Chapter Eight

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The years 1918-1926 mark the high and low points in Alfred Buxton's life. Landscaping continued in the Wairarapa and in parts of the South Island. The Association of New Zealand Nurserymen began to take more of Buxton's time as he achieved the Association's highest office, becoming its President in 1921 and 1922. Also personal matters became central again as his parents died and his children left school. Finally the business experienced substantial change: first in personnel, secondly in moving site and thirdly in its eventual failure when A W Buxton Limited went into voluntary liquidation.

The First New Zealand Town Planning Conference

This conference took place in May 1919 in Wellington. It was to have far reaching effects on future development in New Zealand. Draft legislation on town planning had been placed before Parliament. The conference was opened by the Minister of Internal Affairs who had introduced the bill. Nurserymen were well represented by their executive and by members of several district councils. George A Green, Thomas Waugh and Alfred Buxton were among the delegates. Alfred Buxton also contributed to the accompanying pictorial exhibition of town planning. He exhibited two frames of plans for memorial parks.

One of the principal organisers and speakers was the Christchurch architect, S Hurst Seagar. Not only was he a principal speaker but a major contributor to the exhibition. Much of the discussion centered on 'Garden cities', 'Garden suburbs' and similar ideas. They had been promoted initially by Ebenezer Howard, the author of Garden cities of tomorrow. Another theme which dominated proceedings was the idea of things 'beautiful'. This theme recurs in much of Buxton's later work, in the Christchurch Beautifying Society's activities and their magazine The City Beautiful. Perhaps the view of the Nurserymen's Association is summarised best by quoting from their subsequent annual report:

"...Scientific town building carried out with the assistance of the horticultural architect, and the practical landscape gardener, must result in a great impetus being given to the demand for all classes of ornamental trees and shrubs. This association will always be found on the side of every effort having for its object the betterment of the conditions under which our people live, the Town Planning League being recognised as one of the very foremost of these agencies". 221

Landscaping

Landscaping carried on in the Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay after 1918 as it had done from the opening of a Masterton office in 1916. The period after 1918 is marked particularly by the building of memorials to the fallen from the war. These were discussed extensively at the town planning conference. Besides unknown work for the Wairarapa Fallen Soldiers Committee Buxtons were also responsible for Carterton's Memorial Square for which the money was raised by public subscription. Over one hundred south Wairarapa men had given their lives in the Great War and the Memorial Square was laid out in their memory. The resultant memorial has been described by Lawrence:

"The Square, which was formerly a section of tree planted land opposite Belvedere Street and adjacent to Park Road and the Bank of New South Wales was made into an attractive garden square, with a granite memorial in the centre. The memorial, a plain column supported on a square pedestal on which are engraved the names of those who did not return, represents the column of life. At the top, the column has been abruptly broken off, symbolic of the many young lives that were cut short.......... Around the Square Rowan trees have been planted, and a very spacious and shady parking area for cars has been made available." 222

Buxtons also landscaped memorials at Cheviot and Leeston, and prepared plans for a memorial foreshore development at Picton. The latter is interesting because it involved a plan to build a large pergola, perhaps the largest to be planned in New Zealand up to that time. Picton Borough Council had attempted to acquire the foreshore from the Railway Department as
early as 1914 for a public park and a garden, but did not succeed until 1918. At a Council meeting on 5th June 1919 the reclamation of the foreshore was discussed and it was agreed that the Town Clerk would write to various people concerning their terms for the reclamation or as to who would be suitable to carry out the work. The following February Alfred Buxton attended a council meeting to explain his proposals, but the Council was closely divided on the matter and would not support the initial cost of 150 guineas for plans and specifications. 

At a subsequent meeting the Council changed its mind on the Mayor’s casting vote and Buxtons were asked to supply plans and specifications for the beautifying of the foreshore. The proposals were outlined further at a public meeting in Picton on 3rd September 1920 at which the Picton Progress and Beautifying Society was formed and at which £170 was raised towards the cost of the plans. On 11th March 1921 the chairman of the Beautifying Society presented Buxtons’ plans for the beautifying of the foreshore to the Borough Council but, unfortunately, in spite of approaches to the Government, there were no grants for improvements of that type. As a result no further progress was made on the implementation of the plans.

