

# Edward Pinches

Private

8671

**6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry**



Edward was the second child born to Abraham and Elizabeth Pinches. Abraham hailed from Lingen and worked as a waggoner who constantly travelled the area searching for steady work. Elizabeth from Llangunllo, was the long suffering wife who followed her husband with their ever growing family. They had married in the spring of 1885 and the birth of their first child William, followed shortly after. Edward arrived in the spring of 1888 and was to be followed by many, many siblings. Another brother George was born in 1891 followed by James in 1894 and their last son Walter in 1896. All these boys were to be followed by an equal number of daughters, Mary Elizabeth 1899, Sarah Ellen 1901, Emily Dorothy 1904, Alice Agnes 1906 and the baby of the family Hilda May in the spring of 1909. By this time Elizabeth was aged 44 and although ten children can be identified, in the 1911 census Elizabeth declares that she had delivered eleven children and all survived. The eleventh child has not been identified to date.

As stated earlier Abraham was an itinerant waggoner who moved around following work. In 1891 his fledgling family were living at Strangeworth, Stansbatch and by 1901 the growing family had moved and were living at The Cottage, Little Brampton near Nash. The 1911 census reveals that Abraham had again moved the family who were then living at Arbor Cottage in Evenjobb. This census also discloses that all five boys had left home and Abraham was a lone male surrounded by his female progeny. It is fair to say the family never moved far, but they did appear to be regularly on the move. As for Edward, the 1911 census records he was aged 20 and living and working at Flintsham Court, just outside Titley.

When war was declared in August 1914 a fine young, fit man such as Edward would have been ripe for enlistment into Kitchener's New Army. Very few service records from this time survive and Edwards is not one of them. We do not know exactly when he enlisted but when he did it was in Kington and he joined the 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI). Edward became Private 8671 Pinches and this low service number may suggest he was one of the first volunteers to answer the call to arms. Perhaps he was escaping the tedium of life as a farm labourer or was caught up in the enlistment fervour which spread rapidly around the country when Kitchener told them 'Your Country Needs You'.



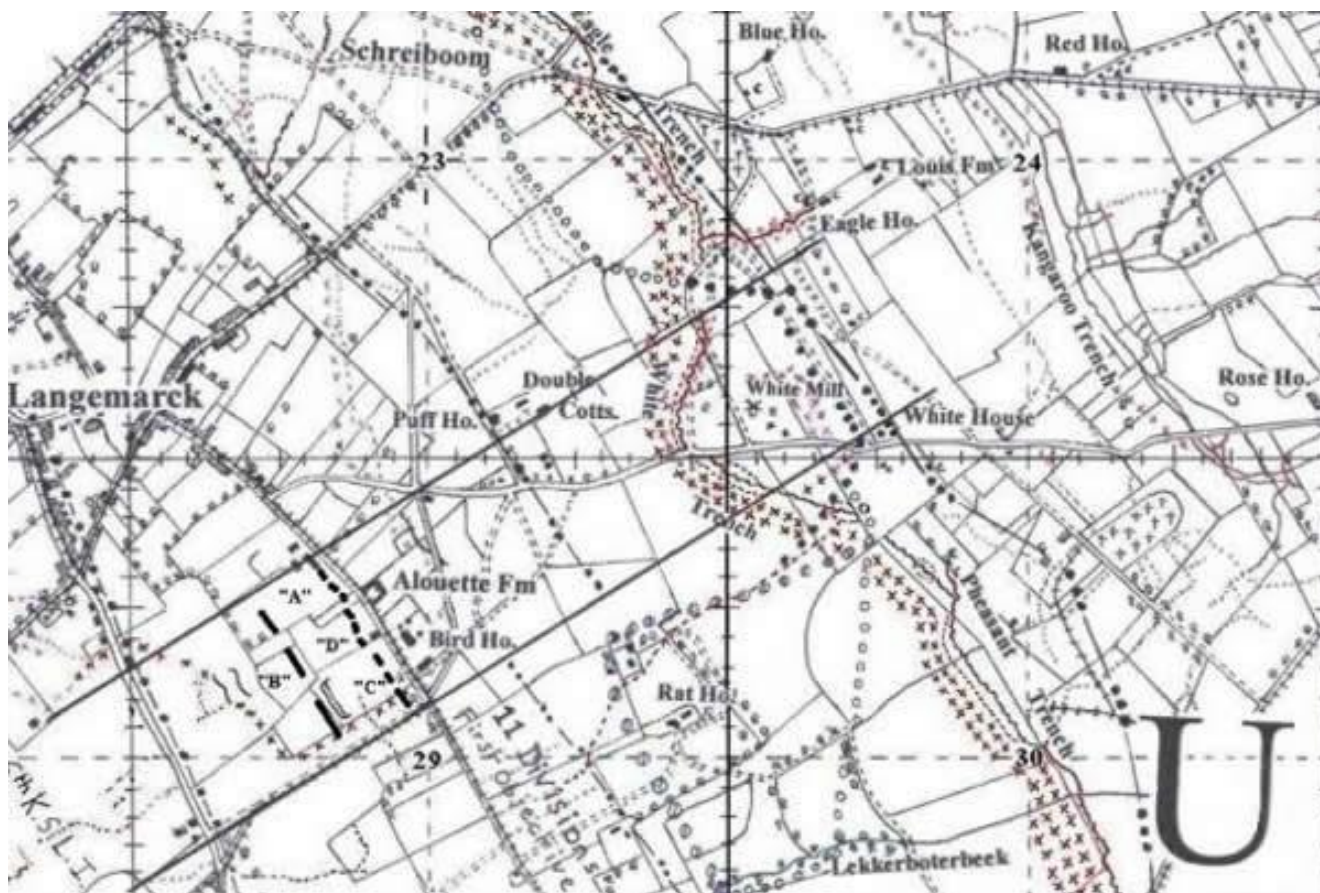
By consulting the 6<sup>th</sup> battalions official war diary and exploring the excellent biography of the KSLI, 'The History of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry in the Great War' by Major W de B. Wood, we discover what happened to the battalion during the war and particularly how Edward came to meet his early demise.

