

A Short History of Ardrossan Academy

Early Years

Ardrossan Academy was founded during the 1882-3 academic year. It was a higher grade school which meant it was the first school in the area to teach secondary education. Before this the nearest academy was at Irvine. Pupils had to pay fees to attend Ardrossan Academy, but bright pupils could win bursaries to help with their fees and gradually the government insisted there should be a number of free places.

For most of the first 50 years of its history the school was sited in South Crescent in the buildings which until recently housed St. Peter's Primary School.



This was close to railway stations on the two railway lines that ran through Ardrossan and this made it easy for pupils from outside Ardrossan to attend the school.

A New Home

As the school population expanded a new site was needed and the Academy moved to its present site in Sorbie Road, the official opening of the new school taking place on October 6, 1933. The Old Building is the only part still standing today.



War

During the 2 World Wars many ex-pupils fought and died for their country. The War Memorial in the school Assembly Hall records 54 ex-pupils killed in the First World War and 66 who died in the Second World War.

During the Second World War many evacuees came to this area. Because of a fear that the harbour would be bombed, these children usually went to farms outside the town or to the villages up the coast. Most of the evacuees who attended Ardrossan Academy came from the Glasgow area, but records in the school show evacuees from different parts of England. These were usually children who had relations who lived in this area.

The school did its bit for the war effort by growing vegetables in the school garden, collecting books to send to the troops and raising £23,000 to help with the war effort - a large sum of money in those days.

An Air Training Corps unit was set up in the school in 1941 to help train recruits for entering the R.A.F. Squadron 1138 (Ardrossan) still meets in the school grounds today.

School Playing fields

The Academy did not have playing fields beside the school at this time. Up until 1939 the current playing fields between Ardrossan and St. Andrew's Academies were part of the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Golf Club. This closed when the war began and much of the land was used to grow food to help the war effort, although the area next to the Academy housed the anti-aircraft batteries which would be used in any air attack on the harbour.

After the war the former pupils' club decided to raise funds to buy 10 acres of land adjacent to the school to be used as playing fields for the use of pupils and former pupils of the school. It was called Memorial Field as it was to be a permanent memorial to those former pupils killed in the wars.

After the War.

In the years between 1945 and 1969 Ardrossan Academy Primary School, where pupils had to pay fees to attend, was situated on the site of the new buildings of the current school.

The Secondary School was open only to pupils who passed the qualifying examination in primary 7 and so took only the brightest pupils in an area from Largs to Stevenston. The entire secondary school was housed in the Old Building and a number of huts. The Library used to be the gymnasium and the Audio- Visual Technician's office was the boys' showers. Various other rooms that are now ordinary classrooms were cookery rooms, technical rooms and science labs. (see the plan of the Old Building.)

Comprehensive Education

A government decision was taken in the 1960's to end selective education and send all pupils from the same area to the same school. Children from West Kilbride, Ardrossan and most of Saltcoats came to Ardrossan Academy.

This led to a huge increase in the number of pupils attending Ardrossan Academy - the old primary and secondary combined was about 950' the new secondary alone had over 1400 at its peak. It was decided to close and knock down the primary school, and build two blocks of classrooms, a dining hall and a P.E. complex on the site.



Ayr County Council in their wisdom decided to make the school comprehensive before the new buildings were complete. As a result for one year (1970-71) the first year pupils went to Stanley Primary, second year pupils attended St. Andrew's Academy (then Laighdykes Junior Secondary School) and third to sixth year pupils were housed in the Old Building. Teachers left their class 5 minutes before the end of a period and were transported by mini bus between the three schools to teach the different year groups. The new buildings opened in 1971.

Since then education has undergone a revolution, but not a lot has changed in the school buildings. A number of huts have been demolished and a car park for the teachers built. The tennis courts have gone. Finally - a sign of the times - large fences and video cameras have been installed in a largely successful attempt to cut down on vandalism.