



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – June 2018

Welcome

Welcome to the June edition of our newsletter, and I do wonder where the year has disappeared to.

As we start the countdown to the October weekend in Kurri Kurri, NSW, I would like to remind everyone *Higher Ground Australia* stands for and what we do:

- To promote the music of John Denver
- To raise money to donate to raptor rehabilitation in Australia
- To plant a tree in John's honour annually

I have some new and exciting things happening at the moment. Our weekend in Kurri Kurri is pretty much organised, thanks to Carmel and Alistair, who have booked the venue. The remaining preparations will be done later in the year, when most of us return from our respective overseas trips.

Further details about the weekend in Kurri Kurri is included in this newsletter. Anyone is welcome to come along and join us for the weekend of the 12-14 October, 2018.

A few weeks ago, we visited Broome, Western Australia to attend a wedding. My friends work in the Kimberley, just on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, in a place called Balgo, which is one of the most remote Aboriginal communities in Australia. Situated almost exactly at the halfway point between Alice Springs and Broome, it is isolated, but rich in culture. I have donated some of the Dawn Publications picture books to the Luurnpa Catholic School in Balgo, as a means of promoting John's songs to those who would otherwise not have an opportunity to listen to or read the lyrics. The picture books are starting to become harder to access, and *Ancient Rhymes* appears to be out of print at the moment. Along with the threat of Amazon (US) no longer posting to Australia, we may find it more difficult to access the books for our annual giveaway. Perhaps we can all contact Dawn Publications and ask about republishing these wonderful books. I'm also open to suggestions on how we can continue to access copies of these books for our annual giveaway to Australian schools.

I'm taking a break for a couple of months, whilst I travel to Ireland and England during the months of

July and August. Despite the length of time I will be away, I will be available by email on hga.vic@gmail.com. I am also hoping to keep up to date with the newsletters as much as I can. As usual, I will also update my travel blog as often as possible, and if you would like to read about our more recent travels, check out my website <https://justgo-blog.com>

HGA New Logo

DON'T YOU LOVE OUR NEW LOGO?

I'm lucky enough to know a young designer, who has created a new logo for us. Despite my rather sketchy brief, Bec Le of Friday Works has given us a wonderful logo. Over the next couple of months, it will be included on the website, Facebook, and other relevant materials.

2018 JD Tribute Weekend

We have finalised the basic arrangements for our 2018 John Denver Tribute Weekend, which will be held on the weekend of 12-14 October. Due to most of our members taking overseas holidays this year, and thus unable to put a lot of time into the organising of the weekend, we have decided to revisit the *Hunter Valley Hotel Academy, McLeod Road, Kurri Kurri NSW*. We have booked two cottages for the weekend, and the total costs will be posted once we have an idea of final numbers. As usual, we try to keep our costs to the minimum, and I don't think the accommodation for two nights would exceed \$100 per person.

A non-refundable deposit of \$40 per person may be paid at any time to me by direct deposit to:

Westpac Bank

Branch #: 733-039

Account #: 542649

Name: Mrs Janette Frawley

Please put your name and JD in the description so I know who has sent the money through.

We have had to make some adjustments to the usual Saturday night BBQ – more on that later.

2018 Fundraiser

We will hold a raffle to raise money for *Higher Ground Raptors*. Peggy McDonald's excellent work with the rehabilitation and release of raptors. The first prize will be an original painting named *Flying for Me* by Davy Turner.

Second prize will be a mystery box, filled with a variety of items, valued at least \$50.



Raffle tickets will be sent out to Australian members in September.

Donations are

also welcome, if you would prefer not to sell tickets. Please let me know.

Higher Ground Australia Website

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>.

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! I'm still working on changes to the website. Watch this space.

Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com with your comments, and I thank those who have sent me valuable feedback recently

John Denver Celebration Concert

Whoo Hoo!

The John Denver Celebration Concert will be touring Australia in December. The concerts start in Sydney on 14th December, Gold Coast on the 15th, Tamworth on the 16th, Newcastle on the 18th, Wyong on the 19th, Adelaide on the 21st, Melbourne on the 22nd, and Perth on the 23rd December. Tickets are available from <https://metropolistouring.com/john-denver/> Book early, as this is going to be a very popular concert.

