

THE ROYAL BURGH
OF
AYR



Seven Hundred and Fifty Years of History

Edited by

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CHAPTER 14

SCHOOLS

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THE story of the schools of Ayr is almost as old as the story of the royal burgh itself. In 1233 there was a dispute about the ownership of a bit of land to which the Abbey of Paisley laid claim and the Pope appointed three ecclesiastics to hear evidence and settle the question, one of the three being Allan, master of the schools of Ayr (*Magister Scholarum de Are*). When we read of schools, we naturally think of buildings. But 'schools' here seems to refer, not to buildings, but rather to subjects of instruction. The subjects most probably were singing and Latin—a Sang School and a Grammar School—to serve the purposes of the Church; the building would be the Church of St. John the Baptist; and Master Allan would be an official of that church.

It is not till 1502 that the burgh records again mention a school in Ayr, and then it is recognised as the Burgh School, under the control of the Town Council rather than of the Church. Again in 1550 a new schoolmaster is appointed, and though he is still an ecclesiastic, the appointment is made by the Town Council.

The Reformed Church of Scotland was zealous in the cause of education. It desired elementary schools to be set up in every parish and grammar schools in the larger towns, and that it should be made easy for boys of ability to pass from these to the universities. The money to carry out this scheme was to come from the confiscated wealth of the old Church, which was reckoned sufficient for the needs of the Reformed Church and the support of a national system of education as well. But so much of the Church's property was seized by unscrupulous nobles that what remained was altogether insufficient for the claims upon it. The Reformed Church did, however, continue to promote education, though it was the town councils which

had to supply the means. A schoolmaster's salary was generally provided from the common good—the property of the burgh which yielded an income from feu-duties, customs dues, rents of land and houses, etc. The fund was seldom a very rich one, and at times dried up altogether, councils being then hard put to it to provide the stipulated salary of the schoolmaster. In 1690 the Council of Ayr, having promised a salary of 400 merks (=£22 4s. 6d.) and being able to find only 300, requested the treasurer to borrow the rest or give the schoolmaster a bond. It does not seem to have considered doing what Linlithgow did in 1707, when, finding the promised salary of 400 merks a heavy burden on the town, it asked the schoolmaster to consent to a reduction and decided to close the school when he declined.

In the seventeenth century the teaching day consisted of ten hours. Saturday was a shorter day, but there were lessons for about five hours. Nor was Sunday a day of rest. Morning and afternoon the master walked to church with his pupils and sat beside them in the scholars' desks. The children were expected to take notes of the sermons and seem to have returned to school to be examined on them by the master. Life must have been grim in those days for masters and pupils alike.

Burgh schools were generally grammar schools, that is to say, the main subject taught, and sometimes the only subject, was Latin grammar and Latin literature. That it was taught with great thoroughness and success can hardly be doubted; and all the teaching was done in Latin—questions, answers, and explanations.

Further, pupils of grammar schools were often forbidden to talk to each other in their mother tongue on pain of being flogged.¹ It is to be remembered that Latin was still the international language among the educated classes, the language of diplomacy and science and of university education, so that a thorough knowledge of it was regarded as the indispensable key for the opening of all doors of knowledge. Nevertheless, the omission of English teaching from grammar schools in general is surprising, because, apart from the existence then of noble English literature, the schools were practically an organ of the Church and the life of the Church was based on works in

¹ The children's game of Tig probably took its name from Latin *te-tig-i* = I have touched, at the time when scholars were required to speak in Latin even at play

English—the Authorised Version of the Bible, the Metrical Psalms, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Shorter Catechism.

Ayr Grammar School was, however, an exception. Grant in his *History of the Burgh Schools of Scotland* says that 'one burgh in particular, namely, Ayr, is conspicuous for the careful regulations made in it from a comparatively early period for supplying the scholars with an English education'. Even before the year 1600 girls as well as boys could study English in the Grammar School; and English was always taught either in the Grammar School or in the Scots School which was closely connected with it, the two schools in the seventeenth century being in the same thatched house in the Sandgate separated only by a partition.

It was only grammar schools over which church and councils exercised strict supervision. But from very early times there was also a Sang or Music School carried on under the patronage of the magistrates. There is no evidence that before the Reformation anything was taught in the Sang or Music School except music, 'meaners and vertew' (manners and virtue); but after the Reformation the Sang School gradually developed into the Scots or English school. Music became a subsidiary branch of education, and the principal subjects were English, arithmetic, and writing, though the school might still be called the Sang School.

PROHIBITION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS

If magistrates were zealous to promote the cause of education, they were hardly less zealous to prevent education being given in any but their own schools. Again and again in the seventeenth century, in Ayr as elsewhere, edicts were issued forbidding any one to open a private school. It is rather puzzling to understand why any one should have wished to do so, for so small were the total earnings of official schoolmasters from salaries, fees, and perquisites combined, that what a private teacher depending on fees alone could earn must have been the merest pittance. We can only suppose that poverty was so great that even a pittance was welcome. We read of cases elsewhere where some old man or poor cripple would teach a little reading or writing to children in a barn or hut and receive

fees from them at the rate of 1s. a quarter, payable in oatmeal. So in Ayr that was possible too. But why were town councils so determined to stamp out private schools? It can hardly have been from objection to the spread of education, but rather from an idea that the existence of rival schools was derogatory to the position of the burgh school and the dignity of its master. But the frequency of the decrees prohibiting adventure schools is convincing evidence of the difficulty the magistrates had in suppressing them.

In 1728 one David Watt was arraigned before the Ayr magistrates at the instance of the English master. When he pleaded that he taught only the ABC and catechism, he was dismissed with an admonition that he must behave 'Christianly and soberly' or he would not be allowed to keep any school at all. Adventure schools, however, continued to spring up, and in 1790 we find the master of one of the English schools asking permission to take a room nearer the centre of the town, the better to counter their opposition. The persistence of those who desired to teach and those who desired their children to be taught won the day, and what the magistrates tried unsuccessfully to suppress, they ended by patronising. The directors of Ayr Academy in their report of 1800 rejoice in the numbers taking advantage of the new school and add with an apparent note of satisfaction that there were numerous other schools in town in which English was being taught under the patronage of the magistrates.

Almost the whole of the seventeenth century was a period of bitter political and religious controversy. Whatever party was dominant for the time being required all others to accept its beliefs and to follow the method of worship and church government which it dictated.

In 1681, towards the close of Charles II's reign, a Test Act was passed requiring all holders of public office to sign a renunciation of the Covenant and admit the supreme authority of the king in matters civil and ecclesiastical alike. The masters of both the Scots and Grammar Schools of Ayr were amongst those who refused to sign and so lost their posts. But two years later Mr. Rankin, master of the Grammar School, was prevailed upon to renounce on his knees in the most humiliating fashion all that he had previously professed, and so was rein-

stated as master. Such troubled times could not fail to be injurious to education and social advance of every kind.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

On the accession of William and Mary at the Revolution a more peaceful epoch began and the eighteenth century was one of great educational progress. Greek was introduced into the Grammar School of Ayr. Subjects of a practical nature successively gained recognition—arithmetic, navigation, mathematics, bookkeeping, geography, natural philosophy and astronomy. And there were only four men on the staff to carry on this programme. English, too, received more prominence. From about the middle of the century it begins to be required of the English teacher that he should be able to teach his subject after the ‘new method’. This seems to mean that he should teach English and not the Scots dialect of it. In 1738 the English teacher of Ayr was removed from his office because he was ‘not known in the new method’. Probably English grammar was included in ‘the new method’, for in 1769 the English master reports that he has a class learning English grammar, ‘which is a branch almost new’.

