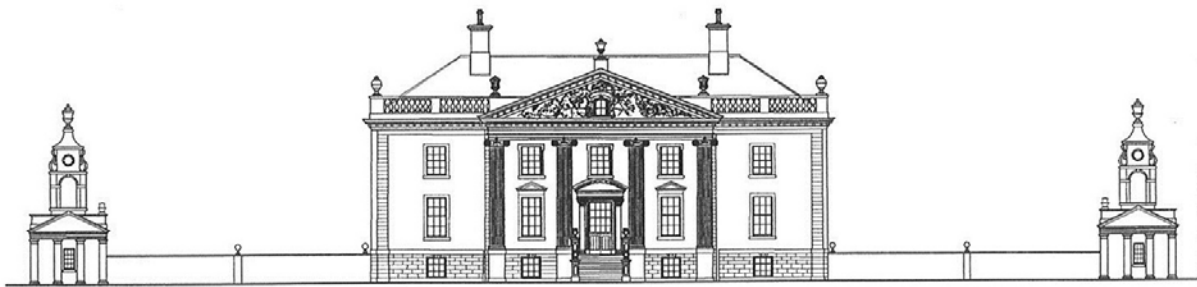


# The Landmark Trust

## AUCHINLECK HOUSE

### History Album



**Written and researched by**

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**Re-presented in 2015**

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## **Auchinleck House – Basic Details**

**Acquired from the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust by the Landmark Trust (Auchinleck) Ltd in 1999; managed and operated by the Landmark Trust**

**Opened as a Landmark 2001.**

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<b>Contractors:</b>	<b>Hunter &amp; Clark, Glasgow</b>
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<b>Electrician:</b>	<b>Hugh Johnston of D.H. Morris</b>
<b>Plumbing:</b>	<b>William Muchland</b>
<b>Heating:</b>	<b>Alexander and McVean</b>
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## Contents

Summary	7
1. History of Auchinleck House	13
2. The Restoration of the House	25
Notes on the Pictures at Auchinleck House	63
3. Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck	67
4. Development of the Auchinleck Estate	87
5. A Brief Life of James Boswell	97
6. James Boswell and the Auchinleck Estate	125
7. The Auchinleck Estate Journals	141
8. Later Boswells at Auchinleck	145

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The library shelves at Auchinleck have been generously stocked with a complete run of the Yale Editions of the Boswell Papers, donated by the Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell.

A generous financial donation was made to the stocking of the library shelves by Roger Eaton.

The library shelves also hold volumes lent by the Auchinleck Boswell Society, to whom we are also grateful for the loan of items displayed in the morning room and of various pictures which hang in the house.



**James Boswell, writer, biographer and 9<sup>th</sup> Laird of Auchinleck,  
1740 – 1795  
(engraving after Reynolds)**

## Auchinleck House – Summary

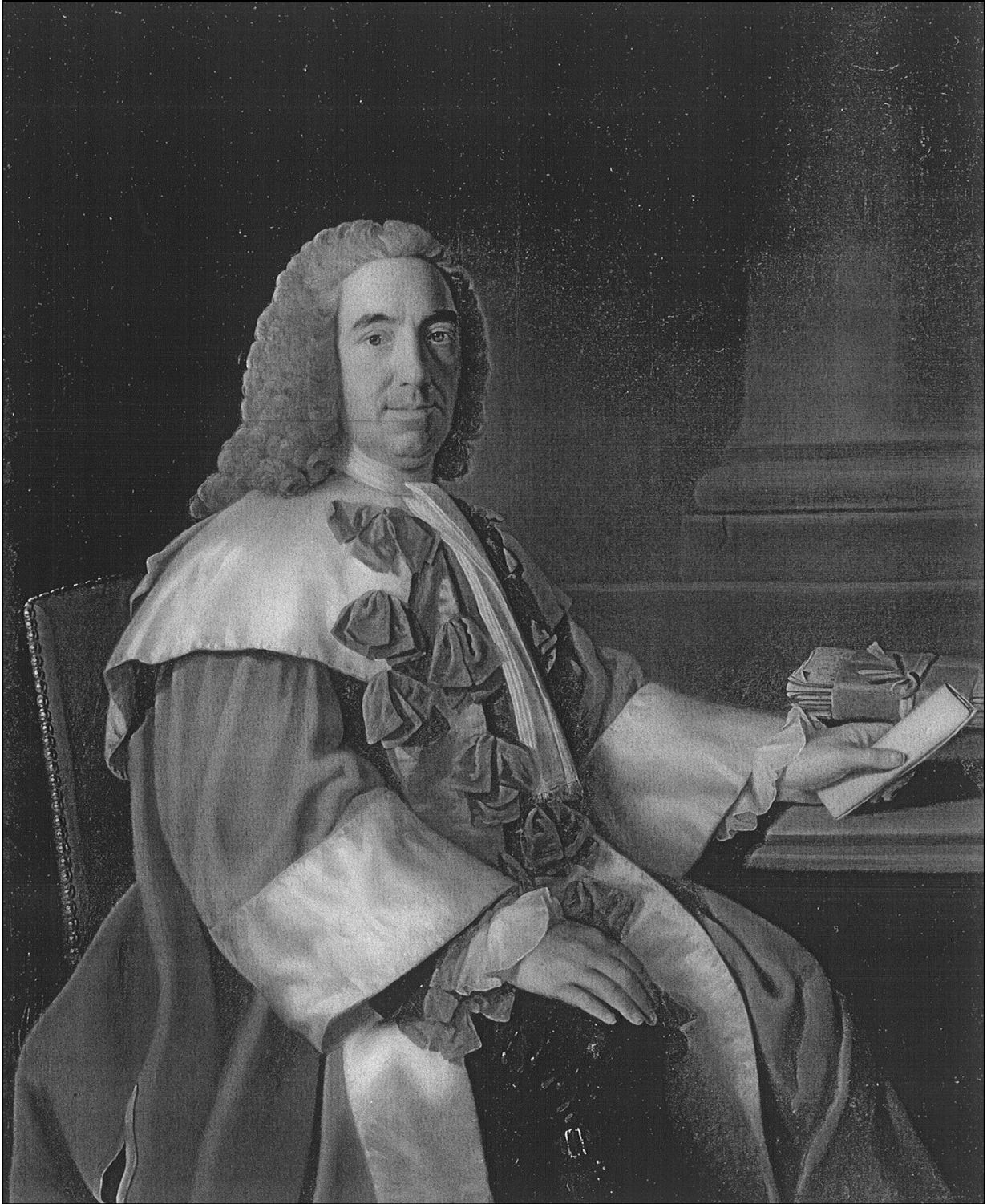
Auchinleck House was built between 1755 and 1762 by Alexander, Lord Auchinleck & 8<sup>th</sup> Laird and the father of James Boswell, celebrated diarist and biographer of Samuel Johnson. It is the third house on an estate granted to Boswell's forebears in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was built as a villa, to which Lord Auchinleck (a non-hereditary title as a judge of the Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court) could retreat when the Edinburgh courts were out of session. However, the house is best known for its association with his son, James Boswell.

The design was once attributed to the Adam brothers, though no clear evidence of this attribution has yet been found. It is more likely that it was designed by Lord Auchinleck himself, in consultation with his master craftsmen. Comparisons are often drawn with nearby Dumfries House, known to be the work of the Adams and a close contemporary with Auchinleck House. Lord Auchinleck records a visit to the Earl of Dumfries at Leifnorris in a letter in 1753 'where politicks and House building made the subject of conversation at a plentiful dinner', but a clearer evidence has yet to be found.

Its design is perhaps not quite the 'exquisite piece of neo-classicism in the Adams style' that Frederick Pottle, greatest of all Boswellians, wished to find, although the house is the more interesting for its deviation from the strict rules of classicism. The severe west elevation is certainly neo-classical, yet the ornamentation of the pediment on the east elevation showing emblems of the civilised mind has an expressive, almost vernacular exuberance. The Duchess of Northumberland applied a metropolitan and aristocratic sensibility when she complained that the pediment was 'terribly loaded with Ornaments of Trumpets & Maces and the Deuce knows what'. However, we can appreciate the exceptionally fine carving, now carefully and conservatively consolidated.

The motto above the main entrance is from Horace (Epistle xi, 29-30) and reads '*Quod petis, hic est; Est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit aequus*' – Whatever you seek is here, in this remote place, if only you can keep a steady disposition. This brief phrase encapsulates the Horatian ideal of fulfilment in a rural retreat - Lord Auchinleck was a keen classicist. It also sums up much of the tension between the contrasting personalities of Lord Auchinleck and his more famous son, who rather found what *he* sought in London's social whirl.

