

October 17th - The Parsonage Choir

During one of the many Festival preparation meetings throughout the year, Jeanette split the large number attending into smaller groups or “Brainstrusts”, asking them to come up with any new ideas for the 2009 event. Tom, having been thrilled and amazed by BBC1’s show Last Choir Standing, suggested that some sort of choral event might prove popular. This led to one of the attendees announcing that a friend sang for the renowned Parsonage Choir from Glasgow. Here is a little bit about them found on their website:-

“The Parsonage is a group of around 40 Glasgow based singers which was formed at the beginning of 2006 by Janis F. Murray. We are a non-religious, mixed sex, varied of age, determinedly independent and self defining organic group. Inspiration comes from the raw, storytelling simplicity of the folk, country and blues traditions. Our first EP, 'This Ain't No Lovey Dovey' was released December 2007 on Glasgow label OSScarr Records and is available at the OSCarr website <http://www.optimo.co.uk>. 2007 and 2008 was busy and fun with some hilarious times performing in a great array of venues including backing vocals for Rod Stewart at Hampden and many summertime festivals (we had a crowd surfer - this must be a first in the world of choir!?) and wintertime singing with sad songs a plenty. The dark nights of 2008 were devoted to accumulating a repertoire of Gram Parsons and Hank Williams songs followed by presentation of our very own Gram Parsons and Hank Williams tribute days. It's now 2009, we're 3 years old and have performed the main stage at T in the Park and just completed recording our first album. This has 4 songs from Hank Williams and 4 from Gram Parsons. It will be entitled simply, 'Hank and Gram' and will be available in spring 2010.”

That led to a firm booking and the Paisley University Student Union was booked out to accommodate this. On the bill were two other musical acts and Buddy Beat were asked to open the show, which is a great honour.

The Buddy Beaters were:-

Jeanette Allan, Jane Bentley, Allan Borland, Hazel Borland, Tom Chalmers, Anne Dowie, Lesley King, Anne Ross, Jackie McDowall, Eileen McGrory and newly appointed Honorary Member Ken Thompson.



Tom hit on the idea of Buddy Beat perhaps having a delicious fish tea at the world famous Allan’s Snack Bar straight across from the venue and this seemed to strike a chord for many of the group took up this offer and we met at 5.15 to grab a chance to socialise without drums. Lesley made an entrance proudly wearing her new Paddington Bear coat and looked a treat indeed! We filled our tums and the air chimed with “That was yummy!” Split over 3 tables, one waitress served us all and when it came to time to pay up, we collected a tip of more than ten quid and she was clearly delighted. Hazel drew gasps from everyone when she ordered a knickerbockerglory and Jane, after salivating for several moments, was allowed a taster.

We drifted out of Allan’s around 7 and strolled 20 yards across the street to The Student Union. Jane led us inside and we had chairs arranged in an almost horseshoe shape just to the right of the main stage. The Parsonage Choir were busy rehearsing and they sounded wonderful. We trooped out to Jane’s Berlingo Van and gathered up a rumble of drums (what else can you call a collection of djembe?).



Paisley University's Student Union

We sat at two tables right at the front of the venue. We were meant to begin at 7.30 but things were running slightly behind. At 7.40, Jeanette gave us the nod and we took to our places and over the next 15 minutes we played with passion and power, filling the air with rhythms and beats, punctuated by perfectly timed pauses. The audience were very quiet and respectful as they soaked in our sound and at the end we received a hearty round of applause. If anything, the lights were a bit dim in the hall and when Jane issued an instruction it quickly flowed around the group Chinese Whispers style! Ken proved very useful once again by taking photos as we played.



Before the show



Buddy Beat hard at work with Jane on the Hapi Drum

We have played many gigs over the last 2 years and it is true to say that each and everyone is totally different, but we have never performed in public like that and played for such a length of time. It was thrilling and energising. Afterwards, Jeanette was asked by her especially invited aunt “How do they remember all that?” Well, its little things like this that makes it all worthwhile.



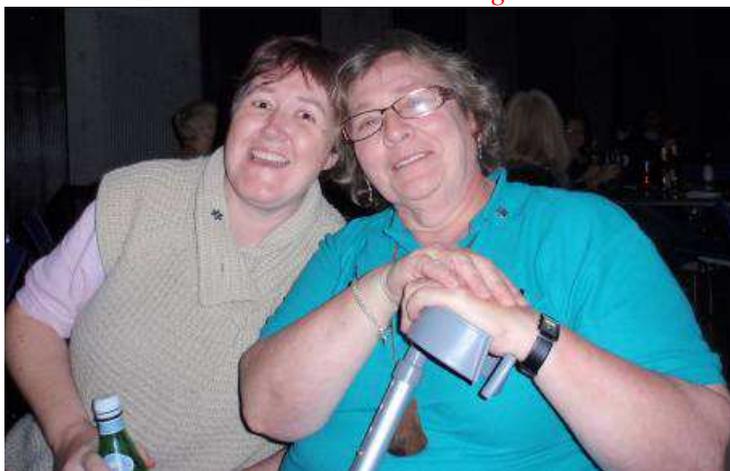
“Let me do the big notes, John. You do the harmonies!”

Jeanette took to the main stage and introduced solo singer/guitar player John Rush and we took to our seats. John sang with a terrific bluesy voice and entertained us for 45 minutes with his repertoire of easy going and heartfelt numbers

After a short break during which time we cleared the drums back into the van, the 2nd act of the night, The Hidden Masters performed. Polar opposites to John Rush, this three piece band gave us their blend of self written rock blasted from the drums, steel guitar and electric guitar. Perhaps a tad loud for some, and not maybe Buddy Beaters cup of tea, they were nevertheless entertaining and it was hard to take your eyes off them during their 40 minute set.



Eileen- “When does the bingo start?”



Girls just wanna have fun



Brad and Angelina



“Smiles”- Sponsored by Colgate

Another short break and it was at last time for The Parsonage Choir! It was 9.45 by now, way past some of our bedtimes. The female choir master introduced her 20 strong choir and guitar accompanist and informed us that The Parsonage mainly perform country songs, but also take modern songs and give them a country treatment. She also said that they had picked the songs for tonight, bearing in mind The Mental Health Festival. They began with a stirring song called “900 Miles”, which is a 19th century American standard. We were then treated to “Success”, a great song by the excellent American country singer Loretta Lynn. Then everyone was singing along to “Hey good looking!” and later gave us their well known rendition of Joy Division’s “Love Will Tear Us Apart” which was superb. A dynamic version of Neil Young’s anthemic “Mother Earth” followed and all too quickly we were informed that it was already time for their last song, which was Elvis Presley’s “I Still Have a Dream” which was excellent. The audience showed their appreciation and with shouts of “Encore!” the choir agreed for one last number and gave a rousing rendition of Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire” which had the audience singing and clapping along.



The Parsonage Choir in full swing

That was a great night's entertainment, right from having dinner together, to playing and then sitting back and enjoying three very different musical acts. Anne Dowie wishes it to be stressed that the half pint of cider taken after our performance was purely for medicinal purposes! We believe you Anne!

Words by Tom Chalmers

Photos by Tom Chalmers and Ken Thompson