Chapter Nine

AFTER THE CRASH
LANDSCAPING IN THE DEPRESSION

Liquidation

William Samuel Newburgh, as the appointed liquidator of the company, had a rather more complicated job than initially appeared. One which was to last him until 1949. The problem stemmed from the sale of the nursery at St Martins and the nature of certain concessionary sales of properties to employees or former employees which were made before the liquidation. Alfred Buxton believed that none of the staff should suffer from the liquidation.

Newburgh had been in partnership with W E Best until 1925 and Best had been a shareholder in Braeburn Fruitlands Limited. The partnership, called Newburgh, Best and Co had lasted 14 years and Newburgh was left to function as a public accountant on his own. No reason for the dissolution has become apparent. Besides carrying out the public notification of A W Buxton Limited going into liquidation one of Newburgh's first tasks was to sell the company's properties. An advertisement appeared in the local papers at the end of June 1926. The whole business was put up for sale as a going concern, with the exception of the building sections at St Martins. The sale was to be by tender. Alternatively the business might be sold in three lots; with the land at Belfast, the buildings, appliances, and nursery stock as Lot 1; the Seed and Floral business including a 14 year lease on the Colombo Street shop as Lot 2; and surplus plant including 2 motor cars, 2 motor trucks, a travelling crane and a quantity of timber etc as Lot 3. The Belfast nursery was sold to T D Lennie for £5030, which was to include the amount owing under the mortgage to the Nicholls brothers. Lot 2 was sold to A H Shrubsall who carried on the Seed, Floral and shop businesses. The disposal of Lot 3 is unknown. Lennie did not enjoy the ownership of the nursery for very long. Inspite of the good nature of the soil and the favourable location, the oncoming depression was more than Lennie could cope with, and he did not have Buxton's flair for landscaping to assist in selling his produce. His dour Scottish background was not an asset and he went into liquidation about 1930. He opened a shop with his sister in mid 1931. Alfred Buxton and his sons took over the remaining landscape contracts.

The disposal of the sections at St Martins was more difficult. In a letter to the Assistant Registrar of Companies in August 1927 Newburgh stated that he had not yet completed the liquidation of the company. There were still book debts to collect. The sections at St Martins had been sold on terms extending over 2 years, thus the accounts would not be finalised until December 1928. In August 1928 he wrote that the assets were being slowly realised but that the liquidation would not be complete until March 1929. In August 1929, 1930, 1931, and 1932 he could not complete the liquidation because 'The Cottage' still remained with its sale to be completed. Between 1932 and 1943 the payments for 'The Cottage' were in arrears and the liquidation could not be completed. However by 1948 the form letter which had explained the delay in previous years was succeeded by another which drew attention to the liquidation 22 years before, said the company had been fully wound up and the funds distributed. As it was impossible to hold a meeting of the company it was suggested that the company should be struck off under sections 266-267 of the Companies Act 1908. The change in tone of the letters may have been prompted by William Samuel Newburgh being suspended as an accountant by the Society of Accountants from 30th July 1947 until 29th July 1951. He had been found guilty of fraud. The company was indeed dissolved but under section 282(4) of the Companies Act 1933 on the 4th April 1949, and the residue distributed to shareholders.

Merle Kirkwood and Ray Buxton both recall their father's surprise when he received the resulting cheque so long after the company went into liquidation.

The problems that the nursery had faced were made abundantly obvious at the time of the 1927 conference of the Association of New Zealand Nurserymen. S G
Smith, the company secretary of the nursery and acting for the liquidator, moved a remit
"That the Conference is of the opinion that the fixing of wholesale and retail prices on a Dominion basis should be dropped and that the Dominion Executive should report to the next Conference on a scheme of fixing retail prices only."
The problem centred on formidable non-member competition and severe underselling. It was particularly acute for roses. The remit was lost, but after prolonged discussion Canterbury growers of roses were allowed to set their own prices for 1927 to defeat the competition. Another problem which raised its head at the conference concerned four blueberry plants given to the Association by Dr Tillyard, a visiting American, in 1923. One of these plants had been entrusted to A W Buxton Limited and had been left in the hands of his successors in title. However a question arose as to the ownership of the plant. Alfred Buxton placed the matter at the disposition of the conference, to do with it as it thought fit. The conference decided to leave the plant where it was, to be taken care of by T D Lennie. That formerly looked after by Lennie was to be looked after by his successor as a nurseryman at Invercargill. The following year (1928) a progress report was requested by the conference. Lennie’s plant was doing well, but Alfred Buxton would not leave the matter there. Dr Tillyard had given four plants to four individuals to look after on behalf of the Association. Lennie stated that when he had sold his Invercargill business he had given up his plant while giving special instructions as to its care. He had bought Buxton’s business on the open market with no word that the blueberry belonged to Buxton. He took strong exception to A W B’s remarks on Lennie not being man enough to hand over the plant. He said rather that A W B had not been man enough to hand the plant over to Lennie. It had grown where it was for two years prior to the liquidation. Buxton thought Lennie was behind the matter introduced at the previous conference. The matter was clarified by S G Smith. He recounted how the issue had first been raised in the Canterbury Council’s report as a matter of interest to the Association. He said that all the discussion had reiterated that the plant was in trust on behalf of the Association. Nevertheless the whole episode illustrates the lack of love between Buxton and his successor Lennie. This is perhaps best reflected in Lennie’s later reminiscences of Buxton when recalling the nursery trade in Canterbury:
"....He was a progressive man, excelling in landscape work, and had a very extensive business in all branches. Those who attended the conference in 1922 in Christchurch when he was president of the association will remember his lavish entertainment. In those times the conference gave much more time to outings than it does now....."

