



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

July 2011 Newsletter

I've been away jet-setting again since last show so will have to rely on my ever fading memory!

For the show we had something new in the form of Three Card Trick, along with the popular Barry Doyle Duo.

Barry, from County Down, and Martin, from County Antrim, played a predominantly country spot but had to oblige the Farmer Dan fans and put on his wellies, climb aboard the tractor and sing a few numbers. Barry has a great singing voice (and in my opinion should stick to singing country), told some great stories, and before long had the crowd eating out of his hands and the dance floor heaving.

Barry and Martin are both really nice guys who clearly enjoyed their night looking totally relaxed on stage. Their popularity with the members was evident by the amount of CD's they were selling, snapping up Barry's new country album along with the Farmer Dan ones.

When we book something new I always get a bit jittery and wonder how it will go down with the members. Thankfully, when I heard Three Card Trick doing their sound check I knew we had nothing to worry about this time.

The band is made up of Glen Rodgers and Les Evans from Essex, and John Keys from Kent. Despite this being the bands first trip north Glen was a familiar face to many. He is part of the Phil Mack country show on Sky's Showcase channel which goes out on Monday nights after Hot Country.

Now I had heard Glen sing on the programme which certainly hadn't done him any favours - what a voice!!! At times spell bounding. They delivered a very varied programme some new country, some old, some receiving the Three Card Trick adaptation, all perfectly delivered. I think the lads were a bit nervous not knowing what to expect from a club in the north tip of Scotland, but they very quickly chilled as the audience warmed to them and they realised there was no language barrier, we all talk the same - Good Old Country Music.

The following Friday saw a fairly large contingent of us from NNCCMC go across the water to the Emerald Isle to attend the Country Fest in Letterkenny, Co Donegal. Once again the festival was held in The Clanree hotel and leisure complex which we knew from last year worked well as a venue. We were all lucky enough to get rooms there for the weekend, so once the cars were parked on Friday night they didn't move again until Monday morning, late on!!!

Now speaking about cars, well I know the motto of the weekend was what happens in Ireland stays in Ireland, however I don't think anyone actually believed that would happen - my motto is share things!

All 10 of us flew from Inverness to Belfast and were picking up three hire cars at the Airport - well guess who nearly never got one; Ally remembered that he'd forgotten his driving licence once we were at the pick up desk, first row. Asked him when leaving Thurso if he was sure he had everything to which he replied 'do you think I'm stupid' - I rest my case, and I may add this is not the first time this has happened!!! Thankfully the guy behind the desk was sympathetic he had our details on the computer since last year and after Ally made a phone call to DVLA, we were set.

However it took us a little while longer to get on the road. The others got cars which were too small to accommodate them and their luggage (too many checked shirts and cowboy boots). After being upgraded to bigger models they discovered one had baldy tyres and out of date road tax, so by the time we got out of the airport we could have been in Letterkenny.

Not to worry on the road at last, but not for long though as Calum decided his car needed petrol so we found somewhere to fuel both it and ourselves. Over lunch the boys decided we needed refreshments for the room. Well trust us we found the only Spar supermarket in Ireland that didn't sell alcohol, yes true we got our mixers but no spirits!!

No more mishaps we had a nice run down to Letterkenny, finding a supermarket with drink en route, after getting ourselves settled we met up and headed into town.

We knew Stephen Smyth was playing in Josie's Bar so needless to say we found ourselves there until the wee small hours. Stephen was recording a video for his new single so the TV cameras were there and a great night was had by all.

Up bright and breezy a good plate of porridge (some had it laced with whisky) and Irish fry up had us set up for the day, ready for more punishment.

The venue once again included 3 stages inside and the big acts on the one outside. The weather was brilliant - a few spots of rain on the Sunday but other than that it was hot and sunny, with factor 30 the order of the day for some.

This year there was a distinct lack of American acts with Charlie Alan, Joni Harms Clinton Gregory, and Georgette Jones not turning up, which put the programme a wee bit off. I won't go in to justifying why as everyone made their own assumptions, but I won't accept the reason announced from the stage that J.W. Promos wanted to promote Irish talent either.

Anyway that aside we had a great weekend enjoyed the acts that were there and never stopped laughing.

