

Earle and Angas: two important new watercolours

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Augustus Earle is known as the author of two early New Zealand classics, *Narrative of a Nine Months' Residence in New Zealand* (1832; re-issued 1909; and again, edited by Dr E. H. McCormick, 1968) and *Sketches in New Zealand* (1838), a very rare portfolio of which a very few copies are in contemporary hand-colouring. Regrettably all Earle's first sketches made in New Zealand during his visit to the Bay of Islands in 1827-28 were lost when his hut at Kororareka was burned down. Only 36 New Zealand watercolours and drawings have hitherto been known for many years—and all these, with one oil painting, are held in the large Earle collection in Canberra, part of the Rex Nan Kivell Collection in the National Library of Australia. They have, however, been lent for exhibition in New Zealand on three occasions since 1953, and all known New Zealand pictures by Earle, including prints after works by him, were reproduced in colour in *Augustus Earle in New Zealand* (1968). The Library was fortunate in that Alexander Turnbull had acquired one of the finest early New Zealand oils, depicting Earle's meeting with Hongi Hika; an unfortunate travesty of this was lithographed in the *Sketches*. A second oil, of Te Rangituke with his wife and son, was purchased at auction by the Endowment Trust in 1967. It is of particular importance in that it is the only Earle of a New Zealand subject included in the illustrations to FitzRoy's *Narrative . . . of the . . . 'Beagle'* (1839), Earle having been FitzRoy's artist on the early stages of the voyage. This painting came from the fine collection of Captain A. W. F. Fuller, of London, the source of the Library's new acquisition, a view across from near Paihia toward the site of Old Russell at Okiato and up the Bay to the Kawakawa River.

Earle, like Sir William Fox and Charles Heaphy (especially in their earlier watercolours), responded superbly to the New Zealand scene and recorded it faithfully without in any way 'anglicizing' it as did so many of their successors. Earle's subtle earthy colours convey the essence of Northland landscapes and this particular painting is among his very best. Although unsigned it bears an inscription in his own hand, and the characteristic phoneticized spelling of Kawakawa as 'Coower Coower', wrongly interpreted by Fuller and others as Kerikeri. This watercolour is obviously part of the series now in the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, which came on the