JOHN MURDOCH

It was three years after this that John Murdoch came from Dumfries to Ayr as English master. He had been Burns’s teacher in the little school at Alloway a few years before that, and we know that he taught him English grammar. When Murdoch came back to Ayr as English master, Burns, now aged 13, came from Mount Oliphant and lived with him at his house in Sandgate for three weeks, one week before harvest studying English grammar, and two weeks after it studying French.

Murdoch remained only four years as teacher in Ayr. He was dismissed by the magistrates for speaking ill of Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, minister of the first charge, and was declared to be ‘incapable of teaching, either publicly or privately, within the burgh and parish of Ayr, in all time coming’. As Burns, in ‘The Kirk’s Alarm’, spoke kindly of Dalrymple, it is likely that Murdoch had in some moments of irritation, and perhaps inebriation, done a worthy gentleman a grave injustice.

In 1746 a committee of the Town Council of Ayr was appointed to look out for the most suitable place for an English schoolhouse. The English master, formerly teacher in Irvine, addressed to them a letter which helps us to see what a school and a schoolmaster’s life were like in those times. He said that the nearer a schoolhouse was to the centre of the town, the more convenient it would be for the children: if the town built a schoolhouse, a little more expense would make it a house for the master, which would contribute a great deal to the value of the school: thereby the master would have it in his power to prevent the abuse which usually happened when a school was at a distance from the master’s dwelling; he could not meet with any ‘avocations’ in his way to school, nor would his scholars have to wait at the door till he came; and in that season of the year which rendered a fire requisite, it would be easy for the master to have it kindled when the school convened. (No janitors apparently or school cleaners in those days.) His scholars in the town of Irvine had reaped another advantage from his dwelling under the same roof, one which was more considerable than all the rest: namely, that when he had a number of beginners that could not be classed, and were only diverting their schoolfellows, his wife afforded her assistance, which she could not have done had the school been otherwise situated.

APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS

The care taken in the appointment of teachers shows how seriously ministers and magistrates took their responsibility for education. That an appointing body should wish to see and interview a candidate is natural. But they did more than that: it was quite customary for them to test for themselves by examination a candidate’s attainments. In 1727 two young men, John Mair, student of St. Andrews, and John Hall, student of Edinburgh, came to Ayr offering their services as ‘doctor’ (assistant master) in the Grammar School. The provost, bailies, dean of guild and treasurer were chosen along with the two ministers of Ayr parish, the master and two Irvine schoolmasters, to examine the candidates. The examination lasted no less than three days. In Greek, Latin, bookkeeping and arithmetic they were judged equal; Mair understood the prin-

ciples of navigation better, but Hall was the better writer. By the casting vote of the chairman, Hall was appointed. In a few months' time he resigned and Mair, applying again, stated that his handwriting had improved.

It is fortunate that on the second test Mair's handwriting was judged satisfactory, for he proved a most enlightened and progressive schoolmaster. He was the author of several books on mathematics, and his *Introduction to Latin Syntax*, which was one of the first grammars to be written in English, was widely used in Scottish schools for more than half a century. He had been assistant for nineteen years when the master, after nearly fifty years of faithful service, 'aged, valetudinary, tender and much afflicted with the gout and gravel', was allowed to retire and granted a pension for life equal to his previous salary. Mair was invited to take his place with the designation of Rector and First Master of the Grammar School of Ayr. He planned to carry on the school with two other masters. One was to be wholly taken up in the teaching of English reading 'according to the newest and most approved method'. The other was to teach Latin and Greek. He himself was to teach the various branches of mathematics and many mathematical sciences; also to supervise the instruction in Latin and himself to take the highest Latin class, 'which would give him opportunity of acquainting himself with the genius, capacity and proficiency of the boys, and so enable him to judge how far they were fit for being entered on mathematical studies the ensuing year.'

The school will now, he added, 'be converted into a sort of Academy where every sort of the more useful kinds of literature will be taught, and the want of a college education will in great measure be supplied to boys whose parents cannot well maintain them at universities. Gentlemen also in the country will be encouraged to send their children to Ayr, considering that the school will by this means have no rival, there being no such fund for education anywhere in the neighbourhood.'

Mair was probably the first teacher of Science in a Scots school. The double event of his entry upon the Rectorship and the coming of a new Latin master was intimated to the town by beat of drum. He remained in Ayr till 1761 and for the last eight years of his life was Rector of Perth Academy.

SUPERVISION OF SCHOOLS

If magistrates and ministers were careful in the appointment of teachers, they were equally diligent in seeing to their continued efficiency. Before the Reformation, it was by the Church that schools were established and controlled, and even when Ayr Town Council assumed the financial burden, the Church's claim to superintend was not contested. The General Assembly enjoined on presbyteries the duty of visiting schools, and presbyteries appear to have done so with the complete approval of town councils. We have a record of their visiting the Grammar School of Ayr in 1735. In 1766 the Council order that the schools be visited and publicly examined annually on the second Thursday of June, and that the magistrates and dean of guild inspect on that day the public library and mathematical instruments. The existence of a public library so long ago is noteworthy.

REMUNERATION

It may be inferred from what has been written that a schoolmaster's position was not entirely enviable. His work was laborious and much supervised by superiors, his tenure was never secure, and his salary was always small. Just how small it was, it is not always easy to know. Sometimes it is expressed in merks, an old Scots coin said to be value for $1/1\frac{1}{2}$ ($=13\frac{1}{2}d.$) in English money; and when it is expressed in pounds, we have to remember that the pound Scots was only a twelfth of an English pound. In 1746 the highly accomplished John Mair, rector of the Grammar School, had 400 merks ($=£22\ 4s.\ 6d.$) of yearly salary, supplemented by fees and perquisites from those scholars whom he personally taught. The *Statistical Account of Scotland*, published in the 1790s, says that two masters have a salary of £15 each plus 3s. per quarter from each of about 40 scholars, making £39 each altogether, and the Latin master has a salary of £20 with 5s. per quarter from each of about 40 scholars, giving him £60 in all.

Newton-on-Ayr up to 1779 was part of the united parishes of Monkton and Prestwick. In that year it was made a separate parish, and the offices of master of the school and precentor in the parish church were, as was usual, combined. For neither office was any salary given. Remuneration as schoolmaster

consisted of the fees of the pupils, while as precentor he received the baptismal and marriage proclamation dues. Nor was it a narrow qualification that was required of the master. He had to appear before the Presbytery and satisfy it as to his ability in English, reading, grammar, composition, writing, arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography, mathematics, navigation, Latin and French.

Wallacetown was then part of the parish of St. Quivox, and the *Statistical Account* says that its schoolmaster, who was well qualified to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, had a total income of about £25, besides a good house and garden. Day-labourers, says the *Account*, could live comfortably on 1s. a day, and their children, almost without exception, were taught to read and write.

PERQUISITES

Reference has been made to perquisites as part of a master's income. The chief of these were the Candlemas Day (2nd February) freewill offerings, presented to masters in all schools, great and small. On that day the master called the pupils to him one by one to receive their gifts, and there seems to have been something of a fixed ritual in the manner of his receiving. For a small gift of 6d. or 1s. (Scots money probably) no notice would be taken; if the gift amounted to a quarter's fee, the pupil would receive a commendation from the master, and the larger the gift, the higher the commendation. The highest donor was proclaimed 'victor' or 'king' or 'queen', and was the centre of a candle-light procession in the evening, which was given over to festivity.