Research among the Boswell papers in Yale has confirmed that the main building phase for the house was between 1758 & 1760, and that it was in 1773-4 that Lord Auchinleck added the four pavilions. At one time they were whitened, which would have toned down their ruddiness in comparison with the main house. Idiosyncratic they may seem, but it is this very tension between regularity and irregularity which makes Auchinleck House so perfect an embodiment of the spirit of eighteenth century Scotland.



**Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck and 8<sup>th</sup> Laird in 1754, when he was appointed judge of the Court of Session and made a non-hereditary peer. (Mellon Collection, Yale)**



James Boswell inherited Auchinleck House in 1782 at the age of 41. He made no changes to the house, although he continued his father's tree planting schemes. After his death in 1795, the estate descended through the family until it passed through marriage to the Talbot family, who moved to Malahide in Ireland in 1905, dispersing the contents and taking with them Boswell's papers, which the family had suppressed. In the 1920s Auchinleck House and estate were bought by Colonel John Douglas-Boswell of Garallan (descendant of a younger son of James Boswell, 4<sup>th</sup> Laird of Auchinleck who died in 1618). After the war began a long period of decline and the house stood empty by the late 1960's.

For twelve years in the 1970s and 1980s there was no lead in the parapet gutters and water poured down behind the linings of the outside walls, accumulating in the basement and its vault. Rot set in, and the building deteriorated rapidly. In 1986, the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust bought the house from the family with 35 acres of surrounding estate. The SHBT made the house weatherproof but then struggled to find a role for it in the face of development proposals for the rest of the site. It turned to the Landmark Trust and in 1999 the freehold was transferred to the Landmark Trust (Auchinleck) Ltd for the house to be managed by the Landmark Trust.

Landmark retained Simpson & Brown as architects, who had been involved with the house since its acquisition by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust. The restoration was funded by generous donations from the Royal Oak Foundation in America, augmented by grants from Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

It was clear from the outset that the quality of the original workmanship was outstanding – masonry and carving, joinery and plasterwork. The plumbing arrangements were found to be particularly progressive, with soil pipes lined with Delft tiles terminating in small stone basins concealed behind panelling and flushed directly from rainwater cisterns on the roof. The (unproved) assumption is that these were *pissoirs*.

The plan of the entrance floor at Auchinleck is a very late example of the Grand Apartment (in which 'parade planning' leads circulation from one room to another, passing through public rooms to private rooms). Alterations in the nineteenth century blocked the door from the parlour to the bed chamber during the original building phase. Otherwise, the original plan has been retained, although we decided to put the Landmark kitchen in the former Parlour, since a kitchen in the basement would no longer be considered practical.

The house was swathed in scaffolding for most of 2000 and early 2001 while the fabric and roof were comprehensively repaired. The carved pediment and Corinthian capitals to the pilasters were carefully consolidated with minimal restoration in order to preserve the delicacy of the original craftsmanship as well as the patina of time. The baroque pavilions and obelisks on the rear terrace were re-pointed and the bridge over the Dippol Burn repaired.

Internally, much of the original joinery survived, but the fine plasterwork had suffered from the water ingress. Large pieces which had fallen from the ceilings and cornices were carefully stored for reinstatement, but extensive sections, especially in the library and stairwell, had to be completely replaced by special hand-made mouldings, mostly individually fixed. The buffet in the dining room is a rare eighteenth century survival and had to be completely restored using contemporary references. Both the buffet and the dining room ceiling refer to the Boswell family pedigree: the hooded falcon with the motto 'Vraye Foy' (true faith) in front of the fireplace is the crest used by the eighteenth-century Boswells. The mailed fist in front of the buffet and the three cinquefoils in the shield within the buffet are other elements from the family arms. Scattered across the ceiling are cornucopia and Arcadian musical instruments.

Above the stairwell is a papier mache hawk which needed heavy restoration. The stairwell leads into the morning room, used as a study by both Boswell and his father. The deep cupboards probably served to store estate documents. Today they hold items from the Boswell Museum, formerly housed in the Chapel in Auchinleck village. These and various paintings have been generously lent by the Auchinleck Boswell Society for display in the house. The more famous portraits of Boswell and his father are reproductions.

The library, as was typical in Scotland in the eighteenth century, is placed on the first floor, facing west across the policy grounds. It was here that Lord Auchinleck famously quarrelled with Dr. Samuel Johnson on the latter's only visit in November 1773, as recorded in Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*. Boswell had looked forward to the visit, though he feared his Anglican, Tory friend might argue with his Presbyterian, Whig father. This they famously did, on a rainy day in the library, as Lord Auchinleck innocently showed Johnson a medal of Oliver Cromwell from his collection. A dispute over the politics of the English Civil War inevitably followed, though for once Boswell forbore to publish the details. Today, the library has been re-stocked with appropriate volumes which include complete runs of the reading editions of Boswell's journals and correspondence, generously donated by the Yale Editions of the Boswell Papers, and books loaned from the collection of the Auchinleck Boswell Society.

As for the furniture, it is not generally Landmark's philosophy to arrange, decorate or furnish their properties as an exact recreation of a particular period – such an approach does not sit comfortably with the degree of contemporary practicality, convenience and comfort expected by today's visitors. Various inventories survive for the house, however (one taken at Boswell's death in 1795, two more from 1805 and 1822) and these have been consulted as the furnishing and decorative schemes are developed. Paint analysis has been done to inform colour schemes. Where possible, reproductions of prints and pictures known to have an association with the house have been hung. In this way it is still possible to catch the atmosphere of the rooms in which Boswell and his family spent their time.

The estate which surrounds Auchinleck House has several interesting features that are mentioned in Boswell's correspondence, and from them, we can re-trace many of the walks he describes with Dr. Johnson, James Bruce his faithful overseer, and other friends. Even today the surrounding landscape bears the imprint of the tree-planting campaigns of Boswell and his father. Closer to the current house lie the ruins of the former family seat, the Old Place, built in 1612 to replace the Old Castle (whose ruins have now almost disappeared). This was a favourite stroll for Boswell, where he and his brother David reaffirmed their allegiance to the family and where he took Dr. Johnson during his famous visit in 1773. Johnson preferred the 'sullen dignity' of this spot to the newly completed Auchinleck House.

Closer to the main house, on the picturesque banks of the Dippol Burn below the bridge, is an ovoid ice-house, hewn out of rock (here ice cut in the winter was stored for summer use, or alternatively salted meat was stored). Further along is a little grotto, again carved out of the living rock, known as Boswell's Summer House. Landmark also intends to restore these and open up public access.

James Boswell's own relationship with his family seat was always ambivalent. On the one hand, he greatly valued the pedigree which the estate embodied and "Old laird and family ideas" as he called them were at the heart of his being. Yet he was always fascinated by London, and the "circles of the great, the gay and the ingenious". Throughout his life, Boswell suffered from melancholy – we would call it depression today, although he knew it as 'Hypochondria'. The only cure, and even then not a certain one, was to lose himself in the social whirl of the metropolis. During his father's lifetime, the situation was complicated by Lord Auchinleck's refusal ever to welcome Boswell's wife and children at Auchinleck House (their home was in Edinburgh during these years).

Boswell had happy memories of childhood days at the Old Place, before Auchinleck House was built. His occasional visits to Auchinleck usually began well:

*'Every morning James Bruce comes into my room before I am up, which does me good. A fine day. Made Sandy Bruce show me how he collects the cess [land tax]. Had first Thomas Edmundson and then James Bruce with me looking for pebbles [?geological curiosities?] from the old washing-green to the Broomholm with a very little interruption, did not get one. Gathered some nuts for my children. Was as happy at Auchinleck as in my earliest days. Hoped to see my wife and children happy here. (Sept, 1780).*

Yet he would soon long for company, dragged down by the abstemious routine of his elderly father and his second wife and her sisters, which he summed up as 'What a life is this! Talk without ideas and card-playing without a stake!' Once he inherited the estate in 1782, it seemed at first that he might settle down and be happy there:

*I have for some time risen easily between six and seven, which braces my frame; and every morning before breakfast I read a portion of the sacred scriptures and of Thomas a Kempis, by which my mind is calmed and sanctified. I read in the dressing-room of the family apartment; and it seems a chapel from this daily celestial habit....But I should lament that I neglect study shamefully. I find myself at present sufficiently occupied without it. The occupations of the estate, even in speculation content me. I this day began to take lessons in arithmetic from Mr. Millar.' (November, 1780)*

As ever, he soon wearied of the limitations of bucolic life and returned to city life in London. His wife (by the 1780s in decline from consumption) and children were to spend more time at Auchinleck than him. They enjoyed many happy times there under the careful eye of the overseer, kindly James Bruce who had served Boswell's grandfather. Boswell kept a keen eye on the estate, but mostly at a distance through correspondence with Bruce and his successor, Andrew Gibbs. However, he summed up his true feelings thus:

*'Agriculture has much variety but it is a sober variety...A man of vivacity, unless his views are kept steady, by a constant golden prospect of gain, cannot long be pleased in looking at the operations of ploughing, dunging, harrowing, reaping or threshing.'*

That Boswell valued Auchinleck is beyond question, but perhaps it is appropriate to see the struggle between his personal exuberance and familial austerity echoed in the architectural tensions of the house. Auchinleck was woven into the life of this complex man: into his image of his family and himself; into the often contradictory goals with which he struggled throughout his life; into his relationship with his biological father and with his surrogate father figure, the great Samuel Johnson.