Continuing landscaping
The immediate necessity facing the family was to find some alternative accommodation when they had to leave St Martins. Relatives at 29 Dyer’s Pass Road took them in initially. Later the landscape business was carried on from 53 Cashmere Road and that address continued to be the home of the landscaping business until the move to the first office of the second Buxton company at the beginning of March 1929. At the time of the liquidation Trevor and Ray Buxton both kept landscaping to complete established contracts and to maintain some family income. Little evidence exists of the landscape contracts which overlapped with the collapse of the company. Some evidence suggests that the landscape plan prepared for E Lyons for a planned house (no. 57, approximate date 8th May 1924) was implemented in part. Trees and irrigation pipes were planted and laid, but Archibald Maclean of Greenhill, the father-in-law of the husband, died in 1929. As a result the Lyons occupied the ‘big’ house at Greenhill rather than their planned residence. In any case Mrs Lyons, who had looked after her father, was left the ‘big’ house. Because she liked trees she did not want to be left with a garden without trees. It also seems likely that Buxton was in the area in early 1927 because he made an offer to the Mayor of Hastings to provide comprehensive landscape plans and working surveys for the following parks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall Park</td>
<td>£55.10.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebbett Park</td>
<td>£26.5.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Rest</td>
<td>£5.5.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway Reserve</td>
<td>£15.15.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total quoted</strong></td>
<td><strong>£102.15.0d</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matter was referred to the Reserves Committee and the plans were approved by the council on 12th July 1928, but they appear to have been lost in the Napier earthquake of 1931.

Meanwhile in Christchurch work carried on for Mr and Mrs Lyndsay Russell at Holmhurst in Cashmere. This project was begun in October 1925 and completed in June 1927. First of all a ravine was filled with the stones and rubbish lying about the hillside site. Then the whole area was deeply dug. Large boulders were laid aside for a proposed rockery. Soil was brought in until the whole site was covered to a depth of eighteen inches. Lawns and rose-beds were laid out in March 1926. The rockery was constructed in the period up to
June. The planting of shrubs, rose and rock plants followed. The project was completed with the planting of rose-beds on the south side and terraced steps in June 1927. 'Crazy' paved paths lead from one terrace to another, and the whole design was finished off by an 'artistic bird-bath' at the centre of one of the rose-beds. 256

Another ongoing project was that for Mr and Mrs G Stewart of Greenmeadows, Orari, near Winchester in South Canterbury. Three phases of construction are recollected by Mr Lyn Stewart, the son of the original clients. The first phase began in 1925 to a plan drawn by Trevor Buxton. The eventual project was for Mrs Stewart as her husband had died within two years of the house being built. It appears she may have been easily persuaded by Buxton's salesman’s charm, especially on Stages II and III. According to Mr Lyn Stewart his mother may have helped get Alfred Buxton back on his feet when he had not got a 'sou' to his name. Nevertheless, the clients’ plans for the line of a stream flowing through the garden were rejected. At this time Alfred Buxton was still driving a 'Moon' car. It was lovingly and regularly polished, according to Lynn Stewart, and many commentators have held it to be one of Alfred Buxton's distinguishing characteristics. Fortunately the invoices and receipts for the work for the Stewarts have survived and are summarised in Table 9.1. They show the range of work undertaken by the Buxtons and their preparedness to take on any form of activity within their range of skills. They also suggest the money still to be obtained from landscaping and related activities despite the increasingly adverse economic circumstances.

Table 9.1 Account for Mr and Mrs G Stewart’s garden at Greenmeadows, Orari.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contract signed 25.8.1927</td>
<td>£382.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract signed 14.9.1927</td>
<td>£118.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract agreed 4.10.1927 for layout in front of</td>
<td>£45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summer house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoices as specified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&quot; Ransomes motor mower</td>
<td>£83.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplying and laying irrigation pipes</td>
<td>£12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>£12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipes etc</td>
<td>£46.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converting stable into summerhouse;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>painting and papering same; erecting pergola;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and building garage</td>
<td>£69.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>£21.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing border around house, planting same,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erecting clothes line etc</td>
<td>£16.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 feet of hose</td>
<td>£4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied invoice</td>
<td>£18.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total due</td>
<td>£816.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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33 Papanui Road