The John Denver Estate and Metropolis Touring Present:

*The John Denver Celebration Concert
A Night of John Denver's Voice, Songs and Videos*

Timeless masterpieces including *Take Me Home Country Roads, Rocky Mountain High, Leaving on a Jet Plane, Sunshine On My Shoulders, Annie's Song, Thank God I'm A Country Boy* and more will feature on the night, through stunning visuals and authentic performances.

Hear John Denver's voice and watch him perform on video screens while being backed live by members of his touring band!

The John Denver Celebration Concert promises to be a night of heart-warming nostalgia. A must-see for John Denver fans!

Alan Deremo (Bass Guitar) A member of John Denver's band from 1994 until his passing in 1997. Alan has performed and recorded with Vince Gill, Amy Grant, Glenn Frey, Bo Diddley,

the Mamas and the Papas and many more. For much of the last decade, Deremo has toured and recorded with Men at Work singer/guitarist Colin Hay.

Jim Horn (Saxophone & woodwinds) A member of John Denver's band on and off from 1978 to 1995. Jim's resume reads like a who's who of rock n' roll through the decades. He started with Duane Eddy in the early 1960s and has recorded or toured with all four of The Beatles, The Righteous Bros., The Beach Boys, The Carpenters, Joe Cocker, Elton John, Warren Zevon, Steely Dan, Garth Brooks and many more.

Chris Nole (Piano, keyboards) A member of John Denver's band in the 90's, songwriter/composer, accomplished session musician, producer, and recording artist. Chris has toured and recorded with John Denver, Faith Hill, Travis Tritt, the Oak Ridge Boys and many more.

Nate Barnes (Drums, percussion) As drummer for the band Rose Hill Drive, Nate has toured the world headlining shows and opening for acts such as The Who, Van Halen, Aerosmith, Stone Temple Pilots, The Black Crowes and more. He has shared the stage with Pete Townshend (The Who), Warren Haynes, Leslie West (Mountain) and others. Nate has earned a reputation as one of the premier live and studio drummers in the Rocky Mountain area.

Jim Curry (Vocals, guitar) Early in his career Jim's natural voice resembled that of John Denver. Embracing the similarities, Jim continued to sing and specialize in the songs of John Denver, sharing John's positive messages of love, humanity and environmental awareness. The untimely death of John Denver in 1997 was a tragedy that was felt the world over. Such a void left John's ardent fans demanding that his music survive. CBS television responded by producing a made for TV movie: "Take Me Home, the John Denver Story" in which Jim landed an off-camera role singing as the voice of John Denver.

JOHN DENVER'S ESTATE & METROPOLIS TOURING PRESENT
***** THE OFFICIAL *****
JOHN DENVER
CELEBRATION CONCERT
Hear John Denver's voice and watch him perform on video screens backed Live In Concert by members of his Touring Band and String Section
*** THIS SHOW IS FULLY ENDORSED BY THE JOHN DENVER ESTATE ***
Australian Tour | December 2018
Friday 14th Sydney Enmore Theatre
Saturday 15th Gold Coast The Star
Sunday 16th Tamworth TREC
Tuesday 18th Newcastle Newcastle Civic
Wednesday 19th Wyong The Art House
Friday 21st Adelaide Dunstan Playhouse
Saturday 22nd Melbourne Palais Theatre
Sunday 23rd Perth Astor Theatre
www.johndenver.com



Walking Down Memory Lane with Jimmy Fong

Janette Frawley 29/6/2018/Photos provided by Jimmy Fong
They enter the auditorium one by one or in pairs, check their tickets, and crane their necks to locate their seats. Squeezing past those who are already seated, excusing themselves as they try not to step on toes. There is an expectant buzz in the air, excited chitter-chatter between friends and strangers alike as they watch the clock a little impatiently.



Right on time, the lights dim, conversations pause, sentences are left unfinished as the attention of the audience is focused on the darkened stage. A man walks into the centre of the stage and as his backing musicians file quietly into their places, he greets the audience with an easy-going smile.

'You feeling good tonight?' he says, as he picks up a ukulele, fingers pluck the strings deftly to play jaunty introduction to his first song of the evening's lineup.