All would be necessary to discover the most economical methods of running nurseries. After a keen discussion of the paper, in which Alfred Buxton and Sydney Smith were among the principal speakers, the following resolution was adopted:

“That an organisation committee be set up consisting of Messrs A W Buxton, A W Hamilton, S G Smith, G A Green, and Thomas Waugh to take steps (1) To arrange, if possible, for a satisfactory system of primary costing; (2) to inquire further into the question of profit-sharing, and to report on the same; (3) to inquire into the question of a co-operative purchasing and selling organisation, and to report on the feasibility of such and the best method of financing the same; (4) to make any other suggestions that may be considered of value to the nursery industry in New Zealand.”

However, the committee does not seem to have achieved very much. Alfred Buxton was appointed to several standing committees besides being a South Island member of the executive committee. In addition to the Organisation Committee he was appointed to the Rose Committee, the Finance and Trade Register Committee, and the combined Emergency Diseases, Fruit Tree, Grading and Sales Committee.

The Association of New Zealand Nurserymen

When the war ended Alfred Buxton was South Island Vice President of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen. At the 1918 conference of the Association moves had been made to ensure the supply of tradesmen for the nursery industry during the war and, in particular, the women of New Zealand were suggested for the role “like their sisters at home”. At the 1919 conference a very influential paper was delivered by A W Hamilton, company secretary of Thomas Horton Limited. It was entitled “After-war conditions and reorganisation in the nursery trade”. Hamilton advocated the need for efficiency, coordination, faith in one’s own business, a determination to succeed, and the training of the individual, as the factors which would help to settle down conditions arising from the war. Re-organisation would need to involve five steps:

1. A system of primary costing.
2. Reduction of varieties of fruit and other trees.
3. Propaganda for more extensive planting by the people.
4. An attempt to harmonise the relations of capital and labour particularly by encouraging profit-sharing and co-partnership.
5. A buying and selling organisation.

In January 1921 Alfred Buxton took over as President of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen from his Christchurch colleague, Robert Nairn, who had held the office for the previous two years. He suggested as the members’ motto for 1921 ‘Be a live wire’. If they all pulled together and each did their best to be a live wire the affairs of the Association were bound to progress. At the conference approval was given for a dominion wages award to be agreed when existing awards terminated. A dominion award was strongly advocated by Alfred Buxton who “thought that nurserymen had everything to gain and nothing to lose by it.....if they faced their men in a proper spirit, in a reasonable spirit, they could do the best both for their men and themselves, and they could do that better if it was a national award. It was far better to do it that way than by fighting in this little corner and that little corner, each side trying to get a sectional advantage.”

Although a strong case was presented for a dominion award many influential members of the Association were opposed to such a change because many workers were opposed to a union and they should take the initiative if they wanted a dominion award. The motion was only carried by 28 votes to 19.

In his 1922 Presidential address not only did Alfred Buxton welcome delegates to Christchurch but also recalled that the first national conference had been held
there in 1907 and another in 1918. During his presidential address he observed that the larger businesses required more departmentalisation, with each department being run as a separate business. Considerable care was needed to ensure that the general costsings and overheads were accurate. In smaller businesses specialisation was the key to profitability. All stocks raised must be of the best quality and true to name. He reminded members of the motto of the Association: ‘Help every member’, and said that members needed the Association as much as the Association needed members. It was the spirit of cooperation that had made the Association as strong as it was. He believed the then current financial stringency resulting from the war and the subsequent extravagance but was only a passing phase from which escape could be obtained by true economy, thrift, and hard work on the part of employers and employees. If they worked together, kept cheerful and buoyant, they would succeed and the future would be better than the palmiest days of the past. The President also drew attention to the valuable work of the Association’s organizer, George A Green. Finally the President noted the necessity of making the nursery attractive, especially the layout and a general appearance of neatness, with special care being taken to make an inviting entrance.

Besides the formal part of the conference a reception was held for delegates at Opawa Nursery, including high tea, a concert and supper. Guests were impressed by the condition in which the nursery was kept and by the orderly and tidy appearance of the extensive beds of plants. Comment was aroused by the great assortment of shrubs, trees and flowers, ranging from alpine plants to forest trees. Visitors were especially impressed by the wealth of blooms in the rose section and by those of pelargoniums, tuberous begonias, and fuchsias in the glasshouses. The pond of water lilies drew considerable admiration and guests were particularly impressed by the management of the nursery and by the labour-saving devices in use. High tea was served in the packing shed, which was transformed by a display of pot plants and greenery. The proceedings were concluded by a concert led by the Rennell brothers, Buxton’s stonemasons.

The 1922 conference was also notable for another event which was only indirectly connected with its main business, the first annual conference of the New Zealand Bud Selection Committee. J A Campbell, formerly a Buxton employee and the Director of the Horticulture Division of the Department of Agriculture, chaired the meeting. But the chairman was unhappy with the name of the organisation as its scope would be more comprehensive than the name implied. The meeting finally agreed to set up the New Zealand Institute of Horticulture with J A Campbell as the founding President and A W Buxton, T W Atwood, and A R Ragg, in their roles as Presidents of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen, of New Zealand Fruitgrowers Limited, and of the Canterbury Horticultural Society, were appointed Vice-Presidents. Alfred Buxton’s occupation of this position was to last only until August 1925 when he failed to attend the annual conference and resigned as a Vice President. From a reading of the first minute book of the Institute it appears that he did not play very much part in the activities of the Institute after its foundation.

At his final address as President at the 1923 conference of the Association Alfred Buxton drew attention to the way in which nurserymen had overcome the economic problems of the 1922 season and "with business ability, honesty, and loyalty to the Association and its ideals" prospects would be much brighter in the future than they had been in the past. Quality was the keynote of success and quality must be first every time if the nursery business was to rise to the position all wished for it. Besides giving general economic encouragement he also drew attention to potential conflict with the Forestry Department in the task of afforestation and the planting of shelter belts. The secretary/organiser of the Association had added to the membership and he had a major role in lobbying Parliament to secure compensation for those who had suffered from fireblight. The President also added that George A Green had devoted more time to the Association’s work than he was being paid for. Finally he drew attention to the good relations with the Fruitgrowers’ Federation and the Horticulture Division of the Department of Agriculture, and to the healthy financial state of the Association.

Besides dealing with the general affairs of the Association the 1923 conference was also confronted again with the question of a dominion wages award. A letter had been received from the New Zealand Gardeners and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers which suggested that such a move would be in the interests of both employers and employees. Alfred Buxton agreed with the idea and moved ‘That the Association supports the proposal for a dominion award’. A W Hamilton suggested that a committee be formed to discuss the matter with the Union prior to conciliation, a move that was approved. T D Lennie drew attention to the disparity in house rents between the cities and the country towns, arguing that it was undesirable to apply the conditions of the cities to those more favourably situated. The motion was eventually
agreed to by the meeting by 45 votes to 34 votes and a Labour Committee was set up consisting of Messrs Buxton, Green, Ivory, Waugh, Conway, and Lennie. In the Executive report for Alfred Buxton’s last year of office it was noted that the President’s health had not been good for a large part of the time. Nevertheless his buoyancy and energy had been abundantly illustrated on many occasions. He had lived up to his motto, ‘Be a live wire’. Alfred Buxton continued his active involvement in the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen after his period of office as President ended at the beginning of 1923. In 1925 the Association set up a committee to look at the status of the industry which included amongst its members its ex-president. The committee was to suggest how the status of being a ‘nurseryman’ or a ‘landscape architect’ might be raised and what training and education might be required. When it reported, at the 1926 conference, it felt that the worthiness of the vocation should be adequately recognised by the public and that the Association should take steps to be adequately appreciated. Beside promoting the status of their occupation the 1925 conference also received a report from the Canterbury district council of problems with competition from the Forestry Department. This competition concerned shelter and forest trees. In connection with this Alfred Buxton had to go to Wellington twice to make representations on the subject and to give evidence to the Parliamentary Committee responsible.  

Further landscaping

If we leave aside Alfred Buxton’s political role with the Association and return to landscaping, his first love, we find that the early 1920s saw a marked extension in activity. This is best explained by two quotations from letters received by the author from individuals who could remember personally Buxton’s landscaping their parents’ properties or those of neighbours. The first concerns the landscaping of a station at Fernleigh near Kaikoura:

"The homestead grounds were sheltered by a few big pine trees. The front of the house was an old riverbed. A W Buxton Ltd drew up a landscape plan for the homestead grounds and the hill behind it. The grounds were levelled off with tip scoops pulled by horses. The many boulders encountered were used to build rockeries. A dam and ponds were built and water brought down from the creek. I only remember the pond being filled once as it was thought to be too dangerous with a family of young children. Beds were built out at the top end of the waterway. These were planted in rhododendrons and azaleas. Conifers were planted in rough ground to the west. Silver birches were
Fig 8.3 Trevor Buxton’s plan for Mr H G Cross of Woodside, Oxford. It was not all planted as shown. (C G Cross)

Fig 8.4 Raymond Buxton also became involved in the landscaping operations as the Company’s financial difficulties increased. He drew this plan for Geaney family of Makikhi, South Canterbury.
Table 8.1 Properties landscaped 1920-1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920c</td>
<td>S Andrew,</td>
<td>Fernleigh,</td>
<td>Kaikoura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-3</td>
<td>W Brown,</td>
<td>Redcliff,</td>
<td>Ikaia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-3</td>
<td>S Spain,</td>
<td>Earnscleugh St</td>
<td>Alexandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Allenton Bowling Club</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ashburton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>E Lyons</td>
<td></td>
<td>nr Hastings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>J Mcclachlan</td>
<td>Birdlings Brook</td>
<td>Leeston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-6</td>
<td>H G Cross</td>
<td>Woodside</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>A Anderson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Southbridge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

planted on the north and east sides sheltered by laurel hedge. Around the driveway were planted many shrubs. The hill was planted with a great variety of orchard trees. Rows of Cypress were planted right around the hill and silver birches up one side. As a small boy I remember that during the planting season in winter and spring, huge cases like piano boxes would arrive. Inside were packed a variety of trees and shrubs which were duly planted out.....The plants all came from Buxton’s nurseries in Christchurch. 235

The second covers the landscaping of Earnscleugh Station not far from Alexandra in Central Otago.

"...Earnscleugh Station, while some trees died through neglect or removal, is the heart to the original design. I consider that A Buxton was sixty years ahead plus (of his) time as far as plants are concerned. All his wonderful stocks would be much in demand today. In the early 1920s though he must have had enormous stocks and few people who knew their value. He conceived the idea of travelling around New Zealand with his son calling everywhere they saw a new house and offering to plan a garden and if the owners could be persuaded to send gardeners, shrubs, trees, and other plant materials to lay it out and plant the whole garden. Mr Steve Spain at Earnscleugh Station then a newly built Elisabethan mansion copied from a South American hacienda copied from the original in England (?). This was in December-January 1922-3 for the plants and July in the latter year for the planting......The Earnscleugh Station planting was completely done all at once including 4 gardeners under a German Count head gardener for Buxton I think at a complete cost of £670. .......The wisteria had to be taken off the walls and the virginia creeper too. They went to the top of the 2nd storey in 2 or 3 years. Old sheep in large numbers were buried underneath..... This effort on A W Buxton’s part got rid of a lot of nursery stock but it may (have) been a fairly expensive operation....... In 1941 I spent 2 mths next (to) his holiday house at the Selwyn huts village. Over-planting was the weakness but this was understandable..... His was a very charming personality. It was a pity such talent for collecting fine plants came to NZ too soon."236

Besides being based on first hand recollections of Buxton’s work this quotation raises a number of other questions which must be discussed. First, the son who accompanied Alfred Buxton was probably his eldest son, Trevor, who would then have been aged 21-22. The second son, Ray, was then still attending St. Andrew’s School. Trevor had been at school at Christchurch Boys High School from 1916-18 after which he had attended Timaru Boys High School for 2 years. In 1921-2 he attended the School of Art at Canterbury College following in the footsteps of his mentor within the company, Edgar Taylor. Most of the plans surviving from this period are probably Trevor’s work, with the exception of the plan Edgar Taylor drew up for J Mclachlan at Birdling’s Brook near Leeston. John Mclachlan recalls that his father was adamant that the planting should not include forest trees but that it did. They had to be removed subsequently.237

Family Life

All the Buxton children attended private schools. Merle, the eldest daughter, went to St Margaret’s College, which she attended from 1913. In having their children attend private schools the Buxtons were indirectly expressing their new social status as the successful business man and his wife and were making sure they mixed with their potential clientele. Some commentators have suggested that Merle, particularly, was something of a ‘playgirl’. When she was 21 (in 1920) her parents gave a ball in her honour at Opawa Nursery. All the glasshouses were cleaned out and an orchestra provided music. All the ladies had pencils
and pads on which to record their partners for the evening. Not only did her parents give her a good ‘coming out’ but they also provided a second home for the family at the Selwyn Huts Village. This bach was useful for the younger members of the family, as well as for their parents, for tennis parties on the nearby courts or for activities such as duckshooting or fishing. The house was built out of an old church by a carpenter in approximately two weeks. It was only 20 miles from the nursery and it gave a useful place for recreation and for weekends for entertaining friends.

As Fig 8.2 shows it was used particularly by the younger generation of Buxtons. George Ferris, who worked for Buxtons when he first arrived in New Zealand in 1921 landscaping tennis courts, and who was later to become company secretary for A W Buxton and Sons Limited, recalls enthusiasts of the Selwyn’s lower reaches including Alf Buxton, Frank Steans, and also Edgar Stead, the rhododendron and azalea breeder of Ilam. Family concerns affected Alfred Buxton in other ways too in the early 1920s. His mother died at 72 years of age in April 1922 and his father, Alfred (senior), at the age of 73 in December 1924. In the latter’s will Alfred (junior) received only a quarter share of his father’s personal property while his younger brother, Joseph, who also had a carrier’s business like his father, received the net proceeds of an insurance policy of some one thousand pounds. In his earlier years his father had been a well known character in St. Albans:

"On the east side of Caledonian Road at the corner of Canon Street in my childhood days a Mr Buxton had a coal yard. He was a colourful character. A short stocky man with a dark bushy beard is how I remember him. When the big strike of 1913 eventuated he enlisted as a special constable and was stationed at Lyttleton." 241

One other family matter concerning Alfred Buxton at this period has come to light. In July 1923 he was made trustee for his uncle’s estate (John Buxton of Wootton and Shirley) because the original executor had died without distributing all his real property before himself dying. The legal documents associated with this change are most interesting because they contain affidavits as to Alfred Buxton’s character and suitability to be a trustee. For example William Wardell of Christchurch testified that he had known Alfred Buxton for over 20 years, that he was head of one of the largest nurseryman’s businesses in Christchurch, and that he believed he was in a sound and substantial financial position. Wardell failed to declare that he was a director of his relative’s company..."
but his affidavit and the agreement of the other surviving heirs was sufficient to have Alfred Buxton appointed as trustee for his uncle’s estate.\footnote{245}

**Personnel Problems**

In addition to the changes in his personal life Alfred Buxton experienced personnel difficulties in his business for the first time. Edgar Taylor had returned to the nursery in 1921 to take over its direction from William Edginton. While he had been working in the North Island some critical changes had taken place in the personnel. In particular, they followed ideas advocated in A W Hamilton’s 1919 paper on reorganisation of the nursery industry after the war. Hamilton had argued for the encouragement of profit sharing and co-partnership. Buxton tried to put this in place when he appointed Frederic Thomas Poole, as one of the nursery’s propagators to replace William Smith. Poole was appointed as a director of the company, although he only had a small shareholding.

### Table 8.2 Shareholders of A W Buxton Limited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Number of shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A W Buxton</td>
<td>Nurseryman</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>11315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Wardell</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R O Dixon</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Eyreton</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Bowron</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W S Newburgh</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F T Poole</td>
<td>Horticulturist</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A D Dobson</td>
<td>Civil Engineer</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A W McCarthy</td>
<td>Gunsmith</td>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Allen</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T S Buxton</td>
<td>Draughtsman</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Unallotted      | 5550           |
| Total allotted  | 15450          |

Source: Companies Office File, no. 04/33.
By this time the share base of the company had been extended from £12,000 to £21,000. There were an additional 5000 Ordinary and 4000 Preference shares of £1 each. By the end of 1924 Trevor Buxton had also been given a number of shares and the company’s shareholders were as indicated in Table 8.2. Poole was not a very popular employee because the staff thought he was of German extraction, and he seemed to be a pompous old man. He certainly seemed old to the younger generation of Buxtons, and somewhat unsuitable because he suffered from erysipelas. The disease was brought on by handling materials which he should have known not too. It caused a debilitating rash which necessitated time off work.

T D Lennie also joined the company at sometime during 1925. He had succeeded Alfred Buxton as President of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen in 1923 and for 19 years had been founding secretary of the Southland branch of the Association. He moved north when the family firm was sold by his elder brother to another nursery firm. In the family business Thomas had had control and management of the seed shop. He was responsible for the financial control of the whole business as well as giving general directions when necessary.

Moving the nursery

When Edgar Taylor had returned to the nursery to succeed Bill Edginton as Manager one of the first jobs he was given was to report to the directors on a proposal to move the main nursery to Belfast. The site at St Martins was no longer big enough for the firm’s requirements. Fresh land was required but Taylor suggested leasing additional land rather than buying the new land proposed. It would be expensive to establish a new nursery on bare ground both in the cost of new glasshouses and on transplanting stock plants. But as Edgar Taylor has described it: ‘A W B won’ and all the stock plants had to be moved. Although motor transport was available by this time most of the work was carried out by horse and dray. Taylor had to organise the move which took two years to complete. Unlike today the glasshouse heating system was different because the boiler required a huge boiler pit. However, no matter how hard the builders tried they could not make the pit watertight and an alternative system had to be adopted based on pumping the hot water around the hot water system. Nevertheless the nursery was, in Raymond Buxton’s view, not as good as the one at St Martins had been. The cost of the move, together with other financial problems, placed the future of the firm in jeopardy. The problems began with difficulties Roger Murphy of Panikau, near Tologa Bay, had in paying for having his garden landscaped when his father died in the middle of the operation and his executors were unwilling to pay for the work. Their willingness was not encouraged by the downturn in the rural economy caused by the end of the ‘commandeer’ system of marketing in 1921. By the beginning of 1921 only approximately £5000 had been paid out of a total contract price of just over £8500. A further £1500 was paid in 1921 but the remaining £600 was only paid in £100 instalments, which ended in December 1922. Another problem was the involvement in Braemuir Fruitlands Limited of the 3000 £1 shares A W Buxton Limited had 1000 and Alfred Buxton himself owned a further 500, making a general further loss of £1500 pounds if we assume all the shares were fully paid up. In addition to these problems we have a further reduction in liquidity from the purchase of the freehold of the town shop and offices in Colombo Street, Christchurch, in 1923. Another factor in the growing costs of the firm was the increasing burden of rates as Christchurch spread outwards. When the nursery had been established it was in a comparatively rural area, but when the nursery was moved the site was subdivided for housing. The area between Gamblins Road, St Martins Road, and Koromiko Street was sold first. It was subdivided into 12 sections for £1725. The second part to be sold was between Koromiko Street and Centaurus Road (Port Hills Road) and included a house. Approximately £1800 was obtained from these sections by the beginning of July 1926. Only £540 pounds was obtained from the sale of three sections to the west of St Martins Road. In total the land sold by the beginning of July 1926 had realised some £4000. The land at Belfast was bought at the end of 1923 from the Nicholls brothers who were woolbrokers. It consisted of just over 38 acres located next to the North Road and bounded to the east by the northern railway. Therefore it would have allowed one important advantage over the nursery at St Martins, with the possibility of having its own railway siding. It would have thus permitted direct loading of produce at the nursery rather than the transhipment of goods to the railway station. The site was bought for £4780, with a first mortgage being granted in favour of the purchaser of £4529 pounds on which interest was to be paid at a rate of 8 per cent. Thus Alfred Buxton borrowed the equivalent of 95 per cent of the value of his new nursery site. He could hardly be accused of not making his money work for him! Despite tightening up on their credit control, as evidenced by the 1924-25 Seed List which specifies more stringent conditions in its Business Memoranda section than is found in earlier catalogues, Buxtons were beginning to experience problems of liquidity. In early 1926 A W Buxton Limited had problems paying their bills. Two judgements were given in magistrates courts in favour
of their creditors. E Reece and Co was awarded £84:19:0d and £71:8:0d was awarded in favour of the Hastings nurseryman Thomas Horton Limited. Hortons themselves experienced financial problems and were eventually liquidated. 254

These were only the symptoms of the problems to come and on the 12th June 1926, following a meeting of the directors, the company was declared to be in voluntary liquidation. William Samuel Newburgh, one of the directors and a public accountant, was appointed as the liquidator. 255