

Scottish sea captain is victim of Air France crash

From The Times June 2, 2009 Melanie Reid

A Scottish ship's captain is one of five Britons believed to have perished on Air France flight 447 which went down in the Atlantic en route to Paris. Graham Gardner, 52, was the master of the pipe-laying and construction vessel for the oil industry, owned by an Aberdeen-based company Subsea7.

He worked month-on, month-off in Brazil and was flying home to join his wife. Joyce Gardner, 51, from Gourrock, Renfrewshire, described her husband yesterday as a "loving and caring" man who would be dearly missed by all who knew him. Mrs Gardner said: "I have known Graham for as long as I can remember. He's such a loving, caring and laid-back man. Nothing fazed him."



Mr Gardner had recently been promoted to Master of the Lochnagar, operated by Subsea 7. He had worked in Rio de Janeiro for four years and spent alternate months in Scotland and Brazil.

Mrs Gardner, a human resources co-ordinator with a Greenock-based firm, said: "Although we don't have children, he was very much a family man and loved playing with all the children in our extended family. He was just a big kid at heart. "I'm sure I can speak for everyone that knew him - whether family, friend or colleague - in saying that he will be missed, dearly." The couple, who had known each other since they were children, grew up in neighbouring streets and both attended Greenock High School. They became a couple ten years after leaving school and got married in September 2001.

Mrs Gardner said her husband had studied at Glasgow College of Nautical Studies after school and spent his adult life in the Merchant Navy, working all round the world on ferries, tankers and container ships. She said: "Graham was on a month-on, month-off contract so the time we had together was precious. He loved to walk, read science fiction novels and tend to his pride and joy, his tropical fish."

Mr Gardner joined Subsea 7 in July 1998 and has served on several Subsea 7 vessels as First Officer and Chief Officer. He was promoted to Master of the Lochnagar in February. Mel Fitzgerald, chief executive of Subsea 7, said: "Our immediate priority is to provide support to Graham's family and his colleagues during this very difficult time. "Graham is a well-respected and highly regarded employee of Subsea 7 who has made a valuable contribution to the company over many years. Our deepest thoughts are with his family."

Mr Gardner is also survived by his mother, Sarah.

Another passenger on the flight was also connected with the oil and gas industry. Arthur Coakley, 61, a founding director of the Aberdeen-based Project Design and Management Services Ltd, spent ten days out of every 14 in Aberdeen. He is believed to have been in Brazil for a month supervising the installation of equipment on a rig. Mrs Coakley said: "He wasn't supposed to be on that plane. "His return trip had been cancelled twice before. He was supposed to be home ten days ago but had agreed to stay and work longer."

She said she had been phoning her husband on his mobile phone. "Yesterday it was ringing so maybe they are not at the bottom of the sea. That's my hope but I think it's fading today."



A pipe laying/construction ship similar (or could be?) the Lochnagar ed.

From the BBC Scotland July 18

By Paul Thornton

THE widow of a Scottish man who was killed by the Air France plane crash in May is to lay his body to rest next week. Graham Gardner was 52 when he the Airbus A330 from Brazil crashed while he was on board. The master mariner, from Gourock, Renfrewshire, was making his way home on May 31 when the plane went down.

He was one of five Britons on board the flight, which was flying from Rio de Janeiro to Paris.

Last month it was confirmed that one of several bodies recovered from the disaster was that of Mr Gardner and he was to be transported to Scotland.

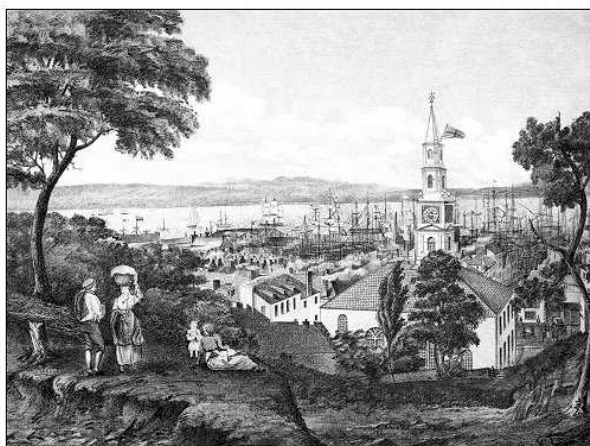
His wife Joyce, 51, at the time welcomed the opportunity to bring him home but added that she would “miss him enormously”. The family announced that a funeral service is to be held on Monday, July 20.

The announcement said a service for Mr Gardner will be held at the Wellpark Mid Kirk in Greenock from 1.30pm and invited “friends, family and colleagues” to attend. Mr Gardner will then be laid to rest at the Greenock Crematorium. And – in a touching nod to Mr Gardner’s career – the family have requested that donations to the Sailors Society and the Sir Gabriel Wood Marines Home be made in lieu of flowers.

Mr Gardner worked as a ship’s master for Aberdeen-based firm, Subsea 7.

Mr Gardner had been in the Merchant Navy all his adult life and served on vessels ranging from ferries and tankers to container ships. For the past four years he had been based in Brazil on a month-on, month-off contract.

Mr Gardner is survived by his wife Joyce, and sisters Iris and Anna and his mother Sarah.



Greenock in 1812



Left a drawing of the Wellpark Mid Kirk in 1812 -Below a postcard of ‘Wellpark’ with the clock spire of the Kirk showing beyond the park .

I was drawn to this story by the name ‘Wellpark’ which was the name of my first ship, she was owned by Denholms of Glasgow so I guess this is the park she was named after.



Left-Princess Pier Greenock an old picture but no doubt familiar to many a seafarer, especially those on the convoys which formed up or dispersed on the ‘Tail of the Bank’

In 1957 I along with the rest of the crew of the ‘Stanrealm’ Landed there from Holy Loch were we had just spent 2 days laying up the ship to bouys using her anchor cables. Got the train from the Pier to Glasgow, midnight train to Manchester -next morning, on buying the paper I read the ‘Stanrealm’ had broke adrift in a gale that night and gone ashore.