

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

valuable, but some other shots are rather obscure. Plans usually show a curving tree-lined drive and a heart-shaped roundabout in front of the house with, say, a rose garden at one side. Pergolas were frequent. Rock gardens, ferneries and lily ponds contributed to more elaborate schemes, such as Greenhill near Hastings or Homewood at Karori. The general character was more rustic than formal and there is little evidence of sculpture, urns or fountains. There was considerable earthmoving on occasion but clients were expected to plough gardens areas and to take delivery of the great boxes of plants, which were sent by rail from the Christchurch nurseries. At the peak of operations 80 men were employed in the North Island alone.

Buxton twice formed a limited company. The first went into liquidation in June 1926 as the wool wealth declined and the second, under the name of Alfred Buxton and Sons, met a number of problems of which the Napier earthquake was one. He returned to Otaki to grow cut flowers for market, employing wartime staff when he could get them and occasionally fulfilling a landscape commission for old clients. He died in 1950.

Different readers will find different interests in this book. By no means least is Buxton's involvement with trade organizations, the New Zealand Association of Nurserymen, which became the New Zealand Horticultural Trades Association, and the Institute of Horticulture, which was originally known as the New Zealand Bud Selection Committee. These are areas of particular interest.

During the course of early research, with some chapters already written, Tipples was badly injured in a road accident and he completed the writing on a word processor borrowed as an aid to his rehabilitation. It may, then, seem a little unkind to comment on the number of literals which have survived into print but they are so many that they must reflect upon the standards of publication in his department. Having said that one must also say that the book is essential reading for anyone interested, however remotely, in its subject matter.

JOHN STACPOOLE

Auckland

The Botanic Garden Wellington. A New Zealand History 1840-1987. By Winsome Shepherd and Walter Cook. Millwood Press, Wellington, 1988. 396pp. NZ price: \$79.95.

ONE OF the most enduring and attractive legacies for our towns and cities from the Victorian era is their botanic gardens. When these were first established, they were not particularly attractive. In swamps or on hillsides unwanted for other purposes plantings were made of exotic trees. The gardens were an act of faith in the future—a very Victorian phenomenon. Today, as those who visit these gardens in Australia, especially Victoria, and New Zealand, discover, most of the trees planted in the Victorian era are fully mature and the gardens are in the full glory that the Victorians only dreamed about and planned for. But the gardens had other purposes which were just as characteristic of the Victorian era although meaning much less to us today. They were, for instance, a practical application of principles of colonization and imperialism. From Kew Gardens seeds and plants were distributed throughout the Empire. The gardens were to be the seed-beds for experimentation in the adaptation of European plants and trees to New World conditions. In the tradition of Joseph Banks they were intended to show what species could profitably be propagated in the New World. Some of these experiments were remarkably successful: this book shows the major contribution of the Wellington Botanic Garden to the 'acclimatization' of *pinus radiata* in this country. From the garden seeds and plants were distributed all over New Zealand. A fascinating part of this book is the tracing of these distributions.