



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

November 2015 Newsletter

Last time I wrote a newsletter I gave you all the summer news, now in a blink it seems that winter and Christmas is fast approaching it hardly seems credible.

I realise I am all out of my routine and haven't been keeping up with things so for that I can only apologise. Last time I wrote I said that I hoped to get away on holiday, I hadn't been feeling great prior to going and waiting results of tests but on docs advice we decided to go and I threw some things in a case, quickest pack ever.

Thankfully I felt well most of the time we were away and enjoyed the break we didn't do very much it was certainly a more laid back trip than usual. I managed to eat enjoyed a couple of drinks at night otherwise I just soaked up the sun and sat and read, I can truthfully say this is the only time I didn't put on loads of weight on holiday there were no fried breakfasts, no nice creamy sauces on my steak, and I never put an ice cream sweet, cake or cocktail in my mouth I didn't miss it (well that's my story).

A few days after I came back I went to see the surgeon hoping to get a date for my op but when I told him I had no pain just twinges no sickness and was getting back to normal he decided he wanted to sort out a couple of other things so would leave the op and see me in December. Anyway that was short lived two days later the pain was back with a vengeance and next day I knew my bile duct was blocked again I was yellow my eyes made me look like an alien I could see folk looking at me (too early for Halloween).

By the time I saw the doc my liver was on the verge of failure as my bloods were way too high so it was straight to hospital. I was in Wick for four days then went to Raigmore the plan being to put in stents to open my ducts to allow stones to pass. However I knew the stones had gone as so had the pain, and my colour was returning to normal - an MRI scan confirmed this so the surgeon said she would just take the gall bladder out as it would just happen again subsequently & put further pressure on my organs.

That was nearly three weeks ago and I am on the mend - it took me a bit longer than I thought but at least it's behind me and I don't have to worry about it happening again. I was told not to do anything for two weeks - no lifts, driving etc. for a month so a steep learning curve for Ally. He's been taking washing in for years so why did he not know how it should be hung up!!! He's lived in the house for 33 years so again how does he not know where things go - I shouldn't be too hard on him as he's trying his best - I'm still tired and just wishy washy but hopefully won't be long before I get everything sorted and enjoy a night out.

So that's the last three club nights I've missed now - more than I have in the last 25 years so no wonder I'm having withdrawal symptoms, I was also gutted that I missed the Triple C's 25th Anniversary show, and I had got tickets for my birthday for a show in Eden Court but wasn't fit for that either.

Yet again a few days before our September show we had band troubles sadly Trevor Moyles was unable to make it due to his mum being very poorly thankfully our good friend Jimmy Henry stood in for Trevor to cover his gigs.

Jimmy now resides in County Tyrone but spent years in Nashville and Canada he is a highly respected bass guitarist and session musician touring with the likes of Philomena Begley, John McNichol, Nathan Carter and Dominic Kirwan. We have seen him perform up here with some of these acts but he has also has been here with his own band Classic Country with whom he has provided backing for visiting acts from the USA including Heather Myles and Gene Watson.

Jimmy recently arranged and toured Ireland with The Golden Years of Country Music Show which was dedicated to the music of popular country singers including George Jones, Buck Owens, Don Williams and Gene Watson. I'm sure Jimmy included numbers from that show during his two excellent spots -- I was really vexed to miss him he has a brilliant voice made for delivering pure country songs and quite a character into the bargain --

Also on the bill that night were brother and sister duo Texas Back from Durham in the north of England making their third visit to the club. Debbie and Gavin have been singing and playing music together since they went to the Salvation Army Sunday school. Their interest in country music began when they were taken along with their parents to country clubs and festivals. The pair certainly enjoy their music and put on a great stage performance very lively and entertaining they cover all types of music from Patsy Cline to Randy Travis and normally include their self-penned number Shannon's Song during the course of the night.



