

Personal loss at heart of railway tragedy

The scene of the Stonehaven rail crash was a flurry of activity yesterday.
Two separate investigations are now ongoing into the tragedy.

The first has been ordered by the Lord Advocate and involves Police Scotland, British Transport Police and the Office of Rail and Road, the independent economic and health and safety regulator for the industry.
In parallel, the Rail Accident Investigation Branch will carry out its own independent safety probe to determine what went wrong and what lessons might be learned to ensure greater safety on the UK’s rail network.
Grant Shapps and Michael Matheson, the UK and Scottish transport ministers respectively, visited the site yesterday to understand the scale of the tragedy for themselves.

Ultimately they, and their successors, will have to action whatever recommendations the investigators bring forward.
And there were messages of sympathy and condolence from various quarters, including from the Queen who, as a regular visitor to Scotland, knows the area well.

It was a response that demonstrates the gravity of the situation.

But the emergence of the first details of three victims of Wednesday’s crash overshadowed everything else.
At its heart, the Stonehaven train derailment is an intensely human story.

Two of the victims, Brett McCullough and Donald Dinnie, were out doing their job when fate intervened.

The third, former Perthshire man Christopher Stuchbury, appears to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time as a passenger.

Each of the men have family and friends who will be mourning their loss.

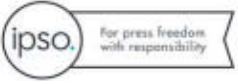
They were sons, fathers, brothers and partners and much more besides.

And, while the accident which led to their deaths will live long in the memory, it is important that their personalities and individual achievements are remembered too in the days and months ahead.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

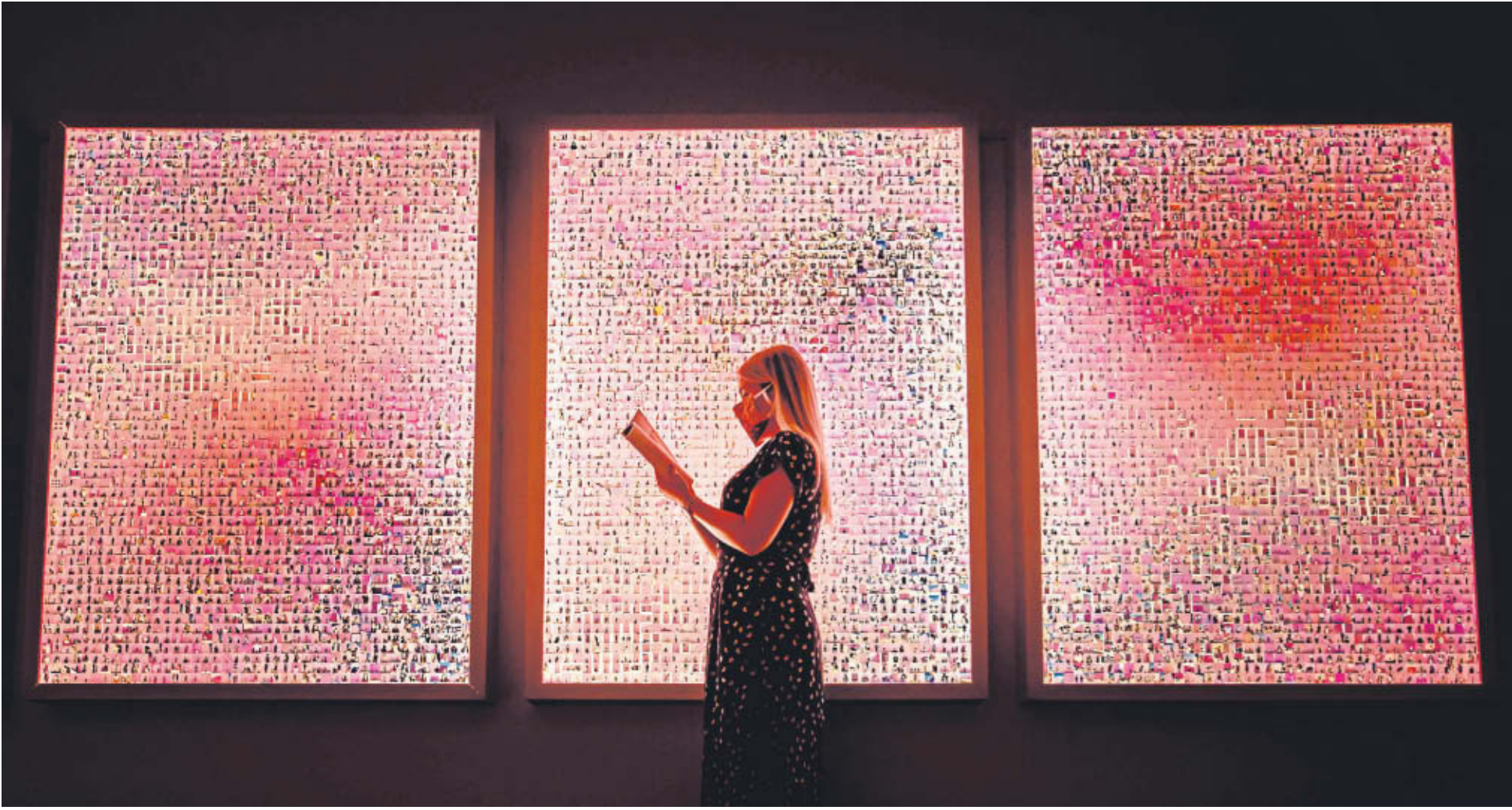
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Picture of the day

