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# *Travel with a Pen*

## Glenn Martin



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I am flying to Hobart (from Sydney) for a twelve-day visit. In Tasmania, I will use buses as my only transport apart from my feet. I will spend most of my time in Hobart. I am attending my graduation from the University of Tasmania in a Diploma of Family History, then travelling to Oatlands (in the midlands) to search for clues to my great great grandmother's presence there (as a convict) in 1850. And I will visit places I haven't seen before.

Life is a series of stories, intricately interwoven. I write the stories as I go.

## Sunday 20 Aug 2023

I was booked on Virgin Airlines, Sydney to Hobart, leaving 10:10 am, Sunday morning. A blue sky, a clear day, crisp. I booked the airport shuttle bus and it arrived on time at 7:30 am, a modern large van. It had two other passengers, a couple from Castle Hill who were returning to New Zealand - with one suitcase! All smooth, and I arrived early at the airport.

I organised myself, printed everything out, but it's still hard to figure out what you have to do. I still have to check in one suitcase. They had helper-persons, so I didn't try, I just asked for help. This looks more legitimate as I get older. I got to the departure gate and had time to read for an hour.

I was in the ninth row in the plane, window seat and no one beside me. A German lady was in the aisle seat with her husband sitting directly behind her. Why? I don't know. So many things every day we don't know. The plane was quite full. Were they holiday-makers, people returning home, Australians, Asians, British tourists travelling in the off-season? None of the above or all of the above.

I like the window seat because, if you're flying, wouldn't you want to see where you are going? Wouldn't you like to see the sky, and the ground, and the clouds, and the sea? It's hard to see where the country goes, because the clouds just disappear into the distance and there is no horizon.

When we were going across Victoria, there were lots of forests and mountains, and often just the single thread of a road passing through. Most people live in cities, but the mountains are still there. I saw the line of the beaches marking the southern coast of Victoria, and then there was just water and patches of clouds. Not rough; no shipwrecks today.

I saw the line of beaches marking the northern coast of Tasmania. There was an inlet that could have been the Tamar River that goes down to Launceston. We flew down the east coast to

Hobart. At times, the sea was so clear that it could have been glass, deep, blue glass. At other times, the surface was rippled all over. No great waves, no turbulence, just a surface shimmer in different shades of blue.

We got to Hobart just after noon. Getting luggage was slow, because several planes arrived at about the same time. But of course, in time it all works out. People find their bags and leave – old people, people with children, who are invariably excited, and the occasional solo traveller, like me.

I was hoping there would be a bus out front that would take passengers who had not booked a seat, and there was. Twenty dollars for the trip. The driver seemed to decide to leave when he thought he had enough people. He took me to a bus stop just one block from the Hotel Astor. He also stopped outside the Grand Chancellor Hotel, where I have to go tomorrow to sort out my graduation gear.

It was about 1:30 pm when I arrived near the Hotel Astor. I wasn't booked to arrive until 3:00 pm, and I thought maybe they don't man the desk outside of the set hours. But my bags were heavy: 12.5 kg for the suitcase, and 5.7 kg for the backpack. So, I went in, left my suitcase on the ground floor and walked up to Level One where reception is.

There was no one at reception, as expected, but there was a lady sitting in the lounge room, and she told me to ring the phone number on the sign on the reception desk, and Tilly or Neil would come down. I am positive this same lady was sitting just there the last time I was here, around four years ago, and she said exactly the same thing. She had a magazine on the table in front of her, and she was doing a crossword. And yes, last time she was doing the same thing.

It was Neil who came down, and it was the same Neil who had been here four years ago, and he said, "Haven't you stayed here before?" Indeed I had.

He walked downstairs and put my suitcase into the lift that carries baggage only. Up it came, all by itself. Then I noticed, just

near the lift door, an exhibit. It looked like a church building, about 900 mm high, with spires and dark wood, except that there were vertical steel bars instead of walls. It sat on a square table made of similar dark wood, nicely turned. I had to ask two questions: Was that there before? And, what is it?

I evidently have a good memory, because Neil told me that Tilly had only acquired it recently at an auction house in Hobart. It was a bird cage! Neil was pleased that I had noticed, and pleased that I liked it.

He said I had a choice of two rooms, and he showed me. The first room was large, and it had beautiful old wooden furniture. The other room was nice, but dark. I'm sure this was the room I stayed in last time. I liked the first room; it had more light, and nicer furniture. It also had a small shower in the corner, which doesn't matter a lot, because there is a bathroom across the corridor, and also, there don't seem to be many people staying here at the moment.

