

Name	WILLIAM FRANCIS (FRANK) McKENNA
Birth	1897
Enlistment/Occupation	Enlisted Walker on Tyne / Driver underground in pit.
Death, date, location	15/09/1916 Killed in action France & Flanders
Age	19
Unit, rank, service no:	6068 Private Northumberland Fusiliers 1/7th Battalion (Territorials) Medal Rolls 1/5 North'd Fus, 1/7North'd Fus 5/3748, 7/6068
Family	<p>Frank McKenna first appears in the 1901 census as a 4 year old living with his grandmother, Catherine Sadler, a fifty year old widow, born in Ireland and employed as an outdoor farm worker. They were living in a cottage (probably a timber frame building) at Wylam Rift, with two coal miners as lodgers/boarders.</p> <p>Frank was still in Wylam in 1911 and completed the census as the only person occupying the dwelling where he was living which he described as Wylam Hills Wood cottages. This was probably not the same cottage that he and his grandmother were occupying in 1901, but a similar one nearby. Frank's occupation is given as Driver underground in pit. Incidentally, he appears to have been the person completing the 1911 census form and included his grandmother's details (i.e. Catherine Sadler now 74) on the form only to then delete them. We believe grandmother Sadler had moved elsewhere to live in the village and is listed as a visitor staying at the Fox & Hounds Inn in the 1911 census with innkeepers Henry & Martha Wilkinson. There is no sign of any wider McKenna family in Wylam, but the census does show a number of McKenna families living in the Walker</p>

	<p>area of Newcastle which is where Frank enlisted.</p>
<p>War Diary 7th Bn Northumberland Fusiliers</p>	<p><u>Battle of Flers–Courcellette 1916</u></p> <p>The action in which Frank McKenna probably lost his life along with a number of other Wylam soldiers became known as the Battle of Flers-Courcellette 15th-22nd September 1916 and was part of the Somme offensive which had commenced 1st July 1916.</p> <p>The following extract from the 7th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers War Diary may give some impression of the fighting that day. The Diary is available on the web.</p> <p>5.00 am 10th September <i>The battalion marched to QUADRANGLE TRENCH IN x.22.b and X 22.d (WEST OF MAMETZ WOOD) arriving there at 9.30am.</i></p> <p>11th-13th September <i>The Battalion remained in QUADRANGLE TRENCH finding strong working parties each night for work in the forward Area.</i></p> <p>9.00am 14th September QUADRANGLE TRENCH <i>Orders were received for the Battalion to take part in an attack on the following day, and the day was spent in issuing ammunition, bombs etc., and making all other preparations. The operation orders and sketch attached.</i></p> <p>9.00pm 14th September, S.3.a. (Sheet 57. D.S.E.) <i>The Battalion moved forward to assembly trenches which had been dug in front of CLARK'S TRENCH in S.3.A (Sheet 57.D.S.E.). The enemy was directing a certain amount of shell fire about these assembly trenches but we only had one man wounded during the night.</i></p>

6.10am 15th September

Two of our 'Tanks' were seen coming up from behind and went forward over our assembly trenches which they crossed at 6.18am. The enemy saw them and at once sent up a number of red rockets which burst into two stars (evidently an S.O.S. signal).

These tanks alarmed the enemy before our infantry attack was timed to commence, but the enemy's artillery was slow to respond to the rocket signals, and our men got away before heavy fire was opened on them. It was reported that when the tanks first appeared a number of the enemy left their trenches and ran to the rear.

6.20am 15th September

Our first two lines got away well to time and advanced in splendid order under our barrage. They rushed the first objective with few casualties and found themselves in touch the 4th East Yorks on their left and the 4th Northumberland Fusiliers on their right. Consolidation of this position at once commenced. A large number of German dead and wounded were found in this trench but very few unwounded prisoners were taken.

