Chapter Six

THE BUSINESS EXPANDS

Opening up the North Island

By 1912 Alfred Buxton's business was expanding to the North Island. The first client who can be identified with some certainty was Ernest Short of Parorangi near Fielding. Short was apparently the first of a succession of stud farmers who were Alfred Buxton's clients. In 1906 and 1909 he had had entries in the Romney Marsh classes at the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Show.

Ernest Short farmed some 5,000 acres in the Fielding area with his farm at Parorangi consisting of some 2,000 acres. He was widely known for his stud farming activities with both Romney Marsh sheep and Clydesdale horses. The New Zealand Farmer's correspondent, in an article about the stud activities at Parorangi, described him as "one of the most meteoric, most successful, and most progressive breeders of sheep in the Dominion". The Parorangi site was acquired from 'King' Riddiford in 1911 and a new homestead was constructed by local builders. The house consisted of 43 rooms with Australian hardwood floors. There were also extensive outbuildings(See Fig.6.1). The grounds were landscaped by A.W.Buxton Limited. A contemporary description of the grounds is given by Playne:

"The private grounds have been laid out with the greatest taste, and the trim and tidy appearance which pervades every portion of the estate speaks volumes for the efficiency of the controlling master mind. Trees of all kinds have been planted in various parts of the station, and the ornamental shrubs and flowers and other decorative garden work make one of the most charming pictures of rural beauty to be found in New Zealand."

Many of the original trees and shrubs still remain forming part of the grounds of Hato Paora College. The College is a Catholic Maori boys school which was bought by the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington from Ernest Short's widow in 1947.

The most extensive plantings are along the drive and around the house and are shown in the Figures 6.1-2 and 19 and 20 of R P Moore's panoramic photographs. The pond, which can be seen, has silted up subsequently. It is now referred to as the farm drain and dries up in dry weather.

In front of the house on the north side is a group of natives (looking left to right) including rimu, totara, karaka, matai, rewarewa, tarata, lacebark, mahoe, bullibulli, titoki, and various forms of matipo. The exotics include Japanese cherries, magnolias, maples, crab apples, wattles, camellias and Chinese junipers and Fan Palms. Large cedars form the background, particularly Cedrus atlantica 'Glauc'a, C.deodara and C.libani. Also there are several magnolias, English(Quercus) and silky oaks(Grevillia robusta), kowhai, and two large weeping elms. Behind these, across the stream, are some douglas firs and Sequoiadendron giganteum. On the west of the house are further exotics including copper and weeping beech, a weeping ash, a sycamore, and some red oaks. Down the drive from the red oaks are a bay laurel, monkey puzzle, gingko, New Zealand beech, Tasmanian blackwood, a honey locust, and various oaks, ashes, elms and sycamores. The planting also includes various cypresses, cedars, a good Sequoiadendron, several Abies, and a douglas fir. From the 'Y'juncion back down the drive to the back of the house the most noticeable feature is several pairs of bunyabunya (Araucaria bidwillii) as well as several previously mentioned species including elms, atlas cedars, and cypresses. A lime dominates the 'Y' junction in the corner of the drive which leads on to the farm entrance. By the side of the sports ground there are several Juniperus virginiana and a fastigiate atlantic cedar of unusually narrow habit. The entrance to the sports ground is marked by a Thujopsis dolobrata while there is Pin Oak beside the house. The drive, which is approximately half a mile long down to the main road, is lined with the trees listed above including several Cupressus torulosa, some redwoods, some evergreen holm oaks, some Italian cypress and Juniperus virginiana. The team responsible for Parorangi was led by Edgar Taylor and included John Frank Ridder as Foreman. The reminder of the labour force was recruited locally. The landscape contract cost some £4000 and it was reported that the planting down the drive alone cost £500. One of the most distinct features is the pagoda, sited beside the lake, but now heavily overgrown by the planting.
Fig 6.1 Parorangi showing the lake and a rustic bridge in December 1914. (Hato Paora College)

Fig 6.2 A copy of one of R P Moore’s panoramic photographs of Parorangi from beyond the lake c. 1925. (NZ Gardening, Jan 1932)

