



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

August 2010 Newsletter

Well by all accounts a good night was had by all at the last club night, everyone I've spoken to have said the music was fantastic and the acts created the best atmosphere there has been in the club for a while.

Joe Moore and Sharon Nixon from Ireland were supported by Nickles and Dimes, however I'm told it wasn't their usual line up. I know that George and Pete, Mr Nicol himself, were unavailable (not sure about Billy), however joining Nigel and Alistair were Ernie Whiteoak and Davie Holland, that brilliant steel player. I would like to thank them very much; they clearly had a long night as, aside from playing their own spot, they also provided the backing for Joe and Sharon.

Joe was as good as ever. We know when he's playing we are guaranteed a night of superb country music delivered as only Joe can, with that voice of his that brings you out in goose pimples. The young lady on next caused quite a sensation Sharon is certainly a bright lively little thing - she had the whole crowd with her right from the start and had the place bouncing. Her voice is also very distinctive - it has a warble to it when she sings some numbers, but she very confidently delivered everything from Patsy Cline to the Dixie Chicks. Alongside being one of the most popular female singers in Ireland at the moment Sharon certainly appeared to be a big hit with the members of NNCMC. Don't think we've seen the last of her!!!!

Of course we were thinking about you all when we were enjoying ourselves across in the Emerald Isle. We tried to phone and check in on Friday night but couldn't get network coverage. Despite reservations before we went regarding change of venue and wondering what acts would turn up, we had a ball. I thought the Festival was very good despite the reduction of American acts, and the Clan Ree Complex worked well as a venue (best yet). There were three stages inside and the big stage was outside in the car park. It was lovely - both in the sunshine throughout the day, and again at night when it got dark, with even the odd shower adding to the atmosphere. For us it was a bonus staying in the hotel as we didn't have to queue in the morning, and another perk was the after-gig parties held in the bar after each night - as if we needed to party on, but you know us we never learn!!!

After arriving in Belfast on the Friday, Bettine, Edwin, Ally and I did the tourist bit & on the way to Letterkenny we stopped at the Giants Causeway and the rope bridge - thought we better have some culture. At night we met some of the other troops from Thurso, namely Jenny & Darren, and Jessie & Calum, we went into town for something to eat and checked out the local pubs before heading back to the hotel. There was live music in the bar (country of course) & the guy was very good so we soon had them all joining us on the dance floor, breaking the ice and making friends with our company for the weekend. Well my night was made when Charlie Allen appeared in the bar with guitar over his shoulder. Charlie was one of the American acts we saw last year and thought very good. Of course like groupies we had to go and blether to him and pose for photos, then as a bonus before the end of the night he treated us to a few songs.

Up bright and breezy on Saturday morning and a good Irish fry-up sorted us out and we were raring to go once again. Among the acts we watched on Saturday were The Murphys, Hugo McLoughlin & Off The Cuff, Jimmy Buckley, Justin McGurk, Benn Sisters, Charlie Allen, and of course the highlight, Gene Watson. Typically on cue it started raining when he came on stage however everyone put the brollies up, jackets on, and just stood and sang along enthralled, he makes it seem so effortless. Of course instead of being sensible and going to our beds we had another party in the bar - well most of us as some had an early night for some reason, no names mentioned...

Bettine and I revived ourselves with a swim before breakfast and off we went again. We started the day by listening to Pam Jackson - she was very good and a relatively new singer, however if you watch Hot Country you will have seen her on that.

Outside kicking off the day's entertainment was a young man with a big future, 10 year old Simon Donegan again a recent Hot Country favourite. Simon might not have much height but he sure has plenty confidence and personality, needless to say he couldn't fail but to have the audience eating out of his hand. His spot was country not Irish as I had expected and the highlight was when he sung a number called *Living my Dream* which he wrote himself about his heroes in country music.

Thomas and Fhiona were next on our agenda before Derek Ryan (a new one on me) - a very young good looking guy who went down a storm, we then caught Mike Denver and Nathan Carter before Mary B and Paul. Sharon Nixon was next and I could see why you all enjoyed her on Friday (particularly the men) she had them all rocking there also.

At night we caught some of Tony Kerr, Brian Coll, Susan McCaan, and Brendan Quinn before the headliners, Hal Ketchum and Gene Watson, brought the festival to a close. I thought that Hal Ketchum was very poor looking he was thin and gaunt and just didn't seem to be on form at all, voice was a good as ever thankfully. Gene once again created a fantastic atmosphere - everyone was so chilled and relaxed we were all singing along and dancing. Of course once again we had to join the end of festival party - apart from the early bedders - and I don't think a certain gentleman in our party saw Gene Watson yet, but he did justify it by saying it was his fault for being on so late he got tired waiting for him - well that's his excuse!

