



MERRY CHRISTMAS

G'day

It's certainly been a while since I last put a newsletter to print - twelve months, in fact. Another year is coming to an end, and once again this year, with the Covid pandemic still upon us, it certainly has affected our music industry, with many of our shows and festivals cancelled throughout another year, starting with the 2021 Tamworth Country Music festival back in January. Plans are well underway for 2022, so here's hoping all goes as planned for the coming year, being the 50th celebration of the Tamworth festival.

Late in February, we went out to *Hartwood* to start preparing the grounds, and following lots of paperwork, many rules and regulations to abide by, once again we ran a very successful Easter event. Special thanks to everyone who attended and to all the volunteers - your support and hard work is very much appreciated. In mentioning volunteers, we received sad news in October of the passing of a very valued volunteer, Jack Wallace from Benalla, Vic. On behalf of Lyn and myself, Chrys and Maria and volunteers, we extend our deepest sympathy to Liz and extended family. Jack will be sadly and surely missed.

Late in April, we headed up to Queensland where I was invited to perform at the Boondooma Homestead Country Music Festival. This was my first time at Boondooma; a great venue and may I say, rich in history of yesteryear.

Upon return from Queensland, in May we then headed down south for a couple of shows, first stop being Wagga, where the festival now has been bought back to a one-day event. It was a great day, joining fellow artists, Dale Hooper, Dwayne Elix, Kenny Kitching and wife Emma Hanna. Following on from Wagga, we had a little time to kill before my next show at the Thurgoona Golf Club in Albury, so we decided to spend a few days at Walla Walla, catching up with friends. It's a very relaxing little town, where I managed to do a show at the local Walla Walla Hotel. This was not on my agenda, but it turned out to be a great night. These nights always seem to go off well, as you never plan for them. It was then on to Albury for the show, with a great crowd in attendance; special thanks to Joy Metcalf for arranging and promoting the show.

After Albury, we then headed down to Barham for the Barham Bush Ballad Festival, which is always a good festival. This year's event was down in attendance, due to the closure of the Victorian border into New South Wales.

From Barham, it was then a race against time to cross the border into Queensland before any further border closures! Thankfully, we made it. We then spent most of June at the Warrego Riverside Caravan Park at Cunnamulla, entertaining travellers around the campfire, with some happy hours lasting a little longer than usual - will look forward to returning in 2022. If you manage to get on the road next year, we may see you there. Judy, the owner, runs a great park and certainly makes you feel welcome. Thanks, Judy.

After leaving Cunnamulla late in June, we decided to head out to the little opal town of Yowah where I managed to pick up and do a show at the Yowah Community Club. I did a show out there a couple of years ago, which was a great night and was pleased to say this year was a success also; plenty of characters and colour scratchers (opal miners) in attendance. On our way out to Yowah, we decided to stop off at a farm stay, Alroy Station. What a wonderful spot. Whilst at Alroy, I was invited to sing for the happy hour gathering which proved to be a great success, with owners, Mary and Mac, inviting me back in June next year for their Fire to Fork night. I'll bring you up to date with more details about this further down the track.

Travelling on via Quilpie, Charleville and Augathella, we then made our way to Isisford, with good mate, Dougie Marle, in tow. I'm sure by now he knows the meaning of "one for the road", as we managed to have some great campouts along the way, before arriving at Isisford, where we tried to lower the yellow-belly population. We did manage to catch a few, and certainly enjoyed a couple of fresh fish and chip meals. Not as plentiful as last year, but it was great to get onto the banks of the Muddy Old Barcoo for a spot of fishing. We had a great time at Isisford, catching up with many friends and making some new ones, along with playing a few shows, which included a farewell night for hotel owners, Ken and Annie, who've decided to move on.

On route to Isisford, I received a phone call from Ged and Trudy Hintz who organise the Channel Country Muster at Thargomindah, to check my availability for this year's muster, as some of the artists they had booked were unable to attend, due to border closures. So, after a couple of weeks at Isisford, we doubled back to Thargomindah for the Muster. It was a great weekend of festivities and I look forward to returning in 2023.

From Thargomindah, it was back to Isisford again to play for the Yellow-belly Fishing Comp weekend which went off well again this year. Some good-size yellow-belly were caught by all. We had a couple more weeks at Isisford before making our way to Camooweal. It was a very enjoyable trip out to Camooweal this year, without having to rush, and it was nice to spend some time with good friends, Dennis and Joan Deaton, along with Ged and Trudy, who were also on the program for Camooweal this year. We had some wonderful campouts along the way at Longreach, Winton, Middleton, Boulia, and Dajarra - love the countryside out there. I have to say we were very spoilt

with Trudy's camp oven cooking; what a cook! I'm still trying to get rid of the extra kilos.

Late in August, we arrived in Camooweal for the Drovers' Festival - sad to say a lot of the old drovers are no longer with us, but we still managed to celebrate a great weekend of festivities.

Camooweal also farewelled long-time caretakers of the camp, Paul and Ellen Finlay, who have now taken up residence in Mt Isa, along with farewells to long time President, Russell Young and wife Sarah, who are moving down to Toowoomba. We'd like to take this opportunity to wish them all the best in their new adventures. Camooweal will continue, however, with a new president and committee on board, so we can look forward to the festival in 2022.

With Camooweal done and dusted for another year, it was time to head back down again to Nanango for the Nanango Country Muster. With several cancellations coming through about other festivals, it was good to receive the news that Nanango was going ahead.

We had a great weekend at Nanango, as usual, with a good crowd in attendance. After Nanango, we headed over to Millmerran for the Camp Oven Festival. This was my first time at Millmerran and thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. Thanks to Gary Fogarty for inviting us and we hope to get back there sometime in the future.

Following on from Millmerran, and with all New South Wales events cancelled due to the pandemic still throwing its weight around, we decided to hang out a little longer in Queensland and were invited back to Ged and Trudy's place to celebrate Lyn and Trudy's birthdays - they share the same date (9 October), a few years apart, so it was a good excuse to party. A great time! Thanks, Ged and Trudy.

Finally, it was time to head for home, and sadly cancellations were still coming in. Let's hope 2022 is a more profitable year for us all. I'm now in the process of getting ready for the Tamworth festival in January - all is going ahead as at time of writing this newsletter.

Some good news, I have a mini-tour coming up in early December 2021 with Lindsay Butler, Shaza Leigh and Peggy Gilchrist. We will be playing at the Ilford Hall on 10 December at 6.30 pm, Barooga Hall on 12 December at 7.00 pm and Queanbeyan Tigers' Club on 12 December at 2.00 pm. Hope to catch you at one of the shows. To view Tamworth festival shows, head over to my website www.tommaxwell.com.au for the listing. Also folks, a reminder, *Hartwood* festival dates for Easter 2022 are 15, 16 and 17 April, with gates opening on Monday 4 April. For full details and artists appearing, check out the website www.hartwoodfestival.com.au. Tickets are now pre-selling via the website.

PRODUCT UPDATE: As at the time of this newsletter, I'm waiting on the arrival of our first **digital download card**. The card will allow you to directly download music to your favourite device: mobile phone, iPad, etc. **REFLECTIONS** is the first album we have

decided to go digital with, so we'll see how it goes. **Looking for a Christmas gift? This could be one.**

Well folks, enough of my rambling for now. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of Lyn and myself, to wish you all a **Merry Christmas** and a safe and prosperous **New Year**. We look forward to catching up somewhere, sometime, soon.

Regards, Tom