

OBITUARY

A. C. HIPWELL

When Arthur Hipwell died on 11th June, 1964, New Zealand lost a distinguished painter and the Ornithological Society a lively member and notable benefactor. Born in Cambridgeshire in 1894, he came with his parents to live at Onehunga in 1910, close to the bird-haunted coast of Manukau Harbour. Since his father was a nurseryman who had conchology as a hobby, Hippy, as he was known to a multitude of friends, grew up in an atmosphere of flowers, shells and natural history. His art education began in Auckland and took him to the Canterbury School of Art. Later he spent three years in Paris. Though primarily a painter, he had a full and varied life as soldier, cartoonist, photographer, teacher, critic and administrator. It was only to be expected that an artist of his versatility would vary his style and experiment in any new media.

In 1957 he was awarded the Kelliher Art Prize for a painting of Mt. Taratara, Northland. In the same year he went north with an O.S.N.Z. party to join Peter Scott in a search for Brown Teal along the streams near Waipu. Hippy, of course, was busy with his pencil and the resultant sketches admirably caught the 'jizz' of the Brown Teal.

Though highly competent in many fields — some of his portraits in oils, for instance, are particularly fine — in his later years he was perhaps happiest out of doors, sketching landscapes and birds. Sometimes they were waders, terns or herons along the shores of Manukau or at Miranda; sometimes the common birds of his own garden. An unusual petrel brought in from Muriwai could at once arouse his enthusiasm to start drawing. From time to time his friends were able to introduce him to rarities; and it was a privilege to share his delight in a Great or Little Egret, a Terek Sandpiper, a White-winged Black Tern or an erythristic Stilt, and to watch the delicate development of his sketches.

When O.S.N.Z. funds were low and the Christmas Card scheme was mooted, the committee turned for help to Hippy as the obvious and natural choice. He undertook the task with zest, to the great financial gain of the Society. Many of his cards will long be remembered for the especial pleasure they gave.

To have Arthur Hipwell in a party was to be assured of witty comment and kindly laughter. In his last years when he became nearly blind, his sense of humour gave him amazing resilience. His zest for living and his eagerness for bird news remained undiminished.

— R. B. S.