

A COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS
MADE BY WILLIAM ELLIS
ON COOK'S THIRD VOYAGE

In 1976 the Alexander Turnbull Library was fortunate to be able to purchase an unique collection of Cook-associated drawings made on the third voyage by William Ellis. This was made possible by a handsome grant through the Hon. Alan Highet (Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of the Arts) from the funds of the Lottery Board of Control and a grant from the Macarthy Trust, augmented by a generous private donation from Mr D. G. Medway of New Plymouth. The balance of the purchase price was provided by the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust Board.

The great research value of this collection of 131 drawings on 49 folios, is amply demonstrated by the following three articles contributed by experts in the fields of scientific history, ethnology and ornithology. The drawings are primarily a working collection, constituting source material for research, rather than exhibition items of pictorial appeal. Nevertheless, several have already been selected by Dr E. H. McCormick for inclusion in the major Omai Exhibition to be presented by the Auckland City Art Gallery in October 1977, on the publication of his monumental work¹ on Omai, the Tahitian who was taken to England by Captain Furneaux on the second voyage and returned home by Cook on the third.

The aesthetic quality of the new drawings—executed in watercolours, pen and wash, ink and pencil—is not comparable with that of the landscapes in the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, Canberra, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich,² nor of the drawings in the British Museum (Natural History).³ Some, however, do reflect the artist's undoubted talent *e.g.* folios 4 'South View of Mangia-nooe' (ink and wash), 8A 'Trading place at Anamokka or new Rotterdam Isles' (pencil) and 25, pencil drawing of Tahitan girl (see plates III, V, I).

The collection as a whole provides great opportunities for further research, not only to art historians studying both Ellis and the 18th century artists of exploration, but also to science historians—as so capably shown by Dr Hoare in his article—and scientists in several disciplines, as well as to 'pure historians' if one may venture to use that term. The Turnbull Art Collection⁴ is maintained on the principles established by the Library's founder, in that its holdings are basically of New Zealand and Pacific material of historical or topographical significance. Inevitably it thus makes a strong contribution to art history and certainly contains many examples of considerable artistic merit along with much that is essentially of solely research interest. Thus