AYR ACADEMY

In 1794 a movement took shape for the 'Establishment of a proper Seminary of Learning in this Town—a place so happily situated for the purpose, from the cheapness of its markets, Healthful Climate, and central position in a large and populous County'. The prospectus set forth that it was desirable that the youth of Ayr should be instructed in the most useful and necessary parts of learning under the observation of their parents instead of being sent to distant colleges, where speculative and indolent habits might unfit them for the active

business of life. The promoters contemplated the setting up of an 'Academy' where a wide range of subjects—literary, scientific and commercial—would be taught. But in reality practically all the subjects had been taught in the old schools for about 40 years. Grant, the historian of the *Burgh Schools of Scotland*, says: 'At Ayr there long flourished a school in which better provision was made for imparting the education now proposed to be supplied by the academies than perhaps in any other school of Scotland. Arithmetic, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy were taught in Ayr long before the period when the Prospectus of the Academy was published in 1794.'

What, then, the new proposals amounted to was that a large new school should be built in which the teaching of all branches of education should be concentrated and which by its very appearance should testify to the esteem in which education should be held.

The Town Council had not resources equal to the enterprise, but they associated with themselves gentlemen of the town and county interested in education and in the welfare of Ayr, and appealed for subscriptions to others like-minded throughout this country and abroad. Meeting with a good response, they proceeded to look out for a rector. 'They incline he should be on a footing nearly with what Mr. Mair was formerly, who taught Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Algebra, Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, Euclid, Practical Geometry, Navigation, Geography, Natural Philosophy, and Astronomy, and in short every branch of Science connected with the Mathematics; if he can teach any of the modern Languages, so much the better.' The salary proposed for such a superman was £80—quite a generous salary it should be said for the times—to which would fall to be added the fees from the pupils of his own classes. If he would keep boarders and superintend their education, as was earnestly desired, the committee might be brought to allow him £20 for a house.

The rector appointed was Wm. Meikleham, who for two years had been teaching the Natural Philosophy class in Glasgow University. His rectorship lasted only about three years, and he returned to Glasgow University as Professor of Astronomy before the new school building was ready for occupation in 1800.

The new school was situated in the same grounds as the present Academy, and it was for many years considered one of the chief ornaments of the town. It may seem strange that when emphasis was being laid on practical, commercial, non-academic subjects, the fashion of the times was to call schools of higher education 'Academies'. But so it was. Henceforward the combined burgh schools were to be known as 'Ayr Academy'.

Change of Government. More than £7,000 had been gifted by private subscribers, and the school came under the control of a body of directors. The directors were mainly those who had subscribed £50 or more, of whom there were over 40, and their heirs after them. The Town Council contributed £100 per year in lieu of what it had previously paid to the burgh schools, and it was represented on the directorate by seven members. As the directors were scattered over the whole country and in British possessions overseas, the management of the school in practice devolved upon those local directors who were most keenly interested, including the seven Town Council members. The provost when present acted as chairman. It may be a mark of the esteem in which the school was held and the dignity attaching to the office of director that at all their general meetings the town bell was to be rung. This was how the school continued to be governed until 1873.

A very elaborate code of regulations was drawn up to secure that the conduct of students attending 'so respectable a seminary' should be exemplary. But offences there were sure to be, and punishments were arranged accordingly, some of a kind familiar enough to-day, others distinctly not so. There were to be reprimands, tasks to be performed at home, seats to which ideas of disgrace should be annexed, temporary confinement, fines and corporal punishment. The extreme penalty was expulsion. The rule that this should never take place except in a public meeting of all the members of the Academy and 'with great solemnity' will generally be regarded to-day as adding an unnecessary hardship to a penalty already sufficiently severe.

The gradation of fines is interesting: late for a class, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; absent without leave, or carrying a stick, 2d.; absence from divine service on the Sabbath day, 6d.; going on a boat in the harbour without leave from parents or guardians, 1s.

Increase in School Hours. In the eighteenth century there had been a tendency in Ayr as elsewhere to shorten school hours. But in the new Academy hours were again increased. They were to be from 7 in the morning till 6 in the evening in the summer months, with two single hour intervals, and only one hour less in the winter (8-6). And in addition there were evening lessons in astronomy. 'Surely there were giants in those days', says the Bazaar Book, 'or not to live but know must have been the aim of Mr. Meikleham and his Directors.' However, things may not have been as hard as they appear. For it should be noted that there was no fixed curriculum which all had to follow, nor were there definite alternative curricula which filled up a student's whole day. Each subject had a fee attached to it, and students took only the subjects they wished. It is not likely that girls spent the whole day at school. This freedom to pay for and study only the subjects one wished continued for at least another 70 years. Nevertheless we are told that the masters worked from five to eight hours every lawful day except Saturday, which was only partly a holiday and had an ordeal of its own, so that we may believe that work was strenuous for scholars too. And that they might not forget the importance of diligence, a public meeting was held every Saturday morning at which all scholars were required and all masters were expected to be present, while directors willing to come were made welcome. In this meeting every scholar received praise or blame according to his behaviour during the week, and, in subjects in which merit could be easily assessed, a list of names was drawn up showing the order of merit. One would think these Saturday meetings must have been very unpopular with masters and scholars alike, but in a report by the directors after some eight years' experience, this means of maintaining discipline is mentioned 'as having had a peculiarly beneficial tendency'.

In the advertisement of the opening of the school it had been intimated that the masters of French and English would be natives of France and England respectively. That a Frenchman should be desired for the teaching of French is understandable, but surely it is surprising that the post of English master should not be open to a Scotsman. It was evidently to be a requisite that the teacher of English should have the authentic English accent.

NEWTON PARISH SCHOOLMASTER DISPUTE

It has been said that the schoolmaster of Newton-on-Ayr received no salary from the parish. Thereby hangs a tale which, besides being of interest in itself, may be worth summarising for the light it sheds on the position of a parish schoolmaster.

The master of Newton in 1802 was one John Gemmell who had been appointed after a public examination by the magistrates in presence of all the 'respectable' clergymen and schoolmasters in the neighbourhood. Two years later he very humbly suggested to 'their Honours', the Council of Newton, that a dwelling-house free of any rent, such as many teachers enjoyed, must be a great comfort to any teacher, but especially to one like himself with a family; and when 'their Honours' granted him four guineas yearly towards the rent of a house during the town's pleasure, his gratitude was so enthusiastic that its expression required the vehicle of verse, 56 lines of it, in which he signified his deep indebtedness to his worthy patrons and prayed for every blessing upon them here and hereafter.

But this high satisfaction with his patrons was destined, through no fault of his, to be transient. An act of 1696 had ordained that a parish schoolmaster must receive a salary of not less than 100 merks (=£5 11s. 2d.) and not more than 200, and a later Act of 1803 had raised the minimum to 300 and the maximum to 400. But, strangely enough, neither the master himself nor the Council of Newton for a long time realised that his status was that of a parish schoolmaster. When the fact gradually dawned on him, he claimed the salary to which by law he was entitled (£16 13s. 4d.), and when he met with persistent refusal, he took legal measures to enforce his claim. The Council used every form of obstruction and the case dragged on for four years, when the council were finally obliged by the Court of Session's judgment to pay all arrears of salary and all legal expenses.

Litigation of this kind may have been unusual, but objection on the part of landholders to paying for school and schoolmaster was very common and the law was frequently evaded. And as for the requirement in the 1803 act that a house of at least a room and kitchen should be provided for the schoolmaster, a great majority of the lairds and Scottish members of

Parliament were indignant at being obliged to erect 'palaces for dominies'.