A visitor reads a programme in front of a work titled ‘Murmurations #23: 10,000 selfies (with a pink wall in Los Angeles)’, by artist Stephanie Potter Corwin, that forms part of the Aesthetica Art Prize exhibition on show at York Art Gallery in Yorkshire. Picture: PA.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pandemic has lifted the lid on unfair system

Sir, – Setting aside the politics of the educational chaos of the last week or so, we do now have a situation where many more young people will have the chance to go to university than would otherwise have been the case.
Some may turn out to be a bit out of their depth if they have been overmarked, but others will rise to the challenge, and their future employers will not look at what exam results they got in 2020. They will look at the last thing they did, be that university exams or work record, and make a judgment on that.
So, amid the chaos, opportunities have opened up for people who might not otherwise have had them, and things will sort themselves out.
Government will have to support them, and there will be an additional cost to that, almost certainly tens of millions of pounds, but that is a small cost compared to the cost of the pandemic.
In theory, at least, there is now a wonderful opportunity for those who should have sat exams this year to do what they want to do.
The interesting point is though, if we are to trust the marking of teachers and that it is a true reflection of the worth of their children, and the grades have gone up by 10-15%, then what has been happening for the last 10 years or so?

Exams issue won’t halt indy

Sir, – I read with interest Jenny Hjul’s article (Purely political penitence, Courier, August 12) .
On this occasion the issue is the “exam

debacle” as she calls it.
With a rather long-winded reprise full of bias rather than facts, we finally get to the crux of the matter which is a feeble attempt to convince and “bring back on board”, distraught voters to the Tory fold.
To use the exam results and the actions of the Scottish Government to resolve what was a very difficult situation as a reason for changing your voting intentions smacks of desperation.
The latter part of her article is pure conjecture and a rather limp

Has the marking system been working against poorer areas all along?
Do we have a system in Scotland where those who can afford to pay (or cost less) are given preferential treatment?
Something is badly wrong here. No other conclusion can be drawn.
The pandemic has uncovered something which we need to properly understand and get to the bottom of.
We need government to support the kids of 2020, whatever that costs, but more importantly, we need to establish what has been happening in the past, and how we are going to progress in the future.
The education you receive determines your

life chances more than any other factor, and also that of your children and grandchildren.
If we are getting this wrong, then the effects will be borne by individuals for the rest of the century and beyond.
Given the order of magnitude of this fiasco, and the suspicion about what might have been happening in the past, the country will be bearing the true cost for the rest of the century and beyond as well.
This will be the legacy of Mr Swinney, who needs to consider his position, whether the Greens support him or not.
Victor Clements.
Mamie’s Cottage, Aberfeldy, Perthshire.

attempt to ignore the fact that all the polls and many pundits predict in 2021 an overwhelming victory for the SNP in the Holyrood elections, with 57% of the vote, Tories 20% of the vote and Labour 14% of the vote.
The desire for independence is

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supported by 54% of Scots.
Little is said about why this is the case.
In fact, it is well known, this is the result of Nicola Sturgeon and her government having the overwhelming support of the Scottish people in their handling of the Covid 19 pandemic and its consequences and not, as is suggested, “only in the eyes of her fan base”.
This is in sharp contrast to the UK Government’s handling of the epidemic.
Dan Wood.
Charles Melvin Gardens, Kirriemuir.

