Glimpses of early Birkenhead Point

The harbour was the early gateway into Birkenhead.

Everything happened by the old sea wall in the days before the first wharf was built. Meetings, deliveries, sales, reunions, and gossip. Flat-bottomed boats transported animals, fruit crops and goods for Auckland. Children fished from dinghies. Horse-drawn vehicles struggled up and down the hill carrying sacks, bales, and people – it was much steeper before the huge landslip in 1893, out of which was formed the seaward side of Hinemoa Park.

From the 1850's speculative land purchases frequently changed hands, with large properties gradually subdivided - the first homes had the best views, while smaller houses lined the main track, now Hinemoa Street. Soon waterside businesses and shops served Birkenhead Point's growing population with regular ferry services from 1882.

Today, Birkenhead Point's different building designs reflect changing tastes and budgets.

Enjoy a leisurely walk passing old homes and businesses, and perhaps stop for a coffee at one of the cafes in the historic commercial premises.

Photo Acknowledgments

1. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1799-189*
3. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0442*
5. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0710*
9. *The New Zealand Police Museum Collection 2023/29/5*
11. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0016*

Find out more...

Kia ora, nau mai ki Birkenhead

Welcome to our heritage suburb!

Māori first fished the coastline in this area, with seasonal camps for eeling and seafood, about 700 years ago. The Iwi Te Kawerau ā Maki controlled the shore's rich natural resources from fortified pā sites at Te Mātā-rae-o-Manaoterangi (Kauri Point) and Te Onewa (Stokes Point), until the Musket Wars of the 1820s, maintaining an occasional presence in the 1830's.

Next came the European kauri forest-cutters and gum-diggers. Swiftly taking their profits, they moved on, abandoning the land where, from the 1850s, settlers established orchards, strawberry gardens and small sheep and cattle farms.

Birkenhead's village of small businesses grew to support them, becoming a thriving maritime suburb, with its first commuters regularly crossing the Waitematā Harbour to Auckland markets. Named in 1863 by real estate agent and broker Samuel Cochrane after his English hometown near Liverpool, Birkenhead expanded quickly after 1884 when the New Zealand Sugar Company started at Chelsea. Sugar workers and their families settled north and east of the refinery, driving population growth and demand for ferry and bus services connecting commerce and families with Auckland.

Kaipātiki Local Board
Auckland Council

Birkenhead Heritage Society
FOUNDED 1979

birkenhead community environment heritage bra.org.nz residents assn.

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0436, Frederick George Radcliffe

birkenheadheritage.org.nz

Birkenhead Heritage Walks

Birkenhead Point

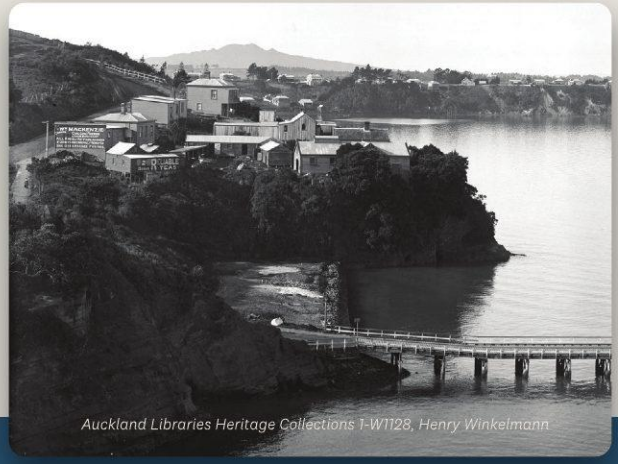
GATEWAY WALK

From Birkenhead Wharf to Glade Place – historic homes and awesome harbour views.

Follow early residents' footsteps up the hill. Enjoy the varied styles of Birkenhead's first villas, gardens and businesses as settlement slowly spread northwards.

Return with views of Chelsea Sugar Refinery and Auckland Harbour Bridge which transformed early Birkenhead into today's thriving maritime suburb.

Then head back to the Wharf down through the native bush of Hinemoa Park.



Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1-W1128, Henry Winkelmann

Heritage Highlights of Birkenhead Point

For more detail about this walk and stories about Birkenhead's people and places, visit **birkenheadheritage.org.nz**.

Please take care when you cross the streets and please respect the privacy of residents.

Keep safe and enjoy your walk!

Scan Me!



1 BIRKENHEAD WHARF



The 1883 original wharf sat to east of the current one, constructed in 1908. The new wharf enabled ferry services and bus connections. Car ferries operated from 25th December, 1910, until the Harbour Bridge opened in 1959. Hinemoa Park, with its bush backdrop, a bandstand (1928) and changing sheds, became, and still is, a popular leisure destination.

2 9 HINEMOA STREET

Entrepreneur settlers William and Maria Thompson built this double fronted villa, Gilderdale (1910). The jam factory and shop at their earlier home (site of no. 7) canned produce from their strawberry fields and orchards using local sugar. They became a nation-wide enterprise (Oak canned food).

3 19 HINEMOA STREET



This Arts and Crafts-style house, c. 1918, was home to Laura Maria Edwards, a member of the colourful Martinengo Italian family of entertainers. This English Cottage (nicknamed the Wendy Cottage in the 1950s) incorporates rough-cast walls, steep slate roof and multi-paned windows.

4 9 AWANUI STREET

Alexander Keyes, fourth Mayor of Birkenhead Borough Council (1906-1911) built this impressive family house with his business partner, brother William. The two-storey weatherboard villa with two corner bay windows once dominated a larger site.

5 8 AWANUI STREET



World famous meteorologist Clement Wragge's rambling estate (8 - 14 Awanui St) included his home, a museum and gardens. His legacy includes weather observatories in Scotland and four Australian states, giving names to cyclones and the tropical palms in many Birkenhead gardens.

At the end of the street, you can extend your walk into Needle's Eye Reserve for a view over his estate.

6 HINEMOA STREET

Walking from Awanui Street up to Maritime Terrace, note the variety of architectural styles and decorative features.

7 58 HINEMOA STREET

Marmaduke Souster built this Queen Anne-style villa with its distinctive columns, wooden shingle cladding and tiled roof, named The Knoll, for his family in c. 1910. In partnership with architect brother Frederick, he created many significant buildings in Birkenhead. One of these (52 Hinemoa St) can be glimpsed behind The Knoll.

8 3 GLADE PLACE

Turn into Glade Place, past the old canvas factory, to glimpse 1890s Eversleigh, built in 1896 by local architect Arthur White for his brother Alfred, a businessman and Birkenhead Borough Council's Town Clerk. Edward Le Roy bought this homestead in 1918, developing its extensive gardens with native plants, now part of Wai Manawa/ Le Roys Bush Reserve.

9 110 HINEMOA STREET



Back on Hinemoa Street, Highbury Community House and Early Learning Centre was the local Police Station from 1905 - 1969. The historic wooden jail cells (see photo) still stand behind the building, though aren't open to the public.

10 98 HINEMOA STREET

Widow Amy Hellaby saved her family's meat company, opening branch butcheries and commissioning the Hellaby's buildings in 1912 from Frederick Souster. Her brick complex of shops with living quarters above and workshops behind, dominates this commercial corner. The butcher's shop (Ravenhill café) retains its historic tiled interior.

11 74 HINEMOA STREET



Before the Harbour Bridge opened, Hinemoa Street was briefly the main north road, SH1.

The 1908 Post Office is part of an old retail hub, around the corners of Hinemoa St, Maritime Terrace and Bridgeview Rd, which included a petrol station, Clow's bakery and a general store.

12 RETURN TO THE WHARF

Bridge View Road leads past villas into Wanganella Street, named after a trans-Tasman passenger ship which became a hospital ship in World War II.

At the end of Wanganella Street, turning left, are six tall palms standing guard at the end of Tizard Road.

Enjoy views of the Waitakere Ranges westwards beyond Te Mātā-rae-o-Manaoterangi (Kauri Point) before returning to the wharf down the bush path.

TIME ALLOW 1.5 HR

FITNESS LEVEL MODERATE (some steep areas)

ACCESS FERRY, CAR, BUS