

## AN ENQUIRY INTO CERTAIN NINETEENTH CENTURY PRINTS

### THE HEAPHY LITHOGRAPHS

Probably the best known and the most popular pictures in New Zealand are the views of Thorndon, Te Aro and Nelson painted in 1841 by Charles Heaphy, v.c. (1820-81).<sup>1</sup> This supposition was confirmed when in 1963 'The Queen's Prints' inaugurated the annual series of Turnbull Library Prints. They were taken from the original Heaphy water-colours in the Library's collections which were once in the possession of the New Zealand Company and were acquired by Mr Turnbull in 1915 from Messrs Francis Edwards Ltd, London.<sup>2</sup> The edition of 1,500 sets of the three prints was sold out within two months and constant enquiries for the prints have continued since. In 1952 the Friends of the Turnbull Library had issued two smaller Heaphy prints from the 1839 view of sawyers in the kauri forest and the Thorndon view, titled *Wellington Harbour, showing the beach, now Lambton Quay, and Thorndon*. Both scenes were dated 1840. And now, in 1971, we have the publication by Avon Fine Prints Ltd, Christchurch, of reproductions of the Heaphy lithographs.

This therefore seems an appropriate time to publish some comments upon the early issues although it must be made clear at the outset that this survey raises more questions than it succeeds in answering.

It is apparent to anyone who makes a comparative study of the Heaphy lithographs that there are variant versions. Yet collectors of New Zealand prints do not realise what a rich field lies open to them in this one sequence alone. Although a few people have for many years been well aware of there being differences, it is difficult to obtain sufficient examples for study, and many copies are in very bad condition while some have been trimmed. The earlier issues, especially, are very subject to heavy foxing, as in the case of the Turnbull holdings. I understand that Avon had great difficulty in finding reasonably matching copies that could be used to make a set for reproduction and in printing them adjustments had to be made to obtain a suitable balance in colouring for all three.

The Turnbull collections contain a total of 22 Heaphy lithographs at the time of writing: over the years the founder's copies have been added to by gift and by purchase. It is now policy to buy additional copies that are certainly different from those already held.

For a considerable period I have been studying them and taking every opportunity of also inspecting all other examples which I could find. Several years ago Mrs Diana Pope (then the Library's Art Librarian) assisted me in drawing up a preliminary table of variant issues