

89th Chemical-Mortar Battalion Field Replacement of Rear Sights

Don Hillhouse reports yet another early report of a changeover to the new rear sight in the ETO (European Theater of Operations) found in the Historical Highlights of the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion published in 1945.

December 2, 1944, the 89th left Boston Harbor for Cherbourg, France aboard the Marine Wolf. While underway their destination was changed to Southampton, England.

Dec 12, 1944 arrival at England and worked their way past the Isle of Wight and up the river to the port of Southampton.

After being served coffee and doughnuts on the pier by the Salvation Army, everyone entrained for Stone, Staffordshire, England, where the battalion was to be quartered.

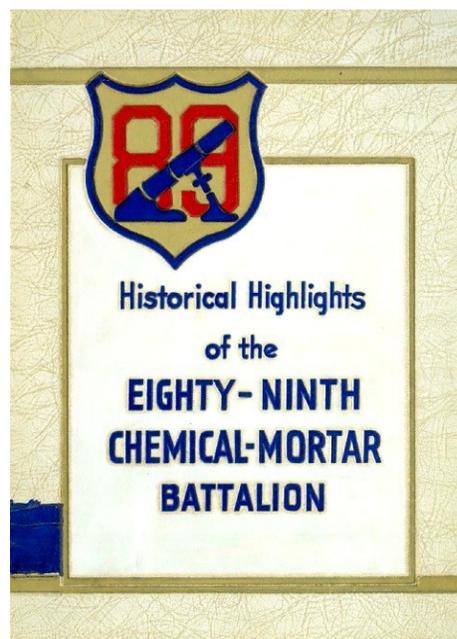
Dec 14th, 1944 Arrival at Stone via train.

Dec 19th, 1944 The Battalion completed reorganization according to a new T/O and E (Table of Organization and Equipment), which called for three line Companies instead of four, and a Headquarters Company instead of a mere detachment.

*“With reorganization completed, the days at Stone were spent drawing equipment and brushing up on communications systems in connection with fire direction control. Every phase of training, the individual job of every man was stressed. All vehicles were drawn at Stone, as were mortars, the new mortar sights, **new adjustable carbine sights**, signal equipment and quartermaster supplies.”*

“The last week in Stone was spent servicing the newly acquired vehicles. mounting new equipment and packing everything for the Battalion's next jump.”

February 13, 1945, the men waved goodbye to Stone, and the vehicles moved south in



the cold, rainy darkness.

The Adjustable rear sight was standardized in April 1944 and appeared on carbines from the factory about May 1944 [WB p.346]

MWO B28-W3 Carbines Cal. .30 M1, M1A1, M1A3; To replace leaf type rear sight with a sight that is adjustable for both windage and elevation is dated 11 Sep 1944.

Rear sights were being replaced stateside.

CCNL 382 article "*Update on Field Installation of Adjustable Rear Sights in WWII*" by Don Hillhouse has an extensive list of reports of field replacement rear sights in the ETO and PTO with dates of mid-February 1945 and beyond.

With the accounts and dates of the 89th Chemical-Mortar Battalion this would be the earliest time frame of replacement rear sights in Theaters of Operation reported to the club.

The Chemical-Mortar Battalions were pretty scarce, 16 battalions in the entire ETO. That is about one per Corps.

Our thanks to Don. We ask all of our members to report any findings to fill in the blanks.

Here are some pictures of various Chemical-Mortar Battalions



**4.2 Inch M2
chemical mortar**



Below an 81mm mortar. M57 Chemical Shells.

The crew is firing either smoke shells to conceal troop movements or White Phosphorous, routinely called “Willie Peter”, white smoke and incendiary which was very difficult to extinguish.



92nd Italy 1944

Another chemical round was Mustard Gas, thankfully never used.

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