Fig 6.3 A view of Mr R Tanner’s property at Longburn (NZ Farmer, 1915).
It was originally wired for electricity and must have been at least 1.5 metres high.\(^{186}\)

Before the contract with Short had ended another local stud farmer, Bob Tanner of Longburn, was also talking to Buxtons. Like Short, Tanner was a member of the New Zealand Romney Marsh Sheep Breeders Association. In 1908 Bob Tanner was a only member of the Association while Ernest Short was on the Association’s Council. By 1916 he too had graduated to the Association’s Council.\(^{187}\) Evidently there was considerable rivalry between Short and Tanner and whatever one had the other had to have too. So they not only competed in the Show Ring but also in private life, and that competition began before the more affluent times associated with the First World War. Tanner’s house was less elaborate than Short’s, though the garden was quite extensive. Again ponds formed an integral part of the scheme though in Tanner’s case they were added as an afterthought when the grounds developed seemed to lack something on the flat marshy site that they occupied.\(^{188}\)

**The Association of New Zealand Nurserymen**

The years before 1914 were also important for two other matters. The expansion of the business into the North Island required an expansion of the nursery site. In November 1912 the Company had acquired the block of land to the east of St Martin’s Road, bounded on the north by Gamblins Road and to the south by Port Hills Road. The new block was nearly ten acres in extent and it brought the total nursery area to nearly eighteen acres.

The Association of New Zealand Nurserymen had been founded at a meeting of horticulturists at the Normanby Horticultural Society’s Show on 17th March 1904. The meeting had been addressed by T W Kirk, Director of the Horticulture Division, Ministry Of Agriculture, on the subject of “The value of Association”. Mr Kirk emphasised that

“Organisation provided a vehicle for expression, vocalisation and power. Without organisation any group was powerless; with it it became the source of untold influence, able to mould private and public opinion, even exercising an influence on the actions of democratic Governments”.

At the conclusion of the address the Association was formed for all nurseryman and seedsmen. Thomas Horton, the fruit tree producer of Hastings, was elected as its first President. Early in 1914 Alfred Buxton joined the Association along with several other members of the trade in Canterbury. Among those who joined were his partner John Avis Pannett, also A H Shrubsall and Bill Edginton of the staff. While the Association was originally formed in 1904 it appears that it functioned at first as a representative body for North Island nurserymen. A district committee existed in Christchurch from 1906 and Alfred Buxton and Robert Nairn were associated with the movement. George A Green was appointed the first secretary/organizer of the association in 1909. Green carried out an extensive recruiting drive in the South Island early in 1914. In addition to Buxton and his colleagues the drive netted the Christchurch Nursery Company, Nairn and Son, J Muir and Co, Messrs Kerr and Barnett, A and S Reid, W Baylis and J Joyce. From this date the Association begins to figure as one of Alfred Buxton’s major concerns. He remained an active member of the Association and its successors for the remainder of his life.

During 1914 the association was organised into eight district councils. These endorsed the policy of the 1914 conference and agreed to avoid sales by auction. Alfred Buxton was nominated by the executive to sit on three special committees for the 1915 conference - roses, fruit trees, and legislation. At the executive prior to the annual conference it was suggested that any future wages award be made a Dominion one, but when a remit along those lines was considered, it was deferred until 1916. The main business of the conference concerned the prices of nursery stock and Alfred Buxton was active in the debate proposing or seconding a number of motions. He also seconded an Auckland motion which urged the passage of a consolidated orchard bill with clauses protecting the raisers of new varieties of trees and the setting up of Certificating and Nomenclature Boards. The venue of the next conference was also the subject of some debate with Messrs Buxton and Cooper moving unsuccessfully for Christchurch.