The morning was spent catching up with folks and making new acquaintances. We had a good blether with young Simon Peters and his family who, along with the other two youngsters, kicked the weekend off as The Three Amigos.

Three young men oozing confidence and enthusiasm - the crowd certainly got entertainment value from them; hiccups with sound never put them off their stride and they carried on regardless.

Mingling outside we met a lot of Irish folk we had spent time socialising with last year and also some who had travelled up to our event. Darryn and Jenny were receiving tuition from some of the best jivers in Ireland (as seen on TV) to improve their skills. Darryn progressed so much that he can now do 'two at a time' show off!! Watch him in the Legion folks.

In preparation for The Indians coming on stage, Mary and Jessie donned their feathers looking very much the part. Their head gear was admired by many with lots of photographs including one with the big chief, well done squaws, sorry girls for entering into the spirit of things.

It was difficult to catch everyone we wanted to see with the 4 different stages, so did a lot of dashing back and fore between them all - this again wasn't helped by the change of schedules.

During the course of Saturday, amongst others, we managed to catch Derek Ryan, Jimmy Buckley, Stephen Smyth, Robert Mizzell & Brian Coll. We also caught up and had a chat to Tony Kerr, and Trevor Loughrey who we hope to have in the club later this year. Old friends, Robbie and Florence - Country Features who will be with us next show, and also Thomas Maguire & Fhiona Ennis who couldn't quite believe they had won our Band Of The Year Award in the club this year again.

Bringing Saturday night to a close was Philomena Begley who was really on form, belting out hit after hit, and putting on a first class show easily living up to her title of Queen of Country Music.

Now you'd think by now that we would have learned sense and go straight to bed but why break the habit of a life time, we ended up in the bar and partied on dancing the night away.

Some went to bed sooner than others but I am pleased to say that Calum managed to pace himself this year and kept going to the bitter end.

For a while in the morning I wished I had gone straight to bed, but soon came round and was raring to go again, another beautiful sunny day.

Opening up outside was Gerry Guthrie. Now I had seen him on Hot Country but only ever singing the one song so wondered what like he would be doing a whole spot. Well he was brilliant - for me one of the most enjoyable Irish acts of the weekend and, I would say, definitely heading for the top. He said he had been in the club when he played in Shaun Cuddy's band - let's hope we manage to get him back again as I'm sure he would go down a storm.

Inside at the same time was Mary B and Paul Gallagher who we had spoken to in the morning and said we would go along and support them. Mary was her usual bubbly self put on a lively show, and even gave our club a few mentions.

Back outside we watched Ray Lynam who, to everyone's delight, invited Philomena on stage with him to do a few duets which fair took us back in time - pure nostalgia.

Another party from Caithness at the festival were Derek Anderson and Jean, along with some of their friends. Their room looked down on to the main stage and they spent a fair bit of time in it watching the acts on stage and having their refreshments!!!! Pink boas, feathers and cowboy hats were the order of the day and Derek thought he was with a hen party, but Philomena put him right and burst their bubble when she called them old roosters - poor Jean, it was from a distance though!

Brendan Quinn another legend in country music did what he always does best and entertained the crowd, receiving a terrific reception from fans of all ages. He performed all the numbers he's associated with, finishing of course with his Neil Diamond tribute.

I thought he looked well - he has a new album on release called *Gotta Get To You* and on it he plays some good country numbers but also some middle of the road tracks, and it's brilliant. Yes like Philomena - another one who can't fail and gives all these youngsters a run for their money.

Whilst outside chatting to Brendon we caught up with another blast from the past Seamus Magee. Jessie was reminiscing with him about the good old nights we had in the Lieurary hall.

After tea we were building ourselves up for the finale, and in my opinion the best spots of the weekend, the two American acts Leona Williams and son Ron (both of whom have been part of our Festivals). Two genuine country music spots delivered flawlessly, I wondered if the majority of the crowd would appreciate them as their style of country is different to the Irish, but I am pleased to say on the whole they went down a storm.

I managed to get a chance to catch up with them both which was lovely. Ron was laughing saying that when he heard there were a crowd of us there he thought 'Oh Sh--- I've got the same shirt on', well we would have been quite happy if he had taken it off!!

Whilst out in the hallway waiting for Ron I unfortunately - for the second time - managed to get myself interviewed for Hot Country. I thought it would be that bad they wouldn't show us, but no I was cringing watching it on TV. Aside from the voice I have been deluding myself that I can't possibly be coming 60 - I'm afraid the wrinkles let me down.

