



Downdraught Kiln

Douglas Rd

1931

Use: Former brick-works, no longer used

Materials: Brick, iron

NZHPT Registered: Historic Place Category I

Legal Description: Pt Lot 8 DP312B Lots 6 7 9 DP 2359 Lot2 DP10816 Pt Sec 5 & Pt lot 1 of Huiakama 8 Blk VIII Ngatimaru SD

Historic Value: 4 out of 5

Architectural Value: - out of 4

Technical Value: 2 out of 2

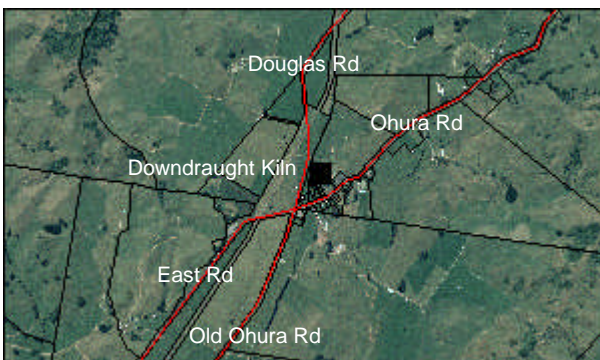
Symbolic Value: 1 out of 3

Rarity Value: 2 out of 2

Townscape Value: 1 out of 2

Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 10 out of 20



Architecture:

The Downdraught Kiln is made of brick, with a single chamber and arched roof. It worked by having air drawn into the firing ports (see *below picture*), which would then be directed to the ceiling by brick structures inside the chamber. The hot air would meet in the middle of the arch, and be forced downwards, past the new tiles, through outlet flues in the floor.

History:

In 1919, stories tell that a Mr. Alfred Emeny was traveling east to make a possible purchase of the Whangamomona Hotel, when he noticed a blue papa seam on the bank opposite the Douglas School. He purchased the land, formed a partnership with his brother Jack and H. Lampitt, G. Gichard and A. Rogerson to exploit the seam, and in 1920 built a temporary Box-Kiln (or Scottish Clamp). This was the third to be erected by Emeny, who was a brick maker from Wanganui (and was known for picking up 12 bricks in one arm).



The demand for bricks was so high that three years later Emeny and his partners were able to erect a Hoffman Continuous Kiln with a 20 metre high chimney (this in itself took 55,000 bricks to construct), and multiple chambers for the continuous production of bricks. 20 men were needed to work this Kiln, which contributed greatly to the employment rates in the Douglas Township. During the 1920s, a steam engine ran the complex, but this was replaced by electricity when they were faced with the re-tubing costs. (The steam engine is now held at the Tokomaru Steam Museum).

From 1924 they also made field tiles, which gradually surpassed brick production, and they later made mudstone bases for cricket wickets, although they continued supplying bricks to various government buildings.

However, after the 1931 Napier earthquake the government turned away from brick buildings, and, coupled with the depression, the Hoffman Kiln became uneconomic. For this reason, Emeny replaced the Hoffman with the more traditional Downdraught Kiln, (which is what now stands). However, he connected the old Hoffman chimney to this, which was located 20 metres away.



This required much less labor to run (two to six men) and casual workers from the Dairy Factory were employed in their off-season. The Kiln reached temperatures of up to 1100° C, and the burning took 2-3 days. (The workers had to wait that long again for it to cool before they could enter). Peak production was 300,000 feet of tiles in a year.

In 1949 Emeny sold the brickworks to the Lampitt brothers, who, with the Toko Lions club, held a Brickarama where over 1000 visitors could

watch the brick making process. The Lampitt's then sold it to Len and Ron Ward in 1978. Ward had plans to modernise the brickworks, but financial problems forced him to close the works in 1981, after 60 years of production.

The chimney, which had cracked due to excessive heat, was demolished for safety reasons in 1985.

The Downdraught Kiln is one of the few remaining examples of this type of Kiln in New Zealand, and so is a legacy from our industrial past, and can successfully illustrate how the firing process occurred in a method no longer used.



Bibliography

NZ Historic Places Trust Buildings Record Form, No. 152 (27.06.85)

Douglas: A Taranaki Rural Community

Heritage Trail

Church, Ian; *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p57