The 1916 conference of the association was marked by Alfred Buxton’s first attendance at the association’s pre-conference executive and by an influential paper from George Green on costs of production. In the latter Green envisaged the cost of labour increasing with a need for more skills in the labour force and proper training for apprentices. J A Pannett agreed that a close watch had to be kept on production costs while Alfred Buxton supported the case for the training of apprentices. A central interest at the conference, with the benefit of hindsight, was a paper by A H Shrubsall entitled ‘Education in horticulture’. Another paper followed in 1917 and Shrubsall’s enthusiasm and tenacity for the subject can be said to have had no small part in the eventual formation of the New Zealand Institute of Horticulture in 1922. His conception of the
objective is summarised best in a quote from his 1917 paper:

"I am of the opinion that the time is ripe for the establishment of a Dominion School or Institute of Horticulture in connection with the most suitable station under the control of the Government Horticultural Department, such Institute to be open to those engaged in or taking up the profession of horticulture and its various branches with admittance by fee and by scholarship. A school of this nature for the whole Dominion could be supplied with thoroughly modern equipment in the way of a lecture room with apparatus and library for science, demonstration, and study with suitable plantings and buildings in adjacent grounds. The practical matters could also receive their proper handling. Periodical courses of a few weeks at different seasons of the year would be of great assistance to those not able to spare more time for the purposes, while the opportunity would be provided for others able to give time for extended study." 189

But Shrubsole did recognise that there were plenty of difficulties in the formation of such an establishment. They included the need to have a uniform system of labour conditions throughout the Dominion. However, the 1917 conference also rejected a remit calling for the executive to support a national wages award when the current Auckland and Christchurch awards expired. The paper received his employers approval when the latter, amongst others, spoke in reply:

"...One point is very clear, and that is that we shall never get boys or nurserymen or gardeners unless we one and all pull together and obtain better prices for our products. Absolutely everything depends on that. (Hear, hear). I am satisfied that the public is willing to pay us a reasonable price for our products, but we are fools to ourselves and do not take it. I have had some very fine lads in my business since I started, but the time has come when I could not pay them what they were worth, and it has given me great pain not to be able to do so, and have to part with them. If we cannot pay our employees what they are worth naturally they will go elsewhere, and that is the reason why the nurserymen and gardeners today are in a poor way. I sincerely hope that something will be done in carrying out the suggestions contained in the paper."190

Unfortunately Buxton had not been able to attend any of the executive meetings during 1916, which were all held in Auckland. However, he was able to attend the pre-conference executive in Wellington at the beginning of 1917, and at the full conference he was elected South Island Vice President of the Association.

North Island operations during the First World War

Farming enjoyed a 'golden age' from the recovery of the late 1890s to the depression of 1921. While popular mythology holds that the struggling pioneer farmer reigned supreme, in reality the established and more substantial farmers prospered most. 191 Such were Alfred Buxton's customers during the Great War when this period reached its zenith with the 'commandeer'
Fig 6.5 The entrance drive approaching Selwyn Chambers' residence, Kopanga, Havelock North. (G Densen, May 1989)

Fig 6.6 The view over the Heretaunga Plains from the front veranda at Kopanga, Havelock North. (G Densen, May 1989)
ensuring high prices and guaranteed sales.\textsuperscript{192} We have already noted the first customers in the North Island, Ernest Short and Bob Tanner, the Romney Marsh sheepbreeders of the Manawatu. No further customers prior to J.H. Tatham of 'Homewood' on the Wairarapa coast and Selwyn Chambers of 'Kopanga', Havelock North, in 1914 are known. Both also had associations with Romney breeders. Chambers had begun negotiations with Buxtons before the outbreak of war and Tatham arranged for his farm to be landscaped as a present for his wife before also embarking. He never returned to enjoy his gift with his wife. The garden at Homewood has been described as

\textit{...lovely with lots of cherries, especially a pink, with a wooden pergola down a slope and asphalt and grass tennis courts.}