After I had shed the load of my bags, I went out, because I was hungry. I promised myself that I wouldn't just do the same things I did last time, but there are four boats down at the harbour that were floating seafood cafes, so I thought that might be worth repeating. I ordered scallops and chips, simple fare. It was nice enough – not gourmet, but nice for a hungry man. Oh, and the music: it sounded like The Beatles from around 1964 – those songs from their early albums, but they sounded like different versions, as if Paul McCartney or George Martin had been trawling through the archives and found them. So that was rather pleasant and evocative.

One thing I hadn't done on my previous travels was to go to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, so I found it and went there. I only had an hour until they closed, but it's close enough, and if I want to come back tomorrow, I will. It was, as museums tend to be, interesting, but I won't enumerate all the exhibits. There were some exhibits based around Charles Dickens, because he visited Australia, and Hobart. He also came to Sydney, and there is a statue

of him there – in Centennial Park, I think. (Yes; it was created in 1891.)

The emphasis in the exhibition was on his books. Apparently, when he was releasing *Oliver Twist* in serial form, for the English and American markets, a printing press in Hobart was printing the articles/stories and distributing them locally. It's nice to hear a good book story. I should note that opposite the Hotel Astor is a building that has "Bookbinder" carved into its stonework. Maybe they printed the Dickens serials!

I went into one room that had many nineteenth-century portraits on the walls. What took my interest were two longish tables in the middle of the room. They were covered with black velvet. I wondered why you would put something on exhibit but then cover it up. Usually if there is something you have to do, there are instructions everywhere, but there was not a word in sight. So, I ignored them at first.

When I was walking around the room, I found myself looking at the tables from the other side, and I realised there was a dowel through the edge of the velvet. Obviously, this was to keep the edge down, but conversely, it meant you could pick the edge up. So I did. What I found were some very old books underneath, early copies of novels by Charles Dickens. One of them was *Great Expectations*. Another cover revealed a letter written by Charles Dickens. Hidden treasures!

After the museum, I wandered down to the wharves. I know I said I would not spend all my time revisiting things I saw last time, but I was very close to the statues of the female convicts, so I went to see them. I had taken photos before, but I realised that to be comprehensive, I should take photos of the base of each statue, because the names of some of the women were written in the brass that the statues stood on, and the names of some of the ships that brought them. I didn't find Sarah Crosby, my great great grandmother, or the *St Vincent*, the ship that brought her here in April 1850.



There was no reason for the history buffs to take notice of Sarah. She didn't bring a child with her from England or Ireland, as some of the women did. She didn't figure in the public history of Tasmania; she married Edward Lewis in 1853, and by 1857 they had left the state for New South Wales, never to return.

By the time she died (1897), her children were trying to eliminate any mention of Tasmania, because of its convict associations. On her death certificate, her eldest daughter changed many of the details of her mother's life. She stated that her mother was born in Ireland (true), married Edward Lewis in Ireland(false!), and in Australia she had lived in Victoria and New South Wales, but never in Tasmania (Victoria seems to have been substituted for Tasmania).

Sarah didn't distinguish herself by her exploits. Her main misdemeanour was to have a child in 1851 to an unnamed father, a child that we presume died, but the baby's death is not recorded. Many convict women had babies to unnamed fathers, and many babies died without record.

I walked to where the Salamanca markets are held, which is on Saturdays, and had a coffee in the dying sun. It was indeed a temperate day, with no ice in the air. People were venturing forth in tee-shirts, although I was comfortable in my flannelette shirt and light jacket. After coffee, I found a walkway between the shops called Kelly's Stairs, and walked up, because it went to Battery Point, and I will be staying there later this week, at the Shipwrights Arms Hotel. It was a steep staircase and very old.

When I got to the top, all the houses in the street were very old and charming. They were neat and lovely. One garden had lots of flowers, which I think is quite a feat in the middle of winter in Tasmania. This area has clearly become genteel. Some of the houses had memorial plaques on them. Some were described as "gentleman's residences". I think that is an exquisite concept, but I struggle to visualise what it is supposed to be.

Is it a single man with servants? Is it a man with no apparent trade or occupation? Is it an important man who happens to be not

married? Or may he still be married? One of them was certainly important. He built the house in about 1903, and he is credited with being the main architect of the Australian Constitution: Andrew Inglis Clark.

The view from Battery Point is wonderful, looking down onto the Derwent River. After that I walked back through Prince's Park to Salamanca. It was Sunday afternoon, and a lady was singing at one of the pubs, in the outside area, the footpath, or the front courtyard. Popular songs from the eighties. Solo with an acoustic guitar.

Then I walked up to St David's Park. It is covered with mature trees and numerous memorial statues. Apart from this it has a corridor of stone walls that have gravestones affixed to them. They were taken from a cemetery that gave way to city progress.

Most of the gravestones are from the 1800s, especially the early part of the century, the early days of Hobart. I just like reading the names and dates, and the messages people offer up for their deceased relatives. There were many children who died. One child died two weeks after the family arrived in Hobart from England. There was one family called Lewis (as per my great great grandfather, Edward Lewis), but the gravestone stated they were from a different part of England from Edward, who came from Essex.

Mentioning this reminds me that I have not found Edward's death certificate or grave. He lived in Sydney for much of his life. Perhaps he lived in Newcastle for a few years, but then the trail goes cold. I think he died around the same time as Sarah - 1897, but all I have is stray clues, no clear conclusion. And I certainly won't find anything useful about his death in Tasmania.

Part of my purpose in coming to Tasmania this time is to go to Oatlands, because it seems that when Sarah first arrived in Van Diemen's Land as a convict, she was sent to Oatlands to work as a servant at an inn. Her employer was Charles Sutton. Oatlands is on the road north from Hobart, heading towards Launceston.

I arrived back at the Hotel Astor around 4:30 pm. In bourgeois terms, this was for an afternoon rest before I went out to

find dinner. Given that it is Sunday and it is winter in Hobart, it may take some deft hunting to find dinner.

I like my old-fashioned room. It does not have a television. If you want to watch television, you can walk down to the lounge room where the lady does her crossword. However, wouldn't it be interesting just to not have television for a couple of weeks?

On my way to find dinner, I walked up the road past the Church of St Joseph's, built in 1843 of sandstone. This was the church where Sarah Crosby and Edward Lewis got married in March 1853. Imagine that! At the time, they lived two blocks away, in Watchorn Street. There is nothing left in Watchorn Street from the old days. It is all car parks, garages, a modern apartment building, and the side wall of the Odeon, an old-fashioned cinema. It's just a short street. Although I vowed not to repeat things I had done before, I couldn't resist walking up the street. I consider it devotion, homage to the ancestors.

Next month, the Odeon will feature a show called "Natural Body Builders". I saw a body builders show on an Indian movie. It was quite a spectacle, and possibly the movie did not even do it justice.

There were not many restaurants open, and I don't eat meat, so I avoid some places. I suspect people get food delivered home. That seems to be the way of it these days. What I was not prepared for, however, was the modernisation of food-ordering within the restaurant. I went into one and was met, not with a person, but with a sign with a QR code on it, saying "Scan this to see the menu". I walked into the restaurant and there was only one table where there were people. But there were no staff to be seen. I walked down to the desk at the back, and again I was met with the QR code and no staff.

I did not want to order my meal by clicking on a QR code and looking at my phone. I wanted a human to interface with me, with words and maybe even a smile or an effort. I walked out of this restaurant. At least I didn't upset any humans by doing so. I eventually went into an Asian restaurant that had humans in it.

However, when I sat down, the waiter (a human) came and handed me a menu with a small piece of paper on it that had a QR code on it. He motioned to it.

I said, "I do not wish to do that. I wish to order a meal from you. Can I do that?" I made an effort not to reduce my voice to a mechanical monotone.

He seemed a little disappointed, as if he had a new toy to share and I didn't want to play with it, but he brought me a traditional colourful, glossy menu and I soon found a choice that I thought would be okay. I got my meal, which was quite satisfactory, and then a group of young people came in and sat nearby. I watched their behaviour. I wondered if the young people realised that they were being studied, anthropological-style.

They all pulled out their phones and started looking at them. I could see the QR codes scattered around the table. They seemed to be quite happy doing this. And the waiter stood back, not interfering with the process. On the other hand, nor did they seem to need help or advice. The message about their order seemed to be communicated without words, and before long, the waiter came back with meals for them. But I did not wish to do that.

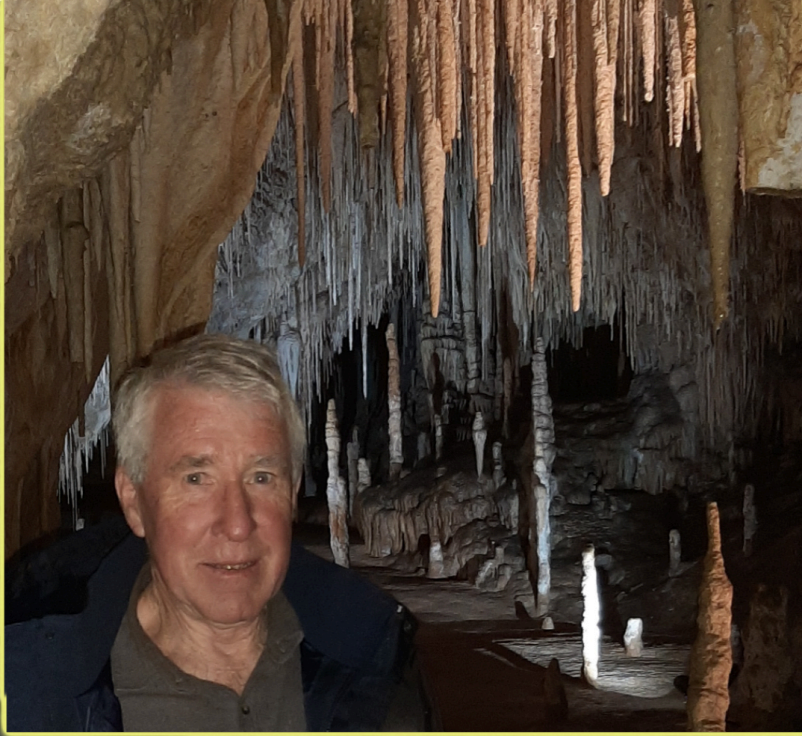
I was rather torn in eating my meal. It was brought in its own bowl, and it was boiling rapidly upon delivery. I was warned by the waiter that it was hot. So, I could not eat fast; I had to wait for it to cool. However, I couldn't stand the music. It was Asian disco, rapid beat, soaring voices that were uniformly emotionless, and... And nothing, just over and over, as if they were products of AI. I almost hoped they were. I had to remind myself that the food tasted quite okay.

After I left, I walked up the street past the old Post Office sandstone building, and three girls walked past me and crossed the street. They were charged up as if they were intent on having "a good night". They started banging on the bars of a shutter door and yelling. I suppose it made sense to them. There was nothing sinister about it, it was just a lark on a cold night. By this time, I was walking past a bus stop and some people were waiting there for a bus.

A young man who looked rather scruffy started commenting on them audibly, saying they should grow up. I realised this was for the benefit of his son, who was about nine. He was trying to show he was a good parent. So much is packed into every moment when you walk around a city.

What had initially interested me in the girls was that I thought we were in the next street, where Hadley's Hotel is located. I had taken note of this place last time I was in town, because it would have been a classy place in the 1930s, and it still preserves something of that aura. The hotel turned up in a book I read recently, an autobiography by Alanna Hill (*Butterfly on a Pin*), a Tasmanian girl who became a famous international fashion designer. In her book, as a teenager living in Hobart, she and her friends got dressed up outrageously and went to this hotel to dance and have a good time. I was reminded of it by the lively party of girls.

And I walked back to the Hotel Astor in the brisk evening. I let myself in with the key, because the hotel closed its doors at 6:00 pm. This is what it means to stay at a private hotel.



"Travel with a pen", these days, is a metaphor for travelling with a laptop. I went to Tasmania for two weeks, intending just to keep a diary of my experiences. I was going there to graduate from my Diploma of Family History course, and I was going to Oatlands, in the midlands, to explore more of my great great grandmother's story as a young Irish convict in the 1850s.

The diary grew into something more, this book. It is easy, when in possession of a laptop, to slip from observation and reporting into reflecting on experiences. For me, it evoked the idea of Boswell's *London Journal*.

**Glenn Martin** is the author of over twenty books: reflections on experience, ethics and values, family history, and poetry.



## **Glenn Martin's books**

### *Stories/Reflections on experience*

The Ten Thousand Things (2010)

Sustenance (2011)

To the Bush and Back to Business (2012)

The Big Story Falls Apart (2014)

The Quilt Approach: A Tasmanian Patchwork (2020)

Long Time Approaching (2023)

### *Books on ethics and life*

Human Values and Ethics in the Workplace (2010)

The Little Book of Ethics: A Human Values Approach (2011)

The Concise Book of Ethics (2012)

A Foundation for Living Ethically (2020)

Future: The Spiritual Story of Humanity (2020)

### *Books on family history*

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The Search for Edward Lewis (2018)

They Went to Australia (2019)

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All the Rivers Come Together: Tracing Family (2022)

### *Poetry collections*

Flames in the Open (2007)

Love and Armour (2007)

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Volume 3: That Was Then: The Early Poems Project (2019)

The Way Is Open (2020)

*Local histories*

Places in the Bush: A History of Kyogle Shire (1988)

The Kyogle Public School Centenary Book (1995)



## The author

Glenn Martin lives in Sydney, although he lived in the bush on the far north coast of New South Wales for two decades. He has been a teacher at high schools and tertiary institutions, a manager of community services organisations, and a commentator on management, business ethics, employment law, and training and development. He has been the editor of publications for management and training professionals and an instructional designer for online learning. He is the author of over twenty books.

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