AFTER 1800

In the beginning of the nineteenth century there were no schools receiving public aid except Ayr Academy and Newton and Wallacetown Parish Schools. These satisfied the law which required every burgh and parish to provide a public school, but they were far from adequate to meet the demand for education. Neither burgh nor parish had sufficient resources to do that. They had not the authority to institute a rating system, and as yet no help for education was supplied from the National Exchequer. The gap was filled in a makeshift sort of way by private adventure schools. Of these there were many, but the quality of most was probably poor. Some, we are told, were kept by elderly women in the humbler walks of life in their own homes and were intended only for beginners, the fees being 2d. or 3d. per week. Yet, even so, the results were not to be despised, for the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* of 1845 says there were few, if any, except some children of poor Irish labourers, who were not able to read and write.

Amongst private schools we should expect some for 'Young Ladies', and here is an advertisement in the *Ayr Advertiser* of 30th May 1816:

MISS M. ROGERS

Gratified for the encouragement given her since her arrival from England has the honour to inform the inhabitants of Ayr and its vicinity that on Monday, 3rd June, 1816, she intends to open a Day school for Young Ladies in the New House near the Moravian Chapel, Mill Vennal (now Mill Street) on the following moderate terms:

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar					Per Quarter
and plain Needlework	-	-	-	-	£0 13 0
All kinds of Worsted and Fancy Work	-	-	-	-	0 10 6
Geography and History	-	-	-	-	0 10 6
Music	-	-	-	-	1 1 0

Whether Miss Rogers was a native of England or had just returned from a sojourn there is not clear, but there seems to be a suggestion that her residence there would be an evidence of her possessing a polish and gentility which would commend her to parents of Ayr children.

Another school of the better sort is worthy of mention. In

John Street, at the corner of Church Street, there still stands a building of some dignity with a pedimented front quite unlike the neighbouring houses in style and looking as though it were intended for some public purpose. This was Wallace-town Academy. There is reason to believe it was more of a finishing school than of a school for beginners, and to yield the proprietor a return for his expenditure, the fees must have been considerable. In 1841 there were nearly 300 pupils and apparently only two masters. At the Disruption in May 1843 those who, with their minister, left Wallacetown Established Church to cast in their lot with the Free Church, held their first services there.

SMITH'S INSTITUTION

In the days before the Government made grants for education, endowments for schools for the poor were much to be desired, and one notable endowment falls to be recorded here. Captain John Smith, mariner, a native of Ayr, bequeathed a sum of £2,000 to found a school for the education of children of the poor, where the master's salary would be provided from the interest on the money invested, and where therefore the children of paupers could be educated free. The provost and magistrates and the two ministers of Ayr were to be trustees and managers of the school. It surely betokens a generous and enlightened spirit in days when the lot of the labouring classes was hard that Smith should have thought the education of the poor worth spending his fortune upon and a thing of which even paupers' children were worthy.

The will of the donor was realised in 1825 when a school called Smith's School was begun. It appears to have been carried on in the Poorhouse from 1825 till 1840, when the accommodation was judged insufficient. Not so the staffing. For most of the previous session the master had taught his 245 scholars alone without an assistant, and in the opinion of the managers 'the school has rather gained than lost in point of efficiency and methodical management from this circumstance'. What numbers those old masters could tackle! For about a year work was carried on in the canteen of the barracks in South Quay, but by 1842 a new school, named Smith's Institution, had been completed in what is still called Smith

Street, a name evidently given in honour of the town's benefactor. It was advertised as 'one of the largest and most commodious schoolrooms in the County', being 54 feet by 26 feet by 14 feet. From the beginning the school fulfilled its function. Education was not free except to paupers' children, but fees were low. Indeed, such a thing as free education, unless as exceptional treatment for the very poorest, is not heard of till it became general in 1889, sixteen years after education had been made compulsory.

When in 1867 a second storey was added to the school to make it accommodate 400 or more, the pupils during the building operations were divided between the Poorhouse and Loudoun Hall. In the Logbook of the school in 1864 we are told that nearly 70 of the very poorest of the population were receiving their education free. Nor was the instruction given merely in reading and writing, as was often the case in charity schools of the time. We read of a boy—he was, however, a pupil teacher—being examined in the first three books of Horace's Odes. In English literature 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' and other works of Scott are mentioned, and in arithmetic the extraction of square and cube roots. Algebra, singing and the theory of music were taught. Pupils were expected to exert themselves. Competition in learning is often frowned upon to-day. Not so then. Sometimes the prizes were exhibited in advance to stimulate exertion. Nor was it thought inappropriate to give a girl 6d. for excellence in repeating the Shorter Catechism to pay for a visit to Mander's Menagerie. But possible ill effects of competition are noticed, for we read of 'emulation degenerating into ill feeling owing to the near approach of the examination'.

And the staff had plenty to do. On 30th March 1868 there was an attendance of 361, to be taught by two certificated men teachers, one certificated lady teacher, and two second-year pupil teachers.

The school continued to be carried on in Smith Street till the end of 1883 in the building (No. 16) now used for a wool and hides business. In 1884 it was transferred to its present site in Holmston Road, and in 1930 its name was changed to Holmston School. No doubt that is a more appropriate name. The bequest of John Smith would do little for the maintenance

of a school now, and the school has long ceased to have any special connexion with the poor. Yet it seems a pity that so generous a bequest has lost its commemoration in the name of the school. It is good, however, that it should continue to be commemorated in the account of the school's origin contained in the charter of its recently granted coat of arms.

LADY JANE HAMILTON'S SCHOOL

Of a different constitution from any other school in town was Lady Jane Hamilton's. It was probably what was called a subscription school, intended for infants and juveniles only. It was built through a generous gift from Archibald Hamilton of Carcluie and Rozelle, aided by a grant from the Privy Council, and was for the education of poor children drawn in about equal numbers from the parishes of Ayr, Newton and Wallacetown, whose ministers along with the provost and Archibald Hamilton himself and his heirs were to be trustees. The fees were to be not less than 1d. per week, and every subscriber of 5s. or more annually was to have the right of sending one child to the school for every 5s. subscription and of voting annually for four of the eight directors, without whose approval no child was to be admitted.

The school was named in honour of Archibald Hamilton's wife and was opened about 1842. It was never large but accommodated between 200 and 300 pupils. When free education was introduced in 1889, it ceased to function specially for the benefit of the poor, but it remained to the end a school for young children only. A few years ago the County Council closed it as a school and adapted the building as central kitchens for the preparation of school meals and as a dining hall for Ayr Academy pupils.

CHURCH SCHOOLS 1843-1873

In this middle part of the century, while no doubt private schools continued to exist, the chief promoters of education were the various churches. The Episcopalians had a school beside their church in Fullarton Street, closed in 1907 because of the increasing burden of expense. The Roman Catholics had one in Elba Street close to their church, transferred partly in 1893 and wholly in 1909 to its present site in Whitletts Road,

where its numbers have gone on increasing. It has long been a Junior Secondary School.

The Church of Scotland had one in Cross Street (now King Street), while the Newton Parish School in Green Street, whose master was obliged to be a member of the Established Church, counted as a Church of Scotland school too. But probably the church most ardent in the cause of education was the Free Church, which had been born in a wave of religious enthusiasm. Its ambition was to have a school in connexion with every one of its congregations, and in Ayr it fell not far short of that. It had a school near the Fish Cross which appears to have been supported mainly by Ayr Free (now Sandgate) Church; another in Main Street, the building of which still stands and is part of the Newton New Church hall; and another in Weaver Street close by. The school in Main Street was known as Newton Free Church Congregational School, and the school in Weaver Street with bigger numbers was also connected with that congregation, but was classed as a missionary school, perhaps because it was intended for children of parents not members of the church. Probably, too, the fees were lower than at the congregational school.

