



## CHELSEA SUGAR REFINERY

Nestled on the banks of the Waitemata Harbour at the foot of Birkenhead Village is the distinctive pink and blue Victorian factory buildings of the Chelsea Refinery.

The refinery took 18 months to complete and was built from one million hand-made bricks 1883-4. The bricks were made from clay excavated from the surrounding hills.

The site was over 82 hectares of flat land. It had fresh water from Duck

Creek to use in the refining process and deep water in the Waitemata Harbour to let boats come right up to the refinery door. It was the perfect spot for a sugar refinery.

Four brick dams were constructed 1884-1920 to provide water for the refinery. These picturesque lakes are now home to ducks, black swans, and shags.

Today NZ's only sugar refinery can proudly lay claim to creating 130 years of unique NZ history.



## THE SUGAR CUBE MAP

### A SLICE OF HISTORY



In 1886 Birkenhead township boasted 334 inhabitants. The company built its own village of thirty five identical wooden cottages [see photo - far left] up a spur at the bottom of Colonial road [yellow highlighted location - left].

The original 35 cottages were sold for 5 pounds each, dismantled, and moved up into the surrounding roads on sunnier sites. Most of the families in Hutton Rd (now Huka) Seddon Rd (now Colonial) Rawene, Palmerston and Rugby Roads around this time were associated with the sugar works. The hillsides became interlaced with shortcuts to Chelsea. Today these are popular bush walks with locals and visitors alike. Enjoy the great history and views!

### THE ORIGINAL SUGAR WORKERS WALK

**1** Begin the sugar walk at the Highbury corner roundabout.



▲ The Art Deco 1927 War Memorial is still located here on the corner of the roundabout.

**2** The Nell Fisher Reserve sits on the corner here along with the War Memorial and the award winning Birkenhead Library. Take a look inside to see the original Chelsea Archives and majestic views from the Mezzanine Floor.

**3** As you travel down Rawene Road you can see several sugar workers cottages spanning from 1880 to 1915. Examples include numbers 55, 30 and 44 Rawene Road.



▲ Former home of Bert Stanley, mayor of Birkenhead 1968-77.



▲ Sugar Worker Cottage.



▲ Sugar Worker Cottage.



▲ Earliest Sugar Worker Cottage.

**4** Near the end of Rawene Road you will see Chelsea Heritage Park on your right. After a small descent at the fork, you are rewarded with magnificent vistas across the Waitemata to Auckland City.

Turn right and follow the sugar workers track across the dam and into the original Sugar Refinery grounds complete with duck pond and resident shag birdlife.

**5** Take a moment to enjoy the view of the large picturesque Refinery. This was built by 150 men and a team of horses. The bricks for the buildings were made using clay from the surrounding hillside.



**6** Continue past the Refinery carpark, cross over the bridge and head up the hill to the four historic Worker's Cottages nestled on the left. In 1910 these two storied brick duplexes were built

for specialised staff that were on call at night. In 2009 the cottages were sold to Auckland as part of the Heritage Park.



▲ An historic photo of the Worker's Cottages built in 1910.



▲ Here are the original Worker's Cottages as they stand today.

Next you will find the grand 'Ships Grab' sculpture. Chelsea Sugar donated the Ship's Grab and sold the park to the people of Auckland in 2009.



▲ The Ships Grab, with views of Auckland city in the background.

**7** This is the site of the original village of 35 cottages existent in the 1880's. These were all moved into the surrounding hillsides in 1905. A living example of an original cottages is at 44 Rawene Road. Pause for a moment to take in the majestic panoramic views from the site.

Opposite the Ships Grab is a short walking track that will take you up into Huka Road, (formerly Hutton Rd). Huka is the Māori word for sugar.

**8** Here you can see a continuous row of cottages which date from around the turn of the century. Number 45 is two original Chelsea worker cottages joined together. 22 and 25 are Victorian bay villas. 33 & 29 are Edwardian houses that workers from the Factory would have lived in.



▲ Sugar Worker Cottage.

Alternatively you can take the longer route, this winds its way up from the Factory through the grounds and onto Colonial Road (formerly Seddon Road). Colonial Road is significant as one of the earliest roads in the area and the main approach to the Chelsea Sugar Refinery (beware of sugar trucks).

Both Huka Road and Colonial Road will take you back to Mokoia Road, (formerly Roberts Road). Turn right and after a short stroll you will arrive back at historic Highbury Corner where you started your walk.

**Well done!** You have completed the sugar walk. We suggest rewarding yourself with a coffee and a bite to eat at one of the many award winning local cafés. Check out [www.birkenhead.net.nz](http://www.birkenhead.net.nz) for great café options.

You might also like these walks: Birkenhead's Oldest Street, Leroy's Bush and Highbury Heritage Walk. For details on any of the four heritage walks with a view visit: [birkenhead.net.nz](http://birkenhead.net.nz)

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**The Original Sugar Workers Walk**  
 New Zealand's only sugar refinery was built in 1884 and at one point employed nearly all of the Village. The first walks were 'etched' out by sugar workers walking home to their cottages after the days work.  
 The walk takes around 35-40 mins to complete and has well maintained tracks throughout. Starting from the roundabout (1) wander down Rawene Road. Use the information on the reverse to discover the local history and points of interest.



**Map Key**

- Historic Place - see reverse for information.
- Ships Grab Sculpture
- Duck Lookout Point
- Shag Point
- Bridge
- Walking Track Route

**Birkenhead Village**  
 village with a view  
[www.birkenhead.net.nz](http://www.birkenhead.net.nz)