I also bumped into Sean Green who is a country radio presenter. I had been in regular contact with him prior to our Festival and arranged interviews for him with our artists, and also did a telephone interview myself, all which was very helpful in promoting our event.

Good putting a face to the voice - Sean's latest claim to fame is that he wrote the much discussed e-mail to the Phil Mac Country Show, informing them what he thought of the show and their definition of country music.

By the time I got back to the gang it was time to get hyped up for the finale and star of the show young Nathan Carter.

Nathan is certainly the biggest Irish country music act around at the moment, he's a nice guy and a brilliant all round entertainer covering all styles of music.

His new CD called *Time of My Life* features his hit single *One For The Road* which, at Calum's insistence, became our theme tune for the weekend (luckily he managed to keep going to hear it live). Terry also has a new theme tune - his is *Ring Of Fire!!!*

Nathan is Jenny's favourite and she informed him she had him in her bed and the bath - I'm assured on her Ipod.

Had to be done - another after-show party saying cheerio to people and having 'one for the road' mind you I had a much earlier night than some had.

I spoke to Crawford Bell who plays (sometimes) as part of Nathan's band. Crawford as you may remember is a member of the Galaxy Showband, and is a brilliant musician in great demand supporting such names as Daniel O'Donnell and Van Morrison on stage.

Monday morning arrived all too soon and we were heading down to Roscommon, however take off was delayed due to some being over the limit to drive. Jessie kept us right with her portable breathalyser but we had to point out to her that maybe she shouldn't have been going around offering everyone a blow!

Our hotel in Roscommon was very posh and we didn't let ourselves down!! We had time to have a swim or sleep before a very enjoyable dinner, then passed time in the bar waiting for Nathan Carter to come on stage at 12.00.

I thought our show and gala dances were wild but they had nothing on this. The Race Dance easily 700 people (no health and safety restrictions) all jiving and going mad - poor Mary had to put her shower cap on to stop the drinks spilling on her head.

I thought we might have flagged, but no we kept going and got into the swing of things, dancing on the chairs by the end of the night. Bettine would have been so proud of us.

We had decided we would go to the races the next day however we discovered the first race wasn't until 5.00pm which was too late, so we took a walk into town instead.

Unfortunately we had our first downpour - I think Calum had done a rain dance and his prayers were answered we had to go into the pub to pass a few hours.

Robert Mizzell was providing the music for the dance that night. We managed to get a better table and the crowd appeared more sedate, well at least we managed to get a bit of space to dance.

After passing the time with Robert and some of the band at the end of the night we, as residents, managed to get late drinks - not that we were needing them but as we kept saying *One For The Road*.

Jessie gave the nod the next day when it was time to get on the road again and travel back to Belfast, Darryn did a great job as navigator and we all arrived safe and sound. Definitely a very subdued company ventured out that night - maybe it was because there was no country music on tap but more likely it was because we had burned ourselves out.

Early night and up bright in the morning headed for the airport and home, despite being shattered we'd had a great time, never stopped laughing and all got along fine with each other, so thanks everyone for your company. Roll on next year and will get some pics on the web site shortly.

I haven't mentioned Val and Donald in the report - they must have been too quick for me to catch out or maybe they were warned that everything is noted and passed on through cyber space. Not too late they better watch out next time.

Whilst in Ireland we heard the sad news that Jimmy Nicolson or Nicky had died following a long battle with cancer. Apart from being a good friend Nicky was one of our Festival supporters and main sponsors who couldn't do enough to help us out, he will be a big miss. He loved his country music and one of his heroes was Gene Watson so we are delighted that Nicky was well enough to see him at Easter.

The Dynamos are playing in the Legion this weekend - it's not that often we see them in Caithness so hopefully they will get a good crowd. Looks like another weekend I'll have to force myself to go out - mind you not that I need much forcing.

The same night the Indians are in Lybster - typical that everything is on at once.

I had an e-mail from Michael Gill telling me he is running a charity dance in the Burnett Arms Hotel, Banchory on the 24th Sept with music by The Jacks. If you are in the area why not go along and support them.

Well I think that's about it for now.

Until next time, keep it Country.

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCCM