

Ngaio Town Hall

1 Ottawa Road, cnr Collingwood Street



Ngaio Town Hall

Image: *Charles Collins*

Summary of heritage significance

- The Ngaio Town Hall is a good representative example of an early 20th century civic building, designed in an Arts and Crafts style.
- The Ngaio Town Hall is a civic building with a long history of community use. It was first proposed by the Ngaio Progressive Association in the early 1920s and built to a design by the Wellington City Council City Architect. It has an association with the establishment and growth of suburban Ngaio.
- The building is an obvious display of community spirit that became evident in Wellington's fledgling suburbs in the early 20th century. It was built at the behest of the local community and was funded by a local rates levy. It is likely to be held in high public esteem by its local community.

District Plan:	Map 21, reference 393
Legal Description:	Pt Lot 7 DP 699
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Not listed
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1924-5
Architect / Builder:	Architect: City Architect / Builder: E.S. Knight
Former uses:	Ngaio Town Hall
Current uses:	Ngaio Town Hall
Earthquake Prone Status:	Yet to be assessed (SR 266553)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

Ngaio was once part of Onslow Borough, which was inaugurated in 1890.² The borough was disestablished in 1919, when the suburbs under its jurisdiction became part of Wellington City Council.³ The Onslow Progressive Association was formed as a response to the change in territorial authority, and was later (1922) split into Ngaio and Khandallah Progressive Associations.

The newly formed association strongly supported the building of the Ngaio Town Hall, a much needed local facility for public and social occasions. The association had strong community support and the hall was funded by a special rating of local residents who voted that they should pay higher rates for the next 10 years to repay the £5000 loan.⁴ Construction started in 1924 and the building was opened by Mayor Charles Norwood, on 1 August 1925.⁵

The Ngaio Progressive Association submitted sketch plans to the City Council for a building of brick with a tiled red roof.⁶ These plans don't survive⁷, however the final plans were drawn up by the Wellington City Corporation and approved by the City Architect, Walter Edward Aked, in August 1924. The tiled roof had to be sacrificed for a corrugated asbestos roof due to the cost. The City Engineers Department oversaw the entire building project.⁸ The principal contractor was Mr. Ernest Samuel Knight.⁹ The new hall, with its fine brickwork and internal timber finishes, was declared "the most attractive hall of any of the city's suburbs."¹⁰ The hall was praised for having moved away from the usual town hall design, and setting a new standard for public buildings:

"The hall design departs altogether from the usual suburban hall design; there are not the accustomed four slab walls and an iron roof, but finely finished brick walls relieved by a white painted wooden gabling, and by the way in which the entrances are set off."¹¹

The hall was used for official purposes but was also a popular venue for private functions such as meetings, lectures, dances, parties and weddings. When the building opened a small reading room and library were established in a room on the east side of the building and run by volunteers. In 1930 it became a branch of the Wellington Public Library.¹² The library quickly outgrew this small space and appropriated other areas such as the dressing rooms, however it would be many years before adequate space was provided.

¹ For a detailed history see: Coralie O'Hara, *Ngaio Town Hall: Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report prepared for the Wellington City Council, 2011.

² Wellington City Council, "Ngaio Town Hall," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), OTTA 1.

³ "Aspects of Ngaio's History," *The Onslow Historian*, Vol. 21, No.1, 1991 p.1

⁴ "Ngaio Loan Poll," *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 50, 28 February 1924, Page 10

⁵ "Ngaio Hall," *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 29, 3 August 1925, Page 7

⁶ "Hall For Ngaio," *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 5, 7 January 1924, Page 8

⁷ Coralie O'Hara, *Ngaio Town Hall: Conservation Plan*.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ "Ngaio Hall," *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 29, 3 August 1925, Page 7

¹⁰ "For Ngaio," *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 16, 18 July 1925, Page 22

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² "Aspects of Ngaio's History," *The Onslow Historian*, Vol. 21, No.1, 1991 p.11

In 1928 local resident Mrs D Thomson and her sister Miss M. Hoseason donated a World War One Roll of Honour. Unveiled on 14 March 1928, the roll honours seventy-two Ngaio residents who served overseas, twelve of whom lost their lives in action.¹³

In 1929 a projection box was installed so that the “Ngaio Citizens Pictures Inc.” could show films in the main hall. This addition was financed by local residents, and once they were paid back, the profits from the films went towards the development of the district.¹⁴ Initially there was little effort to beautify the land surrounding the building, but in 1930, the site was landscaped with lawns and flower beds.¹⁵

