

Letter from Scotland

So once again Scotland's voice has been drowned out by the chants of "Get Brexit Done" south of the border.

Boris Johnson might be celebrating his 80 seat majority at Westminster but Nicola Sturgeon is using her 48-11 victory in Scotland to call for a second independence referendum.



"Taking stock". An angry William Wallace gazes south over the River Tweed.

The Labour Party's collapse is nowhere more dramatic than in Scotland where, once again, it is reduced to just one MP, Ian Murray in Edinburgh South. The Liberal Democrats lost their UK leader Jo Swinson by 149 votes in East Dunbartonshire. The Conservatives lost seven seats and now have only 6 MPs in

Scotland. The Greens got just 1 per cent of the vote.



The Edinburgh election count 12 December 2019 PHOTO ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter

But this has been the strangest of elections. The eerie atmosphere was highlighted for me by the full moon that appeared early on Thursday morning. It was the last full moon of the decade and known as “the cold moon” because it occurs in December, like this first winter election for 96 years. Although in some ways it was a re-run of Mrs May’s 2017 election, it felt altogether more significant. This really was the decision point on Brexit. But it also felt more toxic and this for a number of reasons.



Theresa May campaigning in Edinburgh in June 2017 Photo ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter

It follows a decade of low-growth and government austerity. Brexit has divided the voters and broken their traditional party loyalties. There’s confusion over whether we want to be a parliamentary democracy or a direct democracy with the

recent arrival of referendums.

The invisible web of “social media” has taken debate away from the usual town hall hustings, newspaper headlines and TV interviews. It has also poisoned the air with fake news and unrestrained abuse.

And there are more destabilising factors. The principal protagonist is a well-known rascal but his supporters love him anyway. The Labour Party has been caught sitting on the fence over Brexit and unable to move the debate onto its radical spending and taxation agenda. The spectre of islamophobia and antisemitism has hovered over all three main parties and candidates have had to be disowned.

Then there are the different campaigns in Scotland and Northern Ireland where the very “Union” of the United Kingdom is under question.

Add to that the fact that a quarter of all the constituencies in the first-past-the-post electoral system are marginal and an element of chance has been thrown into the mix.

But we are where we are.

And when the red hot anger in Scotland over the Tory victory at Westminster fades to a raging glow, it's fairly obvious what will happen next. Nicola Sturgeon has already promised she will formally ask the UK government for permission to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence. She will cite the SNP's overwhelming victory in the election and the “material change of circumstances” since the last referendum in 2014. Boris will say “No, No, No” and there will be a simmering resentment for five more years. What that will lead to, I just don't know.

The other parties meanwhile will be raking over the ashes of their various crashes. The Liberal Democrats will be looking for a new UK leader and wondering where they can go next. The

Labour Party will be trying to build new bridges over deep divides between left and centre and between the Scottish and English parties. The Scottish Conservatives are looking for a new leader anyway, following the resignation of Ruth Davidson earlier in the year and they too have their differences with Boris over Brexit.



Ruth Davidson speaking in Edinburgh on the eve of the General Election 2019 PHOTO ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter

But what we do know in all this political scourging is that “Get Brexit Done” is only the beginning of further punishment as we enter negotiations over a trade deal with the EU. And, if most of the economic think tanks are to be believed, it will mean a dreadful time for the British economy for the next decade.

Was that a good night's work ?