Today the only real relics of Buxton's efforts are the trees, but a 'Buxton garden was a very lovely garden - a thing to have'.\textsuperscript{193} However, some of the plants that Buxtons planted were more than ornamentals. African Feather Grass, which was planted in the original garden at Homewood, has become so much of a problem that it is now classified as a Noxious Weed. Homewood is not the only garden to have this problem as is recounted shortly. The layout of Kopanga was not completed as planned because of the outbreak of hostilities. Surviving correspondence suggests that Selwyn Chambers was not anxious to leave for the war with outstanding debts. The plan for a hilltop site involved substantial terracing, axial views from the house, a pond with a rustic bridge and a fernery as well as a winding drive and paths.\textsuperscript{194} It is probable that Homewood was landscaped before Buxtons established so much business in the Wairarapa that it became necessary to set up a regional headquarters. The precise dating of many of the landscapes they established at this period is difficult with little left of many gardens but the original outline, some of the original plants, and perhaps if one is particularly lucky, a copy of the original plan. But even then there is no assurance that the garden was constructed as shown, for not all details of the garden, as designed, were necessarily acceptable to the client either in terms of cost or desirable layout. Also, not all plans are dated or indicate clearly when they were drawn.

Edgar Taylor was given the job of acting as Landscape Manager for the company in its North Island developments. For five months of the year he operated from a base in Queen Street, Masterton, from which he controlled all the company's North Island landscaping activities. Most of the work was up and down the East coast of the North Island and Taylor continued in that capacity for five years. It seems most likely that he operated from Masterton between 1916 and 1921. Bill Edginton left the company's employment in 1921 and Edgar Taylor used his departure as a reason for returning to Christchurch when he had had enough of his migratory style of work. He took over the management of the nursery from Edginton.\textsuperscript{195} Most of the jobs involved gardens of 5-7 acres not just the $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of the urban subdivision. There were 6-7 big jobs but it is unclear which of the gardens they were.\textsuperscript{196} The gardens laid out by Buxtons during this period, known of, are listed in Table 6.1. The approximate date of their construction is also given where it is known. Business was attracted in various ways. The company took space at a number of the east coast A and P shows. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a number of the clients listed were stud farmers, many of them belonging to the Romney Marsh Sheepbreeders
Table 6.1 Sites landscaped in the North Island during World War I and just after

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Locality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Selwyn Chambers</td>
<td>Kopanga</td>
<td>Havelock North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-16</td>
<td>JH Tatham</td>
<td>Homewood</td>
<td>Wairarapa coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>P Mungavin</td>
<td>Kelvin Grove</td>
<td>Porirua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-21</td>
<td>LG Crosse</td>
<td>Glen Cumnrae</td>
<td>Weber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W Eric Knight</td>
<td>Willowpark</td>
<td>Dannevirke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JA Maclean</td>
<td>Te Rangi Pai</td>
<td>Masterton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maunsell</td>
<td>Awatoitoi</td>
<td>Masterton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FJ Miller</td>
<td>Taimahu</td>
<td>Masterton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H Morrison</td>
<td>Richmond Park</td>
<td>Hawkes Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G Shaw</td>
<td>Ngaiana</td>
<td>Masterton (35m NE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WG Stead</td>
<td>Te Mangahuia</td>
<td>Akitio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917c.</td>
<td>GE Allen</td>
<td>Parera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>RC Murphy</td>
<td>Panikau</td>
<td>Tologa Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919c.</td>
<td>FC Loisel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tologa Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920c.</td>
<td>A Maclean</td>
<td>Greenhill</td>
<td>Hawkes Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J Macfarlane</td>
<td>Waeteranui</td>
<td>Hawkes Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HA Matthews</td>
<td>Papatahi</td>
<td>S.Wairarapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinclair</td>
<td>Pirinoa</td>
<td>S.Wairarapa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Association. In many cases these farmers went from show to show staying with other studbreeders. For example, the Tathams always stayed with Archibald Maclean of Greenhill when they went to the Hawkes Bay Show, and he was a later client of Buxtons. At the shows Buxtons typically took a tent which enclosed a model of a landscaped farm. The model measured eleven feet by five feet and was made by Edgar Taylor (Fig 6.7). The exhibit was so successful that many farmers wanted their farms landscaped as in the model without realising that the layout in the model might not suit their situation. Money was apparently no problem. They wanted that sort of design there and then. Edgar Taylor has offered the opinion that it was the only period when real landscape work was undertaken in New Zealand. With the increased prices for their produce under the ‘commandeer’ big landowners were making a lot of money. Houses went up like mushrooms. Families were moving out of their pioneer homes into modern houses.

