, the hospital was hit and many were killed and injured. Sister McGinnis was awarded the Military Medal, the highest civilian honour available, for her bravery under fire and her conduct to rescue and safeguard her fellow nurses and patients. During World War One, of the 114,000 Military Medals awarded, only 147 were awarded to women.



Portrait photograph of Molly McGinnis in uniform wearing her Military Medal.
Courtesy of the Henderson family.