

At the back of Dickiebusch was a large lake and bordering this was Scottish Woods, through which a day-trail led past Voormezele by way of Convent Lane to the trenches of St. Eloi. Under cover of darkness the trenches could be reached by road running up from the Café Belge, and this route was the one followed nightly by the transport when conveying rations. But this was a dangerous piece of road; it was under observation and was constantly swept by machine gun fire. One of the most remarkable features of the 102nd Bn. period of service was the immunity which the Transport and ration parties had from casualties during the whole of the tour of duty in the St. Eloi sector. Micmac Camp was a hutted camp lying between Dickiebusch and Ouderdom and boasted no special features except the presence of a small café where eggs and coffee were procurable. Of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood there is little that is pleasant to say; they were peasants of the least intelligent type, Flemish with pronounced German sympathies; espionage was rampant and more than one suffered the extreme penalty when caught red-handed as a spy or a sniper. There was nothing in the personality of these people to appeal to the sympathetic imagination of troops who had come over fired with the tale of Belgian wrongs.

Amid these surroundings the 102nd Bn. spent the next month, engaged in regular tours of duty either in the front line trenches, or as outlined above. Both in the Front Line trenches and in the Support and Reserve positions the work required was for the most part that of increasing and improving the existing protection. The Hun was unceasingly battering down parapets and parados which had as often to be repaired; there was an insufficiency of shelters, and the unit was responsible for a big improvement in this direction, making a large number of shelters against the winter; above all, the trenches were in a shocking state as soon as wet weather set in; the mud was liquid and the bath-mats were floating on the top. Working-parties were constantly employed draining the trenches and stabilizing the bath-mats. Though no active offensive was undertaken casualties occurred with painful frequency. On the morning of Sept. 1st Sergt. C. C. Higgs, Scout Sergeant, and Pte. W. F. Brewer, one of his section, were killed in No Man's Land, whilst patrolling the front. On the evening of the following day an irreparable loss was sustained in the death of Major A. T. Johnston, O.C. No. 1 Co. He was waiting with his company in Reserve trenches immediately in rear of the Support Line, ready to go forward in relief of No. 2 Co. As the hour approached he came out of his dug-out to make a preliminary observation of the situation over the edge of his parapet just at a point on which the enemy had a machine gun trained, with the result that he was instantaneously killed by a bullet through the brain. His death was an immense blow to the battalion; one of our earliest and most efficient officers he was beloved and respected by all ranks. He was succeeded in command of No. 1 Co. by Capt. Gook. On Sept. 8th No. 2 Co. suffered heavily through the bursting of an enemy high