

George sold his drawings to Banks in August 1776, and Hodges was working for the Admiralty until 1778. If some of the watercolours he copied are not now in the British Museum, these must be drawings that Forster did not sell to Banks, a deduction that suggests that the copies were made before 1776—that is, on the voyage home or within a year of landfall. One wonders if these watercolours have been lost.

Who wrote the annotations? They pose some problems. They are fresh, clear descriptions of the plants and their localities, written in a careful hand, and in rather unscientific language (see Appendix, 5, 6, 7, 8). They do not appear to derive from the Forsters' Latin botanical descriptions.^{20,21} Furthermore, neither the wording nor the handwriting is just what one would expect an artist to put in his own commonplace book (one would expect at least some notes on colour); the annotations read as if they were written (under the heading 'New Plants') for other eyes; the handwriting is careful and neat, even a little shaky. A handwriting expert has looked at the inscriptions, and compared the hand with that in a letter from Hodges.²² The writing is not Hodges's.²³ In fact the placing suggests that the annotations were written after the album was bound. It would be interesting to examine Walton's handwriting.

My conclusion is that the artist was William Hodges, who copied the plants from George Forster's botanical watercolour drawings. My guess is that he copied them either on the homeward voyage, or in London just after the voyage. He sketched the copies on loose sheets of paper, intending to use them as working drawings for the foreground vegetation in the works he was to finish in London. He did use some of them; but later, sick of the South Seas and ready to begin his new career in India, he gave (or sold) them to his colleague, Walton. Walton bound them, and someone annotated them. We can now identify the plants in most of the drawings with confidence.

APPENDIX

These notes are numbered according to the page numbers of the album. The following abbreviations are used

WH: Hodges's album.

BM: the inscription on the matching George Forster plant drawing or engraving in the British Museum (Natural History), and the catalogue number of Forster's drawing or engraving, and comment.