

On the night of September 26th all units moved forward to their assembly positions. The night was exceedingly dark and a steady rain fell until nearly dawn, which not only added to the difficulties and discomforts, but made the going very slippery all the morning.

Owing to the extremely narrow front from which the Division had to "jump off," attacking infantry and machine gunners, supporting artillery and bridging details of Engineers, all had to be crowded into a small area. A heavy enemy concentration on this front would have jeopardised the success of the attack, but the enemy appeared to suspect nothing, and the night was "normal."

The 1st Brigade was assembled in depth on a front of about seven hundred yards. The leading Battalion, the 4th, was in the north-eastern end of Inchy-en-Artois. The 1st Battalion was in the lower end of the Buissy Switch, some eight hundred yards in rear of the 4th. The 2nd Battalion was behind the 1st and the 3rd behind the 2nd. The 3rd Brigade had to attack through a three-hundred-yard "defile," and so assemble on a one-battalion front. The 14th Battalion assembled in Paviland Wood, with the 13th a thousand yards in rear in the Buissy Switch. The 15th Battalion was north of the 13th, and the 16th was holding the front line north of the assembly area of the 14th. The 2nd Brigade, as it did not come into action until four hours after the opening of the attack, was assembled just east of Cagnicourt, some 3,000 yards in rear of the 3rd Brigade.

At twenty minutes after five on the morning of Friday, September 27th, the attack opened under cover of an intense shrapnel and smoke barrage. Some idea of the concentration of artillery may be gained from the fact that there was an 18-pounder gun to every 21 yards of barrage on the front of the 1st Division, and that there were ten brigades of Field Artillery alone whose 240 guns fired 118,062 rounds on this first day of the battle. Supporting this Division, in addition to this, there were 160 machine-guns firing in the barrage, while special companies of Engineers were projecting smoke and boiling oil into the village of Marquion, and on the high ground further to the north. The sight, when the first gleams of