

Noel Bamford: the first director of the Auckland School of Architecture

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ABSTRACT: Auckland's keenest advocate of the Arts and Crafts movement was Frederick Noel Bamford (1881-1952) who was the first director of the Auckland School of Architecture from 1917-19. Apprenticed to carpenter and architect Edward Bartley (1839-1919) during the years that St Matthews-in-the-city was being designed, Bamford excelled at drawing and travelled to London to become a student at the Royal Institute of British Architects' School in 1904. Along with fellow expatriate architectural student Arthur Patrick Hector Pierce (1879-1918), Bamford found work in the office of Edwin Lutyens (1869-1919), famed for his romantic English country houses. Bamford returned to Auckland in 1906, and was elected an Associate of the RIBA the following year. Pierce followed, and they formed an architectural partnership which became renowned for its houses in the English Domestic Revival style adapted for New Zealand conditions. Bamford and Pierce are best known for designing the glamorous *Coolangatta*, 464 Remuera Road (1911, demolished in 2006) for Canadian-born Alfred Foster, a surveyor and his wife Jessie, which Peter Shaw observes is almost an exact copy of a Lutyens house at Fulbrook, Elstead, Surrey, built in 1897. As well as indicating the rapid transmission the Lutyens country house typology to New Zealand, the story of the Bamford and Pierce partnership offers an intriguing insight into the social relationships of Edwardian Auckland. Pierce's father George was prominent in the Anglican Diocese, and one of the earliest commissions that Bamford and Pierce secured was for Bishops Court, a home for the Anglican Bishop of Auckland, known as Neligan House (1909-10). Connections to the law firm of Hesketh Richmond (Bamford's father was Edwin Bamford, (1846-1928), Registrar-General of Lands) resulted in the commission for *Waione* (1910), a single storey house at 22 Domett Avenue, Epsom as well as two houses for wealthy heiress Jeannie Stirling Richmond (1854-1917) for construction on her Rockwood estate. *Ngahere* at 74 Mountain Road (1907-8) was designed for Richmond's newly married daughter Margaret MacCormick (1884-1972) is renowned for its butterfly floor plan. *Woodend* at Gilgit Road (circa 1914-15) was designed as the home of Noel Bamford's brother, lawyer Dr Harry Dean Bamford, who lectured in law at Auckland University College. In 1912, the year that his Remuera house went up in flames destroying £2000 worth of Arts and Crafts furniture, Bamford founded the Arts and Crafts Club in Auckland, becoming its inaugural president. The Club was to have a key role in promoting the adaptation of the ideology of William Morris, and incorporated Māori arts into its definition of craft.

During the early years of World War I, Bamford and Pierce consolidated their reputation as one of Auckland's leading architectural practices. However, even though he was already 36 years old and had started a family, Hector Pierce felt compelled to join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force as a corporal. He left New Zealand on 17 April 1917, and eighteen months later died of disease while on active service in Palestine. Pierce's death precipitated a crisis for Bamford who was encouraged by his academic brother to apply to become the first director of the Auckland School of Architecture. Lasting just two years in the role, Bamford taught "the arts," focussing on the appreciation of Māori arts and crafts. This led to a role as a lecturer for the Workers' Educational Association and also to appointment in 1928 to the board of Māori Arts, chaired by Sir Maui Pomare, which had been set up as a result of the Maori Arts and Crafts Act 1926 to "preserve the craftsmanship of the Māori." Bamford continued to practice until World War II, but never again worked on the scale that he had with Pierce. He occupies an idiosyncratic place in New Zealand's architectural history as a proselytiser for the English Arts and Crafts movement for clients who hoped that they were building a new Britain in the South Pacific. At the same time, he was influential for the revival of Māori art and its acceptance as a distinctive part of the Arts and Crafts Movement in New Zealand.

