



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

May 2013 Newsletter

The last newsletter seems such a long time ago I will probably struggle to remember what on earth has happened since then.

As I recall last time I told you that we were bringing our March show forward to the middle of the month, holding our AGM, and then having a dance to Manson Grant & the Dynamos. This was due to the fact that our normal end of the month date coincided with the start of our Festival.

Our AGM was pretty straightforward - no surprises there then - the committee were all voted back in again, however we know that's its probably not because we're doing such a good job more that no one else wants it!

If you remember The Chicken Pickers were winners of the Sandy Swanson Memorial Band of the Year Award in 2011 as voted by our Club members. However it has been impossible for us to get the boys all together to come along to the Club in order to receive their award now that Mikie and Andrew are studying in Edinburgh. It was suggested we do it at the Festival but since it's a Club award that's where it should be done so this time, before we started the show, Michael kindly came along and accepted the awards on behalf of the band, we are sorry they had to wait so long but better late than never.

Time for the Dynamos and another prize winner on the stage - there's just no holding back young Brandon...he recently added another award to his already impressive list. For the second year running he received the Open Button Box Championship Award in Polmont with an outstanding score of 99 out of 100, what an incredible talent way beyond his years. Anyway firm favourites in the Club, Manson Grant & the Dynamos did what they do best...entertained! During the show they covered their full programme of music, Brandon, along with some Scottish numbers on his 'boxie', also treated us to some Cajun music and shared vocals with Manson and Keith. The band released a new 12 track of all country numbers shortly before Christmas entitled simply *Manson Grant and the Dynamos Country*, they treated us to some numbers from the album traditional songs like *Daydreams About Night Things* and *Pass Me By* to more modern numbers ones like *Superstar*. Yes we had a super night with lots of brilliant music and fun.

The following weekend it was once again time to start the arduous task of setting up the Riding Centre for the Festival weekend. I know I keep saying the months fly in but where on earth did that year go? Of course it wouldn't be normal if everything ran smoothly - we need these hitches to keep us on our toes.

On the Wednesday morning I had been down the street and when I came in Ally said the internet was down... well I though 'that's fine he can't buy anything' and ignored it. I had a few phone calls to make so thought I would do that first only to discover the phone line was dead: yes needless to say I immediately blamed him for mucking around with cables etc. trying to sort out the internet.

However it turned out to be much worse than that when we contacted our provider Talk Talk they told us that the main cable for the area had been severed - thankfully they agreed to divert our house calls to my mobile.

This helped until Friday night when Vodafone went down leaving us with literally no contact with the outside world until Tuesday.

Not handy, and Bettine was in the same situation which was a nightmare for her with folk trying to get in contact for Festival tickets, we spent time over the weekend looking for somewhere we could access our e-mails and make phone calls.

It didn't help that we had two family bereavements. and people were trying to get in contact with us and we had arrangements to make.

So technology is fine when it's working - I remember saying, not that many years ago, what did I need computer and mobile phone for there's no way now I could do without it!

So despite all that and some other set backs we managed to get the venue set up and looking the part just before 'kick off' time on Friday.

I am not going to go through all the acts but there wasn't a bad one on stage all weekend...everyone did an amazing job for us, and there was certainly a good balance of music something to suit all tastes. We did have the usual problem of heating the venue - through the day it was lovely and warm, but once the frost set in at night we were fighting a losing battle... the heating system just couldn't cope with -8 degrees outside, it just wasn't getting a chance to heat the air it was taking in. The situation wasn't helped by the fact that the blow heaters also went on the blink; we can only apologise and hope it didn't spoil people's enjoyment - most folk just got with it either put on an extra layer or danced.

On a brighter note feedback has again been very positive, with people telling us that we had a winner and had, over the course of the weekend, showcased some first class artistes, and heard some great real country music.

Numbers were down slightly on the last couple of years, the plus side being that there was more room in the venue, but of course the downside was that we lost money.

To date we haven't had a wash up meeting yet or have a full financial overview to decide whether it's financially viable for us to go ahead next year.

We are not sure why sales were down; have folk lost interest, maybe just the recession or perhaps the fact that Easter was early.

We have been told that people were saying it was because they weren't familiar with the line up when I can appreciate that this happens most years and done deliberately. We try and look for something different, and I think by now true country fans trust our judgement - we haven't let them down yet.

To go down the route of running a Festival with the acts that are familiar to everyone would also be counter productive... there are Irish bands doing the circuit around the north east constantly so people wouldn't bother travelling.

Anyway on that note some feedback from yourselves would be helpful, it would be good to know what kinds of acts you would like us to include, maybe some of the most popular ones back?