We got a chance to speak to Justin McGurk and do a bit of last socialising, drinking and dancing like the top of the day before going to bed. As I said earlier, contrary to what I expected, we had a brilliant weekend and the venue definitely played a large part in that. All the artists we knew were delighted to see us - both the Club and our Festival were well plugged. Some of them who didn't expect to see us there i.e. Brendan got a right surprise, and others like Mary B, Thomas and Fhiona and Country Features stopped and had the crack. I even caught a glimpse of Seamus Magee at one point - he looked and sounded the same as he did all these years ago. It was great catching up and having the banter with old friends we knew from Ireland to Shetland also meeting lots of new people - Jessie you better build an extension on your house judging by the amount of people Calum asked to stay at yours over Easter!

True to form we managed to get ourselves interviewed for Hot Country. Goodness knows what nonsense we all spoke but by that time we maybe weren't making much sense. Hugh will probably take one look at it and decide he can't give it air play. I bet Margaret and James Simpson wished they had never got involved with us they ended up in the middle of it also. Now I had no intention of letting the cat out of the bag and telling who had an early night on Saturday, but Calum announced to everyone on air, however he did a Cinderella again on Sunday - as did others.

As I said we had some laughs but the one that cracked me up was when a certain person met George Hamilton IV in the corridor and said to him 'Hey George where's the other 3' - I'll need to be bribed to tell you who it was.

Monday, and not in the best of health, we had a long drive down to Carlow to see Gene Watson in concert. The venue was the Mount Wolseley Hotel and Country Club - boy was it posh. Total luxury - had its own golf course and heli-pad, however believe it or not we can do posh when we like without lowering the tone.

Again we landed lucky because we were staying there and got seats in the 2nd row, Ray Lynam opened the show while Philomena was on next, she then called Ray back on stage and they did a duet set together - the whole spot as magical as ever.

Gene had told us at the festival that his own Farewell Party Band weren't able to travel with him due to illness, so he used the same house band of brilliant musicians that were at the Festival. Charlie Allen was there again, he also supported Gene on stage and did his own spot, poor man will be thinking I'm stalking him!

Despite Gene suffering badly from a sore throat he put on a tremendous show - its just natural for him, he just stood and sang hit after hit, and yes Jean he still had the creases in his jeans. Philomena nearly dropped when she saw us; it took her a minute to click as she said she wouldn't expect to see us in Ireland. She had been playing in Scotland over the weekend and still hadn't been home, however she looked none the worse of it she was just her usual.

That was the end of the country music. We spent Tuesday night with mates, and on Wed night in Belfast we managed to get tickets for the stage premier of Dancing Shoes - the life story of George Best. It was excellent; at times we were roaring and laughing while other bits had the tears running down our faces, particularly at the end when he was in hospital along with another sporting great, Alex Higgins. They were recounting their life styles and the evils of drink - probably more poignant as Alex had only been buried that week.

Gerry Ford and wife Joan are now settling down to their life in Australia. All their furniture arrived safely and they are hoping to buy a house, they are also all set to buy a car as they now have their driving licences. They were at a country festival last weekend and thoroughly enjoyed themselves; although they did mention it was slightly different than our events in as much as they didn't sell booze - only tea and coffee! Looks like things are falling into place for them at long last.

I was reading that one of country's great songwriters, Hank Cochrane, had died recently aged 74. Hank was the ex-husband of Jeannie Seely, and wrote such hits as *I Fall To Pieces* and George Strait hits *The Chair* and *Ocean Front Property*.

I also noticed that another country veteran Don Williams is all set to make a come back - he is currently touring in the States, but hopes to come across the pond in 2011.

I spoke to Kay and Gordon following their return from Canada and they were telling me that they thoroughly enjoyed the Alan Jackson concert they went to. I noticed that he had to sell his house for 10 million dollars less than the asking price, but still managed to get 28 million for it!

Did any of you manage to catch the recent programme on a few weeks back about the life story of Merle Haggard? It was excellent compulsive viewing. I think what made it different from some of the other biographies that we see was that Merle himself was telling the story, and no holds barred. He brought on guests to tell how they had featured in his life, and of course this included ex-wife Leona. I thought he looked quite poorly, and in fact someone said over the course of the festival that he now had secondary cancer and was quite ill.

I got a letter the other day on behalf of Cash For Kids - the Moray Firth charity who support terminally ill children from remote areas who have to travel to Inverness or further afield for treatment, and provide support for other disadvantaged children. They are holding a fundraiser in Elgin Town hall on Friday 1st October and the music is provided by The Jacks plus our own popular young band the Chicken Pickers. If you would like to go along and support this good cause and listen to some great country music tickets cost £10 and can be purchased from 01463 227700.

There's no doubting what my record of this month is - it's a duet album from Amber Digby and Justin Trevino called *Keeping Up Appearances*. It's country music magic; every track a winner - they are great separately but together something special.

On Friday we ran a dance as part of our gala week celebrations along with Thurso Town Improvements, and the music was provided by our award-winning local band Slange Ava. The boys put on an excellent night and everyone who was there had a ball. The only comment was that we could have done with a few more coming along to support us, however it was their loss.

Well I think I have rambled on long enough remember at the end of the month we present that popular Irish singer Paddy O'Brien, along with local band Kate Bain, so see you all there.

Until next time.

Keep it Country

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCCMC

P.S. will get some photos on the web site soon