



Solo show - Nerina Pallot

Nerina's talent shines as she goes it alone for gig

On Sunday talented Brit and Ivor Novello Award nominated Nerina Pallot wrapped up her Lonely Valentine Club tour in Birmingham by proving once again that she is one of the UK's finest singer/songwriters.

The intimate surroundings of the Glee Club proved the perfect setting for the show, which saw Pallot ditch the band in favour of a completely solo show - just a piano, a guitar, and her incredible voice.

Without a band the spotlight shone more fiercely on the quality of the songs, and that is where the Jersey-born star excels. And numbers like Idaho and Human really showed

REVIEW

Nerina Pallot, The Glee Club, Birmingham

By David Burrows

her talent. The tour, we were told, had a theme of 'love gone wrong' but Pallot isn't one for sticking to the script, and favourites such as Everybody's Gone To War snuck onto the set-list, as did a cover version of Love Will Tear Us Apart, after the singer decided she would take requests.

There were also new songs from the EP written to accompany the tour. Both Once

and Live Is An Unmade Bed were warmly received from the sell-out audience.

There was also an unexpected emotional moment when Pallot's husband walked to the stage to inform her young son, who had been ill just before the gig, was fine. It brought tears. But not showbiz tears. The tears of a working mother and a very human, down-to-earth performer.

All too soon, the gig came to an end. Put Your Hands Up was given a new rhythm section from the hand-clapping audience before the inevitable encore of the spine-tingling Sophia.

Olympian challenge to raise charity cash

Report by MARK MUDIE



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A CHAIN of charity fundraisers have started a challenge which will directly link Shropshire to the mythical home of the Olympians.

Charities of Fire is the idea of former British athlete John Greatrex and will see a 1948 Olympic torch carried from the fireplace of The Raven Hotel in Much Wenlock to the summit of Mount Olympus in Greece.

Mr Greatrex, 64, who lives in Nottingham, is now inviting people to get involved in the challenge to raise money for their own personal charities.

He said: "The Raven Hotel is where Baron Pierre de Coubertin was sitting and chatting with William Penny Brookes about his vision for an international Olympian peace games.

Summit

"This is the start of a journey that will take the spirit of William Penny Brookes to the summit of Mount Olympus, the home of the Olympian gods. It takes the fire back to the gods.

"Anyone who wants to join in en route can raise money for whatever charity they want. I am going to be raising money for Sense, the deaf-blind charity."

Sunday's launch saw the torch lit from the flames of the fire at The Raven before it was taken to Dr Penny Brookes's grave in Much Wenlock churchyard.

The route for the challenge is flexible and can be altered to accommodate any fundraisers who want to join in.

Mr Greatrex said the torch had been chosen because it had both the Olympic rings and the date on it - 1948 was the year the precursor to the Paralympics Games was first held at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Mr Greatrex, who competed for Wales in the 1970 Commonwealth Games in Scotland, was an 800m runner. He said: "I used to hold the 800m record at Loughborough University until some young whippersnapper came and took it off me by the name of Sebastian Coe."

In researching Olympic history he has also found some strong connections between himself and Much Wenlock - also buried in the churchyard at Much Wenlock are Dr Penny Brookes's grandchildren Gertrude and Arthur Greatrex.

To find out more about the challenge search Charities of Fire 2013 on Facebook or e-mail jmgreatrex@gmail.com



John Greatrex and Gill Kazer, from The Raven Hotel in Much Wenlock, light the Olympic torch

Cakes and concertos support hospice

Cakes and concertos were served up at a venue in one of Shropshire's market towns to raise cash for charity.

Musical fundraisers held the event in Oswestry to collect money for Hope House Children's Hospice.

It took place over two hours on Saturday at the Parish Centre at St Oswald Church for people to wander in to listen to music and enjoy refreshments. Organisers have said about £275 was raised.

Musicians played pieces from Mozart to Vivaldi on instruments including the flute, oboe, bassoon, strings and harpsichord.

Frances Nex, organiser, said: "It is the

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first time we have done this fundraiser. We chose Hope House Children's Hospice because we were thinking of a local charity that might benefit from it. The other purpose of the event was to enjoy the music. It was free entry and people just made a donation."

Mrs Nex played the flute and the oboe on the day and her husband played the bassoon. Other members of her family also brought instruments as well.

She said: "I have always played music

since I was a child. I have been playing for the Oswestry Sinfonia for 12 years. I enjoy it, it is great fun."

Vanessa Thomas, fundraising manager for the hospice, said: "We really appreciate Frances and her team raising money for us at the start of the new year."

In 2012 supporters of the charity helped to raise £3.3 million. The sale of donated goods in its shops raised £475,000 and its lottery raised £250,000.

The charity has two hospices, one in Oswestry and one in Ty Gobaith in Conwy. For more information about the charity visit www.hopehouse.org.uk

Farming Talk

Returns on timber prove money does grow on trees

The UK Government's willingness to embrace the independent Panel's report on Forestry published in January and clearly recognises the important role forestry can play in the UK economy in the future as well as delivering environmental benefits.

