

of natural philosophy at Glasgow where he commenced his efforts at popular education. Having had his attention drawn to the difficulties in this field, he established courses of lectures for working men, which developed, in 1823, into the Glasgow Mechanics' Institute, evidently the first genuine institution of that sort. Birkbeck had left Glasgow for London in 1804 where he practised as a successful physician for a number of years. But when the establishment of the Glasgow Institute led to agitation for a similar movement in London, he immediately took the lead, lent £3,700 for the erection of a lecture-room, and as first president delivered the opening address on February 20, 1824. It was these foundations at Glasgow and London which were soon imitated throughout the country and which spread with the colonies to the new world. (1)

The focus of our attention is now narrowed to one particular colony, New Zealand; and further to one particular settlement, that of Christchurch where, within two years of the arrival of the first colonists in December, 1850 efforts were made to establish a Mechanics' Institute. That worth-while public institutions are not necessarily the outcome of a strong popular movement is evidenced by a letter to the "Lyttelton Times" in March 1852, some years before the actual formation of the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute. As this early development is not generally known the relevant part of the letter is worth quoting.

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1. Dictionary of National Biography; Smith, Elder and Co., London. Birkbeck, George: article by Sir Henry Trueman Wood.