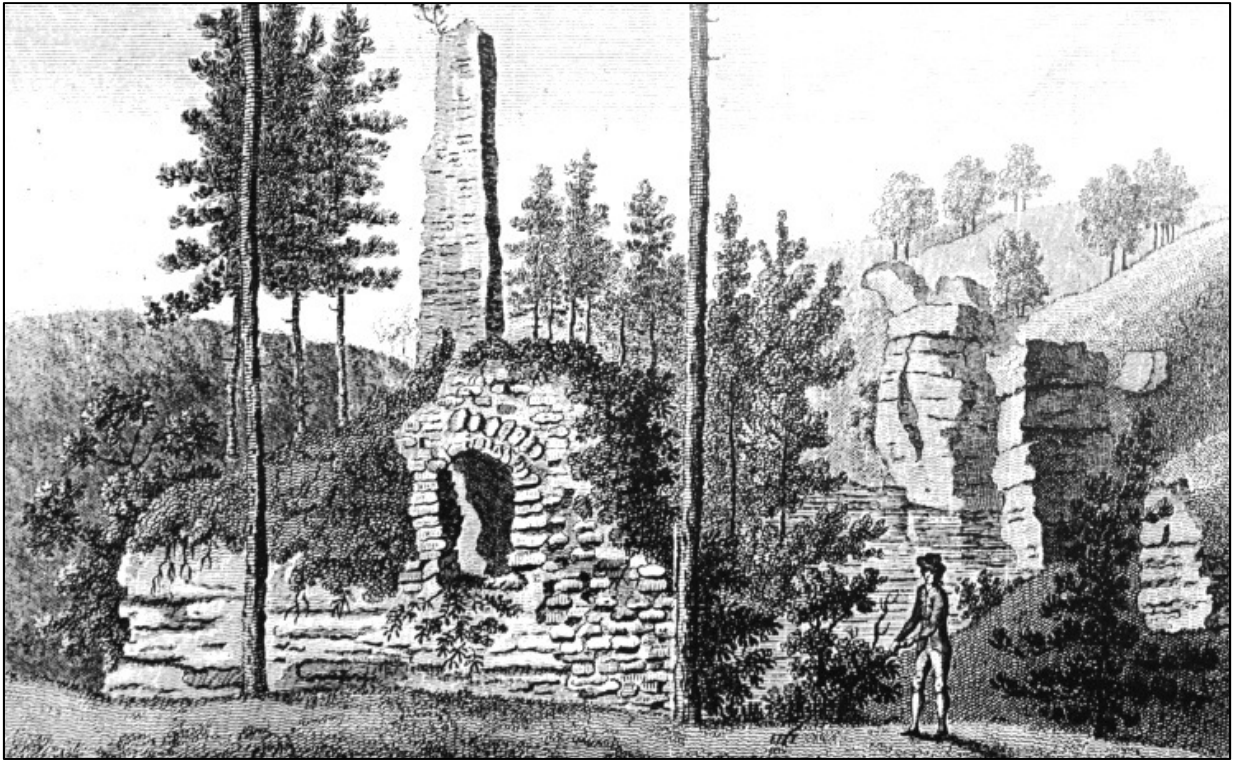
Auchinleck House is the largest building Landmark has ever taken on, of significance throughout the English-speaking world. Its restoration enables Boswell scholars and enthusiasts alike to enjoy a place associated with one of the most vivid personalities of literary history.

## 1. Brief History of Auchinleck House

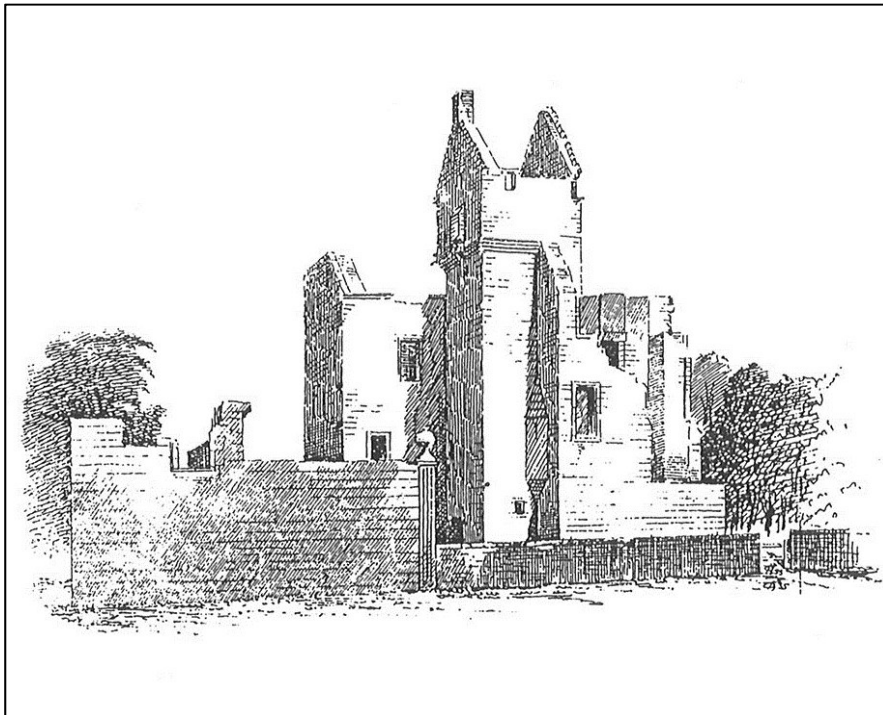
Wherever confusion with another family member might arise in this album, the initials 'JB' have been used to refer unambiguously to James Boswell the biographer.

Today, Auchinleck House is famous for its connection with James Boswell, the celebrated diarist and biographer of Samuel Johnson. Yet it was actually built by his father, whose taste and lifestyle it reflects and who was a far more respected pillar of society than James Boswell.

This father was Alexander Boswell, 8<sup>th</sup> Laird of Auchinleck (1707-1782). There had been Boswells on the estate since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Old Castle, a fortified keep, stood upon the sandstone cliff at the junction of the Lugar Water and the Dippol Burn. By the eighteenth century, this was a romantic ruin, imbued for Boswell with all the weight and romance of his ancestors. In 1504 James IV of Scotland conferred the estate and a barony upon Thomas Boswell (of the Balmuto Boswells from Fife) for his services to the crown. Thomas thus became first Laird of Auchinleck and acquired the Old Castle on the promontory at the confluence of the Dippol Burn and Lugar Water. He later fell with his monarch on Flodden Field. Thomas' grandson John built nearby the house known in Boswell's day as the Old Place in 1612, a small distance above the Lugar Water. It was a typical Scots tower house, a two storey T- shape with an L-shaped added later. It was here that Boswell spent his times at Auchinleck as a boy. While the ruins of the Old Castle have now all but disappeared, those of the Old Place can still be enjoyed, overgrown and crumbling as they are (they do not however stand upon land owned by Landmark).



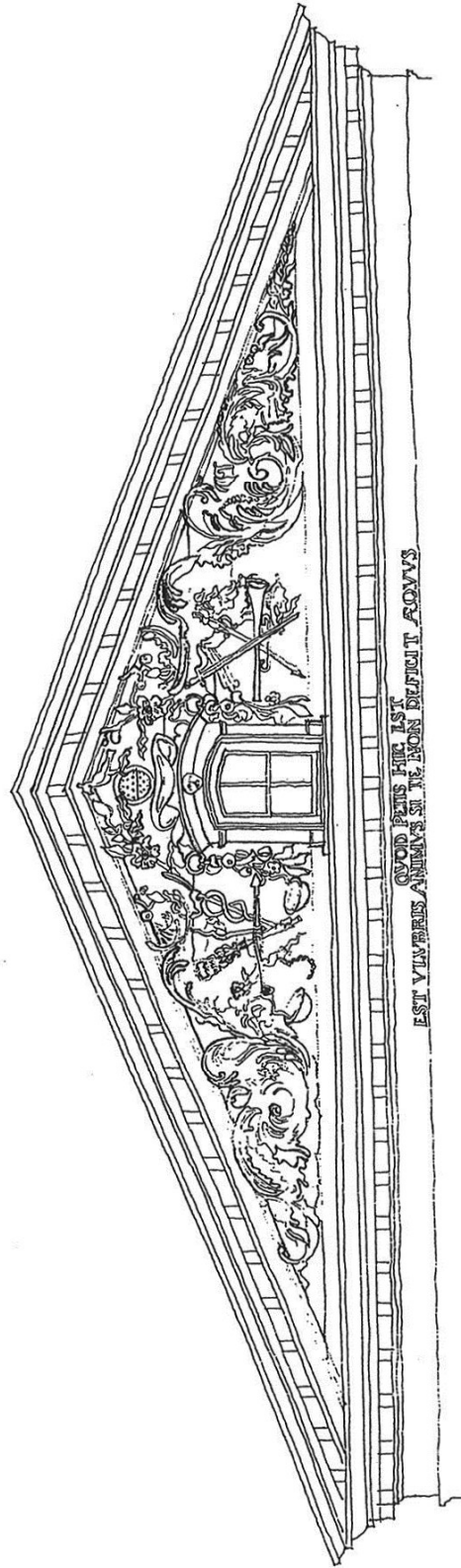
The ruins of Auchinleck Old Castle in 1791 as shown in Francis Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*