One of Auckland's keenest advocates for the Arts and Crafts movement was Frederick Noel Bamford (1881-1952),¹ the English-

¹ His father Edwin Bamford (1846-1928) emigrated from

Shropshire, England to Canterbury with his parents John Dean Bamford and Elizabeth Bamford in 1851 and was a fourth-generation lawyer. Admitted to the bar in 1871, by 1893 Edwin Bamford was Registrar of Deeds and District Land Registrar in Auckland. He was

appointed Registrar-General of Lands in Wellington in 1908, but after his retirement in 1911, he and his wife returned to live in Auckland. Mrs Bamford died in 1924, four years before her husband. Noel Bamford was their only surviving son. "Obituary Mr Edwin Bamford" p 12.

trained architect who also became the Auckland School of Architecture first director in 1917. It is not for his role in architectural education that he is best known, however, but for the English Domestic Revival architecture that he and partner Hector Pierce designed for the eastern suburbs of Auckland. His interest in Māori arts and crafts and his role in the revival of customary practice is not well-documented but seems to have developed after Pierce's death in 1918. This paper will outline the main achievements of Bamford and Pierce's 12 years of practice before considering Bamford's role in promoting the revival of Māori art as part of Aotearoa's Arts and Crafts movement, which culminated in his design of the Te Aute College Memorial Hall "in Maori style" [sic].²

Bamford's architectural education included both local and English training. After studying at Kings College in Auckland from 1897 until 1899, he signed a contract agreeing to be articled to Devonport carpenter and architect Edward Bartley (1839-1919) for four years.³ Bartley, famous for his Princes Street Synagogue (1884) and Jubilee Building for the

² "Arts and Crafts Among the Maoris Board's Annual Meeting" p 11.

³ Bartley *Colonial architect* p 52.

Royal Institute for the Blind in Parnell (1892), won the commission for a new church in the Gothic Revival style in Hobson Street for the Anglican Church and was preparing plans while Bamford was working in his office, as these were completed by May 1901⁴ with the foundation stone laid in April 1902.⁵ Bamford excelled at drawing and travelled to London to become a student at the Royal Institute of British Architects' School in 1904. The following January, the *Herald* reported:

Among those who have successfully passed the intermediate examination for the associateship of the RIBA is Mr F. Noel Bamford, son of Mr E. Bamford of Auckland. Mr Bamford is in London studying architecture, and is in the office of Mr E.L. Lutyens, one of the leading domestic architects in England, his houses being frequently illustrated in art and building publications. Mr Bamford contemplates remaining in England for another year, and then returning to the colony.⁶

Edwin Lutyens (1869-1919) was the pre-eminent English architect of his day, and in 1905 would have had the designs for the remodelling of Lindisfarne Castle in Northumberland underway as well as those for Marsh Court. Stockbridge in Hampshire, a

⁴ "St Matthews Stone Church" p 6.

⁵ "St Matthews Church" p 3.

⁶ "Local and General News" (12 January 1905) p 4.

large house for London stockbroker Herbert Johnson in the Arts and Crafts style in ashlar with a Tudor exterior detailed with lines of black flint and red tile. Lutyens' grand style was to have a profound effect on Bamford who returned to Auckland in 1906, and was elected an Associate of the RIBA the following year with letters of recommendation from Lutyens and another prominent Arts and Crafts architect, E Guy Dawber.⁷ Arthur Patrick Hector Pierce (1879-1918) whom he had met in Lutyens' office followed him back to New Zealand after touring Europe in 1907, and they formed an architectural partnership that year. The practice of architecture was professionalising in New Zealand at this time. Edward Bartley, president of the Auckland Institute of Architects, which became a branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects when it was established in 1905, remarked:

It is gratifying to look back on the small beginning of our Institute, and although the growth has been slow ... we must congratulate ourselves that we are now united throughout the Colony in the New Zealand Institute of Architects.⁸

A decade later, Bartley ensured that his

⁷ Waite *Coolangatta* p 77.