Alfred Buxton’s varied skills were exemplified later in 1928 when he acquired a new property at 33 Papanui Road. The section was back from the road and cost £1100. The purchase was financed by a vendor mortgage for £950, but it appears that only a small proportion of the principal (£100) may have been uplifted immediately. The mortgage was itself mortgaged by the vendor, perhaps experiencing some financial problems at this time of economic distress. The further £850 which was covered by the first mortgage was replaced by another mortgage from the Grand Lodge of the Canterbury United Ancient Order of Druids for the same amount on largely the same terms. The mortgage was registered on 6 October 1930.\(^{267}\) The money may have been used partly to build a seed shed on the property, which was constructed by Buxton himself. When the Buxtons lived at Papanui Road the area was comparatively rural with only big houses down Papanui Road and open paddocks and dairy farms surrounding them.\(^{268}\)

The property was developed with 200 dray loads of soil to raise the drive, along which a row of plum trees was planted. Underneath the trees a box hedge was planted and the entrance was framed in a gateway made of Redcliffs stone. A sunken garden was developed in the middle of the section with the house and work shed lying in the farthest corners from the road. The workshed contained seed boxes and bulb trays, as well as a drawing board, and it was larger than the house. Plant labels were made there of no.8 wire from a jig made by Fred Buckingham, while his son Edward, who was still at school, looked after the grounds. He worked after school, all day on Saturdays and during the school holidays. For this he was paid the princely sum of 4½ d. an hour for which he hoed the drive, cleaned the borders, and clipped the box hedges. His job was to keep the whole place in order but sometimes he never saw anybody for quite a long period of time. Edward Buckingham was tall for his age and had quite heavy work to do but although he was worked hard he never felt he was abused. Next door lived the Cotter family who had originally subdivided the property. Patrick Cotter was also of school age at this time and recollects selling drinks for Buxton when he exhibited at the Agricultural and Pastoral Society’s show each November. Cotter remembers Buxton as an ‘old rogue’, or ‘old rascal’ who was short and square, rather brusque and busy, and an energetic person, a great salesman (‘he could deliver a load of crap!’). To Edward Buckingham he seemed to be old (he would have been sixty in 1932), but he was also described as ‘smart’, ‘upright’, and of a ‘military bearing’. He was not afraid to join in the hard or dirty work and was quite ready to roll up his sleeves and get stuck in with the rest. Buckingham recollects Merle Buxton living at
home but could not recollect Mrs Buxton clearly, although she brought out his morning tea. He thought she must have been a retiring sort of person. Raymond and Trevor Buxton could not be clearly remembered either. 269 Another who worked for Buxton at this period was Frank Neate. He left the Technical College in 1929 and got a job with Buxton in 1930. Buxton had a boundless enthusiasm for what he was doing according to Neate. He was a perfectionist. As a boss he was good enough 'in his way', but he always had to be comfortable while his workers were left to look after themselves. He was a hard task master who would stand no waste time, a 'live wire' who was good at his job. Because he was a perfectionist he never made much money, in Neate's opinion, because everything had to be too perfect. Many of the photographs from this period come from Neate's collection.

The second company

During the period between the wars, after the purchase of 33 Papanui Road, a number of landscape projects were still carried out. These projects were not carried out by Alfred Buxton alone but also by teams led by his sons, Trevor and Raymond. Together they formed a new company in 1929 called A W Buxton and Sons Limited. This was incorporated on 21st March 1929. In the Memorandum of Association, the father and brothers agreed to carry on the business in New Zealand of:

"...Landscape Architects and gardening, nursery gardening, ordinary gardening, fruit growing, orchardists, seedsmen, floral vendors, asphalt, cementing, concreting and contracting." 270

The registered office of the company was to be the office of George Ferris in Victoria Street, Christchurch. The capital of the company was £1000 in one pound shares. The initial allocation of shares was Alfred - 520, Trevor - 250, and Raymond - 230. In no way could the boys outvote their father even if they so desired. While Alfred and Raymond described themselves as landscape gardeners in the Memorandum of Association, Trevor described himself as a landscape architect, although he was not qualified as such in the modern sense. He had worked under Edgar Taylor and also attended classes at the School of Art, but at this period the term landscape architect was used very loosely to describe anybody who chose the title for themselves. Trevor qualified for a National Diploma in Horticulture, by examination, in 1935. His father had been given an NDH as one of those who had received an NDH as a result of their skill and experience in 1928. In 1931 Trevor Buxton took up residence at 62 Te Awe Awe Street in Palmerston North with his recently married spouse, Elsie Nicholson. The company continued to trade as A W Buxton and Sons.

