

left her collection to the New Zealand Government in 1916.³⁶ The National Art Gallery's Swainson drawings are part of this gift.

The Alexander Turnbull Library's latest acquisition of Swainson drawings is part of the inheritance of William Swainson's youngest son, Edwin, whose grand-daughter Mrs Janet Leeper offered the sketches to the Library. Edwin never came to New Zealand, although three of his nine children settled here.³⁷ He received his share of his father's effects when they were distributed in 1873, some time after the death of the widow. His brother, W. J. Swainson, sent aboard the *Malay* a rimu box of his own make containing about one hundred drawings mounted by himself for uniformity of size, together with his father's seal and a few other mementos.³⁸

Mrs Leeper has told us all she knows about Edwin Swainson's one hundred drawings. 'My Mother³⁹ prized the William Swainson drawings which came to her as her "share". Mary [one of Edwin's six daughters] insisted on dividing them up, my Mother wanted them to be left all together. I remember this share-out and imagine it happened after Grandfather's death in September 1913 ... There is no doubt in my mind that Edwin's share of the drawings was intact until then, and that these drawings have gradually accumulated as the daughters died (unmarried except for my Mother and Annie who went to New Zealand before the share-out and died there)⁴⁰ and were finally in the hands of Dorothy Swainson who died here in 1959, the youngest by some 9 or 10 years of all that long family, and a most gifted musician and cherisher of family relics. Her home, like the others, was in France and the drawings arrived after this last war among her family possessions, having been stored in Paris ... since before the war. She herself was put in a prison camp and her house at Noirmoutier in Vendée commandeered by the Germans, but the stored furniture in Paris was not touched. Grandmother's box⁴¹ was among these Paris things and Henry Gabriel's Journal was with the drawings ...'⁴²

Although William Swainson's purpose seems to have been primarily to record, his drawings are carefully composed pictures. The design is gracefully balanced whether it relates objects in space — a few bent trees, a hut and some hills — or highlights a particular feature such as a giant punga against a lightly sketched background of bush. The New Zealand and Australian sketches are mostly in pencil and small, the space amply filled without crowding, an effortless mastery of relative proportions. Form and grace seem to have impressed him more than pattern, except when it came from the overlapping of palm leaves or intermingling of branches. His sense of proportion made him see things whole, so that while he could be delicately exact in the lines of trunks and branches the scale of his drawings did not allow fine distinctions between the pattern of one set of massed leaves and another. Shape and texture are the identi-