⁸ Bartley "Auckland Institute of Architects President's Address."

former pupil Noel Bamford was nominated to be director and lecturer of the new school of architecture at Auckland University College when it was established in 1917.⁹

Bamford and Pierce set up their practice in the Hobson Buildings in Fort Street, and flourished. Newspaper tender notices for a house in St Stephen's Avenue, Parnell, a house in Grafton Road, a house in Parnell and another in Arney Road, Remuera all appeared in 1907. The Anglican Diocese had decided to build a new residence for the Bishop of Auckland in 1905, approaching George Goldsboro initially, and then Edward Bartley.¹⁰ Through Bartley, Bamford and Pierce were given the commission, and the three-storeyed, eight-bedroomed Bishops court was completed in 1910.¹¹ Irregular in both plan and elevation, the house has conspicuously large gables and chimneys, and it is of a great height, to maximise the small site, making it taller than the typical

⁹ "That Mr. T.N. Bamford be appointed director of the School of Architecture and lecturer on the art side at a salary of £200 per annum and Mr. Ashley Hunter lecturer to deal with the mechanical side at a salary of £100 per annum ..." "School of Architecture to be opened" p 4.

¹⁰ Waite *Coolangatta* p 78.

¹¹ "Architecture: Bishops court" pp 278-280.

English Arts and Crafts house. Still, similarities have been found in the overall composition of the house to Lutyens' Tigbourne Court (1899) and Munstead Wood (1895-96), and the windows of the hall are reminiscent of those Abbotswood (1901).¹² There are South Pacific features however: the two-storey verandah and large top floor bedroom window (competing in size with those of the dining and drawing rooms below) on the north-facing garden façade and French windows opening onto the verandah and garden below.

In the spring of 1908 Hector Pierce married a graduate of the School of Music at Auckland University College, Winifred Ethel Lewis at St Matthews-in-the-city,¹³ and her connections¹⁴ brought the firm even more work. They began ranging more broadly, moving away from purely domestic architecture and in 1908 tenders were called for a cottage and moving

¹² Waite *Coolangatta* p 83.

¹³ "Social Sphere" p 12.

¹⁴ The bride's maternal uncle was the Honourable Joseph Tole (1846-1920), who was the Member of the House of Representatives for the Eden electorate and the Minister of Justice from 1884-87, and then one of the inaugural King's Counsel appointed in 1907. He hosted the wedding reception at his house Tantimar, in New Street, Ponsonby.

store in Remuera, sheds at Purewa cemetery, a house in Gisborne, a brick woolstore in Fort Street, four shops in Parnell, a house in Manukau Road, a house at Pirongia and shops in Karangahape Road. The following year, they added a three-storey wing onto a private hotel at 30 Whitaker Place for a Mrs Carter. This extension included a dining room, billiard room and 13 bedrooms.¹⁵ They also designed a house at Farmer's Hill in Great South Road, a house in Domett Avenue in Epsom, a brick house in Parnell, a house in Pencarrow Avenue in Mount Eden and the Criterion Hotel in Ōtāhuhu.

Waione, the house at 22 Domett Avenue in Epsom, built for William Frater in 1907-08 is particularly interesting for its adaptation of the butterfly plan associated with Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) in his remodelling of Chesters House in Northumberland. With wings angled to the south giving the impression of symmetry, this became known as a "suntrap" house, and the approach is used in Waione where the bedroom and living areas are angled out to embrace the sun from the north. Their second butterfly-plan house was Ngahere at 74 Mountain Road, Epsom,

¹⁵ Waite *Coolangatta* p 85.

for Maggie MacCormick where the massing of the construction is spread out along the street frontage. There are other idiosyncratic features: to heat the copper in the laundry a rustic fireplace was incorporated with the bricks of the chimney angled into a stone roughcast wall and at the end of each wing of the house is a Japanese Irimoya-style gable and the south-west gable has a chimney at the centre.

In 1910 the firm designed seven two-storeyed brick shops which were built on the corner of Upper Symonds Street and Khyber Pass on land owned by Hector Pierce's widowed mother for £5,330.¹⁶ Above the shops were professional chambers, where the façades were treated in the style known at the time as Modern English Renaissance, updating the typical Italianate treatment of Auckland shopfronts from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The north and west façades as well as the corner feature Palladian pedimented windows flanked by two sets of three windows. Each window has a Georgian appearance with a white surround, a trim of white plaster above, accentuated by the contrasting verticals of red brick.

