

NOTES ON RECENT ART PURCHASES
WATERCOLOURS BY E. A. WILLIAMS

Four watercolours by Colonel Edward Arthur Williams (1825-1898) are an important historical acquisition. They record an aspect of the Taranaki campaign in March and June of 1865 when Williams was colonel in command of the 4th Brigade of the Royal Artillery. Williams was a skilful watercolourist, a precise and amused observer of the attitudes of people as well as being a remarkably accurate recorder of the nature of terrain. He made an additional gift to history by pasting on the back of two watercolours his own explanations (handwritten on blue paper).

The first of these purchases, geographically on a northward journey and probably in time, is a watercolour [25.2 × 35.6 cm] inscribed in brown ink on the lower right 'Patea N.Z. 30.3.65' and signed with Williams' monogram EW: the capital rounded open 'E' entwined with the 'W'. It shows on the high bluff of the northern side of the Patea River a foreground of bracken, toe toe and flax and, more distantly to the left, a group of the 4th Brigade resting (their uniforms dark blue with white bandoliers and belts—which must have made them better targets—and a blue pill box cap and pom pom). Two sentries stand, the others sit talking or are grouped around the smoke of a fire. Behind the flank of a further hill are three mounted officers and two isolated bell-shaped tents. The two distant camps of about eight tents show on open flats high above the sea, one on each side of the river mouth where two two-masted ships lie at anchor. On the back is written in pencil 'No. 3 outlying Picquit Patea. E.W.'

The 'Left bank of the "Ingapè" March 1865' [Watercolour, 25 × 35.5 cm] is inscribed and signed E.A.W. in pencil on the lower left. It shows tents at the top of the cliff and a newly cut road on which a team of four bullocks is pulling a gun carriage. Soldiers are rolling up their trousers or already wading across the river. Williams' explanatory note on the back reads 'The "Ingapè" River enters the sea 10 or 12 miles north of Patea, and though the stream is insignificant in fine weather, its steep and rugged banks render it a serious obstacle to the passage of convoys of provisions or ammunition—it is fordable at low water only, and none but surf boats can communicate with vessels on the coast. The sketch is taken from the right bank close to the sea.'

The next sketch [Soldiers crossing the Tongahoe River March 1865] [Watercolour, 25.2 × 35.5 cm] is untitled, but Williams with rare forethought supplies it in his note on the back, thus: 'After crossing the Ingapè the troops marched along the sand at low water, and com-