

# ACROSS THE WIDE BROWN LAND SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2008

IAN HUGHES



# PREFACE

There is, as mentioned elsewhere in these pages, a body of opinion (voiced, among others, by the *Dragon Lady Who Used To Operate Out Of The Other End Of I Block*) to the effect that Hughesy is, if not travel-averse, at least travel-reluctant.

This might be seen as a fair conclusion based on the fact that, for several years after we'd finished constructing the Little House of Concrete was complete, Hughesy didn't engage in significant travel activities until 'Er Indoors appeared on the scene.

The travel-hiatus over those years was, however, the result of economic factors rather than an inbuilt aversion to travel *per se*.

The same financial considerations had, before the construction of the Little House of Concrete meant once Hughesy's assorted cricket-related Odysseys were out of the way for the year there wasn't a great deal of cash available for anything above subsistence-level eating and drinking.

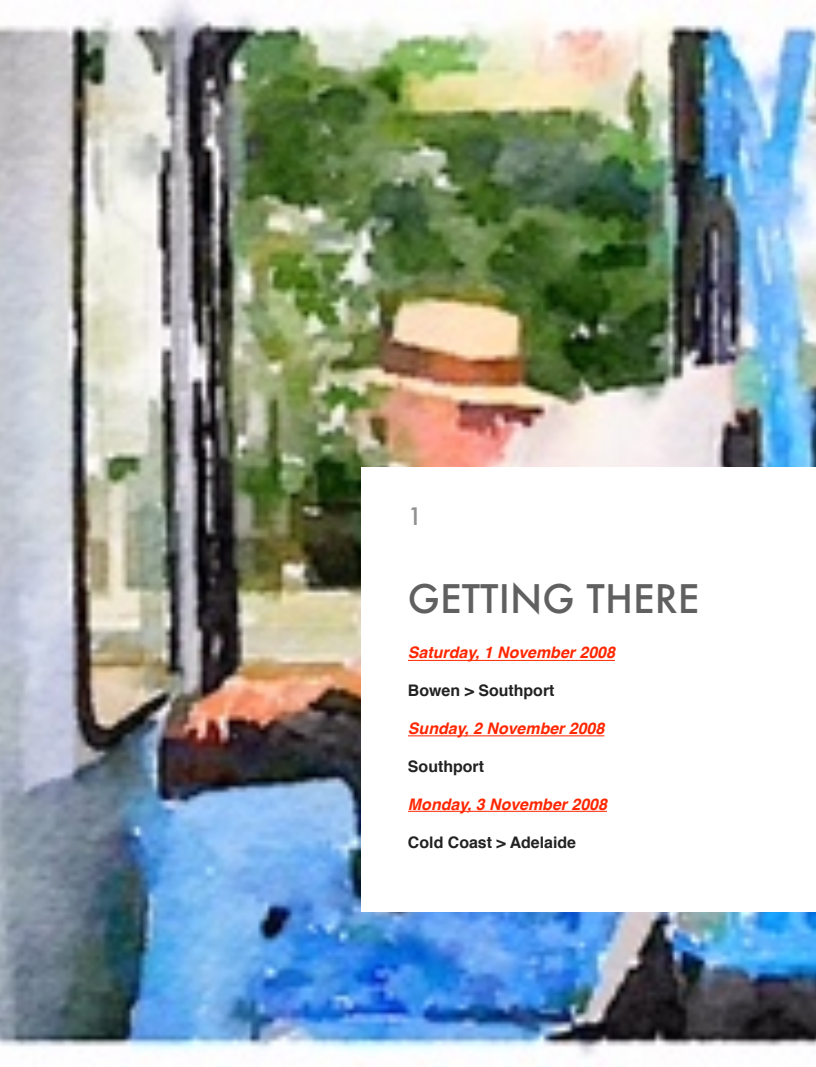
Then, in the run-in to retirement when we sat down and looked at the figures it became evident that my allocated pension would suffice for day to day expenses, but that would be about as far as the money was likely to go.

As a result, travel planning, choices of destination, activities along the way and such were matters for 'Er Indoors since she'd be the one paying for each little jaunt.