The Old Place of Auchinleck. Built in 1612, was left empty once the new house was built. This shows it before it collapsed in 1792; much less is left today. (from McGibbon and Ross, *Domestic and Castellated Architecture in Scotland*, 1897)

Boswell's father Alexander was a lawyer, like his before him. In 1754 (James would have been 14), Alexander was created Lord Auchinleck, a non-hereditary title in recognition of his appointment as a Judge of the Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court. Perhaps it was to celebrate this appointment that he decided to build a new house on his estate, a country villa, to which he could retreat when the Edinburgh courts were out of session. Auchinleck House is essentially Lord Auchinleck's rather than his more famous son's. There is no evidence that Lord Auchinleck had any particular interest in architecture from the books in his library or what is known of him, although it may be significant that in 1752, as senior curator of the Law Faculty's Library in Edinburgh, he was instructed to wait upon the Provost of Edinburgh to progress plans for a new library for the faculty. The plans eventually passed in an Act of 1752 amalgamated the Advocates Library within the City Chambers. The resulting building on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh was completed in 1761, and while the Advocate's Library was never actually housed there, the pilasters and pediment of the City Chambers do bear some resemblance to Auchinleck. Comparisons have also been drawn with houses in Holland, where Lord Auchinleck studied in the 1720s.

His choice of a classical style for his house almost certainly sprang from a deep-seated love of the classics rather than simply a reflection of the fashion of day. A keen classicist all his life, Lord Auchinleck seems particularly to have identified with the writings of Horace. A frequent Horatian theme is the pleasure of a fulfilling life in one's own (usually rural) locale. The epigram which presides over Auchinleck House on its pediment encapsulates this approach to life – *Quod petis, hic est; Est Ulubris animus si te non deficit aequus*. This translates as 'What you seek is here in this remote place if you can only keep a steady disposition'. Ulubrae was a decaying town north of Rome in the Pomentine marshes; Juvenal describes it as empty and Cicero comments that the frogs were particularly noisy there. The quotation comes from a letter from Horace to his friend Bullatius, complaining about the fashion for travelling abroad to escape



EST VLA TRIS ANNAS SI VE NON DEFFIT. 1603  
QVOD PVS HIC IST

**AUCHINLECK HOUSE**  
Main House : Pediment

**Simpson & Brown Architects**

This Drawing is the copyright of Simpson & Brown Chartered Architects



one's troubles when one can just as well find happiness at home. A translation of the full passage reads:

*'Fortune keeps a smiling face; at Rome let Samos be praised, and Chios and Rhodes – though far away! And you – whatever hour God has given for your well-being, take it with a grateful hand, do not put off joys from year to year; so that wherever you have been, you may say that you have lived happily. For it is reason and wisdom that take away cares, and not a site commanding a wide expanse of sea. Those who rush across the sea change their climate and not their mind. A busy idleness is our bane; with boats and chariots we seek to make life happy. What you are seeking is here; it is at Ulubrae, if only you can keep a steady disposition.'*

Was there a certain irony in Lord Auchinleck's comparison of his estate with a remote frog-infested swamp? Almost certainly he chose the extract with his eldest son in mind and possibly guessed even in the mid 1750s that the 'animus aequus' would prove elusive for James, who was then on the Continent and thereafter generally much happier in London than at Auchinleck. Yet Lord Auchinleck himself was not immune to the 'hypocondria' (or depression) that plagued James so perhaps there was a measure of self-exhortation as well. The difference between them was that the Horace's advice seemed to work for Lord Auchinleck, reading in his library or pottering on his estate.

The emblems carved upon the pediment represent various aspects of the cultivated mind, all of which could by implication be expected to find expression in a house whose setting and design seem deliberately to evoke a villa and a cultivated life away from the city. Music, the martial arts, scales for justice, a sceptre for authority and the serpent-entwined staff of Aesculapius the healer are all represented, grouped around the central motif, a hooded falcon, from the Boswell family crest. The Duchess of Northumberland perhaps missed the allusions in the pediment when she dismissed it in typically trenchant style in her diary in 1760 as 'terribly loaded with Ornaments of Trumpets & Maces and the Deuce knows what'. (The building itself she found 'but a middling house, but justly it is a romantick spot.')

For a long time the design of the house was assumed to be by the Adam brothers and it can be compared with nearby Dumfries House, which is known to be their work and was built in the same period as Auchinleck House. Lord Auchinleck records a visit to the Earl of Dumfries at Leifnorris in a letter in 1753 'where politicks and House building made the subject of conversation at a plentiful dinner.' In fact, Auchinleck is more likely to be an artisan house, designed by Lord Auchinleck himself in consultation with his master craftsmen.

To help our restoration of Auchinleck House, Landmark investigated the Boswell Papers at the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at Yale. Although many of the records relating to the construction of the house have been lost, those papers and receipts which do remain provide tantalising glimpses of the building process. A discharge of wages slip dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1760 shows us that Edinburgh squarewright John Johnston worked on the house, and his seems the mind most likely to lie behind its design. Johnston had worked on Duff House and at Haddo with the elder John Baxter, another well-known mason and both were protégés of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, author of *The Country Seat* and instrumental in encouraging the ethos of the villa in Scotland. In this sense, Auchinleck House is the natural successor to Italian Renaissance villas such as Landmark's Villa Saraceno.

It was a busy period for the building trade: James Bruce, overseer of the Auchinleck estate, wrote to James Boswell in July 1758,

*'The building is going on: tho' slowly by reason of few hands, the reason of which was, before a full determination was fixed on, Masons was all taken up as a vast worke is carrying on in this country by these great Nabooos.'*

Bruce means 'the nabobs', men who returned after making their fortunes overseas. Houses at Auchincruive, Rozelle, Drongan and Rosemount were all built around this time.

A near contemporary said that Lord Auchinleck built his house 'so slowly and prudently, that he himself hardly felt the expense', although the General Ledger at the Bank of Scotland reveals that Lord Auchinleck took out Bonds of Credit for £500 and £1,000 between 1759 and 1762. Expenditure on the estate as a whole peaked dramatically between 1758 and 1760 and window tax was first paid on the house in 1760, for thirty one windows.

Surviving building accounts at Yale allow us to follow expenditure on building materials for the house such as tar, rozen, tallow, hemp, linseed oil, butter, black soap and cord as well more predictable items like nails, lime, steel, red and white lead and so on. At the end of May 1762, Lord Auchinleck finally paid 'James Bowie Slater in Air' for 18,000 Esdale slates at £1-9/- per thousand. James Boswell was away on his Grand Tour for the mid-1760s, but after his return he could write to his great friend William Temple,

*'This is a superb place: we have the noblest natural beauties and my father has made has made most extensive improvements. We look ten miles out upon our own dominions. We have an excellent new house. I am now writing in a library forty foot long. Come to us, my dearest friend.'* (30 March 1767)

The estate journals (of which more below) confirm that the four pavilions that flank the house were not added until 1773-4, although they seem always to have been intended. James's younger brother David wrote to him in October 1766,

*'I am glad to hear Sir Wm. Forbes was pleased with Auchinleck. It is a really noble place, but there may be a vast deall done yet to beautify it, there must be Pavilions built to the House, to make it have a grand look, at present it appears very bare, and does not at all support the Dignity of the Family.'*  
*Lord Auchinleck had tried to interest James in their design as early as 1765 when he wrote to James (then in Italy): 'I have some little buildings to make for some kind of offices near the house and have got home a good many stones for them but you shall assist in fixing the plan*



**The South West Pavilion nearing the end of its restoration.**

*and situation of them so will have an opportunity of sharing your Italian taste, for though the buildings are small, ex ungue leonem.’ (a misconstrued Latin version of a Greek proverb – ‘By the lion’s claw shall you know him’).*

There is however no evidence that James Boswell had a hand in the pavilions’ eventual baroque design, which evokes Vanbrugh and provides an unusual contrast with the main house. Alexander Pedin and John Hamilton were wrights who were regularly employed on the estate and from the autumn of 1773 to late summer 1774 we find them working on the pavilions – putting up the masons’ scaffold, making the windows and doors, helping the plumbers on the roofs. Boswell refers to the finished pavilions in his journal in August 1775 as ‘new whitened’, which would certainly have toned down the now rather startling contrast between their ruddy sandstone and the gentler grey limestone of the main house. Idiosyncratic they may seem, but it is this very tension between regularity and irregularity which makes Auchinleck House embody the spirit of eighteenth century Scotland so effectively. In addition to making an aesthetic

contribution to the house, the pavilions would have been used as estate outbuildings.