Edgar Taylor’s view of Alfred Buxton’s part in the proceedings is summarised aptly in another quotation:

“Buxton never done anything. He got the work. He was the agent or traveller. He could get the work; he didn’t need to get it.”

By this quotation Taylor does not seem to mean that Buxton was lazy but that there was no difficulty in getting landscape work at this period and Buxton did not have to go out and get it because it came to him. In fact it is rather a backhanded compliment because Buxton’s reputation must have acted as sufficient advertisement in itself.

All Buxton’s landscape contracts required the preparation of detailed landscape plans. But Taylor’s job involved much more than the preparation of such plans. In his North Island team up to eighty men were employed but only 2 or 3 men came up from Christchurch. Skilled labour was not readily available although the company employed its own carpenters and asphalters at its yard in Masterton. At that period asphalt was made from sand and tar and took twelve months to cure before it was ready for use. Staff could not be trained ‘on the job’ in five minutes and Edgar Taylor had to do a lot of the work himself. Assistance from Christchurch included such men as Painter, the expert with a rake, and John Frank Ridder, the landscape foreman. The work was not only complicated by the lack of skilled labour but also by the distance between sites. Railway sidings might be
30-40 miles away and the sites 50-60 miles apart. Taylor was bought a car to drive between sites but it could only stand the roughness of the roads for nine months. When Buxtons agreed a contract for landscaping a site there were various stipulations to which the owner of the site had to agree. The men had to be kept by the landowner and have their food provided. Also the latter had to agree to prepare the site for planting. Preploughing could save the contractors a lot of work. There was no machinery for earth moving then and the team depended on pick and shovel and horse and dray. Edgar Taylor borrowed a grader from Masterton Borough Council to help with work on a park there, but this was not a common event. There were also problems with getting and grading shingle for which Buxtons charged 3/2d per square yard. Nursery stock was consigned to the nearest railway station or siding from the nursery and had to be collected by the client. Fig 6.8 shows the dispatch of packed nursery plants from the nursery although it is only composed of photographic fragments. It also shows some of the staff members of this period including Edgar Taylor, and the packaging used for plants from the nursery. Besides the work done on Ernest Short’s property at Parorangi two properties stood out in Edgar Taylor’s mind in later years. These were the work done for H J Knight, a big sheep farmer near Dannevirke and for R C Murphy near Tolaga Bay.

Knight’s property was exceptional for the length of its drive, about one quarter mile of tarsealed, and its gates which were wrought iron and cost £800 for the pair. At the time the average wage for an unskilled labourer for a year was only just over £100. Besides the gates Knight’s property was notable for its Japanese lanterns, supplied by the Yokahama Nursery Company. These could be illuminated at night at the flick of the appropriate switch.

The garden created at Panikau during 1919-20 for Mr and Mrs Roger Murphy is the most elaborate Buxton garden remaining today. It was the most expensive too and cost some £8544. The expense was increased by the extensive stonework which was incorporated in the design. The garden probably owes something to English designs and styles which Edgar Taylor had studied. He claimed to have been influenced particularly by the work of C E Mallows, a garden architect of the Arts and Crafts school, who was able to design in a number of different styles. He was known especially for his artistic work and his drawings featured in a series of articles in *The Studio* between 1908-1910. The stonework was mined on the property and cut and arranged by Rennell Brothers, a family.
Fig 6.9 The original homestead at Panikau Station near Gisborne. (P Murphy)

Fig 6.10 The construction of the pergola and the laying out of the rose garden at Panikau. (P Murphy)
Fig 6.11 A view of the completed rockery and the pergola at Panikau. (P Murphy)

Fig 6.12 The enlarged house and the drive at Panikau. (P Murphy)
firm of stonemasons from Christchurch. Seventy years later Peter Murphy finds the design hard to fault with the exception of the initial close planting. There has been a lot of work removing mature trees but that has been hard when they are themselves worthwhile.

