

DICTIONARY OF SCOTTISH ARCHITECTS

J & J Carrick and interwar Ayr

Early in its history the town of Ayr became prosperous through the import of goods from England and abroad to its port, which was one of the few safe anchorages on the Firth of Clyde. Following construction in 1787 of a bridge over the River Ayr linking it to the coal-mining town of Newton on Ayr to the north, the areas in the axis of the two settlements were developed, and villas gradually spread southwards from the centre of Ayr. Steamers initially brought in visitors but after the railway from Glasgow arrived in 1840, Ayr gradually became a popular seaside resort both for day-trippers and holiday makers. In the 20th century the town expanded over the Belleisle, Rozelle and Cambusdoon estates towards the birthplace of Robert Burns at Alloway. The opportunities which arose during the late 19th- and early 20th-century growth were seized upon by a number of local architects, but the ones who stamped their distinctive mark on the town arguably more than anyone else were James Carrick (1880–1940) and from the early 1930s his son, James Andrew Carrick (1911–1989).



James Andrew Carrick © RIAS

The origins of the Carricks' firm can be traced back to the practices of two other Ayr-born men, James Archibald Morris and James Kennedy Hunter.

Morris, an able architect with an interest in history, set up his practice in Ayr in 1880. He moved to work in London, leaving the Ayr practice in the hands of his assistant James Kennedy Hunter who became partner in 1885. In 1896 Hunter left to set up on his own. Three years later James Carrick became Hunter's assistant and was given more than usual responsibility. Job lists in the J & J A Carrick Collection held by Historic Environment Scotland are annotated by Carrick indicating where he was mainly responsible.

The designs of Hunter and Carrick are similar. Both favoured an Arts and Crafts style. Of the two, Carrick may have preferred a more purely English style while Hunter was predisposed to use Scottish vernacular details. High Greenan (1910), English manorial in style, is one of the best designs by the Hunter office.



High Greenan © Crown Copyright HES

The geometric nature of the building's elements are emphasised by its plain rendering, and it looks forward to work undertaken by Carrick in the 1930s. Ayr Pavilion (1911), again claimed by the older Carrick to be his design, exhibits a strange mixture of elements with Arts and Crafts swept eaves, Italian Romanesque campaniles at the corners and hints of the Modern Movement in the curved south end pierced by a series of square windows and squat geometrical overall shape.



Ayr Pavilion © Crown Copyright HES

Hunter retired in 1928. Carrick set up on his own and the speed with which commissions flowed in to his office suggests he already had some status in Ayr. The range of his work was wide: villas, churches, commercial and industrial buildings and possibly his most famous type, entertainment buildings. In 1931 or 1932 James Andrew Carrick joined his father, initially as an assistant, but after a period spent in James Miller's office, the influence of which can be seen in the 1930s, and a study tour abroad, he became a partner in 1934. The name of the practice then changed to J & J A Carrick.

The early commissions Carrick senior received are varied if low profile. He undertook architectural and surveying work for the Castlehill estate, some hospital extension work, and the design of several Ayrshire drill halls for the Territorial Army (he was a keen volunteer himself). From 1930 he began to receive domestic commissions, possibly kick-started by designing his own house, Martins, at 5 Greenfield Avenue in Alloway. This is an Arts and Crafts-style house with Tudor details and is clearly English in inspiration, as were many of the subsequent villas he designed in Ayr and Alloway. The tall brick chimneys, long sweep of the roof and windows with leaded lights look back in style to some villas by Hu



Martins 5 Greenfield Avenue © Historic Environment Scotland (J and J A Carrick Collection).
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The Carricks were appointed architects to the Cambusdoon estate in the early 1930s and they masterminded the feuing of Greenhill Avenue and probably other streets on the estate. The series of villas in Greenfield Avenue which followed Martins, numbers 1–17 and 21–23, all use the same basic vocabulary but are extremely inventive. Number 1 Greenfield Avenue, 'Nairn Park', for T McBurnie is a large house with tall chimneystacks and a deeply recessed entrance, the steep sweep of the roof continuing downwards to cover the porch. Internally the house is well appointed with stone chimneypieces and timber-panelled walls.



Nairn Park, 1 Greenfield Avenue © Historic Environment Scotland (J and J A Carrick Collection). Licensor www.canmore.org.uk

Number 9, 'Holmhill', for J Hendrie, in Queen Anne style, popularised in England in the early 20th century, is a much simpler composition with tall pitched roof.



Holmhill, 9 Greenfield Avenue © Historic Environment Scotland (J and J A Carrick Collection). Licensor www.canmore.org.uk

Some of the villas in Greenfield Avenue would seem to show the hand of James Andrew Carrick. Birch Hills at number 11 is a crisp harled composition, distinctly Art Deco in appearance with a shallow pitched roof and tall plain rendered chimneystacks, while Oakshaw at number 13 has an exceptionally tall roof and recessed entrances through the gable ends.



Oakshaw, 13 Greenfield Avenue © Historic Environment Scotland
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Most of the Greenfield Avenue houses were for prosperous clients. Elsewhere in Alloway and Ayr the Carricks designed more modest homes. Two clients are of special interest, the first being A T McConnell who was the proprietor of Fleury Meng Ltd (Fleury Meng was a Swiss pastry chef), with premises in Newmarket Street, positioned well for visitors. After working on alterations to the shop, in 1932 the older Carrick designed a new house for McConnell at 8 Longbank Drive. It is a modest single-storey Tudor-style house with tall brick chimneystacks, external wooden shutters and a cast-iron porch. Likewise in 1934 the Carricks designed a house for Mrs Popplewell, wife of Ben Popplewell, the Yorkshire impresario who took the lease of the Pavilion in Ayr in 1913 and organised entertainers to perform there for many years. The house is on a small site at 3 Ewenfield Road. With green roof tiles and rendered white walls, it is Art Deco in inspiration, though this is tempered by elements drawn from the Arts & Crafts style.



Popplewell House, 3 Ewenfield Road © Historic Environment Scotland
(J and J A Carrick Collection). Licensor www.canmore.org.uk

There was no dramatic change of direction in their house designs during the 1930s. However the severe brick St Quivox Church (1932) in Prestwick tries to marry tradition with innovation using a round-arched style, possibly Italian Romanesque in inspiration but stripped to the bare essentials.

In the design of their leisure buildings, the Carricks were uncompromisingly Art Deco. These were almost certainly the work of the younger Carrick, a fine draughtsman. The practice's Cragburn Pavilion in Gourock, for which they won a design competition in 1935, is a crisp flat-roofed structure lit by tall narrow windows, its bulk softened by lower 'aisles' and surrounding terrace.



Cragburn Pavilion

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Rothesay Pavilion (1936), also won in competition, is an outstanding example of International Style Modernism. The asymmetrical composition with glazed bowed wing cantilevered over the recessed vestibule and canopy above, the strong horizontality of the building, the glazing of the ballroom running the full width of the central section, the stair tower to the right with tall narrow windows and the flat roof with viewing terrace are all typical.



Rothesay Pavilion © Crown Copyright HES

The Second World War halted the practice's progress. The older Carrick died in 1940. The younger Carrick returned to the practice after war service, but in the difficult post-war conditions of building licensing, it never reached the

same heights. Larger commissions began to flow in by the 1960s. Castlehill Church (1964) has concrete infill panels and a folded roof, inspired perhaps by Le Corbusier's Ozenfant Studio (1922) in Paris and echoed in configuration of the side walls.



Castlehill Church © Crown Copyright HES

One of most successful commissions from this decade is the upgrading of the old Ayr Racecourse buildings, with the Eglinton Rooms added over the main entrance.

In the late 1960s Carrick served as President of the RIAS. He was a hugely entertaining character and whether in jest or in seriousness he told people he enjoyed taking dry-rot fungus home and frying it for breakfast! He died in 1989. The practice continued to make an important contribution to Ayr and other west-coast towns until its closure in 2011.