

## **Beginings – Birkenhead Borough Council - 1888**

**In Eighteen Eighty Eight Birkenhead celebrated the proclamation by Governor Drummond Jervios, the constituting of the Borough of Birkenhead. Prior to this the area was administered by a Roads Board. There were of course people living in Birkenhead long before this date.**

**Birkenhead Borough was Gazetted on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1888 to comprise of a Mayor and six Councilors, in the same document the Governor appointed a Mr Thomas Seaman as Town Clerk and Returning Officer, who was to conduct an election on Thursday 17 May. and the first council meeting was to have been held on Wednesday 23 May, but there was no need to hold an election as the number of nominations equaled the number of vacancies.**

**Consequently the first Council meeting was held at 7.30 pm on Friday 18 may 1888 at the Zion Hill Schoolroom, Birkenhead. .**

**The first Mayor of the Borough was Mr Charles Edward Butler and the six Councilors – Messrs Tom Hadfield, Benjamin Hawkins, Robert Hill, John Kay, Albert Porter and Edward White**

**This first Council had no premises to meet in and very little income, however at this first meeting the Town Clerk's salary was set at 10 guineas per annum and that his other duties were to be Treasurer, Collector and Valuator for the new Borough, and that the monthly meetings were to be held on the Thursday immediately preceding, or nearest to each full moon. This would be a distinct advantage in going to and returning from meetings with no street lighting, or even streets for that matter.**

**Council meetings were duly arranged to be held in building owned by a Mr Shilwell at half a guinea a quarter, with the Town Clerk to be in attendance from 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm on the day of the Council meeting**

**At a later meeting it was agreed that separate Works Committee should be set up to keep drains cleared and pot holes filled. This committee had the power to spend, what would have been a princely sum of in those days, a sum of five pounds without brining it to the notice of the full Council.**

**The first accounted discussion at the Council came over the appointment of a day labourer, discussion took place on the relative merits of two men, eventually a Mr Simpson was appointed at a sum of six shillings a day, a Mr White was to give the new employee on what work was to be done and when.**

To improve the condition of the roads and in particular to facilitate a safe transit for the strawberry growers in Beach Haven, tenders were called for 1000 yards of crushed shell, the quotes were three and a half pence and two and half pence a bushel, it was considered that this was too expensive, so 30 yards of ash from the Chelsea Sugar works was purchased at a farthing per yard.

This was to set the pattern for the upkeep of the roads in Birkenhead for the practice of using Sugar Works ash continued for many years.

The Councils first financial structure was based on the dividing of the assets of the old Roads Board with the Waitemata County. There was some disagreement between the two authorities and it took many meetings to resolve the issue.

Eventually a balance of nine pound sixty pence was handed to the Borough Council , with Birkenhead retaining the power to collect all unpaid rates levied by the Roads Board a total of seventy four pounds fifteen shillings within the Borough and fifty nine pounds outside the Borough.

The first Borough Council estimates showed an expenditure of three hundred and fifty pounds made up as follows :

Share of Government Debentures	73. 3. 4.
Departmental Expenses i.e Salary of Town Clerk, Treasurer, Collector, Returning Officer and Valuator, Clerk and presiding Officer for Licensing District	42. 0. 0.
Office Rental, Advertising, Stationary etc	12. 0. 0.
Contribution to Hospital Charitable Aid	38. 7. 10.
Road Construction and Maintenance	184. 8. 10.
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	350. 0. 0.

Assets were ninety nine pounds with a difference being obtained by levying a rate of one third (one shilling and three pence) in the pound on the annual value of all rateable properties in the Borough, all the levies were to be paid on the one day 22 August 1889.

What were your rates in 2006 ?

Keith Rogers (Beach Haven / Birkdale Residents Association  
Birkenhead