The churches' zeal for education was due to their belief that the best foundation for a healthy church was a well-educated people. Moreover, they naturally wished to inculcate in the schools their own religious tenets, and probably the rivalry made for efficiency. The Free Church had another incentive. Many parish schoolmasters had left the Established Church and for that reason had been dismissed from their posts, so that it was natural that the Free Church should seek to find employment for men who, like its own ministers, had risked their livelihood for a conscientious principle.

GOVERNMENT HELP FOR EDUCATION

Church schools were not wholly dependent on the liberality of church members and the fees of pupils, for in 1839 the Government began to give money grants to all schools which satisfied government inspectors of their efficiency. These grants have gone on increasing ever since and have long been one of the chief, if not the chief, means of financing education.

Little can be known of the inner working of schools in Ayr

until the time when the government began to require masters to keep Logbooks in which daily entries should be made of anything that seemed to matter in the life of the school. There still exist Logbooks of Newton F.C. School dating from 1863, of Smith's Institution and Newton Academy from 1864, of Wallacetown School from 1868, and of the Grammar School from 1875. These Logbooks tell of the work done day by day and generally chronicle quite trivial events, which, however, give an insight into the life of the school. Here are a few extracts from the Log of Newton F.C. School:

- 6th Nov. 1865. All who could not say the psalm were kept in to write it.
- 21st Nov. 1865. Several boys kept in for talking during class hours.
- 29th Nov. 1865. Those who failed in the catechism were told to bring it rewritten.
- 11th Dec. 1865. Kept in and reproved several who had been calling names at one another.
- 14th Feb. 1866. Snowballing going on in the street. The boys alleged that other boys not at the school had attacked them.
- 23rd Mar. 1866. The coals being done, there were no fires in the school to-day.
- 2nd April 1866. Most of the third class were kept in to-day for not bringing the grammar exercise.

Despite all keeping in, there was good feeling between pupils and master. On 18th April 1866, the children surprised him by their kindness in presenting him with an electro-plated tea set and salver as a marriage gift. The Thursday and Friday had to be holidays to let the master have a honeymoon.

This was before the days when school attendance was made compulsory. But of course parental compulsion was common, and the discipline of school has never been agreeable to all children. Here is quite a natural story:

- 24th Oct. 1866. Sent Thomas Smith away for refusing to submit to punishment.
- 30th Oct. 1866. Thomas Smith came back and submitted.
- 17th Mar. 1868. Thomas Smith was punished with five palmies for smoking.
- 17th Mar. 1868. Thomas Smith came back to-day and was sent away on account of repeated truancy.
- 18th Mar. 1868. Mrs. Smith called and promised to see that Thomas would behave better in future.

Whether Mrs. Smith succeeded in keeping her promise we do not know.

There were in this school anything from 75 to 180 children ranging from infants up to some who studied Latin, French and mathematics, all taught by one master with the help of sometimes two pupil teachers, often only one, a youth between the ages of 14 and 18. The ordinary subjects were Bible, Shorter Catechism, English, history, geography of the whole world, grammar, writing, book-keeping and arithmetic.

One cannot but admire the grit and devotion with which the masters of this and other schools of the time applied themselves to their difficult task. It required careful planning to get through the day even tolerably. We are not surprised that experiments are made with different routines, or that the loss of a pupil teacher requires new methods to be tried. The discipline seems to have been mild, but firm and consistent. Keeping in was so regular a punishment (and surely the most fitting one for work not done) that the master one day thinks fit to record that he kept nobody in, but dismissed the whole school at 3. Corporal punishment in the form of 'palmies' does not seem to have been inflicted for bad work, but only for misbehaviour. Holidays were given for Ayr Races, Ayr Cattle Show, Newton Carters' Races; also—for it was a church school—for Fast Days, the days after Sacrament, and any special services in the church. On 29th March 1866, for example, there was a 'half-holiday on account of church services in reference to the Cattle Plague'.

The school received financial assistance from the Privy Council, and therefore Her Majesty's Inspector made an annual examination. His reports at this period are all very brief and favourable.

But the school was owned by and dependent on the Free Church, and therefore representatives of the F.C. Presbytery also examined it annually and gave religious addresses from time to time to the children.

Encouragements to diligence were freely given in the form of medals and book prizes both for general excellence and for proficiency in individual subjects.

Newton Academy. The Logbook of Newton Academy tells a similar story to that of the F.C. School. Here, too, truancy is not uncommon. Typical of some other entries are the following:

7th Oct. 1872. John Taylor returned to school this morning and stated that his father had retained him at home on Friday last and had given him a line, but John had lost the line on the way.

29th Oct. 1872. John Taylor returned to-day. He has been playing truant two weeks.

Some very natural boyish escapades are recorded. There was a launch at the docks, and a great many children ran away at the dinner hour and returned a good deal late. A boy fell into the quay and had to be pulled out by fishermen. Complaints were made that the boys were destroying fruit trees in the neighbourhood by throwing stones. These incidents were made the subject of little homilies by the master.

Perhaps the most noticeable thing in the Logbook is the master's preoccupation with the matter of dishonest working. In the 1872 report the Inspector regretted that the fourth standard were very dishonest. Though repeatedly warned and remonstrated with, they could not be restrained from copying, thus rendering his examination useless. The master was a kindly old man, ready for retiral. He had a sewing mistress and two boy pupil teachers to help him with a school of about 150 lively spirits, practically all in one room. No wonder copying was difficult to stop. The young and enthusiastic graduate master who followed him the next year found it so.

5th Oct. 1873. It is very noticeable that much dishonesty exists in the repetition of lessons, and books are frequently found open, and other means of deception are resorted to. This will be checked.

But frequent entries in the Logbook show how difficult the task of checking it was.

Dull pupils too could be a source of distress to a teacher.

12th Mar. 1875. The spelling of Standard IV is a great heartbreak. The headmaster has tried all remedies, and has spared no amount of work, but seemingly without much fruit.

What happened when a teacher was absent from so poorly staffed a school? When both P.T.'s were absent for a week through illness in December 1873, an entry runs: 'School work went on as fairly as could be expected. Headmaster scarcely able to overtake all the work.'

We can well believe him. Whatever a teacher's job may be

to-day, it is lighter than was his predecessor's of 80 years ago.

Wallacetown Public School. The Logbook of this school provides arguments for many reforms which have since taken place in education. The district was afflicted with the twin evils of poverty and drinking. Attendance was therefore bad, and there was great difficulty in getting children supplied with books and sewing material. In the winter of 1908-1909 there was much unemployment. No less than 118 children, about a quarter of the number on the roll, were given tickets for the Salvation Army's soup kitchen. At the beginning of the session in 1909 the master notes the usual fight to get the children to provide themselves with books.

The Parish Council would supply books free, but only after each individual case had been investigated. That took time, and two months after the opening of the session there were still 56 children present without books.

But the story of this school is not all a depressing one. The numbers rose from over 300 in 1875 to 502 in 1897. From 1930 till 1951 they dropped from 359 to 279. This, however, is not a symptom of decay, but an evidence of progress. The numbers were lessened to provide better accommodation. In 1936 a reconstruction on modern lines was completed, giving the school, among other improvements, a large playroom. There was good reason for the master's comment: 'A very marked and desirable change has been made both outside and in, and nothing is now lacking to provide comfort and pleasant surroundings for the staff and scholars.' A very suitable building, one would say, for a nursery and infants' school, which it has now (1952) become.