While the company’s work was continuing in the North Island some landscaping projects were also going on in the South Island. Two notable schemes occurred during the years of the First World War. The first was the landscaping of Raroa, later Glenelg, on the Port Hills. It was landscaped for George Bowron who could see his Woolston tanneries from the elevated site.

The second was the landscaping of Riverlaw for George John Smith after he took possession of it from Murray Aynesley in 1917. After Bowron Raroa (or Glenelg as it became known) passed into the hands of C M Ollivier, a public accountant of some standing. It is now the health camp of that name. Ogilvie has described the grounds:

"Glenelg with its tennis court, swimming pool, two hectares of trees, gardens and orchards was renowned for its hospitality. For some time it was the only home on that part of the hill apart from the gardener’s cottage and Cooksley’s."

The work at Riverlaw for George John Smith would have had to have been carried out with some precision for he was reputed to be an aristocratic and fussy man who is said to have timed his meals with a stopwatch. He had started his career as a solicitor’s clerk but had risen to be a governor of Canterbury College and a Member of the House of Representatives. Ogilvy’s description is again useful:

"The grounds at Riverlaw were beautifully landscaped with croquet and tennis lawns, ponds, handsome trees and shrubs, rockeries and orchards. Garden parties were frequently held and there are still memories of the regimental bands playing under the Wellingtonia to gracious gatherings of Christchurch’s elite. But the depression put an end to most of this."

So ended one of the most affluent periods in the development of New Zealand gardens.

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Fig 6.13 A different view of the house, pergola and shelter at Panikau. (P Murphy)

Fig 6.14 Peter Murphy, as a small boy, laying a memorial stone in the Panikau pergola. (P Murphy)
Fig 6.15 Greenhill was landscaped for Archibald Maclean at about the same time as Panikau. It also featured a notable pergola and a long landscaped drive. Archibald Maclean is seated with the white beard. To his left is his daughter, Mrs. E Lyons, and on the right, under the arch, is her husband, Mr E Lyons. (H Ross)

Fig 6.16 A closer view of the pergola at Greenhill. (H Ross)
Fig 6.17 Glenelg (Raroa) when George Bowron would have lived there (R P Moore)

Fig 6.18 The drive into Glenelg (R P Moore)
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Fig 6.19 From the Sun Gardening Book, 1915.

Fig 6.20 From "Rock Gardening in New Zealand" by David Tannock, 1924.

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Fig 6.20 From "Rock Gardening in New Zealand" by David Tannock, 1924.

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Chapter Seven

ORCHARD EXCURSION

One area of the South Island in which Alfred Buxton and his colleagues did not landscape was Nelson. Why the province should have been avoided is not immediately clear but Alfred Buxton and many of his fellow shareholders were involved in one significant project in the province, the development of an orchard at Braeburn in the Moutere Valley.

Orchards had been planted in the Motueka area from the early days of settlement in the middle of the nineteenth century. From the formation of the Department of Agriculture in 1892 government officials had expressed concern at the high levels of fruit imports. Later they drew attention to the prospects for fruit exports. The first trial shipment of apples from Nelson left in 1908. In 1910 T W Kirk, Director of the Division of Orchards, Gardens and Apiaries, wrote in the New Zealand Journal of Agriculture of the importance to New Zealand of establishing a regular export trade, and of the encouragement the industry should be given. One development which followed in 1911 was the floating of Tasman Fruittlands Limited by Arthur Mckee, a Tasman orchardist. The Company was set up as an orchard development company and became the model for later syndicates. The company acquired over 2000 acres in the Tasman district for development as orchards and their subdivision. The company undertook to supervise the clearing, planting and maintenance of orchards for absentee landowners for five years and to employ an experienced orchard supervisor.