Jim Kirkwood had met Merle Buxton when she had trained as a nurse at Hamilton. He was then branch manager of a bank in Raglan. But he had become dissatisfied with the treatment the bank had meted out to his customers. In the years before the depression it had encouraged them to borrow heavily and then when the depression had arrived it had foreclosed on them when they were unable to repay their loans. He had been the bank's agent in encouraging them to borrow and felt he could not stay when the foreclosures began. Finding alternative employment in the depression was not easy. Jim Kirkwood and Raymond Buxton decided...
to try their hand at gold prospecting in Central Otago. The price of gold had increased from £4 per ounce to £6 per ounce, and an offer of a weekly payment of relief was made to men who were willing to try their hand at prospecting. The prospector could keep the gold found provided that the Unemployment Board could reduce its weekly payments according to the level of his findings. While at Naseby Jim Kirkwood obtained employment with the local council paying the unemployment benefit. He and Merle Buxton decided to marry as the position was for married men only. They spent the first two years of married life living under canvas. Their tent was pitched alongside a reservoir. In winter it was used by the local residents for curling. Later Jim Kirkwood’s job was transferred to Cromwell. However, the prospect of living there long term did not appeal to the Kirkwoods.

Eventually they decided to move to Otaki, as a result of an advertisement in a Wellington newspaper. Mrs Kirkwood went to investigate. She found that the original idea of Jim commuting to Wellington to work as an accountant, while she grew flowers, was infeasible. While being driven around by the agent she saw a property in Waerenga Road with an orchard and lush grass. It was a total contrast to Cromwell. After returning to Cromwell to discuss the matter with her husband they decided to take the property for the whole family: Alfred and Emily, Jim and Merle, and Ray, but to have it legally in the names of Merle and her mother.

**Landscape writing**

Besides landscape projects, Alfred Buxton turned his hand to some writing. The magazine *New Zealand Gardening* first appeared in early 1931. Many prominent gardeners and horticulturists were commissioned to write about their particular expertise and Alfred Buxton wrote six articles, published between June 1931 and January 1932, under the title "The Garden Beautiful". The articles appeared under the subheadings: "Landscape Architecture-the art ofsubjecting nature to our will", "Landscape Architecture-the one acre section and its possibilities", "Suggestions for planting trees and shrubs", "Making
the flower borders" and "The making of a lawn". The second article was divided in two parts. 273 Besides encouraging writing the magazine was also useful for placing advertisements for the company. A whole page was taken regularly and lavishly illustrated with photographs. In many cases these had been or were taken of the properties on which the company had recently worked. Many of the panoramic photographs taken by R P Moore of Manners Street in Wellington about 1926 were used as illustrations. Perhaps the title of the second article gives a clue to the problem facing many landowners at this time. The large gardens of the Victorian and Edwardian eras were no longer possible and gardens were to be much smaller for most clients because the costs of land and labour were eating into the incomes of all but the most wealthy.

The Horticultural Trades Association

Besides the formation of A W Buxton and Sons Limited, the year 1929 was the first in which the new Horticultural Trades Association 274 had a standing committee for Landscape. The convenor was Edgar Taylor and the majority of the members were from Christchurch, including C H Reece, C D Taylor, and J N Macleod, besides Alfred Buxton. Other members included T F Conway from Palmerston North, H A Christie from Dunedin, A Smith from Hamilton and W H Wallis. 275 In 1930 Edgar Taylor gave up the convenorship to J N Macleod. Landscape activity in Canterbury was also reported as being more active than for the two previous years partly as a result of an increase in residential building. 276 At the same conference Alfred Buxton appealed for the beautification of nursery premises:

"Clean paths and nicely planted borders with plenty of specimens were good...as advertisements and helped business." 277

In 1931 the national Landscape Committee reported that its activities had been reduced during the year by the reduced spending power of the public in general. Although some good jobs had been put out during the year the profession had not prospered as much as had been hoped. 278 Similar results were reported in 1932. 279 The 1932 conference took place in Christchurch as part of the second national Horticultural Week and National Flower Show. Alfred Buxton exhibited 'interesting Landscape Architect's designs and photos' (See Fig 9.2) along with exhibits from Edgar Taylor and C Reece. 280 The following year there was no Landscape report and trade conditions were reported to be difficult in Canterbury. 281 Buxton moved that the minimum subscription for the Association be reduced from 21/- to 10/6, but the move was defeated on the voices. The next year there were some signs of improvement, noted particularly in the Canterbury report, due to increased house building as a result of
citizens being encouraged to build while Unemployment Subsidy Scheme on labour was continued. There were complaints about unfair competition from unregistered growers at uneconomic prices. A remit was proposed by Alfred Buxton for a Dominion Wages Award in place of provincial awards, but this proposal was also lost on the voices. All awards had lapsed, except in Christchurch, and employers were not keen to resume them. There was also a recommendation from the Association for the Institute to introduce an NDL for diplomats in Landscape Architecture. The report also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Association's formation with a series of letters from past presidents and other notable members. Among them is a letter from Alfred Buxton as a former President:

"As one of the oldest members, it gives me the greatest pleasure to give my opinion and experience as to the value of the N Z Horticultural Trades Association. Had it not been for a well organised Association, the Horticultural Trades (especially the Nursery Business) would not have been worthwhile today. The Association gatherings provide a medium for discussing matters relating the trade, regulating prices, improving stocks, and dealing with Legislative and other matters in which the individual would be powerless.