Two new bands for our last show MT Allan and Ray Murtagh supported by Broken Note I was really looking forward to hearing them had planned to go to listen to the cabaret however by tea time I was tired so unfortunately didn't make it.

Yorkshire man M.T. Allan was making his first trip to the north with the other half of the duo Les Evans who was with us a few years back along with Glenn Rogers or Two Card Trick. Les is probably one of the most under rated talent on the British scene he has been around country music for four decades playing in bands and running an agency I think I'm right that he was awarded the service to industry award at the recent BCMAwards -- good to see him back touring he had to take time out when he was with Glenn as he was ill---

MT has also a long association with music his father taught him to play the guitar at an early age joining his first band Harmony when he was 16, then going on to form his own band Broken Spoke gaining experience round the country music circuit. M.T later as frontman with Outlaw a band formed in 93 and was with them until 2000 when as a successful duo he won many awards including British Country Music's Duo of the Year.



Star of the night Irish man Ray Murtagh, superbly backed by Broken Note, put on a fantastic show. I don't know much about Ray so would have liked to have seen him to get some details about him and his career to date. However judging by all reports they were brilliant I heard feedback like -- great voice, sang brilliant country songs, get him back soon, best for a while -- so can't come more highly recommended than that.

During the course of the night the crowd heard all styles of country M.T. played more modern type and Ray gave them the more traditional styles without a lot of Irish.



However although the last two shows were brilliant with top country music delivered, both nights were quiet what a shame on the bands let's hope the next two shows pick up and we get decent numbers.

I have heard nothing but brilliant reports of the Triple C's day festival celebrating their club's 25th year - the whole day went according to plan there was no problems or hic ups.

What a line up - no wonder they couldn't fail, from Ireland they introduced Mick Flavin and his band Louise Morrissey, Trevor Loughrey along with Baton Rouge who did their own spot and provided backing for the others. From home the very popular Manson Grant & The Dynamos who have played the club every year since it started between Robert, Manson, Keith and Brandon they played an excellent spot worthy of the award they were presented with for the club's Band of the Year 2014.

That afternoon I had a look on Facebook and spent the rest of the afternoon in tears reading the devastating news from singer songwriters Joey & Rory Feek that the gruelling treatment Joey was undergoing for colon cancer hadn't worked. Such a beautiful couple dedicated to each other, their family and their faith they are now praying for a miracle. Rory writes a daily blog to let folks know what is going on, it really would break your heart so sad -- what have I got to moan about!!!

That night more tears Ally and I watched the documentary film I'll Be Me about Glen Campbell and his struggle with Alzheimer's disease. It was an excellent film following Glen his wife and family on their Farewell Tour across America. Glen was diagnosed in 2011 and they went public about his condition and set about arranging the tour which they expected to last 5 weeks but in fact they sold out 151 shows it must have been gruelling for him.

You could see towards the end he was becoming more confused forgetting his words not remembering who was on stage with him (his daughter and two sons) so they abandoned the tour before the end - it was so sad but also very humorous, poor Glen blissfully unaware what was happening. It was a very well-produced account of their journey documenting the highs and lows of the unpredictable nature of his progressing disease using love, laughter and music.

Feedback regarding BBC Alba's Ceol Country programmes featuring highlights from our Festival has received mixed reports. I thought the first one was excellent a good mixture of interviews, singing relevant to the event, so was excited about what was coming next.

Sadly as the weeks went on I became more disappointed, now this is just my feelings and as they tell us it may be our Festival but their programme so we have no input. A little less talking would have been good - why show singer songwriters sessions in Ireland? James House had already had a very good interview in Halkirk and the other guy no one knew!! Going around a graveyard again in Ireland with Anthony McBrien was to end up with cringing stuff - Mothers Song a beautiful ballad worthy of hearing but to go to that length was ridiculous. Again The Northern Lights, the Thurso High School band, and the fabulous young duo Rosie & Craig were left out - what a shame as both acts did very well should have had a spot. I don't think it captured the atmosphere at all some songs they featured were sung at night but they showed the clips during the afternoon performances when the floor was empty, so after a great start for me it fell flat.

