like to touch lovingly. I want to bathe all my senses in what is flashing back from our inhuman machine - to smell the warm moist earth, let the lapping water flow over naked limbs, put my tongue against cool aromatic growths, remain still to watch the birds and hear their songs. I could merge myself in this environment, and become a part of it. Phut! It's gone. We are aliens.

Where are we to find rest? The car penetrates everywhere. The fastnesses of the hills are invaded. The stillness of the valley is desecrated. The haunts of meditative fancy are bestrewn with tins and paper. Vulgarity is rampant in the sullen bush, and every quiet solitude has been transformed to a wilderness of monkeys.

from Knocking Round 1930

On a recent visit to the Powerhouse Museum I noticed a display of Australian violins. I noted that one was made by a Balgownie man, Mr. W. Auchterlonie. After some research I managed to turn up this article.

REQUIEM FOR AN OLD VIOLIN MAKER

These hills were not his hills, but for Wil Auchterlonie they became the hills of home.

He saw them first at the age of 22, a Scottish miner stepping into a new life and as yet unaware of his fitted ear for sound.

He settled in Balgownie and three months later he married a girl he had met by chance aboard the ship which had brought him to Australia.

She had gone to greet an aunt arriving from Scotland; they found mutual ground for conservation, she was from his homeplace, Dunfermline, and living at Balgownie.

In the years that followed he built her a fine home in Para Street, Balgownie, worked in Corrimal and the old Mt. Pleasant mines - and began carving violins.

He once estimated he had built 53 instruments altogether. He imported the timber from Switzerland and the German Tyrol, and during the war the curling Scottish voice swore that "Hitler may hack, wreck and destroy, but he will pass, and once again the forests of Tyrol will supply the world with wood for beautiful violins.

And so it happened.

Talking about Wil Auchterlonie yesterday his daughters said he had a pair of hands that could never be still. Even when he retired, a dusted miner, the busy hands searched for creative work.

"He would spend months on one fiddle," his daughters recall. "He would fit the back on, and plane the wood, and keep planing until it satisfied him. If his ear detected a fault he would destroy it and start again."

Always he fitted the strings on a Sunday. Others saw this gentle act as Wil Auchterlonie's personal thanksgiving for his gifted ear and marvellous hands.

The Scotsman seldom spoke of his work, but among his keepsakes lies a letter from Verbrugghen, whose quartet delighted Sydney from 1915 to 1922, inviting Wil Auchterlonie to meet him at the Conservatorium to compare instruments.
Verbrugghen had played one of the Scotsman’s violins, and the quality of tone had impressed him so deeply that a meeting was arranged.

Wil Auchterlonie took the measurement’s of the Master’s Stradivarius, a 5000 instrument which was on loan from the Belgian Government. Verbrugghen offered to take the first violin he made after the encounter, but he died on a tour of New Zealand and America, and Wil Auchterlonie daughter still has the instrument.

Her father told her the Master had commented that the fiddles he made would never find recognition in his own or his children’s day but that perhaps in his grand-children’s day they would be sought after.

so it may be Wil Auchterlonie will never know. He died on Monday, at the age of 85, just three months after the death of his wife Elizabeth, and by coincidence on the same day that the world was honouring the anniversary of the birth of a fellow countryman, Robbie Burns.

His funeral is from Parsons’ chapel today at 3.15 p.m. to the Crematorium.

He is survived by four daughters and one son Mrs. A. Denham, Mrs. M. Naughton, Mrs. J. Lane, Mrs. A. Humphries and Mr. W. Auchterlonie.

LANDLOPERS

The Tale of a Drifting Travel, and the Quest of Pardon and Peace, Written by J. Le Gay Brereton.

Although undated this work was probably first published in 1899. According to Brereton, ”Much of the story is founded upon the author’s own experiences. Therefore I think well to explain that ‘The Boy’ is not a portrait of any one of my friends, though in depicting him I have found it convenient to borrow a few details (of costume, employment etc) from one who travelled with me a few years ago. But essentially ‘The Boy’ is himself alone.”

I suspect, however, that ‘The Boy’ is probably Brereton’s fellow poet and close friend Dowell O’Reilly.

Sunday 5th April.

We had breakfast fairly early, and a few minutes later were overlooking Kangaroo Valley. The valley was brimming with dense mist, a lake of white vapour, which began, as we watched, to grow tenuous along the wooded shores, and to creep up among the trees. The sun silvered the surface of the cloud, and drew it up into hillocks, as we descended the pass. The zig-zag track is bounded by a semi-tropical jungle of cabbage-palms, musk-trees, myrtles, tamarinds, tree-nettles, wild gooseberries and innumerable plant-forms which I love without labelling. In forks of great trees perched staghorn and bird’s-nest ferns, and the whole mass of vegetation was knitted solidly together with raspberries, lianas and bush-lawyers. Through the deep shadows shot and floated the notes of coach-whip bird and thrush.

Later, we came upon bush of a more familiar appearance, where there were few trees but gums; the ground was shaggy with the palm-like zamia. Lower still were paddocks, imperfectly cleared, with corn and sorghum growing among the stumps. At last we reached the valley and fine pastoral country. The mist had lifted, and the sun was bright between lazy-pacing clouds.