

Of passing interest: Ford Brickworks, Rawhitiroa



Historic features in our landscape observed by the director of Puke Ariki, Kelvin Day.

Just a short distance along Hu Road off Rawhitiroa Road can be found a roadside Heritage Trail sign surrounded with a border of bricks. This marks the site of the Rawhitiroa brickworks, which were established in 1898 by Henry James Ford. Three years earlier, Henry, along with his wife Emily and their seven children, took up two small sections on either side of Hu Road, at a time the great Ngaere Swamp was being opened up for

settlement. Henry was a brick maker by trade which may have been why he selected the sections, recognising that that clay in the hill behind would be suitable for brick making.

By 1904 the business was referred as Messrs Ford and Son. At this time new machinery had been purchased and the drying sheds were being enlarged from being able to hold 100,000 bricks to 250,000.

A Hoffman kiln was about to be installed that would allow 90,000 bricks to be produced monthly. As well as bricks drain pipes were also manufactured, experts describing them as being as good as imported ones. However, five years later the business ceased and today the only reminders of this once bustling brickworks is the Heritage Sign and a piece of equipment remaining in the paddock behind.