It gives me great pleasure in testifying to the great improvement that has taken place in the feeling of members who are able to attend Conference and look forward to meeting each other. When we hear of a member who has suffered loss we hear it with regret....There could not have been a happier lot than when we met in Conference. We look for better times in the future, when all shall get a fairer remuneration for the services that they render.

I would like to express here my appreciation of the energy and ability of our Organising Secretary, Mr Geo. A. Green, without whom, in my opinion, the H T A would not have been in existence. We owe a lot to Mr Green. May he long be spared to us.

Another stalwart I would mention is Mr Thos Waugh, the Chairman of our Management Committee. Members who do not attend Conference little realise the amount of work Mr Thos Waugh has done and still does on behalf of the Association and its membership. He has always been at our beck and call doing Parliamentary and other service.

I am very pleased to testify to the fellowship and the helpfulness that exists. It is the operations of the Association which have brought this about. The fellowship alone is worth all the cost of time and energy.

There are difficulties ahead-Auction selling of Bedding Plants, Chain Stores and other items.

These are not going to be easily overcome. However, they will be dealt with in time...

Signed
A W Buxton.
33 Papanui Road,
Christchurch.
14th March 1934.

In 1935 the Association's Landscape Committee reported a steady improvement in landscape work. This was regarded as a good sign as many considered landscape to be one of the luxury lines of the trade. In Canterbury business was not as good as the previous year because of smaller homes and the Unemployment Board suspending the building subsidy. Alfred Buxton urged the Association to support road beautification because the trade was not as prominent in the movement as it should be. He also promoted the idea, with J N Macleod, of a decent living wage for even the least skilled and called for a Dominion Award to help secure a proper standard for all concerned. But other speakers argued, successfully, that the remit was contentious and it was unnecessary to disturb existing labour conditions. Later in 1935, George A Green, the Association's Organizer and Secretary for thirty years, and one of the important formative influences in the Association, Fruitgrowers Associations and the Institute of Horticulture, as well as a personal friend of Alfred Buxton, died. From that date onwards the Horticultural Trades Association's reports have less mention of Alfred Buxton's doings. The Conference in 1936 was held in Auckland. Alfred Buxton attended and read the Landscape Committee's report. Business had been better in both islands in 1935 than for the previous 3 or 4 years. The Unemployment Board had continued the Building subsidy and interest rates had fallen, both encouraging home building. Landscape work improved further in 1937 although there was a lot of price cutting.

Landscaping in the depression

Of the projects listed in Table 9.3 that for Ned Smith at Poraiti was the most unfortunate. Buxtons had had their economic problems but the Napier earthquake on 3rd February 1931 was entirely unpredictable. They had completed an elaborate garden for C E Nelson-Smith at Poraiti on the hills north of Taradale where there was a big family home. Buxtons team here was led by Trevor Buxton. The earthquake made the family practically bankrupt and destroyed the garden. As a result Buxtons did not get paid for their work for a major job. The earthquake not only destroyed Poraiti but also brought down part of the pergola at Greenhill.
Fig 9.6 A design for a Christchurch resident which was not constructed, circa 1930, by Trevor Buxton (D McSweeney)

Table 9.3 Landscape projects completed 1928-1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss Allen</td>
<td>Seatown, Wellington</td>
<td>c1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C E Nelson-Smith</td>
<td>Poraiti, nr Taradale, Napier</td>
<td>1930-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H E Otley</td>
<td>Heaton Street, Christchurch</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Ridgen</td>
<td>Greendale</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Kincaid</td>
<td>Riccarton, Christchurch</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Mildon</td>
<td>Kairanga, Palmerston North</td>
<td>1932-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Sutherland</td>
<td>Homewood, Karori, Wellington</td>
<td>c1930-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Glazebrook</td>
<td>The Washpool, nr Hastings</td>
<td>1934-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Mcskimming</td>
<td>Lesmahagow, Benhar, Otago</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A L Matthias</td>
<td>Grand View, Waipiata, C.Otago</td>
<td>1935-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Hastie</td>
<td>Kokonga, nr Ranfurly, C.Otago</td>
<td>1935-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Cowie</td>
<td>East Lime Hills, Winton, S'land</td>
<td>1935-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs J Clarkson</td>
<td>Wellesley Ave., Invercargill</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs J Howard</td>
<td>Gore, Southland</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs G Stewart</td>
<td>Greenmeadows, Orari</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Rowley</td>
<td>Hawea Flat, Central Otago</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Wallace</td>
<td>Gore, Southland</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Scott</td>
<td>Pukerua, Gore, Southland</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and made the irrigation system unusable. 288 The work for E Ridgen at Brooklyn, Greendale, resulted from a financial involvement by Ridgen in Buxton’s business. Buxton was unable to repay the money put into his business and so constructed a pergola to pay off the debt. Two Japanese bridges were added to the original Buxton lily ponds. The work was carried out at the same time as Buxtons were carrying out further landscape improvements to Kincaid’s property at Riccarton. The pergola was constructed of classical round pillars in the style of the English Landscape Architect Thomas Mawson and was covered with different coloured wisteria. The concrete pillars were delivered by Russell Buxton, his brother Joseph’s son, in a Ford truck, while Buxton himself arrived in the frequently mentioned ‘Moon’ car. In addition to their construction work Buxtons also arranged for twice yearly visits, in spring and autumn, by a maintenance gang to carry out major tasks.289

The biggest project carried out in the inter war years was that at Homewood, Karori, for Benjamin Sutherland of ‘Self Help’ fame. Homewood was bought in April 1928. In 1927 Sutherland had successfully challenged the legality of price fixing in Court. He was also renowned for his enlightened ideas about staff relations. Sutherland’s daughter Jean believes that Buxton first came to Homewood about 1928. Certainly Sutherland was often a visitor to Greenhill and Jean Mckay and Mrs Hudson, the grand daughter of Archibald Maclean, were close friends. Nevertheless, the landscape work at Homewood occurred sometime between 1930-1934. 290 Between 12 and 20 men were working on the garden for a period of two years. 291

"...The gardens at Homewood provided Benjamin Sutherland with the perfect retreat from his business. Here he and his wife could give way to their fancies and artistic impulses. Mr Buxton, a landscape gardener from Christchurch, was employed to lay out the whole garden, and no expense was spared. A running account was kept with the carrier, who collected huge rocks from the river bed in South Makara for the construction of walled shrubberies and ferneries, and load upon load of cow manure from Makara farms. Mr Buxton used to travel up from Christchurch every week or fortnight and stay several days or sometimes even for weeks at a time.” 292
Fig 9.8 Part of the grounds of Homewood, Karori, landscaped for Benjamin Sutherland. Sutherland's fountain with the coloured lights appears in the foreground. (Mrs J McKay)

Fig 9.9 Another view of the grounds at Homewood in the 1930s. Notice the wall of a sheltered fernery behind the pergola. There were several of these. (Mrs J McKay)
Fig 9.10 The Japanese style pergola at Homewood with aristic bridge and lily pond in the foreground. In the background the wall of an outdoor fernery can be seen. (Mrs J McKay)

Fig 9.11 Besides the outdoor ferneries Homewood also had an indoor fernery/winter garden. This feature has now disappeared but is shown under construction. Cork, punga and rockwork were essential materials. (F Neate)
Contemporary descriptions of the garden provide something of the flavour that it exuded.

"To appreciate the real beauty of the garden one must walk along the vista path. Turning to the right after entering the gate we come to a sunken path behind the trees on the edge of the lawn. Every few yards a different perspective meets the eye...to the left a sunken rose garden comes into view, and in a tree shaded bower on the right is a little gnome village...In all the open air ferneries 2, 3, and 4, one is transported in fancy miles away from the hurly-burly of city life to the delightful atmosphere of our unspoiled forest land...In the Grotto Fernery one's first feelings are of wonder and awe, as having intruded in some enchanted glade...Through crevices in the rocks can be seen waterfalls, streams and limpid pools with their mossy banks. Taking a path to the right and crossing a rustic bridge, one comes to the glowworm cave, cunningly, fashioned in the hillside. At the entrance is a most charming scene. Disposed in carefree attitudes around five tiny fountains are grouped several gnomes, watching with delighted attention balls kept in play by jets of water on which are played vari-coloured lights." 293

Whether the 'charming scene' described is of the fountain in front of the house or not is not clear, but the latter was the cause of dissent within the Sutherland family. Formerly the area between the house and the tennis court was a rose garden with a small fountain at its centre. But one day, while Mrs Sutherland and Jean were out, it was replaced by a mechanical monstrosity with coloured lights and floating balls! The grounds were often used for public events such as garden parties and fetes and daughter Jean was married there to Dr. Reay McKay. Besides the works described the garden also contained a winter garden next to the swimming pool and a lily pond and pergola showing some Japanese influence. All were constructed by Buxtons. The rustic bridges were constructed out of reinforced concrete which was poured into moulds in the ground. The soil gave it the rough finish desired. Jean McKay recalls Alfred Buxton as a very clever man who was kind towards herself. On the other hand he was sometimes regarded as something of a nuisance by her brother, John, who often had to take him to the inter-island ferry after he had called to see her father. Buxton made a habit of being late so causing a rush. One day John Sutherland went down from Homewood to the ferry so fast that Buxton was never late again!

While Buxton was not a close friend of her father he was a frequent caller and often stayed for meals. 294
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The illustrations reproduced on this page show examples of constructional work recently carried out by us for clients.
Another garden landscaped at this period was in Buxton's previous stamping ground in Hawke's Bay. The garden at 'The Washpool' was landscaped for Howard and Esme Glazebrook in 1934. They had had their house remodelled in a Californian/Spanish style which suited the very hot, dry plain of the locality during the summer months.

"The garden is essentially English in concept. It has been broken up into separate 'rooms' by the use of stone walls and balustrading. Buxton originally designed a pergola along the south side of the Rose Garden leading down to the tennis court but my father changed this after much argument and now the pergola is at right angles to the axis of the cherry walk. The pergola, which is some twenty metres long and built of concrete pillars and hardwood crossbeams, has been softened by the use of climbing roses and clematis......

The Rose Garden is formal in its design. Each bed is separated by narrow grass walks and each one contains several rose bushes grouped according to colour......

From the end of November to the middle of March these roses provide a splendid show which can be enjoyed from the main rooms of the house......

The garden has some fine specimen trees particularly notable being the Copper Beech and the

*Liriodendron tulipifera* (tulip tree) on the front lawn."  

Trevor Buxton led the team which carried out most of the work on this project which his father had secured. Besides the ferneries at Homewood the landscape team was also concerned with the re-creation of a fernery for Robert Tanner at Longburn, near Palmerston North. The work there, originally carried out in 1914, had decayed with the passage of time and Buxton offered to re-make his original work. The operations are best recalled in Frank Buckingham's photographs of the period. In addition to the fernery a cascade, somewhat similar to that at Kincaid's, was added to the already extensive system of ponds and bridges.  

**Government House, Wellington**

The most significant project, which was not executed, may have stemmed from the work for Benjamin Sutherland. It was to carry out improvements to the grounds of Government House, also in Wellington. How Buxton got this chance to extend his range of activity is unknown, but from copies of the plans and related documents, which have been discovered in the District Office of the Ministry of Works in Wellington and the National Archives, a fairly clear picture
Fig 9.16 and 9.17 Re-construction of the fernery at Longburn for Mr and Mrs Robert Tanner during the interwar depression. (F Buckingham)
Fig 9.18 Part of the finished fernery at Longburn with some planting. (F Buckingham)

Fig 9.19 The cascade constructed in the water garden at Longburn. (F Buckingham)
emerges. Lord Bledisloe was Governor General from 1931-1935, when he was succeeded by Lord Galway. During 1934 Lord Bledisloe allowed the unemployed to establish gardening plots in the grounds of Wellington's Government House. The grounds had become run down due to light expenditure during the depression.

When Lord Galway became Governor General he sought to improve the grounds at Government House, Wellington. This intention may have led to Alfred Buxton being asked to submit a tender. Putting the paths and drives in order was estimated to cost £2420 at the beginning of 1936. It is also evident that the shrubberies and gardens had not been properly maintained for the previous two or three years, perhaps because the previous head gardener had had to retire as he had tuberculosis. Buxton's tender was for £2699 and was for the erection of a stone wall, steps to balustrading, excavations at the foot of the wall, levelling of the ground and the establishment of lawns. The original plans, submitted on 14th July 1935, were much more elaborate and, for example, included provision for two pergolas and extensive flower beds and shrubberies.

Lord Galway discussed his plans with Robert Semple, the incoming Minister of Works in the first Labour Government, on 16 December 1935. Semple asked for the Vice-Regal plans to be forwarded with notes about them. A memorandum replied from the Governor General's Private Secretary the following June. From the memorandum it is clear that the improvements to be carried out had received deep consideration in the intervening months. Some of the delay was the result of both the Governor General's and his gardener's lack of familiarity with the grounds. The outcome was that Buxton's plans were to be sidelined for the time being and more urgent matters undertaken. In particular, the most urgent task was believed to be the provision of improved propagation and glasshouse facilities to provide Government House with adequate supplies of pot plants. While Arthur Purvis, the Private Secretary, thought that the cost of the work given the priority would be similar to the previous proposals he was mistaken. Buxton's tender was reckoned to be reasonable by the Ministry of Works but was still nearly £2700, while the alternative improvements suggested, the provision of improved glasshouses, a shadehouse and improvements to the boiler system, cost only £774. In a period of economic adversity it is hardly surprising which alternative the first Labour government selected with the Governor
Fig 9.21 Part of the plans for Government House, Wellington.
Fig. 22 The proposed private garden at Government House.
Fig 9.23 and 24 P McSkimming's house, Lesmahagow, at Benhar near Balclutha which was landscaped in 1935. The work in progress. (P Neate)
Fig 9.25 and 9.26 The work continues at Lesmahagow and the finished view of the inside of the pergola (F Neate)
Fig 9.27 and 9.28 Two views of the finished garden, tennis court, terracing, steps, rose garden and pergola at Lismahagow, Benhar (F Neate.)
General’s agreement. Cabinet approval was given on 19 September 1936. The postponement was fatal for Buxton’s designs which were never implemented.

Following the rejection of the plans for Government House, Alfred Buxton commenced breaking relatively new territory in Otago and Southland. Work had been carried out in the area of Telford, between Balclutha and Gore, at about the time of the original crash in 1926. Work began for Peter McSkimming of ‘Lesmahagow’ at Benhar close to Balclutha later in 1935. On a hill site, in front of an existing brick house, a terraced garden with several retaining walls was constructed. On the south side the largest of the walls acted as the back to a pergola. All the walls and other structures were built from McSkimming’s bricks, using different facings for effect. Several photographs were taken of the progress of the landscaping and planting (Fig 9.23-9.29). Other projects followed near Ranfurly in Central Otago, in Eastern Southland, and around Invercargill. Often they involved the completely bare landscapes of the locality where shelter was non existant. To cope with this problem a walled garden was constructed at Kokonga, near Ranfurly, for Mr J Hastie, along with the more typical ponds and Japanese style bridges. This garden also features several horizontal elms which have been particularly well suited to the location and are now fine specimens. (Fig 9.30-9.38)

In 1937 further work was carried out for Mrs G Stewart at Greenmeadows, Orari, and on three notable southern South Island properties: for J Rowley at Hawea Flat, for G Wallace at Gore and G Scott at Pukerua near Gore. Perhaps the work for the latter can be taken as an example of activity at this period. It is a good example of Buxton touring the country and offering to layout a garden for anyone who had recently constructed a house.

The Scotts had built a new house in 1935 at a time when the country was coming out of the Depression. They benefitted from the building subsidy to construct the house and from an insurance policy which had matured. They had also stored 2-3 years wool and were able to sell it on a rising market. In spite of the high cost they had decided to go ahead with Alfred Buxton’s plan for their garden because (in Colin Scott’s opinion) they wanted to have it. His mother was in favour of developing the garden, and nothing appeared to be neglected on the farm while it was done. Before Buxton commenced his layout the garden was a typical farm garden. He was given a free hand. The
Fig 9.30 and 9.31 The view approaching J. Hattie's property, Kokonga, near Ranfurly, and the view from slightly further to the east showing the extensive wailing, rockeries, ponds and bridges. (P Neate)
Fig 9.32 A close-up view of the front of the house at Kokonga showing the pergola constructed around the front door, the steps leading to the front door and the surrounding rockeries. (W Cooper)

Fig 9.33 The walled garden and partly completed pergola. (F Neate)
Fig 9.34 and 9.35 Two other views of the mature walled rose garden. Note the hoses and stand pipes which were required to keep the roses in good condition. (W Cooper)
Fig 9.36 and 9.37 Two views looking out from the house at Kokonga. The first is along the entrance drive to the north. The second is more to the east, over the ornamental ponds, Japanese style bridges and farm buildings. (P Neate)
Fig 9.38 The working plan prepared for Mr G Scott at Pukerau, Southland, in February 1937. (C. Scott)

Fig 9.39 The house and garden completed for Mr G Scott, with a fine view of the rockery and early shelter. (F Neate)
Fig 9.40 A later aerial view of the property at Pukerau with clearly defined shelter plantings around the house and buildings. (C Scott)

Fig 9.41 An aerial view of the maturing planting at Pukerau which shows clearly the use of ornamental species inside the outer shelter belts, closer to the house. (C Scott)
original fenced area of the garden was added to for shelter, giving an area of 2.5 acres. 301

The nursery stock for the garden probably came from Christchurch, much to the chagrin of local nurserymen. Two three ton truck loads of plants had to be transported from Pukerua railway station to the farm. Alfred Buxton lived in the house while working on the garden. On one occasion he took Colin Scott with him whom he spent a weekend at a hotel in Gore while inspecting the gardens. He is remembered as a very friendly man, who was hardworking. Nothing would stop him. When he used to travel from Christchurch he would arrive in the middle of the night, probably after stopping for a meal at Bennett’s nursery in North Eastern Valley, Dunedin, and still start at 8.00 am. 302 By this time the ‘Moon’ car had been replaced by a 1934 Chevrolet, the bottom end of the General Motors range. Three men worked with Alfred Buxton on the job, including Frank Neate. The project cost just under £500 and was completed during the winters of 1937 and 1938. 303

The most important feature of the garden, as far as the local community was concerned, was the rock garden, made of Conical Hill stone. Buxton had discovered the stone when doing another job in Gore and looking for a source of local stone. He liked the character of the rock, with its fossilized leaves and a part covering of moss. The rockery became a recognised feature and has often been used for photographs at local weddings. The largest rocks were moved with a sledge and positioned with a tripod, block and tackle. Overall the garden provided too much work for a housewife, but Mrs Scott’s children were already past the baby stage and she preferred gardening to cooking. She regarded it as a great success and her son Colin has worked equally hard to maintain it. 304 The development of the garden from the plan is shown in the accompanying photographs (Fig 9.38-9.41)