

<b>Name</b>	<b>JACOB (Jake) IRWIN</b>
<b>Birth</b>	1892 Wylam
<b>Enlistment/ Occupation</b>	Enlisted Wylam / Miner
<b>Death, date, location</b>	03/ 10/ 1916 Killed in action France & Flanders First entered France 20/04/1915(Medal Rolls)
<b>Age</b>	24
<b>Photograph Hexham Courant 18/11/1916</b>	
<b>Unit, rank, service no:</b>	23963 L/Corporal 149 Coy Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) Formerly 1751, Northumberland Fusiliers (TF)
<b>Family</b>	John (Jacob) Irwin was born in Wylam in 1892 second son of John William Irwin of Hexham and his wife Mary (nee Elliott) from Bedlington. The couple had married in 1888 and lived in Foundry Yard, Wylam at the time of the 1891 Census. Shortly afterwards the houses in Foundry Yard and adjoining terraces were demolished and by the 1901 census when three more children William 6, Nancy 3, and May 1 had joined the family they were living in a new terrace house in No:6 West View (the houses are still standing) behind the Mill. The family were still living in West View at the time of the 1911 census with father and the three elder sons Robert 21, Jacob 19 and William 16 all

working underground in the collieries. Father was a hewer, Jacob a putter and Robert a driver. Four younger children John 8, Jenny 5, Stanley 2, and Septimus 1 had been born since 1901 making a total of 9 children alive in 1911 and living at home.

Jake was a former scholar of Wylam school probably starting school aged 5 in 1897 and leaving school aged 13 in 1910. The school log book maintained by Mr. Ralph Brady the headmaster makes two references to Jake in 1916 when he visited Mr. Brady and the school while on leave from the front. Then there is third entry when Mr. Brady receives notification of the losses in the Somme battles.

**School Log Book entry:-**

*12/04/ 1916 Lance Corporal Jacob Irwin who is at present on furlough after nearly 12 months fighting in France and Belgium paid us a visit, he was heartily greeted by the scholars.*

*19/04/1916 Pte J.F. Brown and Lance Corporal Jacob Irwin, both old scholars called at the school prior to their return to the Front where they have been for the last 12 months. They leave for France tonight.*

*23/10/1916 received information of death of Jacob Irwin on 15/09 killed in action, of Pte Joseph McCarthy killed in action on same date and Pte. Joseph F. Appleby (better known as May) who died of wounds three days after the action on 15th September. These old scholars who have made the great sacrifice for their King and Country were all in 4th Northumberland Fusiliers.*

*(Not all of the detail information in this last entry is entirely correct, but that is understandable given the often delayed and sometimes confused state of the notification process.)*

Jake and his family are referred to in the report of a Memorial Service held on 05/11/1916 in St.Oswin's church Wylam which is reported in the Hexham Courant 11/11/1916. The service was held to commemorate **Fred Hunter, Joe Appleby, Jacob**

	<p><b>Irwin, Alexander White, Jack Winder, John William Young and Joseph McCarthy</b> all casualties of the Somme battles. <b>Frank McKenna</b> was also a casualty of these Somme battles as was <b>John Lishman Hart</b> although not mentioned in the report of this church service. The report refers to Jake as son of Mr. &amp; Mrs J. Irwin, West View. Jake himself is reported as being a very popular member of the community. Noted for his cheery nature and help with charitable work. He had been a member of the Church Lads Brigade, Wylam Football Club and Clara Vale Cricket Club. He had been fearless under fire when first posted to France in 1915. He had ‘captured’ a German piano and had been photographed playing it in a trench. When on leave in Wylam he had referred to the fearless conduct of Captain Robb who led the men with a pipe in his mouth and walking stick in his hand. When his leave was over many people went to Central Station to see him depart.</p> <p>The available records show that Jake’s unit were involved in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette in which the other Wylam casualties had been engaged. However, Jake was killed 11 days after that particular battle finished.</p> <p>The note below explains how Jake and others were transferred into the Machine Gun Corps and the circumstances of his death in action.</p>
<p><b>Source</b> <b>Graham</b> <b>Sacker</b> <b>MGC</b> <b>Research</b> <b>Data Base</b></p>	<p>The transfer to the MGC took place on 7/9/1916 when 56 men of the 4th,5th,6th &amp; 7th Bns NF were all compulsorily transferred to the MGC. This was part of the establishment of the MGC as an independent organisation.</p> <p>On 3/10/1916, No 149 MG Coy (of 149 Bde, 50th Div) was taking part in the overall action dubbed the Battle of the Transloy Ridges, Somme sector. 149 Coy was in Mametz Wood, south-west corner, and on the day in question was being relieved in the front line. The Germans were always on the lookout for such activity since they knew that more soldiers would be exposed to danger, and there would be around double the normal number crammed into the same area.</p>

	<p>Artillery fire was usually directed onto the scene, and inevitably there were casualties.</p> <p>149 Coy suffered 5 killed - one officer, 2/Lt John G Wood, and four other ranks 8633 Sidney Reeves, 23957 George Whitehead, 24042 John White and 23963 Jacob Irwin. The four ORs have no known grave, and 2/Lt Wood's grave was later lost within Warlencourt British Cemetery and he has a commemoration on a Special Memorial there.</p>
<p><b>War Diary</b> <b>149 Coy</b> <b>Machine</b> <b>Gun Corps</b></p>	<p>The War Diary for this formation does exist in the National Records Archive WO95/2831.</p> <p>Formed in <a href="#">50th (Northumberland) Division</a>, 6 February 1916. Moved into No 50 Bn, MGC 1 March 1918.</p> <p>The 149th Machine Gun Company was formed in 149th (Northumbrian) Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division on the 6th of February 1916. They fought on the Somme at The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval and The Battle of the Transloy Ridges. In 1917 they were in action at Arras during The First Battle of the Scarpe, The Capture of Wancourt Ridge and The Second Battle of the Scarpe before moving north for the Third Battle of Ypres. They joined with the other machine gun companies of the Division to form 50th Machine Gun Battalion on the 1st of March 1918. - See more at: <a href="http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/machineguncorps149.php#sthash.kDxESBJI.dpuf">http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/machineguncorps149.php#sthash.kDxESBJI.dpuf</a></p>
<p><b>Memorials</b></p>	<p>Pier and Face 5 C and 12 C. THIEPVAL MEMORIAL</p> <p>Also commemorated in:- School War Memorial Plaque, Falcon Centre, Wylam War memorial Plaque St.Oswin's church, Wylam War Memorial Monument, Village Green, Wylam</p>
<p><b>Comments</b></p>	
<p><b>Sources</b></p>	<p>1891/1901/1911 Census UK Soldiers killed in Great War 1914-1919</p>

	Medal Rolls Hexham Courant 11/11/1916, 18/11/1916 (photo) Wylam School Log Book, The Library, Falcon Centre. 12/03/1916, 19/04/1916, 23/10/1916 MGC Research Data Base
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