



# Fire in the Night: The Piper Alpha Disaster

*Stephen McGinty*

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The fire was visible seventy miles away as a distant, flickering flame on the horizon. The heat generated was so intense that a helicopter could only circle at a perimeter of one mile. Flying at a height of 200 feet, the air crew saw that the tongues of flame extended high above the rotor blades. On the surface a converted fishing trawler inched as close as possible, but the paint on the vessel's hull blistered and burnt, and the rope handrails began to smoke. In the water surrounding the inferno, men's heads could be seen bobbing like apples as their yellow hard hats melted with the heat. At the center stood, at least for now, the Piper Alpha oil platform, 110 miles northeast of Aberdeen, once the world's single largest oil producer. On July 6, 1988, its final day, it was ablaze with 226 men onboard. Only sixty-one would survive. *Fire in the Night* tells, for the first time and in gripping detail, the devastating story of that summer evening. Combining interviews with survivors, witness statements, and transcripts from the official enquiry into the disaster, this is the moving and vivid tale of what happened on that fateful night inside an oil rig inferno.

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