

Mrs Hobson's Album. Reproduced with commentary and catalogue by Elsie Locke and Janet Paul. Auckland University Press in association with the Alexander Turnbull Library, Auckland, 1990. 166pp. NZ price \$54.95.

MRS HOBSON'S ALBUM, formerly known as Mrs Hobson's Scrapbook, was compiled between 1843 and 1845 and was a gift from her friends in New Zealand, made, it would seem, on her departure for England and subsequently given by the family of her daughter, Lady Rendel, to the New Zealand High Commission in London at the time of the country's centennial in 1940. Because some of the contents of the album are later than the time of Eliza Hobson's departure (1843), it is thought probable that the album was left here for completion and taken to England by other hands.

In the almost 50 years since it was placed in the care of the Alexander Turnbull Library it has been used occasionally by researchers, most of whom have hoped for its publication. It has taken another milestone, the sesquicentenary, to see that brought about, helped by a grant from the New Zealand 1990 Commission and another from the Sir John Logan Campbell Estate.

The publication is handsome, with the plates in colour or monochrome according to the originals. They appear to have been reduced to a little less than two thirds the original size so that it is not a facsimile production. Though each page is reproduced it is difficult to visualize the physical nature of the album. The title page describes it as 'Mrs Hobson's Album given to Eliza Hobson by her friends when she returned to England in 1843 as a remembrance of her time as wife to New Zealand's first Governor'. Preceding the plates are an introduction explaining its origin, a lengthy essay by Elsie Locke on the Hobsons in New Zealand, and a further essay by Janet Paul on the contributors. Most important, however, is the 53-page 'catalogue to the album' in which each plate is individually described. These catalogue notes are also by Paul, except where a Maori translation or interpretation was required. Christine Tremewan then supplied what is necessary.

Locke's historical introduction rehearses the well-known facts of the Hobsons' New Zealand stay, without advancing any really fresh information or suggestions. We are told that Eliza was the daughter of a merchant of Nassau, Jamaica (an unfortunate confusion of places more than 400 miles apart), but not that there were rumours of a strain of native blood, as William Mason was one day to inform Dr Hocken. Nor are we told that Hobson was of Anglo-Irish stock, like so many early governors, Grey, Browne, Bowen, Robinson, Jervois, Ranfurly. (Even FitzRoy and Wynyard had Irish wives.) Surely these differing colonial backgrounds of husband and wife must have affected their attitudes towards a colonized people, even though William had left Ireland for the navy by the time he was ten, and returned to it only occasionally, and Eliza was only 16 when she married and left the Bahamas.

Almost nothing is said of the months they spent at Okiato in Captain Clendon's house and it is not until explanations are given in the description of Plate 14 that the ordinary reader learns that their Russell was not the Russell of today. The Auckland years, on the other hand, are well covered with a proper emphasis on Maori aspects and a detailed account of the trial and hanging of the young chief, Maketu, whose two portraits are among the most memorable images in the album though one, like other plates, is in need of defoxing. Perhaps the most unfortunate thing about this part of the introduction is the use in the text of an inaccurately redrawn plan of Auckland in 1842. Many, many things are misleading in this plan, from the altered outline of St Paul's Church to the removal of bridges over the Horotiu stream, and the virtual obliteration of Princes Street. The whole scale of the drawing has been falsified. Fortunately the original is clearly reproduced in Una Platts's *The Lively Capital*, complete with the building identifications.

Janet Paul's task has been to identify contributors to the album and the scenes they portrayed. It appears that there were 11 contributors for the 50 drawings, paintings and manuscripts, but only five signatures or initialings. Hers is a fascinating tale of the detective work needed in confirming old attributions or establishing new ones. She is, however, wrong in stating that Edward Ashworth's work 'became known in New Zealand only after the Alexander Turnbull Library acquired, in 1966, the journals and sketchbook kept during his fifteen months' residence here'. His work was known in Auckland long before that. Ashworth, who taught drawing to the Hobson children when he found himself unable to compete as an architect in infant Auckland, seems to have been a promoter of the album. He was a fine draughtsman and left, in those journals, an important account of his short stay. One hopes that the Turnbull will fulfil before long the promise of their publication.

Joseph Jenner Merrett, John Johnson and John Guise Mitford make the most important contributions after Ashworth, with Edward Shortland, at one time Hobson's private secretary, adding various Maori texts, songs, poems and proverbs and Te Wherowhero's famous letter to Queen Victoria.

The notes to the individual plates are comprehensive and clear and, with so much detail brought forward, it would be strange if one did not find some points of disagreement. Thus, in Plate 8, the pathway in the foreground cannot be, as stated, the road to Government House which William Mason had under construction in November 1840. That road would have been on the other side of the house. Nor could the terrace verandah have been 'about 100 yards long' since the overall length of the house was only 120 feet; and in Plate 3 the viewpoint of Government House makes it unlikely that any building in the background could represent 'the barracks'.