Do we move dates to later in the year - May weekend will it make any difference?

Please feel free to pass your comments on the website or to myself on teengray@hotmail.com.

Feedback we have received (these have all been positive) is now on the Festival web site along with some photos for you to look at.

I think we have just about recovered but it seriously takes us longer each year - no prizes for guessing why!! We were so tired Monday & Tuesday I was like a zombie ... every time I sat down I slept.

On Saturday the 13th some of us went to the Legion to hear our compere George Malcolm play - I think half of us were suffering with the cold so weren't really on top form. However we had a good night it was fine to sit and listen to the music.

With George was his auntie Jessie Baillie, a well known music hall entertainer and singer in the Central belt, who even at the age of 80 can still put on a good turn, so we were delighted when she got up sang a few songs and told some stories

I must thank both Jessie and George - they took the time on Good Friday to go along and entertain the residents in Pentland View and Bayview care homes, which they all thoroughly enjoyed.

Still not feeling that great ... really tired, can't sleep at night, and every time I lie down the coughing starts, Ally and me are off to Portugal on the 9th for a week so hopefully get the batteries recharged then.

Feedback from the C2C concert in London has been favourable, looks like its going to be a regular event. I heard Vince Gill was very good, but then for me that goes without saying - he was probably the only true traditional country artiste on the bill.

Tim McGraw on his first visit to Britain just couldn't go wrong - he had the crowd eating out of his hand, belting out his hits going back to some of his older material as well as his current songs.

LeAnn Rimes performed on Sunday and many felt she was the hit of the weekend, and that her set outshone the one by the current Queen of Country, Carrie Underwood.

LeAnn showcased her new material but won the audience with her more familiar stuff like *Blue & How Do I Live*, the response and the standing ovation she received from the crowd reduced her to tears.

For those of you that are fans of LeAnn and would like to see her she will be visiting us again this year, and tickets are now on sale for her gig in the Royal Concert Hall Glasgow in September.

Closing the weekend was Carrie Underwood - again another outstanding performance, treating the crowd to all their favourites from her albums delivered in true superstar style.

Outside the main arena there were stages with acts appearing - great to see Scotland's very popular duo Raintown amongst them, recently engaged Paul and Claire are making a name from themselves promoting their contemporary twist of country, I am looking forward to seeing them as part of the Hooley in the Highland line up .

Great to see some of the best country music stars across here, I know most of the acts were too modern and rocky for me but interesting to see what next year will bring.

Sadly the BBC has come in for lots of criticism regarding their interview with Tim McGraw on The Breakfast Show, I didn't see it but apparently the presenters hadn't a clue who he was or what he has achieved in his career and sadly didn't bother to research.

Instead of commenting on his record sales, sell out concerts or awards he's won they asked him about his hat – why he wore it, if he would ever go on stage without it, etc. The presenter is said to have treated the whole interview as a joke, so once again the media haven't done themselves or country music any favours.

I had written a piece regarding George Jones being very poorly and hoped he was getting better, but sadly as I am sure you all know by now, George passed away on Friday 26th after being hospitalised with a fever and erratic blood pressure.

Well what a loss - one of the true ambassadors and the greatest living country music artist...respected and loved by everyone in the business.

I was actually listening to *By George* the tribute CD to George by Leona Williams, in particular the track *Ole George*, and thinking what is going to happen when the likes of George, Merle & Willie go (he is celebrating his 80th Birthday this week) we forget they are all getting on. 'Who Is Gonna Fill Their Shoes' who can!! What a loss to country music however he leaves some legacy.

George was currently on his farewell Grand Tour during which he would stop in 44 cities this year, before the finale his last ever concert in Nashville in November. What a line up planned - 50 stars taking part included Garth Brooks, Gene Watson, Lorrie Morgan, Alan Jackson... way too many to mention, but what a truly awesome night it would have been; maybe they will go ahead and hold a benefit night in remembrance of The Possum instead.

His funeral takes place on the 2nd May from the Grand Ole Opry House and they have announced it is to be public so everyone can attend.

During a trip to Nashville in 2005 Ally, Davie, Kenny & myself got the honour of meeting George - we had tickets for his show at the Opry and when we had earlier met up with Gail Davies she asked if we would like backstage passes – how could you refuse an offer like that!!

Anyway on the night Gail took us in as her guests and we got to wander around backstage meeting loads of stars, and the icing on the cake was when she said George had agreed to meet us - what a privilege - he was in no hurry; stood and blethered and his wife Nancy was with him, as was daughter Georgette, and they all stood with us for the inevitable photo shoot.