Bearing those financial constraints in mind, we've done fairly well over the past seven years with trips to destinations along the Queensland coast, the Hunter Valley, to Melbourne, around the Yarra Valley and up to north-east Victoria, down to northern Tasmania and, most recently, Japan.

There's also been the opportunity to catch the 2001 Byron Bay Blues & Roots Festival and last year's Eric Clapton concert in Brisbane.

So I'm happy to sit in the Little House of Concrete and pass the time reading, writing, listening to music, drinking wine and doing some gardening on the side.



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## GETTING THERE

*Saturday, 1 November 2008*

Bowen > Southport

*Sunday, 2 November 2008*

Southport

*Monday, 3 November 2008*

Cold Coast > Adelaide



**SATURDAY, 1  
NOVEMBER 2008**

Part of the theory behind the research was the need to fill in the time between finishing packing (approximately ten in the morning with a few last-minute items to be added once the clothes line had done its job) and the arrival of the Bowen Transit Airport Shuttle.

When the shuttle turned up on schedule around 3:45 for a 6:30 departure from Whitsunday Coast it looked like there were only the two of us on board but checking at Bowen Travel produced a third paying customer.

We'd spent several years without a bus connection between Bowen and the airport, and the service has only resumed relatively recently.

Hopefully, the numbers on board reflected the fact that we were leaving town on Festival Saturday rather than lack of demand because the option of your front door > airport > front door seems like a much better option than leaving the car at the Airport while you're away.



## SUNDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2008

Eight-thirty the following morning found the two of us tucking into the Big Breakfast (Yours Truly) and Eggs Benedict ('Er Indoors) at the cafe down the street from the unit.

That timing meant we could hot foot it back to base for Insiders on ABC1 (had to get the latest on the forthcoming Presidential election) and the 10:30 variant Offsiders where important financial matters would be under consideration.

Every four years on the first Tuesday in November the world watches while citizens of the United States bring a long, expensive process of elimination to a conclusion.

Every year, most of Australia's population spend the first Tuesday in November watching the outcome of a long, expensive process of elimination which sends a field of twenty-four racehorses out around a figure nine in reverse around Flemington race course in the Melbourne Cup.

I was a sporadic watcher of Offsiders until a chance encounter with their Cup preview yielded the trifecta in 2005.



**MONDAY, 3  
NOVEMBER 2008**

The attempt to fool Hughesy's body clock was unsuccessful, and despite attempts to roll over and resume slumber by six I was out of bed and working on the first instalment of the current narrative.

Those efforts were interrupted by Madam's arrival in the living room and instructions that sent me off on errands which filled in the waiting time in a manner which mere slumber would never have been able to match.

Having scanned the options to get us to Coolangatta Airport, we ended up choosing the 700 bus to Tweed Heads, alighted at the airport turnoff and, after a few minutes of slight confusion, caught the shuttle that operates between the highway and the terminal.

Confusion can be attributed to the fact that the last time we flew out of Coolangatta in December 2006 check in closed before the shuttle started, so we had to hoof it through occasional drizzle over 715 metres from the bus stop to the terminal.

The trauma associated with that incident can be judged by the fact that I had blotted the whole affair out of my memory,



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## CLARE

*Tuesday, 4 November 2008*

Adelaide > Clare Valley

*Wednesday, 5 November 2008*

The east side of the Main North Road

*Thursday, 6 November 2008*

The west side of the Main North Road



## TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2008

We'd already decided the day's activities would kick off with a stroll around Henley Beach since our post-nightfall arrival had precluded sightseeing.

Down the road and just around the corner we passed the former headquarters of the Australian Cricket Academy before heading along the jetty for a look back down the coast towards Glenelg.

We headed back to base through the restaurant quarter, where Madam spotted Stella, where she'd hoped to dine the previous night.

Changes to flight schedules between the time we booked in April and actual departure combined with Monday evening to put an end to that option.





## WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2008

Once breakfast had been demolished the first priority for the day involved meal arrangements for the next couple of days.

The briefing we'd received on arrival indicated supper requisites could be obtained from the highly rated Wild Saffron.