'*Jonker Street, where the cultures meet*', he sings, as he takes his audience on a journey to historical Malacca, celebrating the diversity of cultures within his country, and indeed within the auditorium tonight. A tiny light radiates from just above his heart as a spotlight briefly captures the jewelled treble-clef pinned to his vest, then is trained onto the stage, where his name, Jimmy Fong, is brightly illuminated.



Jimmy takes his audience on a ride down memory lane, a nostalgic journey back to his roots in Penang. At age nine, tuned into the RAAF Butterworth radio station and with a borrowed guitar, he taught himself as many popular songs

as the radio station played at the time. Tonight, Jimmy shares the songs by artists who influenced him then and now; musicians like Don McLean, The Beatles, Ralph McTell, and his personal favourite, John Denver. More importantly, however, Jimmy showcases his original songs, which will shine a light in the hearts of every individual here tonight.

There is an audible intake of breath as Jimmy plucks the twangy introduction of the second most-recognised song in the world after *Happy Birthday*. The audience joins in with Jimmy and *The Baby Boomers* as John Denver's *Take me Home, Country Road* unfolds.



Although Jimmy now lives in Melbourne, Australia, his beloved home is never far from his thoughts. Tonight's journey takes everyone to Langkawi, where his audience sways like palm trees to the happy tropical melody. Together they soar above the ancient forests with the eagle after which Langkawi is named and remember the fireflies of their collective childhood memories.

Jimmy catches the eye of an elderly lady in the front row and smiles at her as he begins the song about the five generations of his family. Sung in Chinese, everyone's eyes mist up, but none more than his mum, sitting proudly and sharing the success of her beloved son. This song is one of thanks to his mum and his audience shares this precious moment and gains an insight into Jimmy's extended family.

Jimmy's extraordinary talent as a songwriter is revealed as the words of his original songs serve to personally touch the hearts of everyone in the auditorium tonight.

But this is more than a mere concert. It is a celebration of life and love. Love of music, love of people, and most importantly, a love of home.

This is only too apparent when the opening bars of Jimmy's latest hit song begins with,

*'Though you may be far away
A thousand miles from here today
It doesn't matter what they say
Memories of Penang will always stay'*

Perhaps the lyrics of *Memories of Penang* encourage the audience to reach into the recesses of their individual memories to produce the images they themselves hold dear to their own hearts. The concert is almost over, but the word-pictures that have brought their hometown alive tonight remain.

For Jimmy, he has come full circle. He has come home to where his musical career started and although he has shared his life experience with audiences across the world, there is nothing more satisfying than coming home to sing to his people. He means it when he proudly sings the words,

'I might have left with my feet, but not my heart' for Jimmy's heart shall always remain in Penang.



The house lights are illuminated. The concert may be over but the experience and the memories will linger for a long time. There is the briefest of pauses before the audience members reluctantly shuffle out of their seats and gravitate toward Jimmy, who is waiting on stage to greet them. Some chat, whilst others reach out to touch him, perhaps hoping that some of his talent will transfer into their outstretched fingers.



They all have one thing in common. They all have smiles on their faces. The power of song has the ability to unite people and for a short time tonight, they have walked in Jimmy Fong's shoes down Memory Lane and it has been an unforgettable experience.



Footnote: in the wake of the success of Jimmy's two concerts in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he donated Rm4500 to the St Nicholas School for the Blind. He also appeared in an

additional 'unplugged' concert just before he returned to Australia, the proceeds for which were donated to a an organisation that cares for stray animals in Penang.

Congratulations, Jimmy.

Kindred Spirit

Our good friend, Alan Cherry and his partner, Christine Carlin have joined forces musically, forming a duo called *Kindred Spirit*. Alan wrote a tribute song for John Denver of the same name in 1997, which was released in Aspen on a tribute song album.

A couple of months ago, I was invited to a private party at the Puffing Billy Packing Shed where Alan and Christine were performing. The acoustics of the timber venue were great, and it was a wonderful afternoon.