The Grammar School. The origin of this school was an example of private enterprise for the public good. On 7th May 1867 fourteen citizens requested the provost to call a public meeting to consider the propriety of establishing what they called a Middle School in Ayr, one whose fees should be lower than those of Ayr Academy and higher than those of Smith's Institution. Arrangements were quickly made and it was resolved that a capital fund should be raised by shares of £1 to yield a maximum interest of 4%.

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It was hoped to pay the master £250, a very liberal salary in those days, and to have £80 left for two assistants, a quite

usual but by no means generous sum. In an advertisement which appeared in the *Ayr Advertiser* of 20th August 1868, it was intimated that the school, described as being near the Horse Market Toll-Bar, would be opened on 7th September, and the directors say that 'the premises have been erected with every attention to comfort, and a large area has been enclosed for recreation and amusement. The Scale of Fees, which range from 3/6 to 10/6 per quarter will, it is hoped, meet with general acceptance.'

The school cost £1,300 to build and furnish for 400 pupils. Less than 40 years later Newton Park School cost ten times that amount for only twice the number. But school requirements are constantly extending. Braehead Primary School, the latest to be built in Ayr (1951), has a splendid gymnasium, two dining halls, a medical inspection room, and other facilities. It can accommodate 756 pupils and cost over £76,000.

The prospect of the Grammar School opening struck alarm into one pedagogic breast. The headmaster of Smith's Institution records in his Logbook that he closes the school for the summer holidays 'with fear and trembling'. The cause of his trepidation is revealed after the holidays when the entry runs: 'Begin to hope that the school may survive a little longer—unless, indeed, a second Grammar School be started.' His fear, if it was real, was altogether groundless. The Grammar School prospered, but the number in Smith's Institution increased too.

As supplying a public want in education the Grammar School would have been entitled to claim a government grant. This, however, would have involved submitting to government control. Apparently the directors expected the fees to defray all costs and preferred to remain independent. The conduct of the school may have been a little easygoing on that account. At any rate a new master in 1875 is very critical of the proficiency of the scholars, and prepares to organise the classes to satisfy government requirements. If there was inefficiency, however, it was only in the earliest years. Under the School Board the Grammar School was long regarded as the premier elementary school in town, and remained fee-paying as long as fees were exacted anywhere in the county. But it received no favour in the matter of its premises. In the year 1898 all the members of the Town Council and 48 other citizens signed

a letter to the School Board in which they asserted that the buildings were incomparably the worst in town and petitioned for a new school to be built—rather an unusual thing, surely, for one public body to intrude so directly into the business of another.

The School Board, however, thought that the erection of a new school on the north side of the river was more urgent, and the Grammar School had to wait some years before being reconstructed and enlarged. This, incidentally, together with the widening of Carrick Road had the effect of contracting that 'large area for amusement and recreation' of which the school had boasted at the beginning.

SCHOOL BOARDS, 1873-1919

Education first became compulsory in 1873 by the Scottish Education Act passed the year before. The duty was laid on parents to send their children to school between the ages of 5 and 13, and School Boards elected by popular vote were set up in every town and parish to provide and maintain the necessary schools. Ayr School Board had nine members, and each voter had nine votes which he could give entirely to one candidate or divide amongst the candidates as he pleased. The purpose of this unusual voting arrangement was to allow even a small section of the community to secure representation by 'plumping' for their own candidate, that is, giving him all their votes. Schools under the Board were to be maintained out of a fund raised, firstly, as always before, by small fees from the children; secondly, as had been usual since 1839, by grants from the Government; thirdly, by rates levied on all owners and occupiers of property. It was this last that was the new and important feature.

Into the control of Ayr School Board there soon passed Ayr Academy, the Grammar School, Lady Jane Hamilton's, Smith's Institution, and Newton Academy (formerly Newton Parish School), whilst the Free Church Schools in Main Street and Weaver Street were replaced in 1875 by the present Newton-head School, and the Established Church School in Cross Street (now King Street) by the present Wallacetown School.

Despite all public-spirited efforts for the spread of education a census taken by the School Board in 1873 showed how

great the need had been for a national system of education. Of 2,764 children over 5 and under 13, 1,997 were at school and 767 were receiving no schooling. Building went on rapidly. By 1899, if not before it, Ayr was in the happy position of having more elementary school accommodation than the number of children on the roll.

	<i>On Roll</i>	<i>Average Attendance</i>	<i>Accommodation</i>
20 Jan. 1899	3,916	3,395	4,222

The reign of School Boards lasted till 1919. On the whole the successive School Boards of Ayr may be said to have done their duty by the town. There were never wanting men who were interested in the progress of education, nor those who gave of their time and ability to see that public money was profitably spent. Reading the minutes to-day, we may consider that in the matter of paying their servants, both teachers and others, they were too careful of public money. For many years there were no such things as scales of salaries with their almost automatic increases. Teachers made individual application for increases, and when these were granted, which they often were not, it was commonly a matter of £2 10s. to a woman and £5 to a man. At first also pupil teachers, who were miserably paid, outnumbered certificated teachers, though as time went on the proportion of certificated teachers constantly increased. These defects, however, were not peculiar to Ayr, but common to the whole country, and there were few Boards more progressive or which, when scales began, gave better terms than Ayr.

Of course the power that guided the progress of education here as elsewhere was the Scotch Education Department. It held in a large measure the power of the purse. Its servants, the inspectors, were men of high educational attainments, though possibly inclined to expect too much of ordinary children. Pupils underwent an individual examination, and the number of passes determined the grant for the various subjects. If numerous failures caused the grant to be low, Boards were apt to blame teachers, and teachers to avoid blame and perhaps loss of salary increment inclined to exert undue pressure. By and by the system was felt to be harsh and grants began to be based, not on individual passes, but on the inspector's report

of the general efficiency of the school. Many teachers looked back with aversion on the older system with its encouragement to driving for results.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION UNDER SCHOOL BOARDS

School Boards attached as much importance to religious instruction as the church schools had done. Indeed their members were in large measure representative of the churches and invariably some of them were ministers. Religious instruction was not subject to examination by Her Majesty's Inspectors nor were any grants given for it, but the Board arranged for annual examinations by ministers of the town and gave special prizes for proficiency.

The religious lesson was not compulsory. It was given at the beginning of the day to make it easy for parents to withhold their children from it, if they so desired. Very few availed themselves of the liberty as the Board's policy was in keeping with the wishes of the great majority of the community. The teaching was of course based upon the Bible, passages of which were committed to memory. But the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which Presbyterians regarded as summarising the essential teaching of the Bible, was also in use, and the answers to its questions were required to be memorised. The teaching had thus a distinctly Presbyterian flavour. But when in the early part of this century the use of the Shorter Catechism was discontinued and the religious lesson was given from the Bible alone, public education would seem to have become almost neutral in the matter of religion. When, however, by the act of 1918 denominational schools received the same support from the rates as all others, the advantage may be said to have passed to the Roman Catholics, who are now able to carry on their schools on the same financial basis as all other schools but with complete control of the religious teaching.

EXAMINATION DAY

Some of us may have wondered why in our youth the last school day before the summer holidays was called Examination Day. It did not seem a suitable time for examining, nor was examining done. The school was open to parents and the public. Pupils turned out in their Sunday best, joined in the

singing of a psalm or hymn, watched the distribution of prizes, then listened to words of wisdom from one or more of their elders, waiting impatiently for the moment of liberation. That was all. The name of the day, it seems, was a survival from the times when it was a sort of examination festival. In 1868 we read that in Weaver Street School, in addition to the prizes already awarded, two were offered to be competed for that day and the competition added much to the interest of the proceedings. In Ayr Academy that same year examinations were held on the closing day for five hours in five different rooms at once. The examining was done by the teachers. It was of course an oral examination and more in the nature of an exhibition of the teachers' success than a test of the relative merits of the scholars. In previous years the examination had gone on for three days, and the *Ayr Advertiser* in reporting the event challenges the propriety of the new arrangement. Every visitor had to make a choice of only one of five examinations which he might wish to hear. This was unfortunate for parents who might have several children at school. There were drawbacks from the teachers' point of view also. In short, the reduction to one day was a blunder. Opportunity should be afforded of each class being examined in the presence of all assembled. For such an institution two days at least were necessary for a satisfactory examination. Whether as a result of the *Advertiser's* criticism or not, two days it did become later.

CHANGES IN AYR ACADEMY

The Academy has undergone a few reconstructions. The school of 1800 was replaced in 1880 by a stately classical building which still forms the central frontage. The interior arrangement was curious. There was not as in the first building a central hall. There were five groups of rooms for the five separate departments, seeming to suggest the comparative independence which the various departments did then enjoy, and the first room of a department had to be passed through to get to the second and sometimes the second to get to the third. The awkwardness of the plan is obvious.

It may seem strange that the school had no science laboratory and no gymnasium. In this, however, it was just like other secondary schools of the time. But what must seem more

strange in these days when money is spent so freely on bursaries, travelling allowances, school meals and other aids to education, is that, when in 1895 a laboratory and a gymnasium were thought to be desirable, at least part of the money to pay for them should have had to be raised by private effort through a bazaar. One permanent result is a very able history of the school and entertaining reminiscences contained in the book of the bazaar called *Air Academy and Burgh Schule*.

Reconstruction. In 1907 an excellent art department was added and in 1911/1912 the school underwent complete reconstruction. The original building became little more than a splendid central hall with classrooms grouped all around it. On the wings were large and well equipped gymnasias, science laboratories and a large architectural room, which also served for meetings of school societies. For some years two or three rooms were superfluous and remained unfurnished, and it seemed as though full provision had been made for secondary education for a long time to come, but the Education Act of 1918 extended the scope so widely that the problem of accommodation became serious. It was now a question, not for an Ayr School Board, but for the Ayrshire Education Authority which replaced it in 1919. A temporary solution was found by converting the large architectural room into three classrooms. It was recognised that the ideal permanent solution would have been to build an entirely new school with plenty of ground about it for school games, but a suitable central site was not to be found, and the existing building was too good to justify the costliness of a new one. In the end, and when the County Council had become the authority for the school, as for all other county affairs, some ground behind the school was acquired and an addition was made sufficient to double the size of the former school building. It included a fine memorial hall, so called because some £700 or £800 remaining from the fund raised for a memorial to former pupils who had fallen in the First World War was devoted to its adornment and equipment. Fortunately, the addition was nearly complete when the Second World War began.

Changes in Curriculum. Changes in the curriculum of the school have been notable also. It is strange that, though in the earliest times one of the burgh schools was a 'sang' school, yet

in the Academy which developed from the burgh schools no singing was taught throughout the nineteenth century. It was only in 1904 that a visiting singing master was appointed. Later when Ayrshire Festival competitions began, Academy choirs gained remarkable successes and for many years now have given notable performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operas to crowded audiences in the Town Hall. There is also a very proficient school orchestra. Music in the school has certainly come into its own.

Other subjects that had very little place in the Academy throughout the nineteenth century were those of the science group. It was not until the Scottish Education Department in the beginning of this century established the Group Intermediate Certificate, for which science was made a compulsory subject, that science began to take its due place in the school. In this matter in regard to both music and science, Ayr Academy was not different from the majority of Scottish secondary schools, which, it will be generally agreed, concentrated unduly on the intellectual subjects encouraged by the universities. The various sciences to-day, by their natural importance and popularity, occupy a secure place in the curriculum of the school.

A further great change in the character of the school is concerned with the social position of its pupils. Throughout the nineteenth century fees in the Academy were beyond the power of the great majority of parents to pay. The incomes of masters, apart from the interest derived from small invested funds, were obtained almost wholly from pupils' fees. This continued to be true long after the school passed into the management of the School Board in 1873. Neither government grants nor local rates could be drawn upon for masters' salaries though they were the chief support of the other schools. The Academy was therefore a school for the well-to-do of the town and a large district round about. Moreover, it had from the very beginning a splendid reputation; and numbers of people living at a distance, including some earning their living in government service or business abroad, sent their sons to be educated here and to live as boarders with the rector or masters of the school. In 1840 and succeeding years a Frenchman who was permitted to hold classes in the Academy for

broadsword, fencing, and gymnastics, appealed in the press to the nobility and gentry of Ayr to enrol their boys. The 'nobility and gentry' were apparently the parents of Ayr Academy pupils. Towards the end of last century the policy was to open the school more and more to pupils of ability among the working classes, and various bodies interested in education instituted competitions which gave the successful candidates free education at the Academy and themselves made good to the school the loss of fees. At the same time the boarding element decreased and early this century almost entirely disappeared. Further, areas which were formerly served by Ayr Academy have obtained good secondary schools of their own, so that the Academy now draws its pupils almost entirely from the town and the immediately surrounding district. But though the region which it serves has contracted, the number of its pupils, owing to the growth of population and the great extension of secondary education, has increased. In 1822 there were 566 boys and 96 girls; in 1845, about 400 pupils; in 1868, 405; in 1881, 457; in 1897, 622; in 1952, 590 boys and 592 girls.

Fees. At the end of last century fees for the highest classes in the Academy were over £11 per year, which of course was a much more formidable obstacle than the same sum would be to-day. In 1898 a County Committee was established to distribute to secondary schools grants from the National Exchequer. This Committee suggested that the aid it gave should enable fees in the Academy to be reduced to a maximum of £2 per quarter, a suggestion which some years later was adopted. It was not until some time after Ayr Academy came under the control of the Ayrshire Education Authority that fees in the secondary department of the school were abolished and free books supplied. Fees were still retained in the primary department and in the Grammar School. In 1947 the County Council through its Education Committee resolved to close the primary department so that there might be complete equality among all sections of the community and none even by paying fees (which all too many were eager to do) might seem to have any advantage over others. It was found impracticable to close the primary department because there was no accommodation for the pupils elsewhere, but the decision to abolish

fees remained valid both in the Academy and in the Grammar School.

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

It is probable that in the earlier centuries young children, before they attended either the Scots or the Grammar School, received the beginnings of education in what were called dames' schools. But we saw that before 1600 girls had been taught some English in the Grammar School along with the boys, though after that date the Grammar School was closed to them. In the Sang or Scots School they would receive instruction in needlework and music, but not in mathematics or languages. Nor is it likely that their education extended over many years; their services in the home would be too useful. As there was no career open to them in which higher education was required, there was little incentive either to provide or to seek such education. And this remained true up to very recent times. In neither of the burgh schools, Grammar or English, do we find mention of a woman teacher except for sewing. But about the end of the eighteenth century there are references to special schools for girls. In 1764 a lady who taught young women in Ayr 'sewing, embroidery and other accomplishments proper for that sex', expressed to the magistrates and council of Ayr the hope that 'having shown their willingness to promote the education of the male sex they would be pleased to do something for the other sex'. Such a school as hers was a necessity for a place like Ayr; yet owing to increasing prices and rents 'it was with difficulty she could support herself with what arises from teaching'. The Council granted her £3 sterling yearly 'to provide herself in a sufficient room for teaching'.

