

William Hodges's drawings of plants

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In the Drawings and Prints collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library is an octavo album labelled in brown ink on the cover, 'Hodges's Drawings of New Zealand Plants'.¹ A further inscription reads, 'Drawn by Mr. Hodges the painter who was with Capt. Cook'. The album contains 25 sketches, drawn in yellow and two tones of grey wash with occasional touches of another colour. One is at once struck by the resemblance to Chinese brush drawings of plants. They are quickly and skilfully done. A few pencil lines show through in places, but the artist creates his light and shade, curve and plane, of leaf, flower and stem with a minimum of well judged brush strokes. White flowers (see *Thelymitra longifolia*, plate 3) and leaves are outlined, or stand out from a wash background. Sometimes fine dark lines add texture. But they are poor in botanical detail, not the work of a scientist. There are handwritten annotations for eight plants, but for the first four descriptions there are no sketches so that the fifth description corresponds with the first sketch.

William Hodges (1744-1797) was the professional artist of Cook's second voyage (1772-1775) on the *Resolution*, commissioned to paint landscapes and figures. His paintings often do contain recognisable plants, but no true botanical studies have been ascribed to him. The naturalists on the *Resolution* were Johann Forster, and his son George, who was to draw the natural history subjects.

Was Hodges the artist? The style suggests that he was. Bernard Smith writes, 'I had no doubt at all after I had examined the Hodges sketchbook, both from the style of the drawings and the accompanying inscriptions, that it was his work'.² And, '... strongly reminiscent of Hodges's style,' agrees Rüdiger Joppien.³

Joppien has attempted to trace the provenance of the booklet. The names of T. F. Forster and D. D. D. Gough are inscribed in it, as is the note, 'Mr. Walton who Mr. Tunstal employed in painting, has sent him this book'. Thomas Furley Forster (1761-1825) was not related to the naturalists on the *Resolution*, but was associated with Sir Joseph Banks and his circle. Forster drew up a list of plants for one Richard Gough. Marmaduke Tunstal (1743-90) was a famous natural historian and collector of Cook specimens. Henry Walton (1746-1813) was a still life painter who exhibited at the Royal Academy with Hodges in the late seventies; a Mr Walton