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

that settlement's existence. The decision to emigrate proved to be advantageous to Carlino but not to Charles, whose spirit and health were both broken by the move to antipodean isolation and hardship.

McCormick has proven to be a much more faithful biographer to his subject than Brown was for Keats. The study is meticulously researched and referenced, the prose has an elegance which Brown and his contemporaries would have admired. Charles Armitage Brown need no longer rest in obscurity on Marsland Hill. Yet there is a further irony that one whose remarkable contribution to New Zealand's intellectual landscape is widely acknowledged in academic, literary and artistic circles should himself never have received the public recognition that he so richly deserves.

JEANINE GRAHAM

University of Waikato

Colonial Landscape Gardener: Alfred Buxton of Christchurch, New Zealand 1872-1950. By Rupert Tipples. Lincoln College, Canterbury, 1989. 179pp. NZ price: $40.

THE AUTHOR of this book has himself raised the question of its purpose, whether it is a 'family history, a social history, a trade evolution study or a record of New Zealand's first landscape gardener and his landscape firms'. Alfred Buxton did not arrive in New Zealand until 1886, and was then only 14 years old, so he was not the first landscape gardener (nor, strictly, a colonial one) but, apart from that, the book fills all of its author's suggested roles. As a result it is sometimes confusing and too abundant in not always relevant detail. That the book will, however, be mined by others writing on similar subjects has been anticipated by Tipples, who quotes in his preface Antony Alpers's concept of a 'primary biography', one which absolves subsequent authors from the necessity of arguing over historical facts. Tipples has laid down a solid foundation.

He is a graduate of Cambridge University and a lecturer in management studies in the Department of Horticulture, Landscape and Parks at Lincoln College. He is not, therefore, a plantsman but has been chiefly concerned with labour relations in primary industry. In fact this book, in Tipples's own words, began as a use of 'the life history method' for sociological research but, as it was written, his interest obviously deepened to embrace not only the wider extent of Buxton's work but certain philosophical concepts — the value of gardens, for instance, in combating the effects of loneliness on early settlers.

Alfred Buxton was apprenticed to Thomas Abbott, 'doyen of Christchurch nurserymen', soon after the family's arrival from Britain. Like Buxton after him, Abbott also undertook the 'laying out of gardens and pleasure grounds by contract or otherwise'. Buxton set up on his own in the early 1890s and produced his first nursery catalogue in 1899. Already, in this first catalogue, its cover an interesting example of art nouveau design, he announced his special interest in landscape gardening.

Much of Buxton's subsequent success may be attributed to the qualities of the men he sought out and employed, whether his nursery manager or the draughtsman, Edgar Taylor, whose father had been curator of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens; but he benefited also from the prosperity of the farming community in the early years of the new century. Relationships among Canterbury, Wairarapa, and Hawke's Bay sheep-owning families led to the expansion of his business as far north as Poverty Bay. He would take a tent at agricultural and pastoral shows and exhibit an 11-foot by 5-foot model of a landscaped farm. Large scale farmers made rich by the commission-buying of wool at that time then expected the speedy transformation of their properties.

The book is well illustrated with plans and mainly black and white photographs of gardens in various stages of development. The panoramas by R.P. Moore are particularly