This leads me on to next year and sadly it's looking unlikely that we will be going ahead with a Festival next year. It was evident on the TV coverage with empty spaces on the dance floor that that numbers were well down, and with no guarantee that we can increase audience numbers then it's probably not feasible for us to go ahead. We have our AGM arranged for the 19th of November, and following the outcome of the meeting we will officially let people know what we have decided, so a good turnout at the meeting to put your points of view forward would be advantageous.

Last night Nashville once again hosted the CMA Awards with a few surprises - a virtually unknown newcomer Chris Stapleton walked away with New Artist of the Year, Album of the Year and Male Vocalist of the Year titles beating Dierks Bentley, Luke Bryan, Blake Shelton. Must have a look at him can't say I've heard anything about him he apparently is a well-known songwriter having penned numbers in the past for Kenny Chesney & George Strait.

I will list some of the other top award winners –

Entertainer of the Year -- Luke Bryan
Female Vocalist -- Miranda Lambert

Vocal Group -- Little Big Town
Vocal Duo -- Florida Georgia Line

Talking of which the BCMAWARDS were held recently in London - congratulations to Paul and Claire from Raintown who once again kept up the Scottish side by being awarded the Vocal Group of the Year title: well done to them they work hard promoting their career so a well-deserved award. Our Festival was nominated for Festival of the Year 2015 however we didn't expect anything this time and the honours went to Quickdraw Festival held in Northants and features the top English acts like Darren Busby, Blue Horizon, Gary Quinn no International or American bands, some of the other winners as follows--

Solo Act -- Donna Wylde
Duo -- Ward Thomas

Song of the Year -- Luke & Mel

UK, Album -- The Shires for 'Brave' and they also won Entertainers of the Year

International Song -- Brandy Clark

International Act --- Striking Matches

Heard the sad news that Kenny Johnston had died aged 75, he started his musical career in pop bands then was one of the founder members of the Liverpool band The Hillsiders. They were one of the most popular country bands during the 70's and early 80's, playing the Wembley festival, the Ryman in Nashville, also the original NNCCMC when the club was held in the Royal & Pentland Hotels. After leaving The Hillsiders Kenny went on to form his own band Kenny Johnston & Northwind and again he made the journey north to play for us in the 90's, he played as part of a duo also going out as a solo artist. Kenny was inducted into the British Country Music Hall of Fame in 2007 and retired in June after hosting Sounds Country on BBC Mersey side for 40 years.

Nearer home, Jackie Blair passed away recently after a battle with cancer, Jackie, based in Edinburgh, was involved in the country scene for many years running the Tuscon C.M.Club and also wrote columns in the CMDS and Country Music Roundup. He was a straight talking guy told you exactly what he thought calling a spade a spade, he will be sadly missed.

It's a bit of a worrying time for us regarding our club numbers – they have been falling away at our monthly shows and we are losing money most months. I guess there's a few contributing factors looking through our members list. I realise that, sadly, some of our members have been ill so hopefully we will see some of them back with us soon.

Expense is another reason - we do try and keep the cost down but sadly due to the cost of artistes at times we have to increase admission price in order to pay them.

However the biggest complaint we receive is in regard to the cost of drinks in the club sadly that is out with our jurisdiction. We have discussed with the Legion committee in particular in regard to the price of soft drinks and mixers but sadly they are also in financial crisis and unsure if they can continue operating as a venue if they don't recoup some finances in the near future. So all in all it's a time of uncertainty we really need to find a way to encourage our members to attend regularly - we have a good turn out if we put on popular bands in particular Irish acts but a month we try and introduce something new or different then folk don't turn up and our regulars are penalised again.

Anyway on that note I'll close for now.

Until next time

Keep It Country

Christine