¹⁶ "Local and General News" (15 October 1910) p 6.

Marrying Zoe Emily Nation, eldest daughter of bank manager Edward B Nation in Wellington in June 1910,¹⁷ Bamford decided to design himself and his new bride an eight-roomed house in Arney Road, Remuera which was furnished with £2,000 worth of Arts and Crafts furniture, all of which was destroyed by fire two years later.¹⁸ The firm's clientele extended to include Dr John Kinder, who owned a small plot of land at 1 St Georges Bay Road in Parnell and wanted a house and doctor's surgery designed for the site. Georgian in appearance, with white trim accentuated by red brick, the house has another upstairs verandah, but this time it is entirely glazed. They also worked on another brick house in Grafton Road and an open-air skating rink at the corner of Khyber Pass Road and Burleigh Street as well as the Beaux-Arts style two-storeyed Takapuna Council Offices for Lake Road.¹⁹ With a centralised entrance and elegant curved staircase leading to the council chamber, which extended the length of the whole first floor. This building had an

¹⁷ "Marriage Bamford-Nation" p 1.

¹⁸ "Fire at Remuera" p 6.

¹⁹ Now demolished. Plans and elevations survive. Takapuna Borough Council Offices, Lake Road, Takapuna, Sheppard Collection, File no. B199, the University of Auckland Architecture Library.

imposing façade, its French windows and decorative iron balconies on the upper level derived from French eighteenth-century architecture.

This Takapuna landmark led to other North Shore commissions the following year: a house at Bayswater and a house at Lake Takapuna as well as a cottage at Deep Creek, Oneroa on Waiheke Island. But the major project for 1912 was Coolangatta built at 464 Remuera Road for Canadian-born Alfred Foster, a surveyor, and his wife Jessie. Plans and specifications were approved on 27 November at an estimated contract price of £1,000.²⁰ Peter Shaw observes Bamford and Pierce's design for this house is almost an exact copy of a Lutyens house at Fulbrook, Elstead, Surrey, built in 1897. Its double brick construction had a lime-washed finish, and the roof was Welsh slate with orange Marseilles tile hips.²¹ It was designed to look as if it had been added on to with a long single-storeyed extension towards the street, and had a hipped roof, and casement windows in the early eighteenth-century style. Like other Bamford and Pierce houses, the

²⁰ Waite *Coolangatta* p 103.

²¹ Shaw *New Zealand Architecture* p 88.

garden façade had a two-storeyed verandah, marking its point of difference from English country house precedents. Its floor plan was inventive, as Paul Waite observes:

With Coolangatta, Bamford and Pierce used the north corridor plan which had evolved in the 1890s from the earlier L-shaped plan as houses began to get smaller around the turn of the century. It allows all the reception rooms to face the sunniest direction but can make an overly long, low building which appears stretched out, unless there is some creativity with projections and rooflines, as with Coolangatta.²²

Other important clients from 1912 were Harry and Ida Stansfield whose house at 30 Arney Road, Remuera was located in the south eastern corner of a large site to allow the development of an elaborate garden. Upstairs the bedrooms opened onto a sleeping balcony, inset into the slope of the roof, and oriented north for sun and view. Bamford and Pierce were also the architects chosen for the Auckland Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition which took place between 1 December 1913 and 18 April 1914 and covered 48 acres of the Domain. Buildings they designed included a Palace of Industries with 400 exhibitors, an aquarium, an art gallery with the John Baillie collection of 600 works of

²² Waite *Coolangatta* p 104.

art, a concert hall seating 1,000, a Machinery Court, a Japanese tea house, a second bandstand, a second café with a large verandah and the District and Government Courts. Not only was it hugely popular with over 800,000 visitors, it was a great financial success with a profit of £11,000.²³ Only the tea kiosk and band rotunda, built in brick and concrete, remain. The tea kiosk is a white roughcast cottage which originally had pergolas on north and west sides and a large central space for tea with adjoining kitchens and a staircase leading to the caretaker's flat on the first floor. The columns of the pergolas feature heavy rustication like the walls for Lutyen's house Homewood, designed for his mother-in-law, the Dowager Countess of Lytton at Knebworth in Hertfordshire.

1912 also marked the first year of the Arts and Crafts Club's annual exhibition which took place in the Art Society rooms. Noel Bamford was both the founder and the president of the club, which took over new rooms in the Queen's Chambers, Wellesley Street in 1913, mounting a small exhibition where "the decorative branch of art was strongly

²³ *Auckland Industrial Agricultural and Mining Exhibition 1912-14: Official catalogue and guide* p 4.

represented [and] there were several exhibits of artistic jewellery and enamel work, and some handsome painted china."²⁴ The firm won the commission to design the cricket club stand at Eden Park, a power station building in Mackay Street in Thames, and a house in Bayswater. When the Architectural Students' Association formed on 22 June 1914, he became vice-president of that as well,²⁵ and he was also on the subcommittee of the Town Planning League.²⁶

Architectural work slowed during the First World War, with the firm of Bamford and Pierce only working on a brick house in Epsom, a house in the Bay of Islands, a house in St Heliers in 1914, a tramway shelter in Clifton Road, Takapuna, and a roughcast house in St Heliers in 1915. Fortunately, the remainder of the fees for the Takapuna Borough Council Chambers were paid that year, and the building itself opened in 1916. The practice was boosted by the commission for Woodend at Gilgit Road for Noel Bamford's brother, lawyer Dr Harry Dean Bamford, who lectured in law at Auckland University College and his wife Jean Aitken.

²⁴ "Arts and Crafts Club Opening of New Rooms" p 5.

²⁵ "Architectural Students An Association Formed" p 5.

²⁶ "Town Planning League" p 5.

Constructed in unpainted red brick, and with a boxy Georgian form, this house is remarkable for its two large gable pediments on the north and south façades, which make the house look similar to some of Frank Lloyd Wright's designs for Oak Park in Chicago, or the work of Charles Voysey. This was the practice's last major commission: Hector Pierce enlisted on 27 May 1916,²⁷ and Bamford dissolved the partnership the same day.

The end of the partnership precipitated a crisis for Bamford who was encouraged by the client for this last house, his academic brother Harry Bamford, to accept the nomination put forward by Edward Bartley that he become the first director of the Auckland School of Architecture. Lasting just two years in the role, Bamford taught "the arts," focussing on the appreciation of Māori arts and crafts. This led to a role as a lecturer for the Workers' Educational Association and also to appointment in 1928 to the board of Māori Arts, chaired by Sir Maui Pomare, which had been set up as a result of the Maori Arts and Crafts Act 1926 to "preserve the craftsmanship of the Maori." In welcoming him to the fold,

²⁷ He became ill with malaria on active service and died in Palestine on 17 October 1918.

Sir Maui Pomare commented that:

Mr Bamford, a prominent architect of Auckland, has always made the craftsmanship of the Maori a study, and the board is fortunate in obtaining his services.²⁸

Bamford designed the Te Aute College Memorial Hall, and coordinated the decoration "in Maori style...[which offered] opportunities ... for the carrying out of artistic and decorative schemes."²⁹

Bamford continued to practice until World War II, but never again worked on the scale that he had with Pierce. He occupies an idiosyncratic place in New Zealand's architectural history as a proselytiser for the English Arts and Crafts movement for clients who hoped that they were building a new Britain in the South Pacific. At the same time, he was influential for the revival of Māori art and its acceptance as a distinctive part of the Arts and Crafts Movement in New Zealand.

²⁸ "Arts and Crafts Among the Maoris Board's Annual Meeting" p 11.

²⁹ "Arts and Crafts Among the Maoris Board's Annual Meeting" p 11.

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