

Picturesque past

By...

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sets of the 21 existing in the island at the Institute of Jamaica and in private hands. The exhibition closes January 25.

I WONDER how James Hakewill would react were he to return to present day Jamaica. Hakewill paid a visit to the island in the years circa 1820 and 1821.

He was commissioned by a number of plantation owners to execute drawings of their properties and vistas and, when he returned to London, he brought out a book, 'A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica', featuring coloured engravings based on his pictures and accompanying commentary on the scenes depicted.

An exhibition of the 21 illustrations from the book, hand-coloured, are now on show at the Hills Galleries.

Hakewill's 19th century Jamaica was a gracious well-ordered one, the pastoral atmosphere being conveyed with delicacy and no sense of impending change admitted. The immaculate hills and fields spread out in charming array, a minor paradise. In fact, exactly what the title of the book stated, 'A Picturesque Tour'.

Local interest will no doubt be focused on the contrast between then and the views as we know them now, Kingston and Port Royal from Windsor Farm with the neat little town lying below, King Street, Kingston (a well known one this), with its wooden buildings, dirt streets and leisurely atmosphere. As well, there are the representations of decayed or disappeared residences of the romantic past, like the infamous Rose Hall.

The show is worth a visit from those not only interested in art but in the history of the island. Not very often have the views been collected together for public display, only a few other complete

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