



# Ngaere Primary School

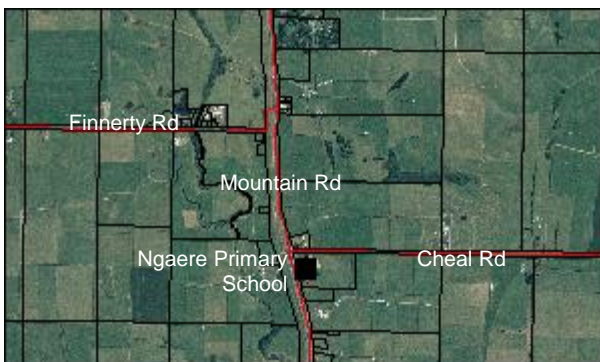
Cnr. Mountain Rd and Cheal Rd

1882

**Use:** Primary School  
**Materials:** Timber weatherboards, iron  
**NZHPT Registered:** Not registered  
**Legal Description:** Sec 71 Blk VI Ngaere SD

**Historic Value:** 1 out of 5  
**Architectural Value:** 1 out of 4  
**Technical Value:** - out of 2  
**Symbolic Value:** - out of 3  
**Rarity Value:** - out of 2  
**Townscape Value:** 1 out of 2  
**Group Value:** - out of 2

**Overall Heritage Value:** 3 out of 20



Ngaere School commenced in 1882, after a railway station, store, post office, butchery and Brown's sawmill had been opened in the district. At this time, pupils from Bird Road and Finnerty Road were walking to Ngaere School. However, once their own schools were built, Ngaere school pupils mainly came from the actual Ngaere community.

The original school building burnt down on 10 October 1928. Records show that it was a clear day, and no fires had been lit for weeks. It is thought that starlings had nested round the iron chimney during these weeks, and so when the infant room teacher (Mrs. O'Keefe) lit the fire, the chimney caught alight. The following are little anecdotes from the children at the time:

*"I'd just started school with a new raincoat. I was well and truly told I must look after it. I was sitting in class watching the flames in the ceiling then we were raced outside. A lot of coats were thrown out but mine was not among them".*

*"We'd been writing an essay – one thing I hated, so I left it to go up in flames. Five or six of us big boys managed to get the piano out and down the steps, across the asphalt and onto the lawn"*

*"At the Hall we had to kneel on the floor and do our writing on the forms. The Finnerty Road children wished it had been their school".*

The school was then rebuilt, and it is this school that is standing today.

Ngaere has always maintained a high reputation in the field of agriculture. During the 1940's, the school was awarded the Cooper Cup for the most vegetable plots for a school of its size, five years in a row.

In late 1957, Phil Sheppard became the headmaster, and at this time the school roll sat at a stable 73. Unfortunately, the school roll dropped to 65, and Mr. Sheppard was transferred to Kapuni in 1963. Mr. Rob Meredith took over, and the roll rose again to 80 pupils by August 1964. A sound projector was fundraised for and bought, as it was felt that TV's were not likely to be put into schools. Mr. Jack Mills become headmaster in 1965. He was obviously well liked by the pupils – the local magazine that the pupils edited contained a ditty by a pupil, Jonathon Perry in 1973:

*My little school is a nice little school  
It's made of bricks and plaster  
There's only one thing wrong with my school  
That's old Jack Mills the master.*

To which Mr. Mills replied:  
*My little school's a great little school  
Hey diddle diddle down derry  
If there's one thing right with my little school  
It ISN'T Jonathon Perry.*



*Bird Rd School (Located at Ngaere Primary)*

Mr. Ken Edwards became the headmaster (or principal, as was the term by this year) in September 1973. During his term, a new garage and residence was built for him, the school interior was repainted, extensions to classrooms were made (in 1974), and the library and classrooms were carpeted in 1977. The school also purchased its first calculator.

By 1979 the school roll was down to 49, and Mrs. Ridley became acting principal, until Mr. R.H. Hood began his term at Ngaere. At this time, the school was remodeled – a new staff room being built on, (the old one becoming the sick bay), and the library was remodeled and reorganised. By this stage the school (plus the garage, hall, and Amble-In Motel) had become the core of the Ngaere locality, and even today it can be seen as the centre of this community.



*Finnerty Road School  
(Located at Ngaere Primary)*



*Plaque which reads "This, the old Finnerty Road School Building was officially re-opened at Ngaere School on 20 August 1993 by Mr. E Jenkins, the last chairperson of Finnerty Road School."*

In 1993, Finnerty Road School closed down, and as a result the school building was moved to the Ngaere School grounds, to extend the room available for the increasing numbers of students. This also happened with Bird Road School, which closed 18 July 1997. (See *photo on previous page*)

A recent (2003) ERO report for Ngaere School shows it is flourishing – sitting at a roll of 135 students, and rated at a decile 7.

## **Bibliography**

*The Ngaere Story* (p33, 64-68)

Church, Ian; *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p39

[www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)