



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

Aug/Sept 2011 Newsletter

It's still August but no doubt it will be into September before I get this masterpiece finished! Rushing again typical me, leaving everything to the last minute.

Where do I start!! Show at the end of July and what a cracker. I think we must have had a capacity crowd - it was certainly one of the busiest shows we've had recently. The music provided by two very popular acts in our club Robbie and Florence, a.k.a. Country Features, and The Jacks.

Robbie, from County Fermanagh, has been around the music scene for 20 years, and Florence, from Omagh, started in the business during late 70's/early 80's; taking a break to raise her family before returning again in 2005, while from nearer home The Jacks have between them 120 years of musical careers.

Robbie and Florence always go down well; and it's not just because Florence brings tins of sweeties or that they are a really nice couple, they can also sing and put on a good all round country show. I told you in a previous newsletter that Florence had recently recorded her own album called *Time After Time*, a long awaited dream come true for her, she treated us to some numbers from that. I particularly enjoyed the one of her self penned numbers called *Alone Here Without You* and also her version of the Heather Myles number *Your Mama's A Star*. The duo have been playing together since 2005 and are regular visitors to Scotland, where they have gathered quite a fan base. They are always professional smart in their appearance and attitude, and very friendly - ensuring they take the time to speak to everyone - and clearly have a great time on stage.

I really can't say anything about The Jacks that hasn't been said before. We know what to expect and they don't disappoint - don't think we got very many songs during their cabaret spot but certainly got a few yarns and jokes from Geordie which only he would get away with. However we did hear the boys play some of our favourite numbers with the lively combination of the 9 instruments and 4 voices they deliver with their easy personalities. By popular request Trevor took over vocals and treated us to a few songs whilst dad Geordie took his place on drums - went down very well judging by the applause.

Both bands shared the stage for the final few numbers and by this time the crowd were going mad, refusing to let them finish kept going by our compere Sandy of course.

I'm sure you all know that Dan and Dolina have recently completed a fundraising John O'Groats to Lands End trip in their American truck to raise money on behalf of the R.N.L.I. and Macmillan Cancer Support to very worthwhile causes. Dan and Dolina's truck is a very important part of our Festival every year so we thought it would be a nice idea for the club to do something for them so we decided that the proceeds of our raffle this month should be donated to them. I am delighted to say that you all gave very generously and we raised £360, which the couple will come along and collect at the next show.

In between the shows we were once again away on our travels - this time on a special trip to Stavanger in Norway to see Alan Jackson. When I found out he was coming back to Europe again this year to play in Norway and Sweden I dropped big hints saying that was what I wanted for my 60th birthday but got no response, which I didn't think was fair as I took him to Las Vegas for his. Didn't think much of the excuse either, he couldn't do anything on line as it was in a foreign language!!!

Thankfully Darryn to the rescue he decided Jenny and him would like to come with us, as did Val and Donald so he took over and organised it no bother at all, in fact he managed to get perks thrown in as well.

After months of waiting the big day arrived and on Friday we flew from Wick to Aberdeen then Aberdeen to Stavanger. We landed in brilliant sunshine and after a short taxi ride arrived at our hotel, and this is where the perks came in - Darryn's son-in-law was, until a few weeks ago, working in Norway and had stayed with the same hotel chain (Scandic). He very kindly allowed us to use his loyalty points which resulted in all 6, of us getting three nights in the hotel for free, now given the prices of everything in Norway that saved us a small fortune, and if that wasn't good enough we got the equivalent of £100 to spend on food and beer – jammy or what!!

We were well warned by everyone how pricy food and drink would be and they weren't kidding. We managed to get 2x litre bottles of Smirnoff in duty free for £18 - to buy two drinks in the hotel was the same price not including your mixer, so thank goodness for duty free and an ice machine in the corridor.

The hotel was only opened in July so was very chic, modern and luxurious. It was located about 6 miles of town, but less than a 5 minute walk to the race track where the concert was taking place. After a freshen up we had dinner, opted for the buffet which gave us the opportunity to try out some local dishes all for £40 - the cheapest item we found on the a la carte menu was a burger for £25 - it did come with chips and coleslaw though!! Didn't take long to retire upstairs, not to bed but to listen to music and drink some of our duty free.

We met for a 10.00am breakfast buffet-style which was delicious - loads to choose from; hot, cold, continental, healthy, whatever, and as much as you wanted. After ensuring we got our moneys worth we wandered over to the venue to watch the final preparations and suss things out.

Excitement mounting mid afternoon; we donned our matching t-shirts and met for drinks. Now we are not really miserable, we just don't like getting ripped off so thought we would be smart and mix some drinks disguised as soft ones to take with us.

Late in the afternoon the hotel entered into the spirit of things by laying on a country buffet. We got the full works; chilli, barbeque chicken, spicy sausages, corn on the cob, coleslaw, and baked pots with different fillings - certainly better than the hot dogs on sale at the show.

