

# Birkenhead 1902

Extract from THE CYCLOPEDIA OF NEW ZEALAND  
SUBURBS OF AUCKLAND - BIRKENHEAD 1902

BIRKENHEAD is a large residential suburb situated about three miles to the north-west of Auckland, across the Waitemata Harbour. The first settlers established themselves there over fifty years ago, and on these hardy pioneers, Mr Henry Hawkins who has resided in the district for over half a century, is still alive, though now (July 1901) over ninety years of age. Birkenhead is a large tract of undulating country, well wooded, and dotted with pretty patches of native bush. Although the land is unsuitable for growing grain, it is unsurpassed for fruit growing, and this industry is cultivated by over 200 settlers, strawberries being raised in large quantities. In order to encourage fruit culture, and successfully export the produce, a canning factory has been established near the Birkenhead wharf. At the present time (1901) apples, plums, pears, quinces, and tomatoes are being canned and sent all over the colony, and very shortly peaches will be similarly treated. Some years ago the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Limited, established large sugar works at Birkenhead, and the rapid development of the industry has materially helped the progress of the district, as the majority of the persons employed at the works are residents of the borough.

Birkenhead is bounded on the east by the district of Northcote, and on the north-east by the outlying district of Birkenhead; otherwise it is surrounded by the Waitemata Harbour, where it is indented with charming little bays. The main public school of the district is situated on the boundary of Birkenhead and Northcote, and is attended by an average of over 250 scholars. Birkdale, the north-western portion of the borough, over which wild cattle were running a few years ago, has a public school, attended by seventy scholars, under the tuition of Miss Bowen; and the Mayfield public school is outside the borough boundary, in the outlying district of Birkenhead, and the Church of England and the Presbyterian denominations have places of worship in the adjoining district of Northcote. The only public halls in the district at present are the Gladstone Hall and Tarry's Hall, both of which are in Northcote; but the Birkenhead Borough Council has purchased a site for a town hall, council chambers, and public library, and the buildings will be put up in due course. Mr. Witheford, M.H.R., the Mayor of Birkenhead, has recently given a grant towards the library. There is a post and telegraph office in both Birkenhead and Northcote.

Near the Ferry Wharf, and on the surrounding high land, many of Auckland's business men have large and handsome residences, surrounded by well laid out gardens, and this portion of the borough commands a magnificent view of Auckland and the whole of the Waitemata Harbour. The Devonport Ferry Company maintains an efficient and continuous service, from early morning to nearly midnight, with Northcote and Birkenhead.

Birkenhead was proclaimed a borough in 1887, and Mr. C. E. Button, who was elected the first mayor, occupied the position until November, 1900, when Mr. J. H. Witheford, M.H.R., the present mayor, succeeded him. The Council is moving in the matter of a more efficient water supply, and is endeavouring to bring the water from lake Takapuna. It is also considering the establishment of borough gas works, which would also supply Northcote. One important feature that reflects great credit on the council, and cannot escape the attention of strangers, is that throughout the whole of the borough well formed footpaths have been constructed; and, there being no hard metal in the district, the council employs scows to bring this necessary material from Rangitoto Island for the roads.

Near the landing wharf there is a large boardinghouse where visitors are hospitably received; but there is no hotel in the borough, though there is one at Northcote. There are three stores doing business in Birkenhead.

**BIRKENHEAD** is a borough in an area of 2697 acres. It contains 278 ratable properties, owned by 252 ratepayers. The rates levied by the Council consist of a general rate of 1s 3d in the £, a special rate of 3d in the £, and a separate rate of 2-1/4d, and the annual value of ratable property is £7312. The Borough has a population of 1087 persons.