A *Puffing Billy Dinner Train* has been booked for December 1, 2018. This will include a roundtrip by Puffing Billy to the Packing Shed, where the audience will enjoy a dinner and be entertained by *Kindred Spirit*. It promises to an wonderful evening of listening to the music John Denver and Patsy Cline, whilst enjoying dinner. I would like to organise a HGA table for this event, so please let me know in advance if you are interested. I will have some firm costings for the event very soon. This would be a wonderful early Christmas gift for the Denver/Cline fans out there. For additional information, please contact me

hga.vic@gmail.com.

Footnote: The following article about Alan was printed in the Rocky Mountain High Newsletter in January, 2003. I'm not sure what happened to JDMAS, but they don't seem to be operating any longer. However, Alan is still around and is organising a dinner concert in December. Details to follow:

SINGER/SONGWRITER ALAN CHERRY TO SING JOHN DENVER TRIBUTE SONG IN AUSTRALIA AND USA
(By Christine Egli, President / Editor John Denver Music Appreciation Society)

'I've recently spoken to Alan Cherry - singer/songwriter of the beautiful John Denver tribute song "Kindred Spirit" -and not only is he singing this beautiful song at the Victorian and Australian Country Music Awards, in Tamworth (NSW) next January, he will also be singing it at the BUNYIP Country Festival in Victoria in February, and at the John Denver Memorial Event in Aspen, Colorado next October. However, Alan hopes that he can also sing for us at a future JDMAS gathering here in Australia sometime next year. Alan kindly sent me a cd of the song "Kindred Spirit", and he truly has captured the spirit of John in the music and the words. Alan's

beautiful tenor voice and his ability as a songwriter, along with wonderful instrumental and acoustic music, all combine to make this a very special John Denver Tribute cd. The cover and cd artwork with sunset and eagle, and Alan's notes about the cd are really lovely too. Here's a paragraph from Alan's biography:

"John Denver has been a great inspiration to Alan, and he sings many of his songs. Alan has been writing songs for many years and feels now it is time to write and record his own experiences of life as the song a True Blue Aussie battler from the bush. Alan's latest song "Kindred Spirit" is a tribute to a man he admired so much as a performer, songwriter, humanitarian and conservationist - John Denver."

Rory Young Photography

This beautiful page is included in Rory Young's website. The article about how the John Denver Sanctuary came about, and the accompanying photos are so lovely, I would not insult Rory by reproducing it in this newsletter. Here is the link: <https://www.rypix.com/the-john-denver-sanctuary/>



Chris Westfall

Chris Westfall has announced his next concert on the 14th July will be held at **Seven Points Amphitheatre, Raystown Lake**, 6993 Seven Points Road, Heston PA at 7pm

CHRISTOPHER WESTFALL
in
Concert



Head to the Mountains with Chris Westfall when he returns for this popular annual concert! Featuring songs from singer/songwriters such as James Taylor, John Denver, Dan Fogelberg and his own originals, come out for a great night of music!

Saturday, July 14, 2018
7:00 pm
Seven Points Amphitheatre
Raystown Lake
6993 Seven Points Rd.
Heston, PA

Sponsored by: US Army Corp of Engineers, Raystown Lake
And with thanks to the: Comfort Inn, Huntingdon

Donations suggested

Mark Cormican – Just announced!

Mark Cormican will be opening for wonderful Michael Martin Murphey at the **I-BAR Ranch in Gunnison Colorado on Friday, July 20, 2018.**

Tickets are available from

<https://www.songkick.com/concerts/33417804-michael-martin-murphey-at-i-bar-ranch>

For anyone interested in listening to the talented Mark Cormican and Starwood, they have released their new CD, *Family Tree*.

CDs are available for \$15 (plus \$3 for shipping) to: Mark Cormican, P.O. Box 270178, Louisville, CO 80027 or go to PayPal "Friends and Family" and send \$18 to Sharon's email -

alaskanchild17@gmail.com

Mark has organised a Christmas concert at the Colorado Center for Musical Arts in Lafayette CO on **Saturday December 8th at 7:00 p.m.** Put it in your diary and more details to come later.

Back Home Again

A tribute to John Denver.

"In this time of environmental concerns, and Americans' efforts to simplify their lives, it seems that John Denver's music and message are even more relevant today, yet you rarely hear his music on the radio anymore."

