

SISTER LILY McNICHOLAS, O.B.E.

OUR IRISH HERITAGE

A PEOPLES' HISTORY OF IRELAND

Sister Lily was born on 16th October 1909 in Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, to Bridget and Thomas McNicholas.

One of ten children, Lily emigrated during the 1930's to study nursing in England. She enlisted in the war effort as a reserve within Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

Following a harrowing experience at sea, she continued with her nursing career with postings to London, Bombay and Egypt.



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Sister Lily's Lifejacket



O.B.E. "in recognition of gallant conduct in carrying out hazardous work in a very brave manner" The London Gazette

Sister Lily was on board the MV Amsterdam, a hospital ship returning to Great Britain from Juno Beach, when the ship was torpedoed off the Normandy Coast on 7th August 1944. Along with her colleagues, she assisted the wounded to lifeboats and gave up a place in a water ambulance to escort her patients to the deck from her ward.

After escaping the capsized ship, and despite not being able to swim, she saved many wounded. Among the 106 souls lost that day, was her best friend. Sister McNicholas chose not to attend her Investiture at Buckingham Palace travelling instead to see the parents of her friend in Scotland.

Sister McNicholas died in Chicago in 1998. The McNicholas family kindly donated several of Lily's belongings including her O.B.E. and life jacket to the Kiltimagh Museum, where they can be seen today.



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