The 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion was formed in December 1914 from villages and towns around the County. Recruits volunteered so rapidly that a problem was encountered with the supply of uniforms and equipment and the men of the 6<sup>th</sup> had to wait until the November before they received their first issue of emergency blue uniform. Few rifles were available so the men first paraded with a mixture of uniforms and mufti, bowler and straw hats, poles, stakes and pit-props. In July 1915, the battalion had moved to Larkhill on Salisbury Plain and became a unit of the 60th Infantry Brigade, 20th Division. On 21st July they entrained for Folkstone and after a rough crossing aboard a 'small Channel boat' at 12:50am on the 22nd July 1915 disembarked at Boulogne. Their first camp was at Ousterhove Rest Camp on the outskirts of Boulogne. From here they were quickly moved up the coast to Calais and then on to St Omer, a few miles inland and near the Belgian border. On the 30th of July, the battalion were moved still closer to the front and were inspected by General Sir Douglas Haig. Muster passed, on the 11th of August they

entered the trenches by Companies, initially for training purposes by seasoned campaigners, but by the end of the month they managed their own trenches near Laventie right on the French/Belgian border.

There followed a succession of engagements some small, some major. In September 1915, the battalion were involved at the Battle of Loos and in June 1916 The Battle of Sorrel where they came under attack from lachrymatory shells, today known as tear gas. In early September 1916 they saw action at the Battle of Guillemont and a month later at the Battle of the Transloy Ridges. They fought on through 1917 and in the August of that year found themselves involved in the Battle of Langemarck. As earlier stated, sadly few of Edwards service records survive hence we cannot be sure exactly when Edward enlisted but it can be assumed he was involved in all these major engagements and indeed all struggles in between.

Edwards story now moves on to September 1917 and the Battle of Menin Road Ridge. In the east Russia was faring badly against the Germans and this threatened to release German troops back to the Western Front. The French achieved success at Verdun but morale was low and resistance exhausted. Sir Douglas Haig was adamant that offensives on the Ypres salient, despite their slow progress and the unseasonable weather in August, were essential in occupying the Germans and thus relieving pressure on the Russians and French. The Battle of Menin Road Ridge was one such offensive. This encounter was the third general battle of the third Battle of Ypres and took place between the 20th and 25th of September 1917. As the war progressed so British tactics evolved and at this battle a system of "leap



frogging" was used whereby units were set achievable objectives which they would consolidate while fresher units would leap frog them and move on to new objectives. This tactic was successfully used by the 6th KSLI but in terrible conditions and under very strong resistance by the enemy. Prior to the attack extensive aerial reconnaissance was undertaken along with field observations to better understand the field of battle. The contemporary map included here, shows the area of responsibility the 6th KSLI had during the advance on 20th September. Significant structures and key trenches are identified. By consulting the battalions official war diary for the period 19th – 23rd September, in conjunction with the map, their involvement in this epic battle is revealed.