The breaking in of the country was very laborious compared with modern methods and far less effective. The scrub had to be cut by hand and then burnt. The land was then ploughed and cultivated with horse drawn implements. No time was allowed for fallowing before planting. Benzie, an eyewitness of the events, has described the resultant fruit planting boom which lasted from 1911 - 1916:

"Townfolk from far and wide were attracted to that most interesting, genteel way of making a comfortable living by growing apples for export, with the assurance that a Government guarantee would be made available. Doctors, solicitors, carpenters, plumbers, school teachers, office workers, civil servants, missionaries (or foreign service) and men retired from army and from navy all joined the ranks of purchasers of land to grow apples for export." Among the purchasers of orchard blocks at Tasman were T W Kirk and Thomas Horton, the Hastings nurseryman. Horton's Nursery, lvy's of Rangiora and Two Bay Nurseries from Australia supplied most of the trees. In the boom period some 7000 acres were planted in fruit trees, but not all plantings were successful. The lack of experience of many prospective growers and indiscriminate planting made the long term success of many orchards unlikely from the beginning. Costs of development were miscalculated and orchards took longer to reach maturity than expected. As a consequence growers became discouraged, short of funds, and often had to abandon their orchards. Alfred Buxton's development, unfortunately, fell into this last category.

By 1918 A W Buxton Limited were doing reasonably well. Their founder was South Island Vice President of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen. Landscaping operations were proceeding in both North and South Islands and the company's share capital had been increased from £10,000 to £12,000. The Nelson area was vitally interested in fruit export and most orchards were expected to reach maturity from 1924 onwards.

Why, in this situation, did Alfred Buxton and his colleagues believe that orcharding was still a good prospect, although they would be latecomers to the business and had no specific orcharding experience? The reasons are unclear. Looking back surviving members of the Buxton family have suggested a number of reasons besides simply making money. But these reasons may all be coloured by hindsight. First, it has been suggested that at the time Buxton's had a
surplus of fruit trees in their nursery. Quite possibly this was the result of overordering when the curtailment of the planting boom was unexpected. Secondly, the orchard may have been intended to try out different varieties of apples. Thirdly, part of the land was to be afforested for the later production of wooden cases in which to export the apple crop. Apparently Alfred Buxton was also attracted to the area as a possible future retirement location.

The precise reasons cannot even be ascertained from the Memorandum of Association of the company formed to carry out the development, Braeburn Fruitlands Limited. The company was registered in Christchurch on 21st March 1919 as a private company, with its office in St Martins Road, Christchurch (probably at Opawa Nurseries). It had an initial capital of three thousand £1 shares and its objects were "to acquire, deal in and cultivate land at Motueka, and general". All, with the exception of G J Smith and W E Best, were also shareholders of A W Buxton Limited. On 24 March 1919 the company purchased a substantial block of land adjacent to Holdaway's Road, Braeburn. It was midway between Motueka and Upper Moutere. The land was purchased from James Graham Jeffreys, a medical practitioner of Motueka. It was freehold, extended over some 400 acres, and cost some £1600. Finance for the purchase was provided by a first mortgage from the vendor of £1550 and the mortgage was repayable on 16th July 1923, with the interest being set at 5%. The land consisted of Sections 31, 33, 34, and 35 of Block XI of the Motueka Survey District.

Table 7.1 Subscribers to Braeburn Fruitlands Limited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscribers were</th>
<th>Number of shares held</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A W Buxton Ltd</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Bowron (chmn)</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A W Buxton</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G J Smith</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R O Dixon</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Wardell</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W E Best</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W S Newburgh</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total shares</strong></td>
<td><strong>3000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The land purchased was adjacent to the orchards of Arthur Holdaway, A B Hirst, J Thorp, and a Tasmanian by the name of Clark. With the exception of Arthur Holdaway, all, including Braeburn Fruitlands Limited, were absentee landowners. Their orchards were...
Fig 7.2 A view of Braeburn Fruitlands from the hills intended for afforestation to the south. (I Holdaway)

Fig 7.3 Another view of the site of Braeburn Fruitlands on the inland Mosere Hills. (I Holdaway)
Fig 8 & 9. A surviving copy of one of the plans for a memorial pergola on the Puxto foreshore. (Marborough Archives)
developed and managed by Mr Holdaway along the lines laid down for the original Mckee development at Tasman. Upon the orchards reaching maturity the owners would have been able to take over their businesses as going concerns if they so desired.