Tom Becker is a former member of the *Legendary Folk Group, The New Christy Minstrels*, and has gone on to appear with *Grammy Winners and Music Legends* including Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Gregg Allman and Jerry Jeff Walker.

Check out Tom's website for his forthcoming show schedule.

<http://www.johndenvertribute.net/schedule.htm>

Tom's next tribute show will be on July 22-23 in Lancaster PA. Click the link for details and tickets.

<https://dutchapple.com/>

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon are excited to be returning to the beautiful Wheeler Opera House to pay tribute to John Denver's music and legacy. More details will be coming!

The concert is scheduled for 13th October. More details later.

Aspen in October 2018

Aspen in October is off to a slow start, compared to last year's lineup, but there is still plenty of time for tribute artists to lock in their gigs for the week.

For more information on the current list of concerts, please click on this link.

<http://johndenver.de/index.php/en/aspen-in-october/aspen-2018>

Pikes Peak Cog Railway

We took a trip on this iconic railway in October, 2017. The day was brilliant with visibility to over 100 miles. We could see almost to the end of the world.... But now, if you want to see this

magnificent view, you have to drive up the mountain, and apparently it is not for the faint-hearted.

Pikes Peak Cog Railway will not reopen for the foreseeable future

While it closed down for the winter and was supposed to reopen for the spring season, the 127-year-old railway's "infrastructure and equipment has run its course."

The iconic Pikes Peak Cog Railway will not reopen for the Spring nor will it reopen for the foreseeable future. This comes after the historic railway closed in October for maintenance, the first time it had done so in 10 years. Once inspections started, there were more issues than just fixing the tracks like the owners at the Broadmoor Hotel expected.

"Like peeling skin on an onion, we realized there were more and more layers of things that needed to be looked at," said Allison Scott, the Broadmoor Hotel Director of Communications.

Scott said the equipment has "outlived usefulness" and they cannot guarantee the train's safety.

Pikes Peak Cog Railway is just one of two in North America and the highest altitude cog in the world. Because of this rarity, the Broadmoor will need to call in experts from Switzerland. Citing its 127-year lifespan, Scott said that many of the pieces aren't made anymore, so it's hard to figure out what pieces are usable. That's just one question of many, including, will the Cog Railway ever re-open?

"Everything is on the table at this point, and yes, that is certainly one of those things," answered Scott. But she said they are doing everything in their power to keep it open, and that could mean a lot of money, although exact numbers are unknown.

This announcement comes after local officials in El Paso County proposed a project to replace the Pikes Peak Summit House with a bigger and

better one. Scott said the Broadmoor has reached out to the forest service and local officials knowing this decision to stop operating the Cog Railway could affect that proposal.

"This is all new to us," Scott said. "The decision was literally made 24 hours ago, so we are in conversation with all of the stakeholders."

Scott is in the process of calling customers who paid for a ride and refunding them. She said they plan to be transparent throughout the process and encouraged people to call 719-685-1045 to give the Broadmoor an email address in order to receive updates.



This month, I've selected the lyrics *Take me Home, Country Road*.

Some material included in this newsletter has been derived from the public domain, such as the internet and printed media. Articles and reviews are the opinion of the individual writer and as long as the content is of a reasonable nature and it is appropriate, it will be included. Organisations mentioned or featured in this newsletter are included to educate and inform people of their role and purpose. HGA does not profit from including the names of any organisation in this newsletter.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.

Take me Home, Country Road

(Danoff, Denver, Nivert)

*Almost heaven, West Virginia
Blue ridge mountains, Shenandoah river
Life is old there, older than the trees
Younger than the mountains, blowing like a breeze*

*Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia Mountain mamma,
Take me home, Country roads*

*All my memories, gather round her
Modest lady, stranger to blue water
Dark and dusty, painted on the sky
Misty taste of moonshine, teardrop in my eye*

*Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia Mountain mamma,
Take me home, Country roads*

*I hear her voice in the morning hour she calls me
Radio reminds me of my home far away
Driving down the road I get a feeling
That I should have been home yesterday, yesterday*

*Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia Mountain mamma,
Take me home, Country roads
Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia Mountain mamma,
Take me home, Country roads*

*Take me home, down country roads
Take me home, down country roads*