

# Letter from Scotland

**Even though he is half Scottish, it's hard for me to find something nice to say about Donald Trump. But let's try.**

He is a good stage entertainer. He has the same wild-haired appeal as Boris Johnson, a clown, a purveyor of the outrageous, an up-setter, a bar-stool philosopher with simple solutions, a salesman of false dreams. Like Captain Ahab, he has a courageous obsession, chasing his own Moby-Dick, the white whale of America in the 1950s.

We can but hope that, this time, he has a redeeming feature: that he will appoint a sane and competent cabinet who he will allow to govern America wisely. Trump can then entertain the crowd, front-of-stage, saying things we all know are mad and irrelevant, like an old and embarrassing uncle at a wedding. But it looks as though even this hope will be shattered, since many of his rumoured cabinet appointees (Elon Musk, Robert Kennedy Jr) look quite frightening.



Donald Trump and the hunt for Moby Dick.

Scotland comes into this disturbing story as the birthplace of Trump's mother, Mary Anne MacLeod, who left the Isle of Lewis in 1930, at the age of 18, to seek a better future as a domestic servant in New York. She ended up marrying a rich property developer Fredrick Trump and having five children, one of them "The Donald". In honour of his mother, Trump has invested in two golf resorts in Scotland, at Turnberry in Ayrshire and Balmenie in Aberdeenshire. Despite pumping millions of pounds into the courses, both have been making losses for years – over a million pounds each last year.

No doubt we shall have a Presidential visit in the next four years. The First Minister John Swinney said Mr Trump will be

very welcome. He said it through gritted teeth, since he publicly backed Kamala Harris during the campaign. "I recognise that democracy has taken its course," he managed to say, "and I congratulate President Trump on his election."

However he went on to warn that Mr Trump's promise of a 20 per cent tariff on imports to America will severely damage the whisky and salmon-farming industries in Scotland. He might have mentioned too, the threat Trump poses to our NATO defences, and our fight against climate change.

On Tuesday, The Scottish Government itself had to climb down on its own targets to cut climate change emissions. It won support in parliament from all parties, except the Greens, for a bill to drop annual emissions targets after the independent Committee on Climate Change concluded they were no longer credible. They've been missed for years. Instead there is going to be a "carbon budget" for Scotland in which emissions are measured every five years.

It comes embarrassingly close to the opening of the latest UN climate change conference (COP29) on Monday in Baku, Azerbaijan. We are telling a very different story today compared to COP26 in Glasgow three years ago when Scotland was boasting we had the most ambitious emissions targets in the world. We are still aiming to get to net zero by 2045. But if you can change a target, is it a target at all?



PHOTO Tony Marsh Photography

We had the usual troublesome Bonfire Night on Tuesday. The fire service turned out to over a thousand calls. In Niddrie, Sighthill and Moredun in Edinburgh, in Clydebank near Glasgow and in Blackridge in West Lothian, fire-fighters and police were attacked with fireworks, bricks and petrol bombs. A crowd of 50 in Niddrie had to be controlled by police in riot gear. Fireworks were thrown, despite the city council imposing a “no-firework” zone. Thankfully no one was hurt this time. But it appears to be becoming a local tradition to attack anyone in authority on Bonfire Night.

All this week, Glasgow has been hosting a gathering of police officers from 196 countries around the world. The 92nd conference of Interpol was not so much about fireworks as about organised crime, terrorism and people-smuggling. The prime minister Sir Keir Starmer announced £75million of new money for Britain’s Border Force and said he was determined to crack down on the people-smuggling gangs. It’s thought over 700 people were smuggled into Scotland last year as modern slaves, many of them from Vietnam.

It’s Remembrance Sunday this weekend, a time to remember the lessons of the World Wars and those suffering in the current wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. Among President-elect Trump’s sound-bites during the campaign was a promise to end

both of these dreadful wars. I wonder what his plans will turn out to be. Compromise with Putin and back Netanyahu? They are the kind of simplistic solutions that appeal to him, never mind the collateral damage and the long-term consequences.

We are entering a madder, and more dangerous, world.