

TURNBULL'S TUCKERBAG:
A SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN MANUSCRIPTS IN THE
ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

Recent articles in the *Turnbull Library Record* on the Library's scientific manuscripts¹ and the journal of John Boulton² have drawn attention to two areas with strong Australian interest. This article surveys the contents of Turnbull's tuckerbag and it is hoped that it will increase awareness of the assistance New Zealand institutions can give in documenting the Australian experience.

Alexander Turnbull's policy and progress in collecting Australiana are outlined in Eric McCormick's biography. For some years he had wavered between confining his collecting efforts to his own country and widening their scope, until in 1899 he stated that his purpose was to gather 'all literature relating to the Australasian Colonies and South Sea Islands'.³ The manuscript collection is therefore only part of a range of research materials including books, pictures, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals and photographs which bear witness to the success of his aims. Most of the Australian manuscripts were gathered by Turnbull himself, but in later times, with a narrower collecting policy, reference to Australia has been an added bonus in several items acquired primarily for their New Zealand content.

Excluded from consideration here are items mentioned in the previously cited articles and a number of literary manuscripts which will be described in a later issue. The items discussed here, together with a number of others of interest, are listed at the end of the article.

The earliest and perhaps most notable manuscript in the collection is a 17-page statement by Captain John Welbe written in 1722 from King's Bench Prison, consisting of copies of letters and petitions written by him in pursuance of a scheme to exploit Australia's natural resources and protesting the falseness of charges which had resulted in his imprisonment. Welbe had accompanied Dampier on his voyages of 1703-6 and in James Williamson's edition of Dampier's *A Voyage to New Holland*⁴ reference is made to a document dated 27 May 1715 which had been found in a volume of miscellanea at the National Maritime Museum. The document which is printed in full outlines Welbe's 'Scheme for a voyage round the globe for the discovery of Terra Australis Incognita'. The manuscript material at Turnbull shows that although nothing came of *that* attempt, Welbe did not relent in his efforts and changed his original plan in favour of a Charter Company and continued to petition His Majesty concerning the 'Barbarious and Unjust Usage that the Said Capt. hath met with for . . . offering to undertake to discharge the Nations debts and enrich the Nation upwards of one hundred Millions