In the 1960s the hall was extended with more dressing rooms to make up for those appropriated by the library. Finally, after fifty-odd years of campaigning for a larger library, the site was redeveloped and a new library building was purpose-built next to the Town Hall. Several alterations to the Town Hall were made during this redevelopment, and some new spaces were built.¹⁶ The Cummings Park Library, named for Herbert Cummings, was opened on 25 November 1989. Herbert Cummings was president of the Ngaio Progressive Association for many years, and was instrumental in bringing the Town Hall project to fruition. Cummings was also the hall’s first honorary caretaker, having offered to do the work for free.¹⁷

Since the redevelopment in the late 1980s the town hall has remained largely unchanged, except for an extension to the toy library in 1994. Today the building remains a community facility and is used often for a range of activities, including sports, concerts, dances, exhibitions, book launches, charity sales and as a polling station. Along with the toy library the building also houses a drop-in centre and a childcare centre.



The Ngaio Town Hall in 1930, showing the surrounds being prepared for landscaping (Ref: EP-2486-1/2-G ATL)

¹³ “In Memoriam,” *Evening Post*, Volume CV, Issue 63, 15 March 1928, Page 7

¹⁴ “Ngaio Efforts,” *Evening Post*, Volume CIX, Issue 150, 28 June 1930, Page 10

¹⁵ “Improvements at Ngaio,” *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 59, 6 September 1930, Page 17

¹⁶ Coralie O’Hara, *Ngaio Town Hall: Conservation Plan*.

¹⁷ File TC 6/118, Ngaio Town Hall, Wellington City Archives



Ngaio Town Hall during the opening of Cummings Park Library on 25 November 1989. Ngaio Town Hall is in the process of redevelopment - note, for instance, the roof of the new drop-in centre where the chimney has been removed. Image from *Onslow Historian* 1991 v21, n1, p11.

1.2 Timeline of modifications¹⁸

1924-5 Building constructed

1927 Additions - door constructed between ladies bathroom and dressing room, requiring a lean-to at the rear of the building (00056:28:B2752)

1928 World War One roll of honour donated and installed

1929 Projection box installed above the entrance porch (00056:71:B6860)

1930 The grounds are landscaped

1932 Fire escape placed at rear of men's dressing rooms as the door between the library and main hall had been permanently closed (The original fire escape plans are in the Records of the Ngaio Progressive Association, Alexander Turnbull Library)

1950s Custom lighting installed in the main hall to make badminton playing easier

1962 Extension to stage area – additional dressing rooms

1988-9 Ngaio Town Hall is redeveloped. (00059:640:D11782) The library is moved out of the building. The drop-in centre, toy library and childcare centre are established within the Town Hall.

1989 Cummings Park Library opens next door to the Town Hall on Saturday 25th November.

1994 Alterations to the Town Hall. The toy library is extended, requiring alterations to the kitchen and adjacent storage space (00060:169:6166)

1999 Interior painting and renewal of heating in the Town Hall and curtains hung in the main hall.

¹⁸ Coralie O'Hara, *Ngaio Town Hall: Conservation Plan*.

1.3 Architect

Plans signed off by Walter Edward Aked, City Architect

In 1945 Aked won the Fulton Medal for a paper on damage suffered to Wellington buildings following the 1942 earthquake.¹⁹ The award was presented to a member of the New Zealand Institute of Civil Engineers (now the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ)) who presented the best paper on an engineering subject. Aked's paper was considered so valuable that the Mayor (Mr. Appleton) suggested the Government should print it for the benefit of interested local bodies and institutions.²⁰

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Ngaio Town Hall is a 1942 civic building that was designed in an Arts and Crafts style. The steeply pitched roof is a dominant feature of the building, with its prominent ridge-mounted roof ventilators, wide overhanging eaves, and the irregular shapes formed by its hips, part-hips and lean-to sections. The roof-top ventilators appear to be simplified replacements of the originals.

The main (south) elevation features a hipped roof, but the eaves have been cut back somewhat and are approximately one-metre higher than at the east and west elevations. The area between the eave and the top of the brickwork of the walls is clad in timber shiplap weatherboards, and splayed at the base to create a 'bell-cast dado'. The ground floor external walls are brick, and the entrance porch is set in a wide projecting bay with simple, rendered, pilasters. The dormer window (shown on early photographs) has been removed.

The east side of the building features a row of dormers at roof level. The walls are brick with a rendered band below the eaves. The window lintels and sills are rendered and are likely to be concrete. The wall is divided into bays with simple projecting brickwork 'pilasters'. The lean-to at the north end of the building once housed the library.

The interior comprises one main hall space oriented north-south, with the entrance porch and cloakrooms at the south end and the stage at the north end. There are service rooms on both the east and west sides. Those on the east (Ottawa Street) side were originally the library reading room.

Despite the bulk of the building, the low roof eaves (especially over the original library wing), small paned windows, the dormers in the roof, and the hipped forms at each end of the main roof of the building tend to give it a domestic character.²¹

¹⁹ "Valuable Paper," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXIX, Issue 63, 15 March 1945, Page 8

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Wellington City Council, "Ngaio Town Hall"

2.2 Materials

The building is of cavity brick construction on concrete foundations and piles with timber floor, and the roof is spanned side to side by five rivetted steel trusses. The bottom chord of the trusses takes the barrel-shaped profile of the ceiling, giving the hall a spacious feel for its size. Flat-roofed dormer windows give good natural light. Interior finishes include timber dado panelling and fibrous plaster wall linings above.²²

2.3 Setting

The Ngaio Town Hall is a very distinctive landmark at a busy traffic intersection.²³ The hall is right in the centre of the suburb, close to other significant community landmarks such as Cummings Park, the library, a war memorial, the railway station, and Ngaio School. All Saints Church on the ridge to the east and the Town Hall together form the most important focal point physically and socially in the suburb of Ngaio. The design of the hall allows it to sit comfortably in the suburban context of the small scale shops and houses in the vicinity.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

3.0 Sources

“Aspects of Ngaio’s History,” *The Onslow Historian*, Vol. 21, No.1, 1991

O’Hara, Coralie. *Ngaio Town Hall: Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report prepared for the Wellington City Council, 2011.

Wellington City Council, “Ngaio Town Hall,” *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), OTTA1.

File TC 6/118, Ngaio Town Hall, Wellington City Archives

Newspapers

“Hall For Ngaio,” *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 5, 7 January 1924, Page 8

“Ngaio Loan Poll,” *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 50, 28 February 1924, Page 10

“For Ngaio,” *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 16, 18 July 1925, Page 22

“Ngaio Hall,” *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 29, 3 August 1925, Page 7

“In Memoriam,” *Evening Post*, Volume CV, Issue 63, 15 March 1928, Page 7

“Ngaio Efforts,” *Evening Post*, Volume CIX, Issue 150, 28 June 1930, Page 10

“Improvements at Ngaio,” *Evening Post*, Volume CX, Issue 59, 6 September 1930, Page 17

“Valuable Paper,” *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXIX, Issue 63, 15 March 1945, Page 8

4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Ngaio Town Hall is a good representative example of an early 20th century civic building, designed in an Arts and Crafts style.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The building is the most important landmark in Ngaio, partly because of its long history of community use and partly because of its site at the centre of the suburb, alongside a busy intersection and in proximity to All Saints Church and the Ngaio Railway Station.

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The Ngaio Town Hall is a civic building with a long history of community use. It was first proposed by the Ngaio Progressive Association in the early 1920s and built to a design by the Wellington City Council City Architect. It has an association with the establishment and growth of suburban Ngaio.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

Pre 1900 land use –Kaiwarra Saw Mill was located nearby.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

The building is an obvious display of community spirit that became evident in Wellington's fledgling suburbs in the early 20th century. It was built at the behest of the local community and was funded by a local rates levy. It is likely to be held in high public esteem by its local community.

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?

The building has some commemorative value as the repository for a local World War One Roll of Honour.

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

Although the building has been subject to some intrusive modern alterations and additions (particularly to the north elevation) it has been a feature of the Ngaio townscape for over 90 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the suburb.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The building is likely to be the focus of community sentiment and connection as it remains an important part of the social life of Ngaio with such activities as weddings, balls, dances, film screenings, and sports occurring in the hall. Some particular groups have a long history of consistent use of the hall such as the Ngaio Badminton Club, which has met there since it began in 1950.

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The town hall is a good representative example of an early 1920s civic building.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The building retains much of its early or original form, function, room arrangement and built fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

The building is important at a local level as a civic building that serves its local community.

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	N	Doesn't seem to be one
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	N	Not listed
HPT files	N	Not listed
Conservation Plan	N	None found
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopaedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*

1930 – Beautification

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19300906.2.138.9>

There is a photo and this caption (photo won't copy & paste):

“Evening Post” Photo.

IMPROVEMENTS AT NGAIO.—Recently the City Council has been carrying out beautification work in the vicinity of the Ngaio Public Hall, in preparation for the laying down of lawns and flower beds. The photograph gives some idea of the extent of the work, which extends to the back as well as the front of the hall.