

of the experience. Novelty and curiosity counted for much but, increasingly, so too did technical competence as art, science and natural philosophy set more rigorous demands. In all these 'branches' Cook's voyages opened up new facets in a new era in the European experience.

The 74 pages of drawings on 49 sheets of paper recently acquired by the Alexander Turnbull Library form an honest, unvarnished, immediate record by an experimental, visually perceptive, skilled hand and mind. They represent the honest striving by an eye unhindered or not conditioned, we must suppose, by classical or neo-classical artistic training—an effort to reproduce in Hodge's words 'a constant study of simple nature'. They represent, too, and graphically, the evolution of one man's skill during 'a long, tedious and disagreeable' four years and three months of exploration (1776-80).

That third voyage was a fatal voyage; in lives a costly voyage. Valuable, skilled and influential were the men who died. For Ellis it meant the loss of his Captain, his scientific medical superior and his immediate patron. Beaglehole summarises the melancholy list: 'On 4 October [1780] the ships were in the Thames; without Cook, without Anderson, without Clerke'.<sup>3</sup> Those three influenced Ellis.

Ellis was not the sole young man to learn much from this voyage. His friend the bardic 'highly Welsh', highly literary and 'darting' David Samwell put it best in 1781: 'there never was such a Collection of fine Lads take us for all in all, got together as there was in the *Resolution* & the *Discovery*'.<sup>4</sup> Among those likely lads, among the Andersons, Blighs, Burneys, Kings, Portlocks, Rioux, Samwells, Vancouvers and so on, William Webb Ellis stands as perhaps the most obscure.

His graphic legacy (now considerably extended by this latest collection) and one book—a surreptitious career-destroying two-volume work on the voyage—are his gifts to posterity from those floating, questing, highly important 'schools' of Pacific science and exploration led by the master, Cook. And of Ellis's posterity we know more than of his antecedents. What we know about him, anyway, is little enough.

He was, said Samwell, his friend and fellow professional medical man (Samwell sailed in *Resolution* as surgeon's mate and then, after Anderson's death, as surgeon in *Discovery* from August 1778), 'a genteel young fellow and of a good education'.<sup>5</sup> He joined *Discovery* on 22 March 1776. Behind him was a Cambridge education and some medical experience at St Bartholomew's Hospital, that ancient venerable institution.<sup>6</sup> Here is a glimpse, perhaps, of where his artistic delicacy and precision may have been enhanced in the study and drawing of anatomy. But that, like much else with Ellis, is speculation.

On the voyage through his pen, pencil and brush he becomes a more real young man. He had, notes Beaglehole, 'a patron in Banks'<sup>7</sup>—Banks, now the scientific stay-at-home but Banks still the scientific supercargo