Biden playing identity politics

Sir, – Presidential candiate Joe Biden has made an appeal to identity politics.
Biden is a 50-year Washington insider.
He backed the wars in Afghanistan Iraq, Libya and Syria.
He wrote the Crime Bill that was the start of mass incarceration in the US.
He helped oversee the 2008-09 bailout of Wall Street.
Biden has indicated his

presidency would see a return to “centrism” of the Obama years.
This means bailouts for Wall Street and never-ending foreign wars and no public health system in the US.
The result of Obama’s policies paved the way for the Republicans to take control of the House of Representatives in 2010, the Senate in 2014 and ultimately Trump in 2016.
How by doing exactly the same Biden will get different results is a mystery.
He has chosen Kamala Harris as his running mate.
Her acceptance of the position of vice-presidential candidate was filled with the usual platitudes about improving education, dismantling structural barriers and achieving “racial justice,” all without changing the capitalist system.
It is an unpalatable truth that this system is the main cause of violent police repression. Kamala Harris made her name as a prosecutor locking up mostly poor people.
Her donors included the Getty family and

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Trump himself.
Harris is a centrist whose record is unremarkable.
The perspective of those who advocate “identity politics” denies that racism is the way in which the bosses divide working people in order to keep their power.
This opposes a unified struggle of workers against capitalism, against class oppression.
Instead they favour more BAME people in corporate management.
The Democratic Party is using identity politics to pose as advocates for “justice” against a brutal capitalist state.
Alan Hinnrichs.
2 Gillespie Terrace, Dundee.

Leaves will have come out too!

Sir, – What a heartwarming story about the rescue at Perth Airport of the hedgehog stuck in a drainpipe, where the SCAA is based (Helimed team saves hedgehog in a prickle, Courier, August 12).
As a bonus it probably got all the leaves out too!
Ian Brooks.
Halyburton Place, Cupar.

THE ARCHIVES

The Courier

100 years ago

At the monthly meeting of Laurencekirk Town Council, the Town Clerk (Mr W.J.C Reed, solicitor) submitted a report on the progress being made with the municipal housing scheme, in the course of which it was stated that, while one of the contractors was considerably behind, the mason was five weeks in advance of his contract time. It was agreed to request the architect to use every means to facilitate the progress of the work, with the view of making the houses available for occupancy at Martinmas.

THE COURIER
AND ADVERTISER

50 years ago

Passengers on the 4.54pm Perth-Dundee bus yesterday had a lucky escape when it crashed through a fence and ended up in a field. The accident occurred 300 yards on the Perth side of Kinfauns Garage, when the driver braked suddenly to avoid a car. The bus skidded on the wet surface. The 36 passengers were uninjured, as were the bus driver and conductress. Half the crashed bus partially blocked the road and single-line traffic was in operation for just over an hour. The bus was slightly damaged.

THE COURIER
AND ADVERTISER

25 years ago

Dundee experienced an explosion of noise and colour as Scotland’s Chinese community made their contribution to the city’s water festival. Shoppers in the city centre at lunchtime could not fail to miss the 40-foot silk Chinese dragon which paraded around the town accompanied by the traditional Chinese lion and drum. The ornate dragon, last seen in the city at the Dundee 800 celebrations seven years ago, was a gift from the Chinese government to the Confederation of Chinese Associations of Scotland.

THE COURIER
AND ADVERTISER

One year ago

Fresh calls have been made for an independent inquiry into Mossmorran chemical plant after the latest incident of intense flaring. On the same day the start of flaring was accompanied by thick smoke at Fife Ethylene Plant, there was a cross-party call for Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham to reconsider Fife Council’s request for an independent inquiry into flaring. A letter from Labour MP Lesley Laird, signed by Labour, Conservative and Green politicians, questioned the ability of Sepa to regulate the site.

ON THIS DAY

- **1867:** John Galsworthy, English author, was born in Kingston Hill, Surrey. When his Forsyte Saga was dramatised on BBC TV on Sunday nights in the 1960s, clergymen had to change the times of evening services to get a congregation.
- **1880:** Cologne Cathedral was completed, having been started in 1248.
- **1893:** The world’s first car registration plates were introduced in France.
- **1945:** Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. VJ Day was officially celebrated on the following day, August 15.
- **1967:** The Marine Broadcasting Act came into force after midnight, outlawing pop pirate radio stations broadcasting within British territorial waters.
- **1969:** British troops were deployed in Northern Ireland.
- **1975:** The Rocky Horror Picture Show, the longest-running release in film history, opened at the USA Theatre in Westwood, Los Angeles, California.
- **1979:** The longest lasting rainbow on record shone over North Wales from the coast of Gwynedd to Clwyd, remaining for more than three hours.
- **2013:** Egypt declared a state of emergency after security forces killed hundreds of demonstrators supporting the former president Mohamed Morsi.
- **ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR:** Facebook became the latest technology firm to admit listening to and analysing some audio recordings from users.
- **BIRTHDAYS:** Frederic Raphael, novelist, 89; David Crosby, rock singer, 79; Steve Martin, comedian/actor, 75; Danielle Steel, writer, 73; Gillian Taylforth, actress, 65.