

James Pinches

Private

16587

8th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry

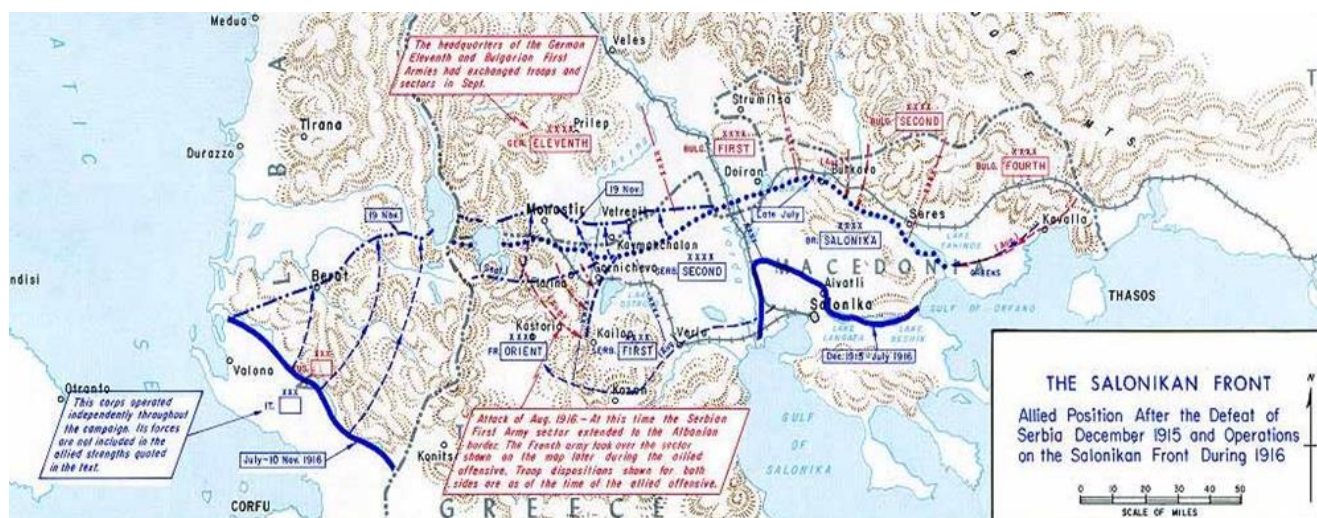


James came from a very large family which included nine siblings. His father was Abraham Pinches of Lingen who was a waggoner and travelled the area following work. His mother, Elizabeth from Llangunllo, was the long suffering wife who followed her husband with their ever growing family. James was born in early 1894 and was a fourth son to Abraham and Elizabeth, he was to be followed by another brother then five sisters. It appears Elizabeth had her last child, Hilda May, in 1910 when she was aged 44. The Pinches family began in Pembridge or more precisely Marston Common, where James was born. By the 1901 census they were living in a farm cottage at Little Brampton near Nash. In the 1911 census we discover that all the boys had left home and only the five girls were still living with their parents, now at Arbor cottage in Evenjobb. It is true to say they never moved far, but they did move regularly. In 1911 James, now 17, is recorded as living with and working for a farmer called Charles Jones at Upper House, a large farm near the church in Huntington and is recorded as Mr Jones' Cowman.

Very little is known of James's service history but we do know that when Lord Kitchener asked for volunteers in late 1914, for his Third Army, James stepped up and enlisted in Hay-on-Wye. He joined the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, 8th (Service) Battalion. An excellent transcription of the 8th battalion war diary can be found in Major W de B. Woods book, The History of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry in the Great War. By studying this we discover that the 8th battalion, probably including Private 16587 Pinches, soon moved to Seaford on the south coast, with 1100 other volunteers, for their initial training. In May 1915 they were

all marched to Aldershot finally leaving this army town on the 5th of September 1915. They entrained from Tweezledown Camp heading for Southampton where they boarded ship, sailed for France and set foot on French soil the following day.

The battalion were immediately required at the front so marched across country arriving at Hebuterne on the 11th of September, where they were attached to the 144th Brigade and prepared to go to the front the following day. They spent the rest of September and most of October in the front line but on 21st of October the battalion were relieved and ordered to make their way across country toward Marseilles. On the 28th of October the battalion set sail from Marseilles aboard the H.M.T's Marathon and Huntsend bound for Salonika in northern Greece arriving there on the 6th of November. The British were not alone in this unexpected headlong dash for Salonika, the French were also racing toward Greece. The reason for the combined Franco-British operation and landing at Salonika (today called Thessalonika) was to help the Serbian Army in their fight against combined German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian aggression and insurgence. However, the expedition arrived too late with the Serbs having been beaten before the arrival of the allied support troops.



The British military advised that troops be withdrawn but the French, with Russian, Italian and Serbian backing, implored them to stay believing the Balkans had strategic importance in the fight against the Central Powers. It was decided to keep the force in place for future operations, perhaps even against possible Greek opposition.

During the first four months of 1916 the British Salonika Force had enough spadework to last a lifetime. They dug-in until the summer of 1916, by which time an international force from Serbia, Russia and Italy had joined and reinforced them. In July the Bulgarian forces attempted an invasion of Greece but were repulsed near Lake Doiran. At the beginning of October 1916 the British, in co-operation with her allies on other parts of the front, began operations on the River Struma towards Serres. The campaign was successful with the capture of the Rupell Pass and advances to within a few miles of Serres.

In November the battalion moved into trenches just north of Ardzan and relieved the 12th Cheshire Regiment. On the 8th of November a reconnaissance patrol went out and although they met heavy resistance returned with useful information. On the night of the 26th/27th of November a detachment consisting of 9 officers and 275 other ranks, carried out a successful raid on an enemy strongpoint called 'The Nose'. The raid was preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment which cut the enemy's defensive wiring. At 9.15pm the raiders successfully entered and cleared the enemy's trenches. All dugouts and defences were destroyed and the party returned in good order. The operation was undertaken whilst under heavy artillery, trench-mortar, machine gun and rifle fire from the enemy. Five officers were wounded on the raid and three other ranks were killed with one missing believed killed and four wounded. James Pinches was 'killed in action' on the **27th November 1916**. Although his name isn't actually mention in the war diary as being a casualty it is highly probable that he was one of the four men killed on this raid. He was just 22 years old.

Sadly the men of Kington and Huntington found themselves fighting in some improbable places. Places many of them would not have even heard of before attesting. James is buried at Karasouli Military Cemetery, grave reference A125.



Karasouli Military Cemetery, Polikastro, Greece

The cemetery is on the edge of the town of Polikastro (formerly Karasouli) which lies some 45 miles north east of Thessaloniki. The cemetery was begun in



September 1916 for the use of casualty clearing stations on the Doiran front. For his sacrifice and bravery James was awarded the Victory and British War medals and 1915 Star.

James's name was remembered at the Kington Peace Service held at St. Mary's Church on the 6th July 1919. He had attended Kington Boy's School on Gravel Hill and on Empire Day 1922, 24th May, a magnificent Roll of Honour was unveiled at the school. James' name is remembered on that Roll of Honour. For Abraham and Elizabeth the loss of their son, so far from home, must have been unbearable, but the war had not finished with the Pinches family, worse was to come.