That night he introduced Georgette on stage for her Opry debut and they took the stage together to do some George & Tammy duets - talk about making the hairs on the back of your neck stand up – unforgettable.

Country music singer Mindy McCready was recently found dead from a gun shot wound apparently self inflicted. Poor Mindy has been a troubled and tortured soul for some time being treated for alcohol addiction and mental health issues.

She had lost the care of her sons and hadn't recovered from the suicide of her boyfriend a month earlier. Mindy rose to fame in the 90's with hits such as *Guys Do It All The Time* & *A Girl's Gotta Do*, but sadly her career took a down turn in 2004 when she became drug dependant, suffered several arrests and suicide attempts – very sad.

Nearer home some more sad news on Sunday morning the very talented British guitarist and musician Stu Page died after a very short illness. Stu was born in Yorkshire in 1954 and was into music at an early age, during his teens Stu moved to America to play in a band, returning to continue his musical career in Britain.

During the early 90's he played for us in the Viewfirth and more recently he played the Club this time as part of the Eagles tribute band the B Eagles.

Think he must have had a break from the music for a while as I hadn't heard anything about him, however I read recently he was back on the scene and on the road with his son Tom - they had bookings in Scotland which Stu had to cancel because he was ill, then later diagnosed with cancer from which sadly he couldn't be saved; another waste of talent.

On a happier note Shaun Loughrey and fiancée Carrie Benn had a baby son on the 18th April they have called him Liam John Loughrey and all are doing very well.

Shaun will be playing for us at our Club night on the 31st May this will be a busy night with a high demand for tickets so please give me a ring to reserve yours.

Time for another show last Friday night... yes they certainly come round, and what a cracker it was.

Kicking off the entertainment for us was Double Trouble, father and son duo Drew and Terry Thompson. Both guys sing lead and harmony, complementing each other on the wide range of material they cover from traditional country to middle of the road and 60's numbers.

Drew, originally from Shetland, has been in the music business for nearly 40 years and has been part of many popular bands including The Ruby Rendall Band, The Duke Boys & The Brothers. He played solo for some time before son Terry joined him 5 years ago; Terry, I noticed, is now playing mandolin and doing more singing, and has gained more confidence since we first saw him in the Club.



The guys have now released their second album called *Say You Love Me*, but sadly they didn't have any with them. Drew and Terry are great guys - they are full of fun and certainly give 100% performance enjoying themselves on stage.



Next up, making a very welcome return to the Club, were two times Band of the Year Award winners Thomas Maguire & Fhiona Ennis along with their band and of course 'The Bump'.

Fhiona looked very well and said that, although tired, she has been keeping well both her and Thomas are looking forward to the arrival of their baby in August.

They have just released their new DVD entitled *Solid As A Rock* which was filmed in the studio and on location in Ireland.

It contains a great selection of popular songs from the couple including *We're Still Together*, *We Were Made For Each Other*, *Hit Em Where It Hurts* all of which we heard on Friday night during their 3 spots. Fhiona and Thomas are both so natural on stage and interact superbly with the crowd, so it's easy to see why we had visitors travelling from as far afield as Elgin to be part of our night.

We had lots of birthday celebrations in the hall - Rona Young (Robins' wife) turned 60 at midnight, whilst Calum Elder became 50, with wife Jessie becoming 50 on Tuesday. Gordon Campbell celebrated his 60th the week before however Kay and him weren't there on Friday night - hope your not turning an old mannie now your 60 Gordon!

We really had lots of fun and crack along with brilliant entertainment from both acts which we didn't want to end, sadly however we had to call a halt as they were all heading back south - I'm sure they weren't looking forward to it at that time of night, and hope they let poor Fhiona sleep, she must have been exhausted.



We had some 10th Anniversary T-Shirts left from the Festival so both bands changed into them for their second spots - didn't think until later but the committee should have done the same.

Also on Friday night Sandy announced our Club Band of the Year winners for 2012...one or two surprises Lisa McHugh third place, Gerry Guthrie second and worthy winner, the guy who certainly wowed the crowd at our anniversary show, Johnny Brady.

Local band winners for the Sandy Swanson Memorial Award as follows; in third place Slange Ava, runners up Chicken Pickers, and winners Manson Grant & the Dynamos, so well done to them - a nice award for them in the year they celebrate 50 years in the business.

I spoke to the guys on Saturday night and they were delighted to have won - they were playing at Rona Young's surprise birthday party and we had a good night with great music and company, although some were a bit 'rough' after overindulging on Friday.

Well I think that's about it for this time but please do let us have any comments you may have regarding the Festival.

Until next time.

Keep It Country

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCCMC