

Heritage Item 6

Former School, Barrhill



Location

Address:	18 Sycamore Avenue, Barrhill Village
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5725380 , Easting 2417625
Legal Description:	Lots 17 and 18 DP 144
Owner:	Ashburton District Council

Purpose

Current Use:	Community Hall
Original/Past Uses:	School

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic; Cultural
Heritage NZ:	Not registered
Ashburton DC:	Category A

Site Assessment

Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	20 November 2014

Detail	
Description:	<p>This former School was built and opened in 1878 as part of the creation of the model village of Barrhill. It is noted, along with the Schoolhouse (Heritage item 7) and St John's Church (Heritage Item 5) as good early examples of the use of concrete.</p> <p>The building is constructed of solid concrete walls with a corrugated iron hipped roof. There is a very large concrete chimney running up the outside wall which dominates the northern elevation – other than the chimney, this elevation is completely bare with no openings. The fascia boards on each end elevation have an intricate edge detail. The building has large sash opening windows which are located high enough to prevent the children looking out and becoming distracted. The windows were located only on one side to allow the sunshine in during the day – unfortunately it was constructed to a northern hemisphere design and so the windows are actually on the wrong side (southern elevation) to obtain the sunshine. There is one large double sash window on the eastern elevation.</p> <p>To the western side of the building, there is a small concrete porch with a hipped corrugated iron roof. Its roof is considerably lower than that of the main building. Outside the porch stands a flagpole. There are two entrances into the building, both on the western side – one through the porch and one directly into the main room.</p> <p>Internally the building consists of one classroom, plus the entrance porch. The classroom has a high wooden ceiling with exposed trusses, through the centre of ceiling runs a cast-iron vent. One wall is dominated by the large windows, the other wall is dominated by the large fireplace. The classroom had an unusual heating system in which heat from the fire circulated water in the pipes behind wall linings and warmed the room via wall vents. These wall vents are still intact. The classroom still retains the original school bell which sits on the mantelpiece.</p>
History:	<p>John Cathcart Wason was born in Ayrshire, Scotland in 1848 and immigrated to New Zealand in 1868 aged 20. In February 1869 Wason bought the Lendon Run of 20,000 acres (1250 of freehold) on the south bank of the Rakaia River and renamed it Corwar after his home in Scotland. He wanted to create a model estate and planted oaks, limes, walnuts and poplars to create a British appearance. He created a mid-sized freehold estate with a large mansion overlooking the river complete with gate lodge (Heritage Item 8, Corwar Lodge). Part of this estate was a model village, Barrhill, which was to mimic the British ideal of a squire in his manor house with the workers housed nearby.</p> <p>The school was constructed and opened in 1878 and, along with St John's Church, formed the centre of this community. When the school opened it had a role of 23 pupils. At its peak Barrhill comprised of the Church, school, schoolhouse, a bakery, blacksmith, post office, boiling works (for mutton), store, inn and about 15 cottages.</p> <p>Wason planted sycamores, birches, poplars and oaks in an defined shape within Barrhill – possibly to convey some religious symbolism. Four outer avenues (of four different tree types) form a square which is bisected by two avenues forming a cross.</p> <p>When the railway bypassed Barrhill in the 1890s, the village started to decline and Wason sold up in 1900 and moved back to Scotland. His mansion burned down shortly after that. Over time most of the original buildings in the village have been lost, with just the three concrete buildings remaining in Barrhill and the gate house slightly further along the road. The school closed in 1938 due to a dwindling number of pupils.</p>

Detail	
	<p>The teacher's house was built next to the school (just to the north) in the same concrete style. There is a hole in the hedge and a small wooden gate which provided access between the two.</p> <p>The former school is now a community hall and is used for local functions and gatherings. The Church, school and teacher's house are now owned by Ashburton District Council and looked after by the Barrhill Village Preservation Society.</p>
Notable Features:	Concrete construction; northern hemisphere design with windows to south; large sash windows; chimney; heating system; vents in timber ceiling; original school bell.
Condition:	The building has been maintained in a very good state of repair. The concrete walls are in relatively good condition – some cracks are evident but not of serious concern. The corrugated roof is well painted and maintained. The woodwork in the window frames, door frames, doors and fascia boards is all tidy and well maintained. Internally the classroom remains well painted and tidy. Outside, the immediate surroundings of the school are well kept.
Setting:	The school is located in the heart of Barrhill village, next to the school teacher's house and across the road from St Johns Church. It is surrounded by a large grassed area of open space edged by mature trees. The setting is of high historical significance as being part of the core of John Cathcart Wason's model village. Also of group value due to its proximity to and links with the school teacher's house.