In the assault the 6th KSLI were in support of the 12th Rifle Brigade and 6th Ox and Bucks Light Infantry who were to be in the vanguard of the advance. The battalion formed up on the 19th September at Alouette Farm, just to the south east of Langemarke. At 5:40am on the 20th the battalion started their advance with A and D Companies following the Ox and Bucks LI and Rifle Brigade respectively. It was for A and D Companies to consolidate the ground taken by the Ox and Bucks and Rifle Brigade in a line from White Mill (Windmill) to Cemetery. At all times, it was important that A and D Companies kept in communication with the advancing battalions and to respond to their needs as required. B and C Companies were kept at their assembly point at Alouette Farm until called forward. D Company advanced across open ground until they reached White Trench all the while under enemy crossfire from Eagle Trench. B company were brought up to fill gaps which had occurred during the initial advance and once a protective barrage had been organised advanced still further to White Mill. Meanwhile A Company had formed up in White Trench, all the while under heavy machine gun fire from Eagle Trench. A Company casualties were high and their isolated position on the left of the front made communication with them particularly challenging. C Company were advanced and in consort with B Company moved on some 100yds from White Trench, primarily to avoid murderous shell activity from the enemy's artillery. As the morning wore on the battalion consolidated their new positions. At 2pm the 6th KSLI were ordered to attack what they knew as the Green Line and later, in conjunction with the 12th Kings Royal Rifle Corps, were again ordered to advance this time to a line running between and through, White House, Louis Farm, Cemetery and Eagle Trench. Advances were made all the way up to Kangaroo Trench and at 5:45pm the Commander of D Company reported that a counter attack was developing and that enemy infantry could clearly be seen advancing, in open order, on Kangaroo Trench ahead of them. Such was the aggression of this counter attack that allied troops on the right were seen retiring from Kangaroo Trench. At 6:30pm a barrage was laid down which enable British troops to regroup and then advance once more. By sticking close to the barrage D Company were able to advance into Eagle Trench and also attacked Louis Farm. The diary proudly informs us that Corporal S. Williams and fifteen men 'took Louis Farm under stiff resistance he and his team then advanced still further to consolidate their gains'. Resistance in Eagle Trench was extreme and only when a Lewis Gun was brought

forward was order resumed. I need not articulate what terrible havoc was wreaked. The attackers entered the trench and cleared it of enemy all the way through to Cemetery. Meanwhile over on the right C Company advanced into ground to the south of Louis Farm and joined up with troops from the 51st Division thus securing all ground from Eagle Trench through to Kangaroo Trench. That night all ground gained was consolidated and the enemy failed to counter-attack. On the 21st an enemy patrol bombed the front line to the south of Louis Farm but were repelled by men of C Company who emerged from their trench, killed the patrol officer and took eight German Stormtroopers prisoner. Later that day the battalion were relieved and retired back into a support roll. One officer and twenty-five men were left to hold the cemetery flank. On the 23rd the battalion were relieved by the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

During four days of intense fighting the battalion acquitted itself with great honour. Taking and holding the strategically vital Eagle Trench was the pinnacle of their achievement. The 20th Division had performed well and all objectives were achieved, this leading the Army Commander, General Sir Hubert Gough to release the following communique.

*'The tenacity, gallantry and skill which the Division showed over the operations round Eagle Trench are very fine. Please accept my congratulations and expressions of admiration for you and all ranks of your gallant Division'.*

In recognition of their bravery in fighting between the 19th and 23rd September

Wounded men on the roadside following the Battle of Menin Road Ridge



1917, sixteen NCO's and other ranks of the 6th KSLI were awarded the Military Medal. However, such glory and achievement came at the loss and injury of many good men of the 6th Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. The record indicates that Edward was one of those wounded in action. Evacuated from the battlefield, sadly he succumbed to his wounds

on the **27th of September 1917**. Total British casualties between 20-25th September were 20,255 of which 3148 were killed. German casualties broached 25,000 with some 3243 taken prisoner during the conflict. The battle was considered a success for the British but as can be seen, losses were considerable.

Edward was buried at Dozinghem Cemetery, grave reference V.E.16, he was 29 years of age. Dozinghem Cemetery is located to the north-west of Poperinge near Krombeke, West Vlaanderen. West Vlaanderen was outside the front held by Commonwealth forces in Belgium during the First World War, but in July



DOZINGHEM MILITARY CEMETERY

1917, in readiness for the forthcoming offensive, groups of casualty clearing stations were placed at three positions, named by the troops as Mendinghem, Dozinghem and Bandaghem. Now is a good time to point out the black humour which existed among the men on the Western Front. Look closely at the names given to these three cemeteries and see the irony within. The 4th, 47th and 61st Casualty Clearing Stations were posted at Dozinghem, it is probable Edward was treated in one of these. The cemetery was used by them until early in 1918. There are now 3,174 Commonwealth burials in Dozinghem Cemetery.

What of the Pinches family back in Kington. World War One was unbelievable cruel to the Pinches family. Edwards death on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1917 was just two days after the death of his brother Walter who died fighting for the Herefordshire Regiment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Gaza in Mesopotamia. Earlier in the conflict, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1916, their brother James had also been killed while fighting in northern Greece on the Salonika Front. Abraham and Elizabeth had lost three of their beloved sons in quick succession. The heartache and grief this must have caused can only be imagined today.

Kington had lost three of its finest and on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 1919 the town paid its respects with a Peace Service held at St. Mary's Church. The names of all three Pinches boys were read out, along with 62 other brave Kington men, all of whom



lost their lives fighting for that noble cause. For his bravery Edward was awarded the 1915 Star, Victory and British War medals. On the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1918 his final accounts were made up and £34 16s 2d was forwarded to his father Abraham. This was followed on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1919 with a further £18 War Gratuity. But surely no amount of money could make up for the loss of a son.

Researched and produced by Mark Wheatland