

No.5 ASRU MEIKLE FERRY.

Originally opened in 1937 as the Marine Craft Section, Meikle Ferry, attached to No.8 Air Training Station, Tain Ross-shire. The unit operated two Armoured Target Boats, A.595 a 37ft 6ins and A.575 a 40ft type. Both were built by the British Power Boat Company at Hythe and provided seaborne bombing range targets for both RAF Tain and RAF Evanton. The self-contained unit was situated on a spit of land on the ~~north~~^{south} side of the Dornoch Firth



Photo.1 A 40ft Armoured Target Boat from the same batch as A.575.

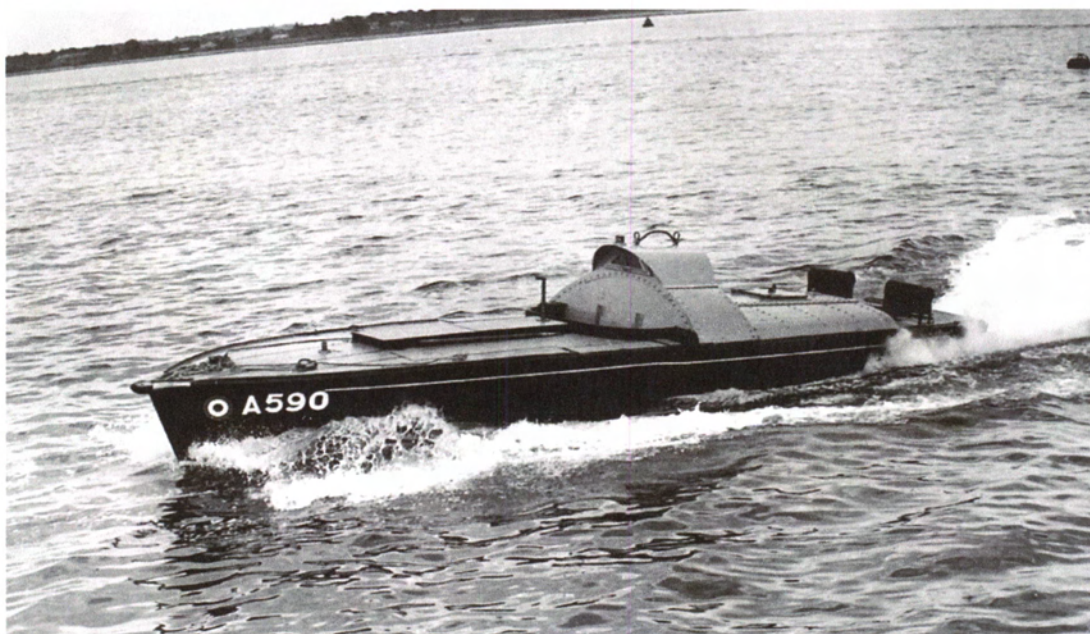


Photo2. A 37ft 6ins Armoured Target boat sister to A.595.

In addition to the ATBs the unit initially operated two 37ft 6ins Seaplane Tenders, Nos.259 and 260, these arrived in November 1937, along with two 16ft dumb dinghys.

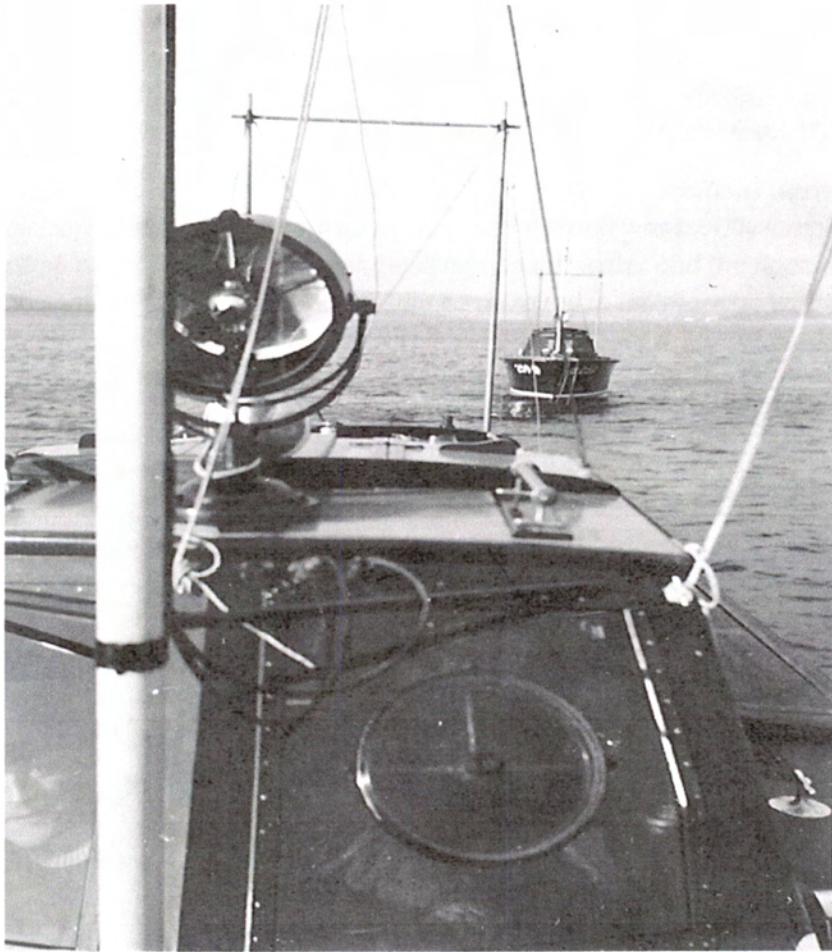


Photo 3. ST.260 in the foreground with 259 astern in 1939 at Meikle Ferry 1938/39. *Courtesy Charles Pearson*



Photo 4. Meikle Ferry 1938/39 with ST.259 on mooring with the two ATBs at their buoys. . *Courtesy Charles Pearson*

It appears that sometime in 1940/41 the section at Meikle Ferry was disbanded and all the buildings were apparently removed and the boats relocated to Invergordon or Alness. When it re-opened as No.5 ASRU/No.88MU in 1942 the site was bare and the first RAF technicians on site had to set up tents and live in packing crates until new buildings were erected.

“When I moved to 88.MU at Meikle Ferry in 1942 the conditions were appalling. We lived in wooden aircraft packing crates with no heating and lighting was by Tilly lamps. To get to your bed you had to climb over two others. The ablutions had no hot water and the floors were always wet. There were no canteen facilities and a WVD van came round in the morning with hot tea. If you wanted anything to eat you had to purchase J.M.s Yellow Peril. This was a type of Madeira cake made by the corporal cook and was of a consistency that allowed it to be cut to the thickness of a wafer” - Alastair Stirrat.

When No.5 ASRU opened in 1942. The original two STs returned but both went for conversion to Fire Floats, No.260 on the 26th May 194 as F.F.33 and 259 on the 25th December 1943 as F.F.36. Apparently they were replaced by 41ft 6in Broad Beam S.T.s. Various Dumb Dinghy's were returned but not the Armoured Target Boats, A.595 was transferred to the RAAF at Sydney on the 1st June 1942 and A.575 went to the RCAF on the 31st August 1944. To give credence to its MU status RAF Docking Barge DB.1 was posted in on the 2nd November 1942 and permanently moored just off the slipway. Built by Harland & Wolff she was requisitioned for RAF use and acquired through the M.O.W.T. It is unknown just exactly how this barge operated but an annotation on Photo 7 remarked ' Dry Dock Barge sunk under boat to wait for high tide'



Photo 5. Meikle Ferry during WW.2. HSL.2563 is in the Docking Barge. *Courtesy RAF Museum.*

Some of the RAF launches that used the barge were; 2584 from Banff slipped from July 1943 until September 1944; 2729 and 2730 from Wick slipped between February and April 1945; 2610 and 2611 from Buckie in November 1945; all these HSLs were 67ft Thornycrofts.

When the unit closed in early 1946 when Docking Barge DB.1 was nominally transferred to 213 MU for disposal before being returned to her owners McDonald & Morrison (Inverness) Ltd on the 5th June.

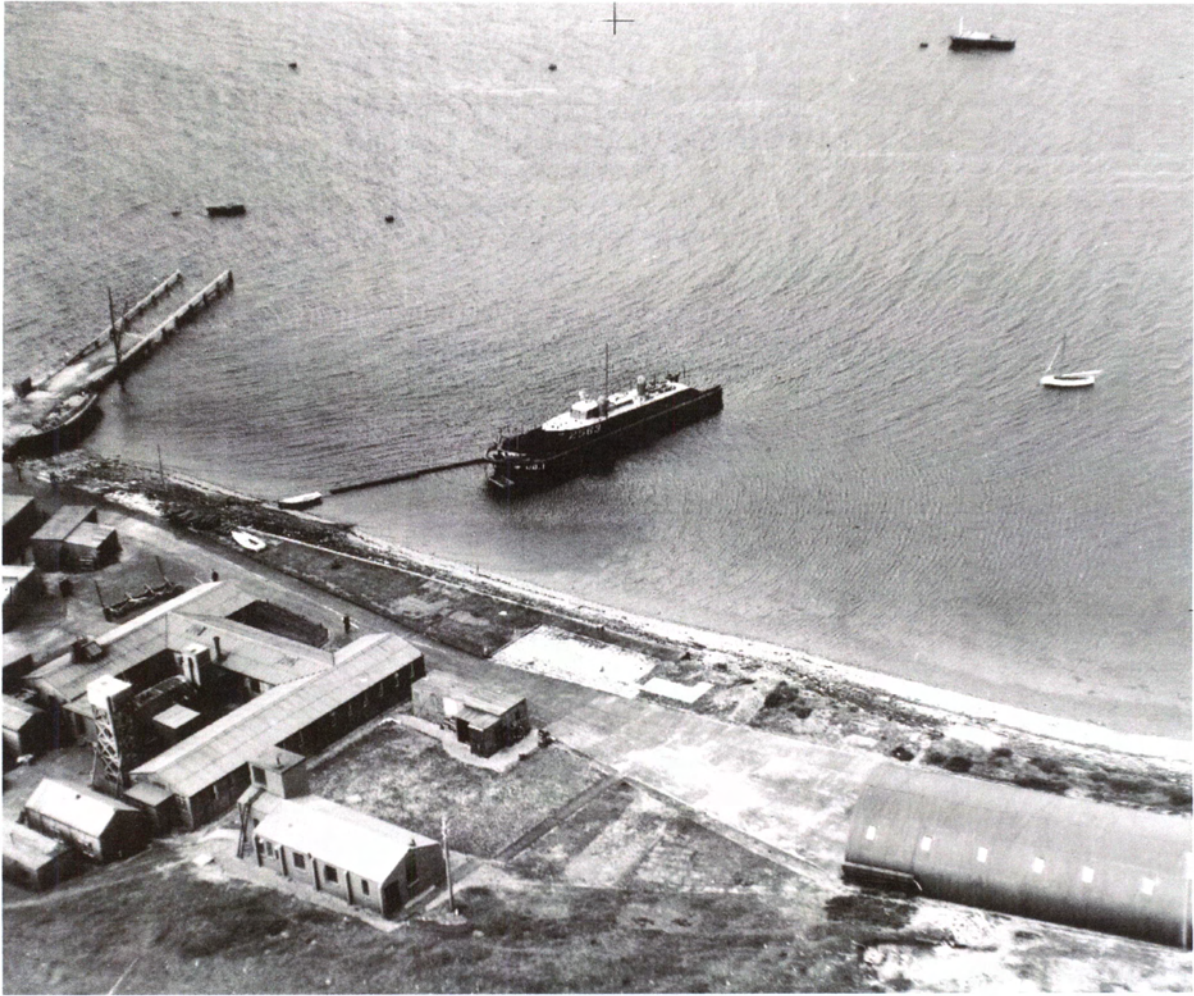


Photo 6. Aerial view of the camp with HSL.2563 in the Docking Barge, the attendant Dumb Dinghy is moored at the shoreward end of the gangway and a 41ft6in S.T. can be seen on her mooring at the top of the photo. *Courtesy RAF Museum.*

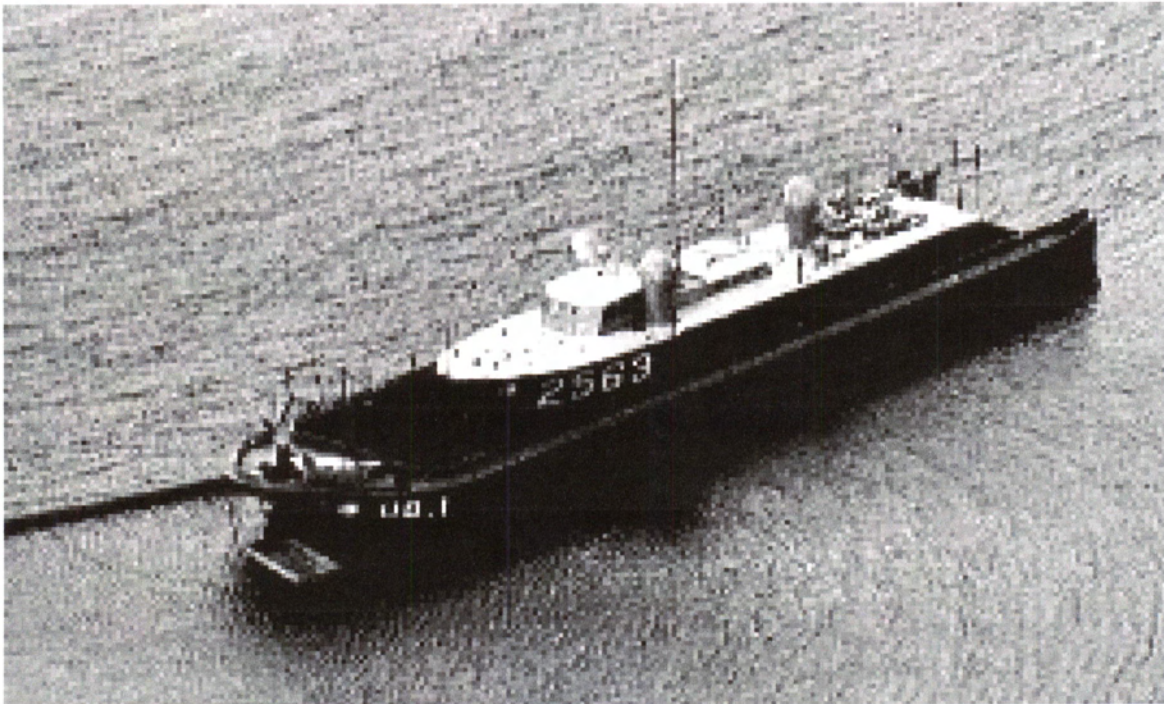


Photo 6. Close up of 2569 in Docking Barge D.B.1

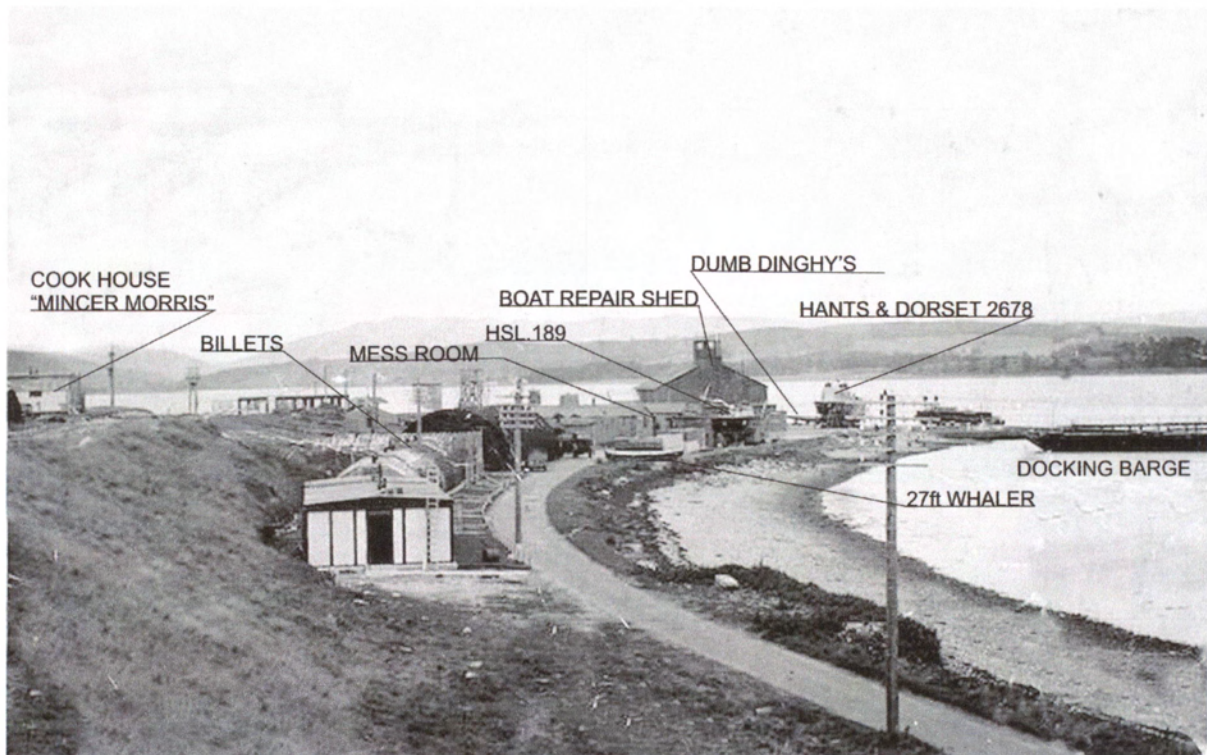


Photo 7. Meikle Ferry unit sometime between 1944 and 1946. *Courtesy George Henry England.*



Photo 8. Meikle Ferry today.

To date this is all I can find relating to Meikle Ferry but hopefully some of our veterans may have some more information.