In 1782 two sisters who kept a girls' boarding and public school in Ayr wrote to the Town Council claiming that in their school 'everything was taught as complete as at Edinburgh' and that this 'was a great saving to the inhabitants, a convenience to the neighbourhood, and an advantage to the town at large in bringing gentlemen's children to it'. They requested some 'encouragement' from the Council and in acknowledgment of their service to the town received an annual grant of £15 sterling. Not many years later Ayr

Academy was established, and there from the beginning girls were received as pupils. What subjects they were taught there at first is uncertain. In a prize list published in the *Ayr Advertiser* of 7th August 1806 there are separate prizes for boys and girls in English, but no mention of prizes for girls in any of the many other subjects taught to boys. This is strong evidence that there were no classes for girls in those subjects. The extension of secondary education to girls was a gradual process. By 1868 it had made a good start. One of the English commissioners appointed to report on higher education in Scotland has flattering things to say of the aptitude of girls and makes this special mention of Ayr Academy as a school where 'I found a large class of girls, who passed a capital examination in Virgil, the questions put to them being exactly such as I would put to boys in a classical school and answered in the same way'.

Towards the end of the century there seemed to be some recognition that mental cultivation for its own sake was as important for girls as for boys, and with the development of girls' education came the gradual opening of more careers for women on something like equal terms with men. There is mention of girl pupil teachers in Newton F.C. School in 1872. Thereafter girl pupil teachers became common and long before the end of the century women formed the larger part of the staff of all elementary schools. But they had not yet obtained any footing in the Academy. There the teachers were practically all university graduates, and university education for women was still very uncommon at the end of last century. It was only a few years before 1900 that a woman was first appointed for the infants of the Academy. By this time girls had begun to invade all departments of the Academy as pupils and proved in every subject a match for the boys. Into every department, too, women gained entrance as teachers. During the First World War the school was mainly carried on by women, and since then they have always formed a large and indispensable part of the staff.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND GAMES

It was a long time before the authorities took any thought for physical education. Doubtless it was believed that children's natural love of games would take care of their physical develop-

ment. But in 1900 Ayr School Board, stimulated probably by the Education Department, suggested to the headmasters that exercises to promote physical fitness should be given, and from then onwards such exercises have been a regular part of school work. Nearly all Ayr schools have now a playroom with gymnastic apparatus and a visiting gymnastic teacher to give regular training.

Organised games, too, were late of receiving recognition in elementary schools. Previously pupils had formed clubs for themselves and played matches on the Old Racecourse or the Low Green or Newton Public Park without teachers being expected to take any part in their arrangements. But the general interest in the big club leagues apparently suggested an organisation of something the same kind in school-boy football. The initiative naturally came from sports-minded teachers and as naturally made a strong appeal to boys. It was in 1906 that an Ayr Schools Football Association began. Its activities were extended after the First World War, and now there are three trophies offered for annual competition—the Gould Cup for the under 15's, the Mackie Cup for the under 14's, these two being decided by knock-out competitions; while the third, the League Shield, goes to the team scoring the highest points in the season's games.

In the competition open to all Scotland selected teams of Ayr boys have had remarkable successes, reaching the final five times, and on two of those occasions, 1925 and 1934, winning the Cup.

In the international sphere no fewer than 34 caps have come the way of Ayr boys.

In Ayr Academy physical training formed no part of the curriculum till after 1895, when, as has been said, a gymnasium was added to the school from the proceeds of a public bazaar. In the 1911 reconstruction two spacious and well-equipped gymnasia were built, one for boys and one for girls, and since then all classes have received instruction under qualified teachers.

For many years after the First World War the Academy had a flourishing Cadet Corps which repeatedly won the Lucas Tooth Shield as the most efficient all-round company in the county. But more notable were the successes of its physical

training teams. In 1922 a team of twenty, after defeating all Scottish rivals in the Lady West Memorial Shield competition open to all the Cadet Corps of Britain (some 2,500), journeyed to London to compete in the final as an event in the Royal Tournament at Olympia. It won the Shield. In the following year it nearly repeated that performance, and in 1926 it did repeat it, while on two other occasions it reached the semi-final.

In 1923 a Cadet boxing team in a competition for the Prince of Wales Shield, open to all Britain, reached the semi-final, and in 1938 another Academy team won the Shield.

In the Academy's story, athletic sports and football are much older features. There were school rugby teams at least as early as 1864. But by 1872 association football had become so popular that the rugby teams could find few clubs to play against, and in that year they resolved to change to 'soccer', which thereafter they played with remarkable distinction. In 1879 the captains of both Glasgow and Edinburgh University teams were former Academy players, and they and a third old Academy boy had the honour in that year of playing in the international match against England. That was in the days before professional football.

Later the school readopted rugby, which has been the traditional game for more than half a century and is played now with probably as much distinction as at any time in the past. There are no less than ten match-playing teams, and out of 453 pupils of age to play, 257 have voluntarily become members of the Rugby Club.

Cricket, of course, is the school game in the summer time. There are seven match-playing elevens. The season, however, is short, as July and August are school holiday months.

But the prowess of the girls must not be forgotten. Hockey has been a school game for many years. A large number of girls are members of the Hockey Club and find healthful and enjoyable exercise in the regular practice of the game. The school has at present some nine match-playing teams which compete against similar teams from other schools. Many of the girls continue the game after school days in the Ayr Ladies' Hockey Club, of which old Academy pupils are the mainstay. Some of them have had the honour of playing for Scotland in

international contests, and more have been chosen to display the quality of Scotland's women in teams that have toured Holland, Denmark, South Africa, and the United States.

Rugby, hockey and cricket teams all have excellent playing pitches in the Old Racecourse and satisfactory club accommodation in the pavilion.

The first organised Academy sports meeting was held in 1877 in Springvale Park, Midton Road. In the following years, in addition to events confined to past and present pupils, there were included in the programme open races to which the most eminent Scottish athletes were attracted, none more eminent than the old Academy boy, W. W. Beveridge, who in 1881 for the third year in succession won the Athole Challenge Cup, then the blue ribbon of Scottish sprinting. He happened at the time during his Theological College vacation to be acting as temporary assistant in classics to the rector, and we can well believe him when in an article he wrote for the *Academy Magazine* in 1924 he says that his reception at the school on the Monday morning was a memory that would only leave him with his life. When he played in international football matches he always, out of affection for his old school, chose to be designated as of Ayr Academy rather than of Glasgow University.

EVENING SCHOOLS

Ayr has long given in evening schools excellent facilities for young people to continue their general education as well as to study technical subjects useful for their trade or profession. At least as long ago as 1876 students of Newton Academy evening school were gaining certificates from the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, and ever since then various schools in town have provided classes to meet all demands as well as to stimulate demand where none existed.

But the range of subjects has never been so great as now. For young people whose school education has been for any reason unsatisfactory there are courses in arithmetic, history and English, with domestic science for girls. There are commercial courses, courses in chemistry, coal-mining, engineering, naval architecture and all kinds of technical science, run in connexion with the Royal Technical College, Glasgow. There are also

special classes for adults of all ages, who desire only to improve their minds and increase their powers of enjoyment. Nor need anyone be deterred from enrolling by the cost, because for a season's course in English literature, French literature, current affairs, appreciation of art, or 'know your town', the fee is 2/6. If there are any people in Ayr deficient in ordinary education or in technical knowledge or in artistic appreciation, it is not for lack of ample opportunities for improvement.