We managed to get into the arena fairly early and yes you've guessed - they took our drinks off us at the gate, so it was beer for the night - I don't even want to think how much that cost.

The weather had been slightly over cast all day and the locals kept telling us it was going to rain however it didn't, and it wasn't too cold either - we only needed something on our arms later on at night.

Most people made a bee line for the front of stage but we didn't want to be too close and look up so we chose a spot in front of the sound desk, this meant no one at our backs, something to lean against, provided a bit of shelter, concrete slabs to stand on which raised us up slightly and we could look straight on to the middle of the stage. Sorted.

One of the opening acts were Joey and Rory and, as we have them booked for our Festival next year, we were keen to see them live. Before we left we had e-mailed Russell their manager and he said it would be good if we could catch up with them. We weren't allowed into the venue whilst they were doing their sound checks so we thought that was the end of that. However just before the warm up band came on he phoned, came over and took us to the dressing room to meet Joey and Rory and their band. Lucky us!!! Sadly no Alan in the dressing rooms...what a bonus that would have been! The couple were very nice and delighted to see us. They told us how much they were looking forward to coming over next Easter, chatted away and showed us the DVD of their new single *Headache* and duly posed for photos. We thought we would have lost our spot by time we got back across but no we managed to squeeze back in just before their set.

I had seen Joey and Rory singing their first hit single *Cheater Cheater* on Hot Country and had listened to their CDs, but wondered what their stage show would be like. Happy to say it was great - we thoroughly enjoyed it, and they went down a bomb with the audience.

Rory is an accomplished songwriter his hits have included Blake Shelton's *Some Beach* and the recent No. 1 *A Little More Country Than That*. The couple have been singing together since 2008 when their career took off very quickly. Many of their songs are about their own life experiences including the title track of their second album *That's Important To Me*. They have a great stage presence and are just so comfortable together, they are not just a musical deal but a genuine couple and I know you'll all enjoy them next Easter in Halkirk.

The next band we could have done without - a local act called The Hellbillies. Very popular in the area judging by the reception they received but much too rocky for us, and the fact they sang in Norwegian didn't make it any better.

However glasses now charged, stage looking great with the lights on as it was just beginning to get dark, when on walks the main man looking as good as ever cowboy shirt, cream stetson, ripped jeans and boots - WOW!

Almost two hours of hits one after the other - he went through his full repertoire. Not sure if he managed to fit in all his 34 number ones, but he certainly got through a good few. He started way back with his oldies like *Here In The Real World*, *Chattahoochee*, *Gone Country* then worked his way through *Drive*, *Remember When*, *Good Time*, *Where I Come From*, *Small Town Southern Man*, my favourite *5 O'clock Somewhere* his duet with Jimmy Buffet, to his latest hit with Zac Brown, *As She's Walking Away*, the list just goes on. Playing all the time at the back of the stage were videos and film clips representing all the numbers he sang.

Before he sang *Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning*, the number he released following the nine eleven disaster in New York, he mentioned the recent horrific incident in Norway when 69 people - mostly teenagers - were gunned down by a madman whilst on a trip. Whilst he was singing the names and ages of the deceased came up on the screen very poignant and moving, with not many dry eyes.

He was awesome; so natural and effortless it's no wonder he's sold almost 60 million albums, and is one of the most honoured singer songwriters of the last twenty years'. I've heard today that another honour was bestowed on him - he will be inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall Of Fame.

I'm not sure how many people were there - we heard about 13,000 but there didn't look that many. They were pretty well scattered around the venue until just before Alan come on when there was a surge to the front.

In the afternoon before we went in we were chatting to some of the guys who were setting up the stalls with T-shirts - they admired our ones and Darryn agreed to give them his one at the end of the night in exchange for one of theirs. So true to his word at the end of the show we duly met up with them and Darryn stripped his one off and put on one of theirs, the guy was delighted as I don't think he thought we were serious.

Back to the hotel on an absolute high the place was packed as you can imagine, so we stayed downstairs for a while getting the crack with the locals and the barman even played some country music for us.

Late breakfast; some definitely later than others, and no sign of Donald and Val who are always early risers so we assumed they had gone for a walk, however as time was marching on Jenny tried texting them and got no response. Darryn eventually called their room from reception and guess what - they had slept in! I said I wouldn't tell the reason Val hadn't answered Jenny's text was because the phone had fallen in the toilet (can happen to anyone) but didn't think she'd go to the extent of getting a new phone, they got off scot free in Ireland however I knew I would get them sometime.

After a hearty breakfast and with our feet just about back on the ground we went into Stavanger to do the whole tourist bit. It was beautiful walking round the harbour area and up and down all the little back streets. I think the men were quite happy that, unlike most places, the shops are closed on Sundays - so we could only window shop.