Referring to Plate 16 the text quotes the description of a sketch in the Grey Album (British Museum), in which Merrett used the word 'onyx' for the material of the White Terraces at Rotomahana. Or did he? The caption to a marginal reproduction of the sketch uses the word 'salyx'.

The most worrying description is of Plate 44, 'Auckland looking NW'. To begin with, Ashworth's title is misleading. It should be N — due North. The viewpoint is surely close to the top of Vincent Street where it meets Hobson Street. Two streams, one approximating to Queen Street and one to Wellesley Street West or Vincent Street, joined not far from the courthouse, which is clearly shown left of centre. The fenced house may have been George Graham's house, but is certainly not Government House, which would have been obscured by the mound soon to be occupied by the Albert Barracks.

Plate 46, St Paul's Church: 'Nearly two years passed before it was ready for construction.' Does the cataloguer mean consecration? Even that would not be right for it was not consecrated till March 1844. It would be more accurate to say that it was nearly two years before the church was preached in.

There are other minor irritations - some plates have been slightly cropped - but it would be a pity if they were allowed to overshadow the positive virtues and the real importance of this publication, providing, as it does, a whole range of new images to sharpen our understanding of New Zealand as it was in those first days of European settlement, when the Maori were living much as they had done for centuries and the landscape was yet unaltered from its natural state. Auckland's volcanic cones are a prime example of altered appearances. The authors were not quite prepared to name the cone shown in Plate 57 but it is surely Mt Eden seen from the direction of Mt St John. If Mt St John seems not quite high enough to see the background of water which the extra height of Mt Hobson reveals, and which is shown in the drawing, it may simply be that it is obscured by the growth of trees and buildings on Mt Eden's slopes. Or perhaps a part of Mt St John suffered from

the attentions of quarrymen like so many other hills? Or Ashworth adjusted the landscape?

Understandably the Album is very much an Auckland publication — there are two views of Wellington and none of the South Island — but one hopes that its reception will encourage publication of other holdings in libraries like the Turnbull, not only Ashworth's but also W.C. Cotton's and David Burn's journals for example. Like the book in hand they will need expert editing and elucidation.

JOHN STACPOOLE

Auckland

The Friend of Keats: a Life of Charles Armitage Brown, By E. H. McCormick. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1989. 265pp. NZ price: \$29.95.

WHILE MARSLAND HILL and St Mary's Church no longer provide the sense of sanctuary so important to New Plymouth residents during the turbulent era of the 1860s, the graveyard, cherry trees and walkways still attract many to venture beyond the buildings to the location in which they are set. The old headstones especially hold a fascination even for those not concerned with genealogical research and as a youngster my curiosity was constantly engaged by one lone and unusual epitaph, 'CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN, the friend of Keats'. Dr McCormick's monograph has provided answers to my unspoken question.

In this painstakingly detailed account of a minor English essayist, artist, critic and librettist, McCormick lifts Charles Armitage Brown from his relative obscurity as an individual and places him within his broader social context. The strength of the book is the insight which it gives into the lifestyle and preoccupations of members of the literary circle in which Brown aspired to move. While John Keats is the most eminent of the group, such other men of letters as Charles Wentworth Dilke, Joseph Severn, E.J. Trelawny, and Leigh Hunt also have their place in the study. The result is a fascinating glimpse of persistent financial difficulties for most of the individuals mentioned; of constant health problems, consumption in particular; of professional rivalries and pettiness; and of their preoccupation with their status as well as the quality of their writing. Although the personal foibles and vanities are handled most judiciously by McCormick, none of the writers emerges as a particularly attractive individual.

The pathos implicit in that Marsland Hill epitaph is evident in Brown's life. While McCormick's study indicates that Brown was extremely supportive of Keats, particularly when the younger poet was experiencing financial or medical problems, the impression remains that the relationship came to mean far more to Brown than ever it did to Keats. Although the poet died in 1821, the memory of that friendship, and the personal status which this was assumed to convey, dominated Brown's life until his death in June 1842. The biography of Keats which Brown professed to be writing was never completed. As McCormick notes, the sad anti-climax was reached in 1838: 'The search for sources, the correspondence with friends, the years of preparation, the plans so often announced and so often postponed, had ended in this: a discourse delivered to the obscure literati of a provincial centre' (p 150).

There are a number of other themes explored in this study, Brown's relationship with his son, Carlino, being one of the most dominant. The final chapters which deal with Charles Brown as emigrant are particularly successful in conveying as an impression of the vicissitudes of the voyager and new arrival in New Plymouth during the first years of