*At 6.25am 'B' Company of 6th Northumberland Fusiliers (who were in support) moved up to **CLARKE'S TRENCH** and came under orders of O.C. 7th Northumberland Fusiliers. No messages were received from our O.C. companies until 7.40am, when a telephone message was sent from 149th Infantry Brigade saying that they had received a message from O.C. 'C' company to the effect that he was in the first objective. At 8.00am a message was received from 'A' company saying they had gained their first objective. These messages arrived too late to be of any value as the orderlies lost their way.*

However, it could be seen from Battalion Headquarters that the first objective had been gained

7.18am 15th September 1916

'B' Company 6th North'd Fusiliers moved forward to 1st objective and were replaced by another company of the 6th North'd Fusiliers from the rear.

	<p><i>At the same time, four lines of our Battalion advanced towards the second objective, and almost immediately a certain amount of confusion arose. The attack on HIGH WOOD on our right had failed and from their commanding position in the NORTH of this wood, the enemy directed a very heavy machine gun fire on the 4th North'd Fusiliers, and on our right flank. This to a certain extent broke up our orderly lines and our right lost touch with the 4th North'd Fusiliers.</i></p> <p><i>The troop were advancing on compass bearings as our second and third objectives were in a valley and nothing beyond the first objective could be seen in our own assembly trenches. It was impossible, therefore, to give distant objectives to march on. Before reaching the second objective our lines had to halt as our barrage was holding them up.</i></p> <p><i>Three captains who were present at this time state that our artillery did not work to programme and were not lifting fast enough. Several attempts were made to get forward but we lost so heavily from our own barrage that the remainder of the Battalion were forced to wait until it lifted.</i></p> <p><i>We should have reached our second objective at 7.25am but it was 8.35am before we could move forward. All officers are confident that it was our own barrage that held us up, but it is possible that they were mistaken and that the enemy had laid down a heavy barrage on this line.</i></p> <p>Casualties for the 15th-16th September:- Officers 3 killed & 7 wounded Other ranks 40 killed, 219 wounded & 74 missing</p> <p>Frank McKenna who was killed on 15th September was most likely one of these casualties</p>
<p>Memorials</p>	<p>Pier and Face 10 B 11 B and 12 B. THIEPVAL MEMORIAL</p> <p>Also commemorated in:- School War Memorial Plaque, Falcon Centre Wylam War memorial Plaque St.Oswin's church, Wylam</p>

	War Memorial Monument, Village Green, Wylam
Comments	<p>The Medal Rolls record that Frank was in the 1/5th Battalion and then moved to the 1/7th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. It would seem a lot of the Wylam men joined the 1/4th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers in Hexham.</p> <p>Interestingly, Frank seems to have a link with the Walker district of Newcastle and the 1/5th Battalion NF were raised in that area of Newcastle. Copied below are some details of each of the 1/4 Bn, 1/5 Bn and the 1/7 Bn of the Northumberland Fusiliers.</p> <p>1/4th Battalion August 1914: in Hexham. Part of Northumberland Brigade, Northumbrian Division. April 1915: landed in France. May 1915: became 149th Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division, in France. 15 July 1918: reduced to cadre strength and transferred to Lines of Communication. 16 August 1918: transferred to 118th Brigade, 39th Division. 10 November 1918: disbanded in France.</p> <p>1/5th Battalion August 1914: in Walker. Part of Northumberland Brigade, Northumbrian Division. Record same as 1/4th Battalion.</p> <p>1/7th Battalion August 1914: in Alnwick. Part of Northumberland Brigade, Northumbrian Division. Record same as 1/4th Battalion up to February 1918. 12 February 1918: transferred to 42nd (East Lancashire) Division and converted to Pioneer Battalion.</p>
Sources	<p>UK Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919 ancestry Commonwealth War Graves Commission</p>

	1891/1901 & 1911 Census. Hexham Courant 18/11/1916 War Diaries 4th & 7th battalions Northumberland Fusiliers, Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland, Alnwick.