Even though 2012 is remembered for its stagnant economic growth, investors perceived there is a very good case to own at least some timber to diversify their portfolio over the medium to long term, because timber and the ownership of forest land, with its low volatility, hedge-against-inflation potential and fairly low correlation with the performance of other assets, delivered favourable returns compared with equities and gilts.

The IPD UK Forestry Index is calculated from a sample of private sector coniferous plantations of predominantly Sitka spruce in mainland Britain and in 2011 returned 34.8 per cent according to the most recent report (2012).

A famous US investor, Jeremy Grantham of

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cent up on 2011 due to a strengthening market, investor optimism and its productive quality. Timber rose in 2011 by 4.3 per cent following a record rise of over 38 per cent in 2010.

The UK offers favourable tax treatment on direct investment in forestry. Timberland exploited commercially qualifies for 100 per cent business property relief once held for two years. If held at death, there is no inheritance tax payable on the total value of the land and trees.

The increase in the value of timber and plantations is exempt from Capital Gains Tax. There is a clear opportunity for those who have a CGT liability arising from the sale of a business asset. By rolling over into another qualifying asset - timberland - the CGT liability can be deferred.

By holding the forest until death, the estate is assessed for inheritance tax and CGT liability is extinguished. Income generated from the ownership of commercial woodlands is exempt from both income tax and corporation tax.

I can think of no other assets with such pot-



Investment in forestry brings tax benefits

ential for capital growth. Trees naturally put on incremental growth, g environmental benefits and are physically untouched by an economic crash. Money does literally grow on trees!

Martin B Jones is a chartered forester and managing director of The Woodland Stewardship Company, Shrewsbury

STAR BRIEFING

New card shop opens in village

A woman who moved to Shropshire for her husband's work has decided to launch a business of her own.

Debbie Emery, 49, has set up a card and gift shop in a village near Market Drayton to offer residents a local alternative to travelling into the town.

She bought about £10,000 worth of stock and opened The Gift Box in Slaters Village in Bull-rings Gate, near Market Drayton, last week.

It is the first time she has worked for herself after working in big stores like Tesco and Homebase when she lived in Cornwall.

But Mrs Emery moved to Shropshire three years ago and decided it was time to set out on her own.

She said: "It is something I have always wanted to do. "I have worked in retail for many years and just wanted to do something for myself."

The shop sells gift cards for all occasions as well as wedding, christening and birthday gifts.

There are Yankee candles, home decor items, and trinkets as well wrapping paper, gift bags and cards.

Mrs Emery also sells photo frames, night lights and mugs.

"I have always fancied being my own boss," she added.

"I haven't worked for three years and I got bored and thought it was time to have a go at doing something new.

"It is quite different from the work I have done before, it is pleasing instead of thinking 'oh no I don't want to go to work' and having to drag yourself in."

Park calling for artistic entries

Artistic entries from Shropshire are being sought for a big open competition.

A prize of £2,000 is on offer to the winner of the Weston Park open fine art competition, as well as the chance to have work displayed in the stately home's Granary Gallery.

Each month the gallery exhibits the work of an acclaimed artist from across the country and overseas but each August the space houses the shortlisted entries in the open competition.

Edward Sellman, who won the competition last year, said: "I was absolutely delighted to win this prize, which has given a boost to my profile and ensured that further exhibition opportunities have continued to arise for me."

Gareth Williams, curator to the Weston Park Foundation, said: "As an educational charity, we believe that an important part of our role is about fostering, showcasing and nurturing new talent."

Entry costs £15 per piece and the deadline is June 28. For details visit www.weston-park.com/granaryopen to download an entry form.



Gareth Williams

Bosses warned on payroll shake-up

Employers have just weeks left to prepare themselves for one of the most radical changes to payroll systems in decades, a local accountancy firm has warned.

Chris Dorricott, payroll manager at Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants, in Shrewsbury, said Real Time Information (RTI) was due to come into force in April.

"It's a new payroll reporting method for anyone who operates a PAYE scheme. These employers will now be required to report each time an employee gets paid, rather than completing an annual year-end return."

"HM Revenue and Customs have introduced the scheme to improve the operation of PAYE, and by October this year it will be mandatory for all employers to process their data using the new system."

Mr Dorricott added: "Don't leave everything right up until the very last minute, as a system change this radical takes time to prepare for - and it's even more important to start preparing as soon as possible if you run your own payroll system independently."

MEP given an insight into the Armed Forces

RAF Shawbury received a visit from Euro MP Nikki Sinclair as part of a scheme designed to give politicians a better understanding of the Armed Forces.

Ms Sinclair who represents the West Midlands in the European Parliament, was briefed on the roles of the unit and its standing in the local community by the Station Commander Group Captain Chris Luck.

This was followed by a visit around the Central Air Traffic Control School and its simulators by Wing Commander Dave Johnson.

She met community teams and visited the refurbished junior ranks mess, the Defence Helicopter Flying School and 660 Squadron and was taken up in a Squirrel helicopter.

RAF Shawbury spokesman Squadron Leader Neil Hope, said: "The visit gave Ms Sinclair the chance to chat with a broad range of personnel to gain an understanding of the training completed at the unit as well as an appreciation of today's Armed Forces in a truly tri-service environment."



Nikki Sinclair