We'd also been told that lunch at Skillogalee was a must do so once I'd succeeded in booking us in for lunch on Thursday it was a case of setting out to locate Wild Saffron to check the options for the next two days' evening meals.

Those looked like being lasagne (highly recommended by our host) or Thai beef salad.

After a quick conference we decided to head off on the tasting trail and return after lunch (I'd pencilled in at Salt 'n' Vines), pick up dinner supplies, drop them in Auburn and then head off on a loop through Polish Hill River and Mintaro.



## THURSDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2008

Having decided to make full use of the facilities on offer at the cottage, Madam had indulged in a sauna the evening after we arrived and I'd indicated that I wouldn't mind a ride along the Riesling Trail on one of the bikes stored in the shed at the back of the premises.

Yesterday had dawned bleak and drizzly, putting that concept into the Not this morning, Josephine basket, but a cloudless sky took care of any excuses, and I set off around 7:10, planning to ride to Leasingham and back before breakfast.

Bearing the fact that I don't recall riding a bike at any point over the past twenty-plus years and that most of the route along that section of the Riesling Trail covered a gentle uphill slope, the news that I didn't quite make it into Leasingham mightn't come as a great surprise.



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## THE LAST LEG

Friday, 7 November 2008

Clare > Barossa

Saturday, 8 November 2008

Barossa > Adelaide

Sunday, 9 November 2008

Monday, 10 November 2008

Adelaide > Gold Coast



## FRIDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2008

An early night was, as it turned out, the smart option.

Through the night, the wind picked up, not enough to disturb the slumber at first, but in the predawn hours as the wind howled and the rain swept across in scuds of varying intensity a warm bed was the place to be.

Somewhere around two, the wind dropped, and the thunder moved in, eerie in the silence and threatening enough to make a return to sleep a difficult proposition.

But with several hours of sleep already under the belt, lying half-awake listening to the rolls of thunder gave me a chance to think back over the previous couple of days.

Madam's research activities had, once again, paid off.

She looked at a number of possibilities before booking us into one of the cottages that operate under the name of Lavender Blue.



**SATURDAY, 8  
NOVEMBER 2008**

With the winery-oriented part of the odyssey concluded, in the morning the main cause for concern was the direction likely to be taken by the weather rather than the direction we'd be taking to the nearest vineyard.

When I peeked outside things looked overcast and unpromising (at least as far as sightseeing was concerned), but we ventured back across Stockwell Road towards the Farmers' Market.

Predictably, as soon as we were actually inside the old Vintners Pty. Ltd. warehouses the rain decided to take a temporary break

Like most blokes, I've missed acquiring the shopping gene, so I'm not over-big on markets, but Madam likes to browse, so I wandered in her wake.

There wasn't much in the arts and craft line, and most of what was there could have been interesting if we were staying longer, and the accommodation had cooking facilities.



## SUNDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2008

Sunday morning found us setting out on a morning constitutional a little later than planned, thanks to a good night's sleep.

We spent a pleasant couple of hours wandering in and around North Terrace, Adelaide Oval and the Botanical Gardens before ending up in the Rundle Mall Markets where we met up with some of Madam's Adelaide-resident Japanese acquaintances.

While we were there, Madam found the Thai fisherman's pants she'd been looking for and, once seated in Scoozi; she had the opportunity to catch up with old friends while Hughesy took a long look at the wine by the glass list.

That meant lunch turned out to be a lengthy indulgence involving a variety of dishes, and while the Japanese conversation was intelligible, the wines were speaking a language I comprehended.



## MONDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2008

Monday's game plan, with us flying north in the afternoon, was based on opportunities for Madam to catch up with friends with Hughesy indulging in activities that would kill time.

Those were supposed to involve wandering around bookstores and CD shops.

But once I'd picked up a couple of titles I just had to have (the new Le Carre, a Michael Dibdin/Aurelio Zen omnibus and a new Andrea Camilleri) reluctance to spend anything beyond what was necessary saw me sitting around cooling my heels while I waited for departure time.

If that sounds a bit extreme, the reader needs to remember that straight after I'd picked up those titles I wandered into a CD store where I could easily have spent a couple of hundred dollars filling gaps in the music collection.