The ground undulates from the Moutere Valley in the east to an altitude of nearly 500 feet on a ridge to the west of the property. It is crossed by a number of gulleys facing in a north easterly direction. The soils are Mapua clays derived from the underlying Moutere gravels. In its natural state this soil group has a low level of fertility and good crop production has only been found to be possible with generous applications of lime and phosphate fertilizers in recent years. The use of such soils for orcharding has been described as ‘a striking example of the successful economic use of a substantial area of marginal land’. 214

Arthur Holdaway’s orchard had been planted about 1911, and a packing shed constructed at the junction of Central and Holdaway’s Roads. It was intended to be used as a cooperative packhouse for all the orchard land developed under Holdaway’s control. Arthur Holdaway was a very busy man who was known as “the boss”. 215 The nickname portrays the characteristic managerial role which would have been essential to operate an extensive orchard development. Besides, the area planted by Braeburn Fruitlands Limited would have involved considerable numbers of labourers and several horse teams.

No records exist of the cost of the development or of the varieties planted. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show the extent of the plantings around 1920 and the exposed nature of the country. Before the orchard was planted the land for planting was all double ploughed. Other land which was not double ploughed produced less growth. The area planted in orchard was some 60 acres from the 100 acres of Lot 32 of the title. The gullies and steep slopes were not planted. An orchard development on the Moutere Hills at this period would have been expected to have reached maturity in approximately eight years, but it appears that the development was abandoned long before the eight years expired. Why did the development fail so quickly?

The first problem is that we know little of the financial affairs of Braeburn Fruitlands Limited. We do know the initial capital of the company (£3000) and that the land purchase was financed by a vendor mortgage for 97% of the £1600 purchase price. The development costs for the site may only be estimated. One contemporary estimate of the cost of developing orchard lands in the Motueka area was prepared by W Boucher, Assistant Director of the Horticulture Division, Department of Agriculture (Table 7.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.2 Costs of orchard development about 1918</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs of development (per acre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearing scrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
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<td>Year 2</td>
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<td>Year 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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If we allow £1 for the inflation of costs between the time of Boucher’s estimate and the work at Braeburn we have an accumulated cost per acre of £30. Over a 60 acre planting a total cost of £1800 may be surmised. However, such a figure makes no allowance for the management fee paid to Mr Holdaway, or the directors fees and expenses, or the costs of the ornamental trees planted along the boundary of the property. Nor has any record survived of how much of the nominal capital of the company was called up by the directors. It is possible that the development costs of the business may have exhausted most of the initial capital. The company’s problems may have been exacerbated by an exchange crisis and credit squeeze in 1921 and a sharp increase in the numbers of bankruptcies from the low levels of 1918 and 1919. 216 Alfred Buxton was very busy in 1921 and 1922 as President of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen. In 1922 he also hosted the Association’s annual conference in Christchurch and at Opawa Nurseries. For the latter event no personal expense was spared. 217 Also during this period he experienced ill health to a sufficient degree for it to merit comment in the official report of the 1922 annual meeting of the Association. Taking all these factors together, and bearing in mind important changes affecting A W Buxton Limited 218 a combination of circumstances led to the loss of interest in and subsequent abandonment of the Braeburn development. The only conclusion which may be made with certainty is that the Braeburn development was abandoned prior to the collapse of A W Buxton Limited in June 1926.

Today the only signs of the original plantings are rows of ornamental trees along the boundaries of the property. These trees were brought up from Christchurch by Alfred Buxton personally with shrubs
for planting around the Holdaway's home (Fig 7.4). Although Fig 7.2 and 7.3 show the orchard as well maintained, it appears probable that little work was done on the site after the initial planting. Ian Holdaway can only recollect chasing cows around an abandoned orchard with plentiful blackberries. 

There are no memories of the Braeburn development being sprayed as was A B Hurst's adjacent orchard. However, Hurst did visit from Nelson much more frequently than Buxton did from Christchurch.
Fig 8.0 Carterton Memorial Square, as it is today with its war memorial. (G Densem)