We stopped at a harbour side café for a drink/coffee and it started pouring down. Luckily we were finished our sight seeing so we returned to the hotel, lazed around, had 40 winks before having dinner then, finishing off the duty free, another late one.

Woke to a beautiful morning, had breakfast, packed and walked for 20 mins into the shopping centre - 100 shops and 20 eating places yet we just browsed as it was still too much for my non-mathematical brain to calculate how much things cost.

All too soon it was time to go back and make tracks to the airport, homeward bound again. Just to add insult to injury the guy at duty free told us we had just missed Alan - he had passed through 20 mins previously. Anyway the trip was worth every kroner and I will get some photos on the web site when I get round to it.

Back to earth and work, and time to get ready for another show last Friday night, our main band had called off and at the last minute so Country Bluestars stepped in.

The three piece outfit from East Lothian - Gillian and Grant (husband and wife) and John - have been together since 1993. I don't think you would class them as a country band although that is what they gave us. They are clearly used to going out as a cabaret act, doing different tribute shows - Gillian does Blondie, Madonna (the blondes of pop), while they also do Abba and Rock'n'Roll shows, and many others.

I think they had intended doing more of a cabaret/comedy type of show but don't think it took them long to realise that we were looking for our country straight. They did all the well known covers of the big country stars such as Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, Johnny Cash and Garth Brooks. They certainly put on a very enthusiastic performance and really enjoyed themselves.

Our support band too was very nice - Tequila, Joe and Graham from Dundee, are a very busy duo and I can see why. They have been together for 7 years and are very busy on the country music club circuit in the central belt. Aside from being busy they are also very popular having been voted Band of the Year in the Prairie Star club in Alloa, Maverick in Dundee and Silver spur in Linwood.

The lads were very popular with the members as they played a pure country spot, they gave us the old along with new, but also something a little bit different, and all perfectly delivered (I could pick out a lot of line dance numbers in there also).

Shame the numbers were slightly down it's always harder to get things going and the dance floor busy, and makes it harder for the bands, however they both looked like they were enjoying themselves.

Beatrice, the manageress in the club for the last twenty years, was on duty for her last night so we presented her with a gift from the members to wish her all the best in her retirement. Dan and Dolina also joined us for the night - they were delighted to be presented with their cheque, and are holding yet another fundraiser on Saturday 10th September - a buffet dance in The Waterfront in Wick. Music will be provided by Scott Heywod with, of course, his tribute to Elvis, so should be a good night and a good cause. Tickets can be bought from Dan on 01847 851717.

No drinking for me on Friday night as we were off to see Boyzone in Inverness on Saturday, all girls of course - 8 of us, didn't want to go off with a hangover as it was bad enough coming home with one.

We had a good time Inverness - it was full of females all there for the same reason and we all had a great time even though not a country song was sung. The weather stayed okay; got chilly at night but dry thankfully, not the storms there was in Caithness, although it was bad in bits coming home on Sunday.

Kenny and Margaret went off to Edinburgh on Friday to fly to New York then on to Nashville on Saturday morning, however with the storms in New York all flights were cancelled.

They were stranded in Edinburgh on Friday night but managed to get the last two seats on a plane to London on Saturday morning, were diverted to Texas and then on to Nashville. An epic journey for them especially as they both hate flying and were dreading it anyway, however I am sure it will be worth it all. Let's hope they won't spend the holiday worrying about the flight back which is on 9/11.

Our committee members Alan and John were in Glasgow to see Dolly Parton - they thoroughly enjoyed it and said she did the whole two and a half hours herself and that it was brilliant. For the ones who were lucky enough to go to London to see Brad Paisley, I believe it was worth every mile they travelled also.

I was listening to Stewart Fenwick's programme on line a couple of Sunday's back and his CD of the week was the one recently released by Gene Watson and Rhonda Vincent and I can say it's excellent - I enjoyed every track.

I read in the magazine and heard on Hot Country that the new release by Patrick Feeney is called *Good Thing Going Down* - of course the song written by Keith Macleod from Slange Ava and The Dynamos dad Davie.

BBC ALBA have confirmed the transmission of this years programmes from our Festival - can't wait to see what they've done this year. Details are as follows

Episode 1 Tuesday 20th September at 9.00pm, repeated Sunday 25th September at 9.00pm
Episode 2 Tuesday 27th September at 9.00pm, repeated Sunday 2nd October at 9.00pm
Episode 3 Tuesday 4th October at 9.00pm, repeated Sunday 9th October at 9.00pm.

The programme will be available on as follows

Freeview 8 (Scotland only) • Sky 168 • Virgin 188 • Freesat 110

Also available online via BBC iPlayer, either to watch live as it goes out or as a catch up service for 7 days after transmission at http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/tv/bbc_alba. Happy Viewing

Until next time, keep it Country.

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCCM