



# Northern Nashville Country Music Club

## May 2012 Newsletter

It seems like such a long time ago, and so much has happened, since I wrote the last newsletter, that I am seriously struggling to remember what happened during our club night in March, never mind before that!

I think last time we were getting ready to go to the Granite City weekend in Dyce. Well we had a great time - sat back and listened to some brilliant country music. It wasn't a full house, just a comfortable number, which made it all the more friendly and relaxing, the accommodation and food as usual brilliant. We sat at the table with 4 young ladies from the Fraserburgh area - very nice girls - we shared a few laughs, dances and drams. I saw lots of people we hadn't seen in a while so it was good to catch up.

It was great meeting up with Bill Conlon and the Band, I had actually forgotten how good they sounded and I thought it's a shame they are so far away so it's not easy to get them to play in this area. Also enjoyed hearing Blue Horizon - Christine has a lovely voice - more really nice people, and they will be appearing in the NNCCM later this year. It was the first time for me hearing Lorraine MacMillan Band - enjoyed their spot and again they too will be in the club during the summer.

The line up released for next year looks another cracker, shame we are missing their Festival in June but can't catch it all.

The club night in March was held a week earlier than usual to accommodate the Festival. I do know that we had an absolute cracking night with some great entertainment provided by Manson Grant & the Dynamos and Shooter.

Part of the Mne media team who film our Festival on behalf of BBC Alba were there, I hope the thought of them filming the show didn't put anyone off coming if it did then they missed a good night. Following feedback from ourselves regarding last year's television coverage of the Festival, they agreed to concentrate this year on more local stories of interest.

During the day they spent time with Manson & Robert in the recording studio and also with the Chicken Pickers.

The reason they were in the Legion was that they were interested in the fact that we had been going for 25 years and wanted to include that as part of their Festival screening, as clearly without the club there wouldn't be a Festival. They wanted a bit of background about the club, talk about how it started, meet some past committee members and see some memorabilia. They are a great bunch, they didn't wait long and certainly weren't intrusive and hey it's all good publicity for the club.

Anyway back to the show. Shooter, a five piece band based in the Glasgow Ayrshire area, started the night in fine form. This is the first time the band has been in the club although I have seen them twice in the Triple C Club.

Lee Blackstone provides lead vocals and covers a wide and varied selection of country music, I thought the first time I heard them they leaned towards the modern country but this time thought they had it just right and covered everything. Their line up also includes the very talented and accomplished steel guitar player Davie Holland who is no stranger to us having supported Heather Myles on stage when she was last with us.

The boys must have been sick of seeing that A9 as they had travelled up it the week before and played in Wick, however it didn't seem to bother them - they very quickly got the dancers on their feet and appeared to enjoy their night and played to the crowd.

Firm favourites with the NNCCM crowd our own Manson Grant & The Dynamos followed and did what they always do on stage - entertained!

Young Brandon Macphee, who was very recently awarded the prestigious title of British Accordion Champion - quite an achievement for a teenager, is now part of the bands line up.

The band covered their full programme of music and Brandon, along with treating us to a few Scottish numbers on his 'boxie', also played guitar and shared vocals with Manson & Keith.

I thought a very brave young man to tackle singing a number like *May Way*, however nothing seems to faze him - he's a very pleasant guy destined for a big future in music. Considering we had taken the show in a week we had a really good turn out - it maybe took a wee while for the dancers to get going, but once they hit the dance floor there was no stopping them. Yes a great night and a super atmosphere.

During the show Sandy announced the winners of our Band of the Year Award for 2011; the results were very close maybe a wee bit of a surprise to some. In first place came Lisa McHugh and her Band, who just pipped Thomas and Fhiona (winners the last two times), and a close third was Sharon Nixon. Worthy winners of the Sandy Swanson Memorial Trophy, for our local band this time were The Chicken Pickers, again followed very closely by last years winners Slange Ava.

That past, the following week it was down to the hectic regime of getting the venue set up for the Festival. On the Saturday morning I ran out to catch Ally before he left for Halkirk. Unfortunately my feet went in one direction and I went in another and down the back steps I went - his fault of course for not going out the front door! I was scared to try and get up but relieved when I could, however I had made a right of mess of my foot - it was badly swollen, black and blue and, of course, very painful. Well cowboy boots back in the cupboard only one pair of boots would fit, talk about bad timing - nothing for it but popping the pain killers and hobbling around. Was told to rest it and sit with it up as much as I could, I tried but not easy. However I did resign myself to the fact that I could sit and watch some of the acts at the Festival without feeling guilty, and of course still give orders!! Doc says I was really lucky to get off so lightly, it's slowly getting better returning to a normal colour, have strapping off now, but it will learn me to watch where I put my feet in future and stop rushing around.

Things went reasonably smoothly during the week. The work at the riding centre was down to the very eager hard working committee and club members who turned it into a very impressive looking venue for the weekend. I don't think we were as stressed out as usual we even managed to get finished early enough on the Thursday night to meet up with the Terry White Band for a few drinks and chill out.

On the Friday morning I went along with the TV crew to meet Shirley, the lady who was flying in from California to come to the Festival. It was quite funny...at the Airport everyone was getting excited wondering what celebrity was arriving. Shirley is a very big Johnny Rodriguez fan she follows him all over America so decided she would follow him to Scotland. Hardy or what, travelling all the way on her own! She had quite a journey - in getting here she got caught up in the tornados in Texas, plane delayed, re-routed...you name it she had it. Anyway she had a ball - enjoyed every minute of the weekend, loved the music and getting the crack with everyone. She couldn't believe how friendly everyone was, and loved the dances from Alan & Calum.

In the afternoon I went with George Malcolm to entertain the residents in Bayview House and Pentland View, George was our compere again for the weekend and in the past was a member of the Duke Boys, but is now a solo artist. With George was his auntie Jessie Baillie, who is a well known musical hall entertainer in the Glasgow area, and although now almost 80 she can still put on a good turn. Jessie sang a few songs, got the residents all joining in singing and also relating to her stories from their era, a fine singer and a bit of a character, it was nice of her to give up her Good Friday to come along with us.

On the Thursday night after the Festival George put on a nights entertainment in the Legion, we the committee used it as an after-Festival get together a chance for us to have a blether, dram and compare notes and Festival post mortems. Some didn't make it as they were down with bugs; sadly they missed out on a good night, nice to see a good turn out in the Legion especially for a Thursday night.

George put on a great show sang a varied selection of country songs had us all joining in and dancing. Jessie did a wee turn which went down a bomb, they had all heard me speak about her on Friday so it was good they got to hear her themselves, we also heard a few numbers from Robbie Petrie (The Brothers) and The Munlochy Cowboy (Liam Christie). The banter was great - we could do with more nights like that, so thanks George.

So to the Festival itself. Reports and feedback have all been favourable again...we heard comments such as 'best one yet', 'gets better every year' and 'great selection of music'. I personally felt that we achieved what we set out to do, and that was to provide something to suit all tastes and styles of music.

For some people the Americans did it, other enjoyed the Irish acts, and the European and local bands were certainly well received. Although everyone had their personal favourites it would hard to choose a favourite band of the weekend, I thought this year all the acts did exceptionally well. Over the course of the weekend we heard some great music all perfectly delivered. From the time Kate Bain struck the first note and Slange Ava the last one it just went, the atmosphere was brilliant all weekend.

This year again we are pleased to report that we had capacity crowds attending our shows, with some a total sell out. The afternoon shows were all well attended with families bringing along the 'country fans of the future'.

Local young band The Chicken Pickers launched their 1<sup>st</sup> CD with us during the weekend, which I know made it feel extra special for them, and anyone who bought the album got a complimentary glass of wine and chocolates.

Before the Festival the lads were worried about being on the last spot in the afternoon or the 'graveyard shift' when most people leave early to get their tea and back for night, however as we expected they managed to keep everyone in the building and on the dance floor - Well Done Boys!!!

We noticed this year that we had more fans travelling from out with the local area and from further afield - certainly an increase in numbers from England & Ireland. This in turn meant that people who attended were genuinely interested in the music and appreciated the calibre of acts on stage, so thanks to you all who travelled to be with us and for making our event the success it was. So now it's tying up loose ends, getting the finances in order, then back to the drawing board trying to decide where we go from here & who to bring up next year!

Happily once again the weekend passed without any bother. Of course we did have the odd complaint but thankfully they were mostly to do with the hard seats, lack of tables etc. We do try to look at these issues each year to improve peoples comfort and enjoyment, but there's no easy answers - it's trial and error. This year saw the stewards decided to search people's bags on the Sunday night - something we didn't want to happen, but they had received several complaints of people drinking their own alcohol - it's a shame that some people spoilt it for everyone. Some were penalised for having water etc. - it's not as if the drink was expensive it was as cheap if not cheaper than any pub in town.

I notice that BBC Alba are currently repeating last years Festival, and I have already had a few enquiries from people who have just watched it, had never seen it before, and are interested to know about next year's Festival. So for all who have been asking what date Easter falls on next year it is the 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> March.

After a brief rest the following weekend it was away to Glasgow to see Mrs Brown's Boys. We all thoroughly enjoyed it and my head was sore with laughing after we came out - a bit rough in parts but great crack. All told another hectic weekend lots of eating drinking and socialising.

As I mentioned earlier Lisa McHugh was our Band of the Year winner - Lisa will hopefully with us in the club for our September show to receive her award. When talking to Lisa and her family at the Festival, her Mum mentioned that Lisa had only been released from hospital earlier in the week due to putting a disc out in her back. I'm sure none of you would have guessed seeing her on stage; however she was in pain which couldn't have been helped with the travelling up.

I spoke to her manager last week and he said she had been readmitted with the same problem following her return to Ireland, but he was happy to report that Lisa was at home recovering, but will have to take things easy until it is properly healed. Shame she's very young (and super fit) to have back problems - lets hope it's not going to keep recurring, she looks as if she has a busy schedule during the coming months.

Her manager let us know that last Friday she was awarded the title of New Female Vocalist of the Year by the Irish Country Sounds, and on 4<sup>th</sup> June she is away again to Nashville to make an appearance as part of the fan fair celebrations. Next Friday sees the release of her new 14 track album called *Dreams Come To Life*, which is exactly what has happened to Lisa in the last sixteen months.

I read recently that Merle Haggard was now on the mend after a bad start to the year when he had double pneumonia, and then he received treatment for colon polyps and stomach ulcers.

Country Legend George Jones is also now recuperating at home after having respiratory problems, he has been ordered to rest until mid May to ensure complete recovery.

Keith Urban has now fully recuperated from vocal chord surgery to remove a polyp, he then spent three weeks without talking never mind singing.

I knew I was going to enjoy Jerry Kilgore at the Festival and I was right - just a pure country act singing the kind of stuff I like. Got a copy of his new CD called *Telephone T.X.* at the Festival and love it all - he sang some tracks off it when he was there...my favourites are *Can't Hide A Heartache*, *If Ya Wanna Keep Your Beer Cold* & *Telephone Tx*.

Seems like Jerry made such an impression when he was over here that he is coming back in July as a support act for Gene Watson on his English dates.

When I'm not playing Jerry these days I have Will Bannister on... He is the young guy I told you took Wembley by storm. I love the title track *Turned Her On To Country* - he's another artist with a pure country sound.

Looks like he's also set to return to England later in the year (maybe Halkirk next year) and is being supported on stage by that fine bunch of musicians C'est La Vie.

They look like they are going to be really busy for the remainder of the year - in June they provide support for Jeannie Seeley & T.G. Shepherd on their tour, then Larry Gatlin in November, and hearing them this time and watching them back Moe Bandy I can see why.

Was reading Stewart Fenwick's article in the latest CMDS issue on the latest inductees into the Country Music Hall Of Fame. They are Connie Smith, inducted under the 'Veterans Era Artist', Garth Brooks in the 'Modern Era Artist' and Hargus Pig Robbins 'Recording and/or Touring Musician active'. All justly deserved winners, but I thought Brooks was already in there.

I was looking at the list of entertainers who are scheduled to play at this years' Fan Fest in Nashville. I noticed that the Mavericks have been added to appear on the Sunday night, and Roger Ryan confirmed this in his newsletter, adding they have brought out a new album to coincide with their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I can't believe it was that long ago that, as groupies, Bettine and myself were on the tour bus with them getting our T-Shirts signed (thinking we were it)!

Last Friday night was our April club night and what a night it was... brilliant...both bands first times in the club but guaranteed it won't be their last.

To kick off the night was Texas Back - brother and sister duo Gavin and Debbie from County Durham- were introduced to country music by their parents who were big fans.

They have been on the road together since 2006, playing many clubs and Festivals around the UK and we've also seen them being nominated for many awards.

Both shared vocals and displayed fine harmonies and impressive guitar playing, choosing a wide range of songs from country artists such as Patsy Cline to Pam Tillis and Shania Twain, Hank Williams to Tim McGraw.

I particularly enjoyed their version of *People Are Crazy*, and a self penned number by Gavin dedicated to his niece Shannon, Debbie's daughter.

A very friendly and lively pair who clearly enjoyed their night, and meeting and chatting to the members.

Although the star of the show, Shaun Loughrey, was paying his first visit to NNCCMC, he was familiar to everyone due to his weekly appearances on Hot Country.

Shaun and his band The Country Siders, stood in for Patrick Feeney who, on the advice of his doctors, was forced to cancel his tour.

Shaun was born in Manchester to Irish parents - his father being the well known country singer Johnny Loughrey. Following Johnny's death Shaun sang at a family wedding and, as they say, 'the rest is history' - he moved to Ireland and his career has gone from strength to strength. Shaun and his band gave us the full entertainment package...covering all styles of music and, like the title of his new double album *Two Sides of Me*, he did just that, singing some of his favourite Irish numbers, and also showcasing many American country songs by some of his country influences.

Shaun and his band, and not forgetting manager Marty, were great guys who thoroughly enjoyed the crack and Shaun, to the delight of the members, did his dance routine.

I can see how Shaun is very busy across in Ireland but hope he still finds time to fit fans across the water into his busy schedule sometime in the future. Yes a great night enjoyed by everyone.

Before I go, our Festival Programme designer is now able to offer a limited run of the 2007 Festival Programme for any collectors who missed out when the programmes didn't arrive from the printer in time. Price is £4.00 each and they are happy to post them out for if required at reasonable rates. Please e-mail [robin@rom-art.co.uk](mailto:robin@rom-art.co.uk) for further details.

Think that's just about it for now another hectic few weeks coming up. Going to Inverness to see Ladies of Country and of course Wick to Derek Ryan, and must also think about getting organised for holidays. It's scary how quick it all comes round.

Sorry to go for ever but that's what happens when I fall behind.

Until Next Time

Keep it Country

*Christine*

Christine Gray  
Chairperson NNCCMC