

# MTB '40K'

BY

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## ABSTRACT

MTB 40K was built in Looe for the French in the late 1930s, taken over by the Admiralty, and used by the RN until 1943. Details of the boat are given, together with what is known of her history.

In the late nineteen thirties a number of motor torpedo boats were built, some on behalf of the Admiralty or foreign governments, and others, usually of experimental design, as private ventures. Engines of adequate power were difficult to obtain and, apart from the Napier Lion, a proposed marinized version of the Rolls Royce Merlin, and others of Thornycroft or Sterling design, recourse was made to Italian-built Isotta Fraschini engines. In about 1936, however, Aero-Marine Engines Ltd obtained a licence to build the 600 hp Lorraine 'Petrel' aero-engine as a marine power unit. This engine was no longer manufactured in France as an aircraft engine but on 6 September 1937 an order was placed by the French Government with Aero-Marine for the construction of twelve boats to be fitted with the 690 hp marinized engines.

Building of the hulls was sub-contracted to a number of French yards of which the Chantiers Navale de Meulan, near Paris, was to be responsible for the hull design, while the order for one boat went to Messrs Curtis & Pape Bros of Looe in Cornwall. The assistance of a French engineer, M. Picker, was provided to the Looe boatyard by Meulan.

The details of the boat were:

Displacement:	23 tons
Dimensions:	65.4 feet length × 14.75 feet beam
Speed:	40 knots on two shafts with four 690 bhp 'Petrel' engines (two on each shaft); plus two 700 bhp (silenced) Lycoming cruise engines giving a quiet cruising speed of 10½ knots
Complement:	two officers and six ratings
Proposed armament:	one 37 mm gun; one 7.6 mm machine gun; two 18 inch torpedoes (side dropping gear); six depth charges

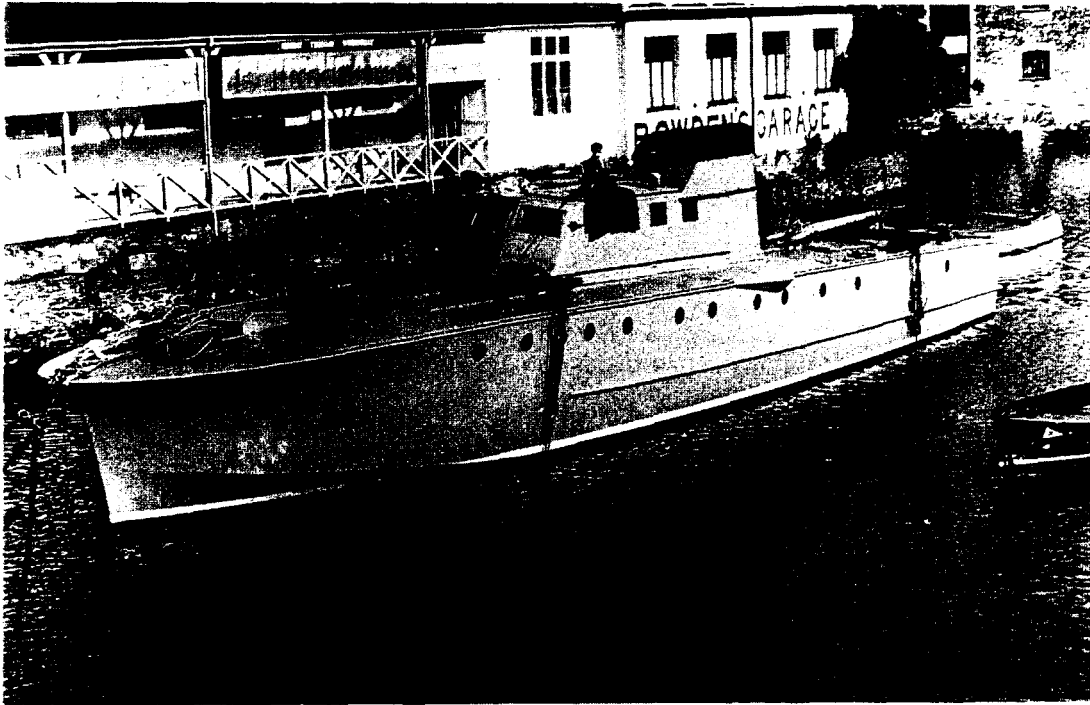


FIG. 1—MTB '40K' IN 1939

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In the course of the Spanish Civil War the Republican Government sought to buy the twelve boats, but this was refused and in September 1939 the Curtis boat was taken over as MTB 40K (i.e. 40 knots) by the Admiralty and allocated to the 4th MTB Flotilla at Portsmouth. Accepted on 2 December 1939, she was unarmed and was employed in training MTB personnel. Early in 1940 it was proposed that 40K be re-numbered as MTB 108, the next available number in the experimental series from 101 onward, but this failed to materialize and in June 1940 she became MAC (Motor Attendant Craft) 7, supervising the East coast minesweeping flotillas. Her armament comprised two Lewis guns.

Apparently she sank on 22 December 1940 but was soon salvaged only to be damaged by fire in January 1941. Repaired, she was employed in connection with measures to repel enemy invasion forces by pumping petrol off-shore and setting it alight ('F' Scheme?). This lasted until February 1943 when she was declared unfit for further service only to founder in tow at Portsmouth. Raised and beached at Gosport in October 1945, the final entry in the Pink List shows her as 'Sold 1947'.

Two similar craft were brought to Britain from France in June 1940 and were designated MASB (Motor Anti-Submarine Boat) 98 and 99 (later MGBs), while another of identical appearance is illustrated without details in the German section of *Jane's Fighting Ships 1944-45*. She is listed as a Motor Launch and carries the identity letter N on her bow.

Much detail about these craft remains obscure but possibly memories may be stirred or private records come to light as a result of the above. The illustration shows 40K in the river at Looe in the summer of 1939. The location was identified from the name of the garage.