Once the house itself was finished, attention could turn to the landscaping around it. Overseer James Bruce had known Boswell all his life and he wrote regularly to him from Auchinleck. From these letters we get both glimpses of the work and of Bruce's wistfulness that Boswell did not show more interest in the estate:

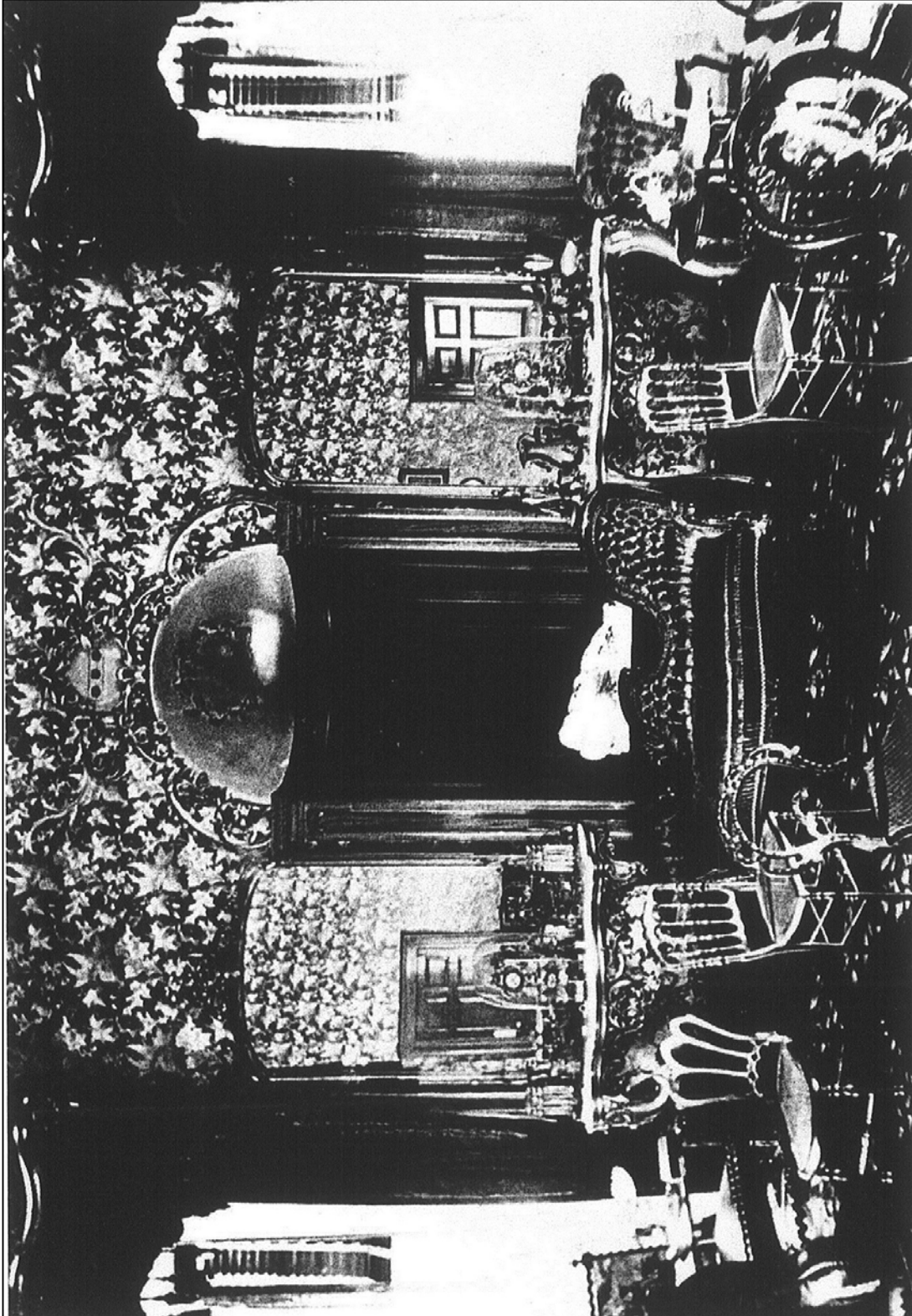
*'But mean time, to give hopes of your intending to settle sometime at this place, as now something must be done in finishing about the New House. It might be of use at spare hours if you'd purchase some plans of Noblemens Seats, of which plenty will be got in the City and from which several things might be taken that would help us much. Likewise a few different kinds of seeds either of trees or flowers, you might please send to Edinburgh as directed for my Lord, which would be no small comfort to him, as you know his taste that way.....I must inform you that at last we have got plenty of water in the well at New house.'*

(10 Jan 1763)

*'We just continue about this, moving in the usual slow way. Sometimes levelling a little about the New House, than carting stones, and dung, mending dykes, weeding hedges, working in the garden (by the way theirs very few fruit this year here) and now cutting hay....Your Honour according to promise has never sent any plans.'*

(8 July 1763)

By the time Lord Auchinleck died in 1782, the new house and its immediate surroundings would have been well-established. Like his own father, he was a great tree planter: Andrew Wight in *Present State of Husbandry in Scotland* (1777-8) wrote 'Lord Auchinleck is a most assiduous planter, and equally careful of his trees, though, indeed, in that wet climate they require little else but to be fenced from cattle. His enclosures are extensive, and his own farm is mostly in grass. Upon his broad walks lined with trees, and consequently well sheltered, hay is commonly taken'.



The dining room at Auchinleck House after it became a Victorian parlour.

His largest road building project was the Barony Road (now the B7036), a straight, three mile avenue which connects the south drive to the church in Auchinleck. He planted beech and oak trees along it, many of which remain today. They are said to refer to the 'B' and 'O' of Boswell. Lord Auchinleck humorously dubbed this drive his 'Via Sacra'. He also formed the planned village of Auchinleck from 1756, on a 'Maltese Cross' plan-form and encouraged tradesmen to settle there. At the same time, he refurbished the little chapel there and built a plain family mausoleum. Both survive and the Auchinleck Boswell Museum was formerly houses in the chapel. The coat of arms on the mausoleum supported by two elegant greyhounds is however that adopted by Lord Auchinleck's grandson, Sir James Boswell and his wife Jessie Jane Montgomerie.

Lord Auchinleck lived to the ripe old age of 75, increasingly cantankerous and garrulous. James Boswell was 41 when he inherited Auchinleck Estate in 1782 and became 9<sup>th</sup> Laird. He made no changes to the house, although he continued his father's tree planting schemes. Planting had been undertaken on the estate since the early seventeenth century and it was the aspect of estate management which he enjoyed most. JB wrote to his friend John Johnston of Grange in October 1771, 'I have been serving an apprenticeship with my father in the art of pruning, and I hope in time to be a skilful and diligent guardian of trees here.' After his inheritance, he attended to seasonal thinning, pruning and replanting as well as planting, just as father had done.

At JB's death in 1795, the estate passed to his son Alexander Boswell, who became an English MP and was made a baronet in 1821. After his death in a duel in 1822, his son Sir James became eleventh Laird aged only 15. After his death, his eldest daughter Julia inherited but she and her husband died childless, so the estate passed through her sister Emily (who had died in 1898) to Emily's son. Emily had married the fifth Lord Talbot de Malahide, of Malahide Castle in Ireland and their only child, James Boswell, was the last direct male descendant of James Boswell the biographer.

The house changed remarkably little through the nineteenth century, the only significant change being one of function, when the dining room was swapped with the parlour.

The Talbot family moved to Malahide in Ireland in 1905. They dispersed the contents of the house and took Boswell's papers (which the family had suppressed) with them. In the 1920s, Auchinleck was sold to a distant branch of the family, the Douglas-Boswells of Garallan. After the war the house began a long period of decline. It was uninhabited from the mid 1960s. The lead was stripped by thieves from the roof and for twelve years in the 1970s and 1980s water poured down behind the linings of the outside walls, accumulating in the basement and its vault. Dry rot set in, and the building deteriorated rapidly. All the plaster and panelling were damaged by the water, dry rot set in and in 1986, its owner James Boswell agreed to sell the house to the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) with 35 acres of land.

The Trust made the house watertight, but then struggled to find a role for it in the face of development proposals for the rest of the site. In 1999, the SHBT turned to the Landmark Trust, and the freehold was transferred to the Landmark Trust (Auchinleck) Ltd., the house to be managed by the Landmark Trust.



## 2. The Restoration of Auchinleck House

Auchinleck House came to Landmark as a weather-proof shell. The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust had been able to make emergency repairs to the roof and external walls and replace the windows with a grant from Historic Scotland. All the panelling had been carefully removed from site and stored so that more than half has since been reinstated. The plasterwork had already been badly damaged, especially around the perimeter of rooms, but a detailed photographic record was taken and fallen fragments salvaged wherever possible.

Pre-contract work began early in 1999 even before Landmark's formal acquisition of the house. As architect, we appointed James Simpson of Simpson and Brown, who had long been a champion of Auchinleck House. James is an acknowledged expert on eighteenth-century Scottish architecture and it was he who undertook the emergency repairs for the SHBT. Before work began, Simpson & Brown employed master carpenter Tom McFadyen of Addyman and Kay to decode the hastily stored panelling. Fiona MacDonald (also of Simpson & Brown) carried out a thorough survey of each elevation in every room. All this thorough pre-contract work was completed by December 1999 when, despite frustrating delays due to legal difficulties surrounding the acquisition, Auchinleck House was finally transferred to the ownership of the Landmark Trust (Auchinleck) Ltd.

After an exhaustive search, Hunter & Clark of Glasgow were chosen as contractors, a large, traditional firm of builders with particular strength in stonework. Their project team was made up of John MacLeish as contracts director and brothers Jim and Alan Brady as Contracts Manager and Site Agent respectively. Sue Whittle acted as post-contract architect for Simpson & Brown. Quantity surveying was provided by Landmark's regular partners in Scotland, Robertson & Dawson, with Ron Dawson acting as project manager and Willy Ross as quantity surveyor. These are the people without whom Auchinleck's resurrection could never have happened and once this team was in place, work could begin in earnest.



**Auchinleck House as it was in 1999, when the freehold was transferred to the Landmark Trust (Auchinleck) Ltd.**



**The east and north elevations of Auchinleck House, February 2001. The scaffolding was up throughout 2000 and the first half of 2001.**

## The Exterior

For all 2000 and the first half of 2001, the exterior of the house was swathed in scaffolding. Very little was done to the front elevation, though we replaced half the panes of plate glass in the new windows to recapture some of the glitter of the original glazing. The whole pediment was carefully cleaned and consolidated by Nicholas Boyes. Once viewed at close quarters from the scaffolding, the high quality of the carving of the pediment was even more apparent. Modern fragments were pinned in to repair the original decoration only where absolutely necessary. The column capitals were more eroded than appears from the ground; after much debate we decided to leave their replacement until it becomes unavoidable. For the time being, the capitals have been consolidated so that the original workmanship can be enjoyed while still bearing its patina of time.

On the rear elevation, the stonework was repointed with flush pointing in the traditional way. We removed cement rendering at the lower level and replaced it with lime render, finished with limewash. The rainwater goods were replaced and drain into a re-opened cundy (similar to a French drain) which runs around the house. The organisation of the courtyards have been rationalised a little to enable the necessary parking and access. We were puzzled by the fact that walls did not connect the obelisks to the house at the rear as those to the pavilions do at the front – until we learned that these sections had been removed in another rationalisation earlier this century. Perhaps these will be reinstated when time and funds allow.

The pavilions have been made wind and weather tight. The observant will notice that, despite their broadly similar silhouettes, each is different. They would once have been used as estate offices and the two which flank the front of the house once carried a clock and a bell respectively in their roundels – the mounting for the bell is still there. Despite a solitary reference from Boswell in 1775 that the pavilions were 'new whitened' it was clear that it had been many years since



**The fine capitals on the pilasters are more worn than they may appear. For now, we could not bear to compromise the original craftsmanship so they have been consolidated as found.**



**'..terribly loaded with ornaments of trumpets and maces..' Newly cleaned and conserved, the crispness of the original carving stands out better than ever.**



**Architect James Simpson and stone conservator Nick Boyce discuss the consolidation of the pediment.**



**The hooded falcon of the Boswell crest (affectionately dubbed the 'hooded parrot' by the builders) at the apex of the pediment. The crude holes in the roundel were clearly made at a later date than the fine carving**



The south east pavilion after repointing and repair.



The north west pavilion before repair

they bore any limewash and so we have left them standing unashamed and idiosyncratic in their ruddy hue.

The stable block for the house, a pleasantly functional design, still stands at the top of the south drive, although these buildings are not in Landmark's ownership.

### **The Policy Lands**

Originally of course, the Auchinleck estate was much larger. Boswell describes it as stretching for ten miles. Landmark was happy to acquire a more modest 35 acre holding around the house, which extends to the west 'lawn' and the field in front of the house and also enabled us to reinstate the north drive as the polite entrance. The rest of the estate is in private ownership and every August the Auchinleck Horse Trials are held at the front of the house.

The north drive bridge over the Dippol Burn by which the house is now approached belong to the 1830s, in the days of Sir James Boswell, JB's grandson. The bridge is a typical example of a good Scottish single span bridge, which will serve its purpose well while the deck is properly maintained. Unfortunately, this was not the case here and water had been seeping through for years, washing out the joints. The footings in rock face on the south bank nearest the house were also in a precarious state. Ted Ruddock was engaged as engineer to solve these problems, which necessitated a great deal of work. The span was filled with scaffolding and the builders spent many hours prone on their backs pointing, re-pinning and grouting. Victorian and later repairs were left as they were and stones which had fallen into the Dippol Burn were fished out and repositioned. Only some ten percent of the balustrade had survived so the balustrading was reinstated to a modified design to provide greater strength, which we hope will be better able to withstand the rigours of the Scottish climate. As for the railings, only two pieces of iron remained so new sections were cast in Scotland.



Better drainage was installed, not just on the bridge itself but also on the banks adjacent to carry away surface water. A new concrete deck was given a tarmac surface which will soften in appearance as it is used. Despite all these remedial works, the bridge could only be restored to a proportion of its original strength and will only carry cars. We found the north drive to be surfaced with local river-washed cobbles, no doubt taken from the Dippol Burn itself.

There are other features to be discovered in the grounds. The grave to the east along the Dippol Burn is a modern one and belongs to Patrick Boswell, who inherited Auchinleck from his father, Colonel John Douglas Boswell who bought the estate in the 1920s. Landmarkers can also retrace JB's steps around the estate. Near the Dippol Burn bridge on the south bank are the grotto and ice house. The grotto, also known as Boswell's Summerhouse, dates back to Boswell's day and was said to have cost no more than a normal room to construct. A well-finished room has been fashioned out of the cliff face with a door and two Gothic windows. Mortice holes suggest that there was once joinery. It provided a picturesque destination for Dr. Johnson on his visit in 1773, as it still does for us today. The ice house is a well-finished ovoid cavity hewn out of the rock. It may just have been used to store ice cut from the estate in the winter to keep for summer use or, more likely, also provided cold storage for salted venison. In this case the chamber would have been packed with salted meat and ice and then sealed with earth until the meat was required. We hope to be able to make access easier to both these structures when fund permit.

Perhaps a mile to the west of the house beyond the west lawn lie the ruins of the Old Place, best reached by the track which runs alongside the home farm. The Old Place does not stand on land owned by Landmark although considerate access should not be a problem. This is the spot whose 'sullen dignity' Johnson preferred to the new house and where Boswell swore so many passionate vows

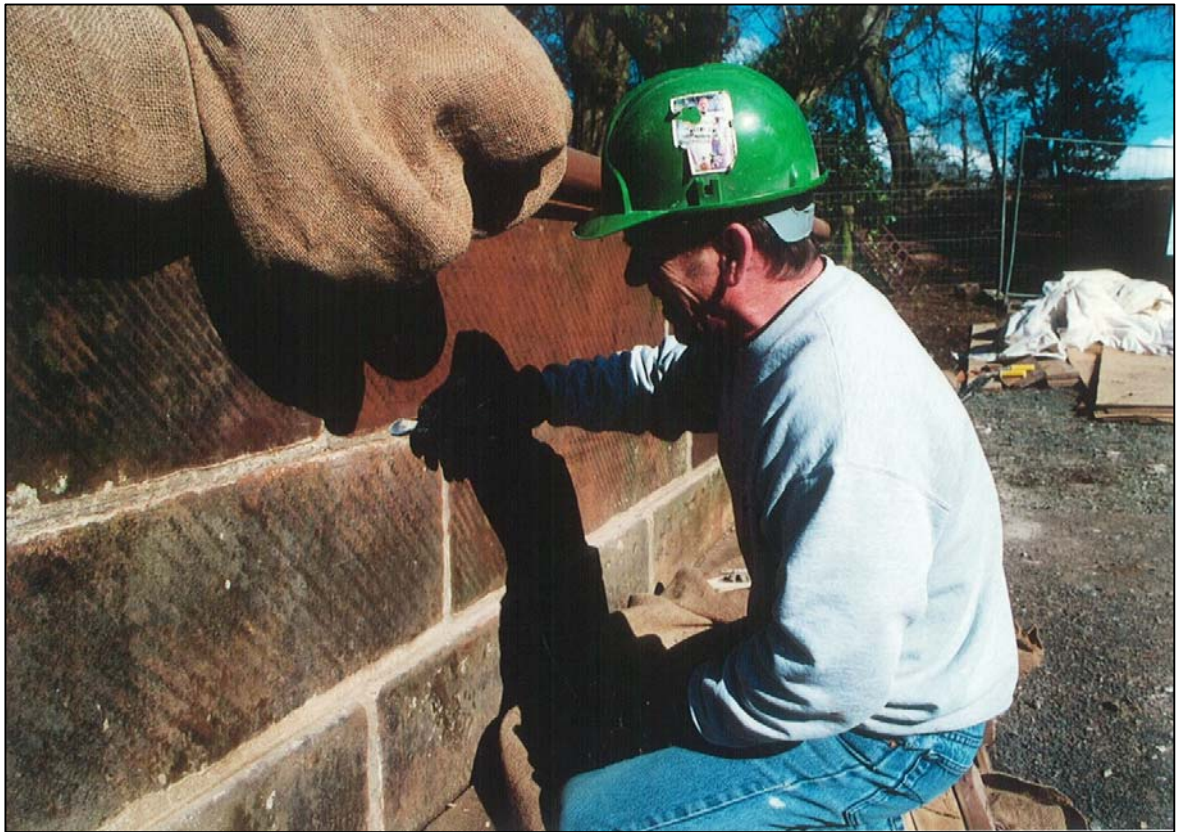


**The Bridge before repair. Auchinleck House can be seen in the distance**





Repair work underway. The new cast iron balustrade and piers have been put back



**'Many hours pointing, re-pinning and grouting'**



**Vista of Auchinleck House across the repaired Dippol Burn Bridge. The hessian wrappings protect the lime mortar from February frosts**



**Boswell's Summerhouse or Grotto**



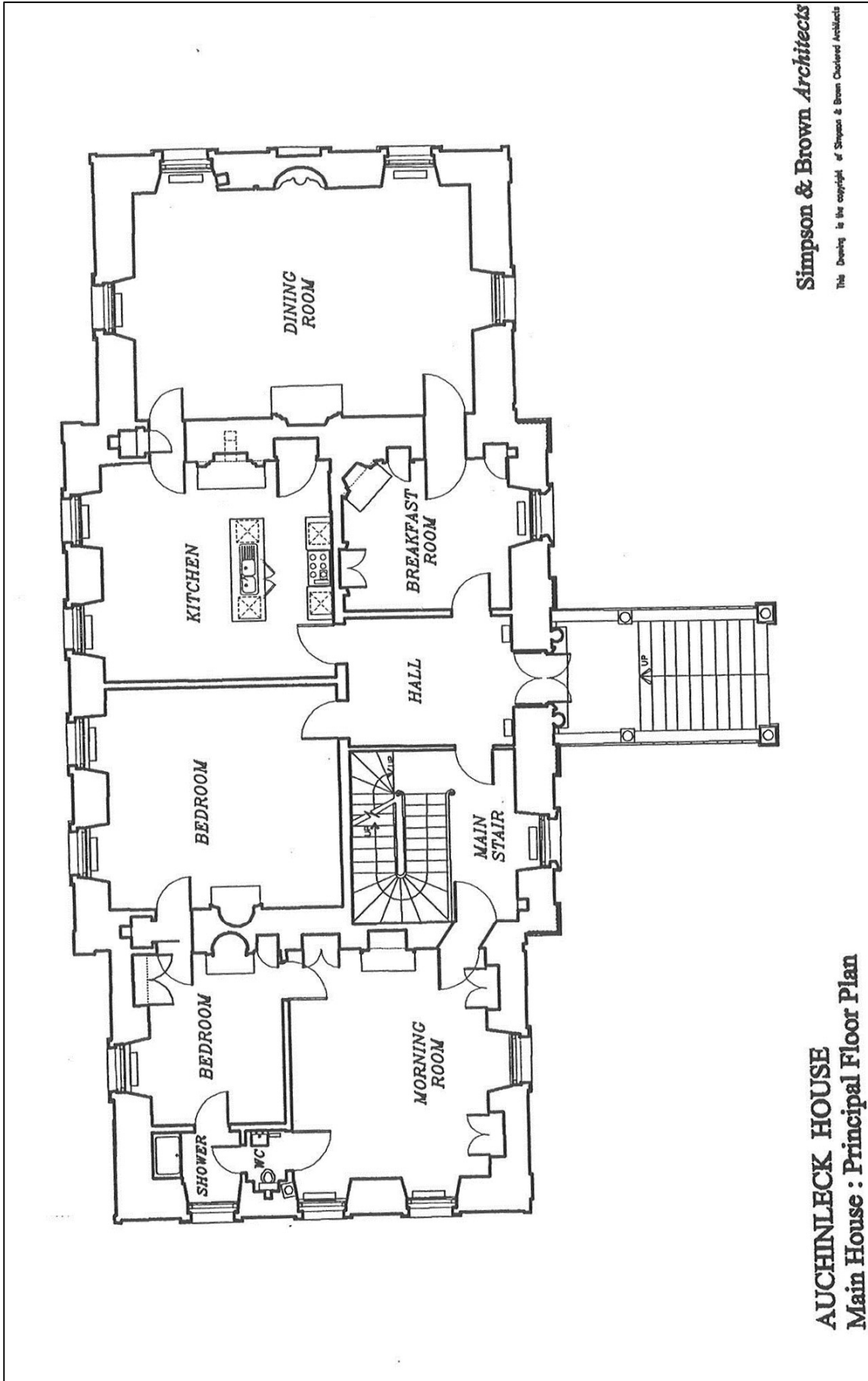
**The entrance to the Ice House**

to uphold his ancestral responsibilities. In spring it is known locally as 'snowdrop valley' and James Bruce often recorded the advent of the snowdrops at the Old Place in the estate journals. It is not over-fanciful to consider that today's crop are from the same stock. Of the Old Castle, nothing can now be seen above the undergrowth although it would have stood a little upstream of the Old Place.

Just below the Old Place runs the Lugar Water, into which the Dippol Burn flows. A dramatic sandstone gorge has been carved out by the river and, to quote the Duchess of Northumberland once more, 'it is justly a romantick spot'. Just upstream on the Lugar is Wallace's Cave, believed to date to the thirteenth century although the supposed link with William Wallace is as tenuous as many such. It is complete with Gothic arched window and door and vaulted ceiling and is reached via a narrow and precarious stepped path on the banks of the Lugar.

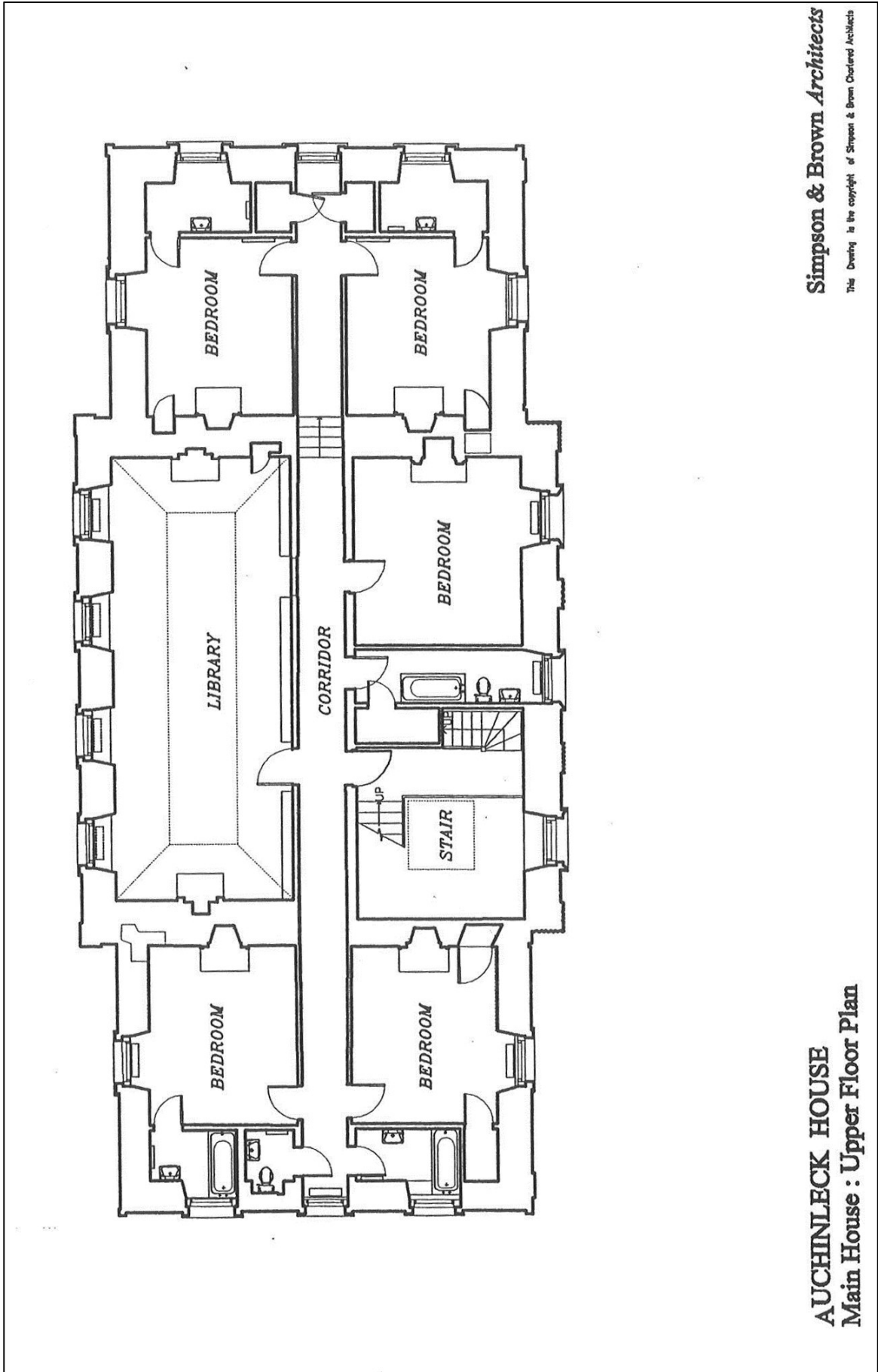


**View of the Lugar Water just below the Old Place**



**Simpson & Brown Architects**  
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**AUCHINLECK HOUSE**  
**Main House : Principal Floor Plan**



**Simpson & Brown Architects**

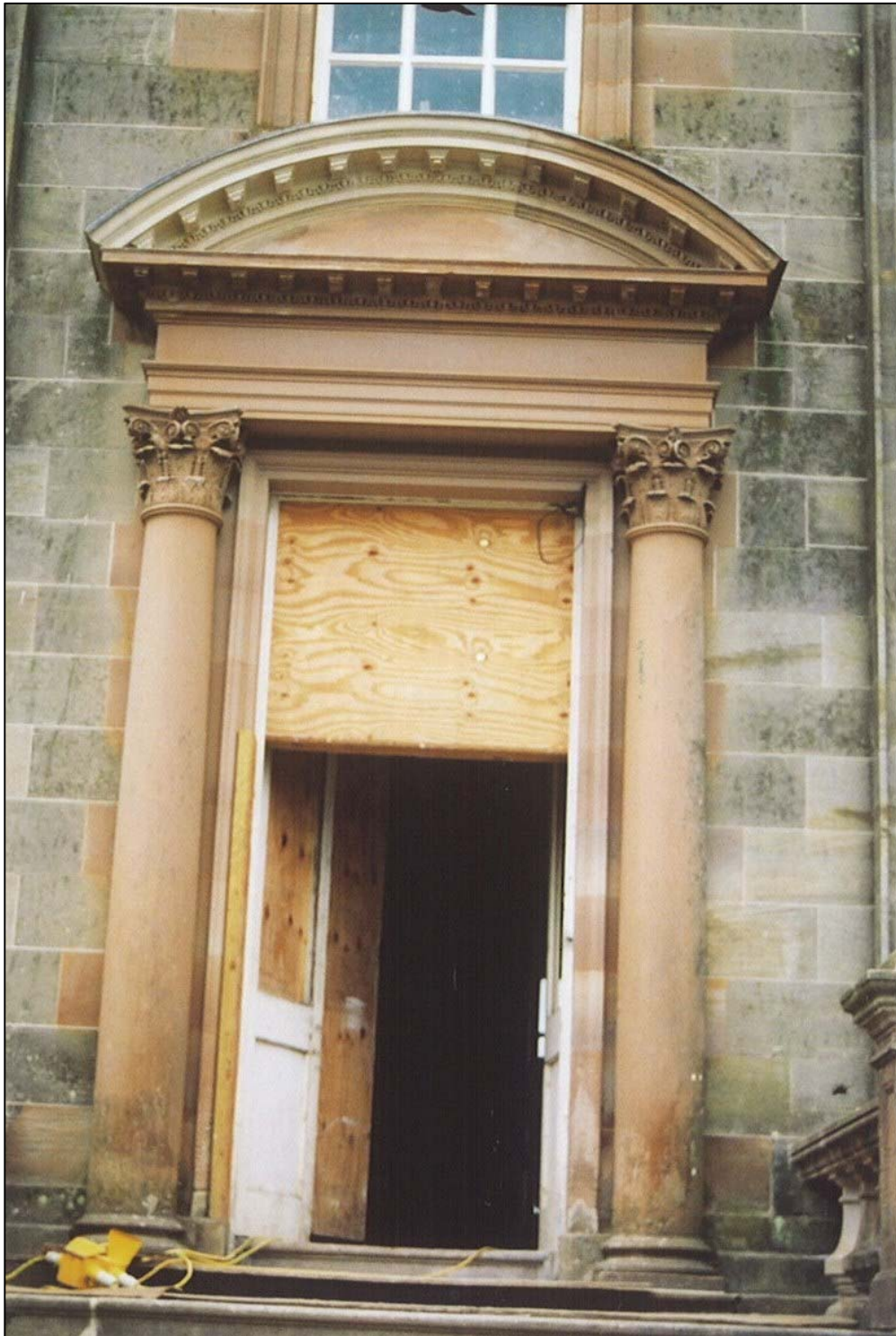
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**AUCHINLECK HOUSE**  
**Main House : Upper Floor Plan**





**The moulding over the lintel of the front door was badly eroded by the weather.**



The undamaged portion of the hood was retained, the rest replace. The stonework was carefully cleaned.

### The Interior of Auchinleck House

Landmarkers' very first encounter with Auchinleck House will be through the entrance off the south courtyard and into the basement. This may seem strange at first, but this entrance was almost certainly the daily entrance to the house. In addition, the main, polite door seems only ever to have been intended to be opened from the inside, the joinery having more in common with a sash window than a conventional door. We decided to keep this arrangement; after that first entrance, Landmarkers can choose their own practicalities of access.

The basement porch is almost certainly a later addition, perhaps at the time when the pavilions were added. Its double doors are different weights, an external and an internal door. The corridor, with exits at each end, is also in some ways both an external and internal space. We have done relatively little down here apart from general consolidation though we did take the opportunity to lay new drains beneath the (original) flagstones along the length of the corridor. At the south end of the corridor lie a cloakroom for day visitors and a boiler room, essential for drying outdoor clothes in Scotland.

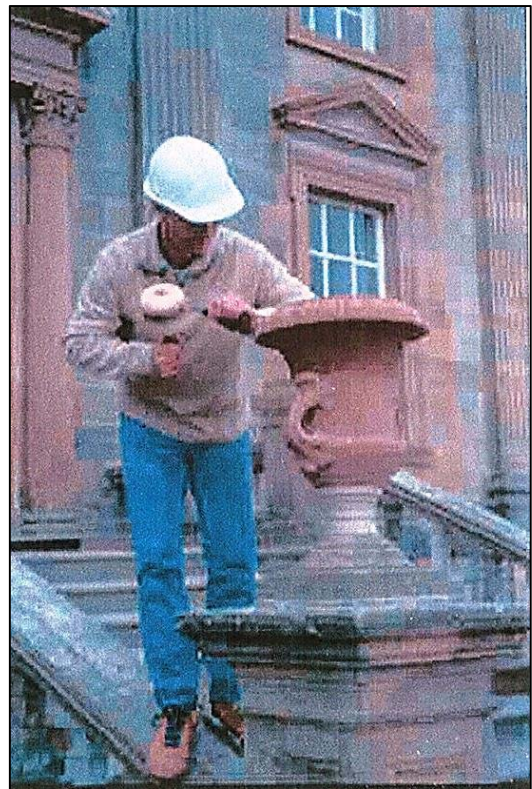
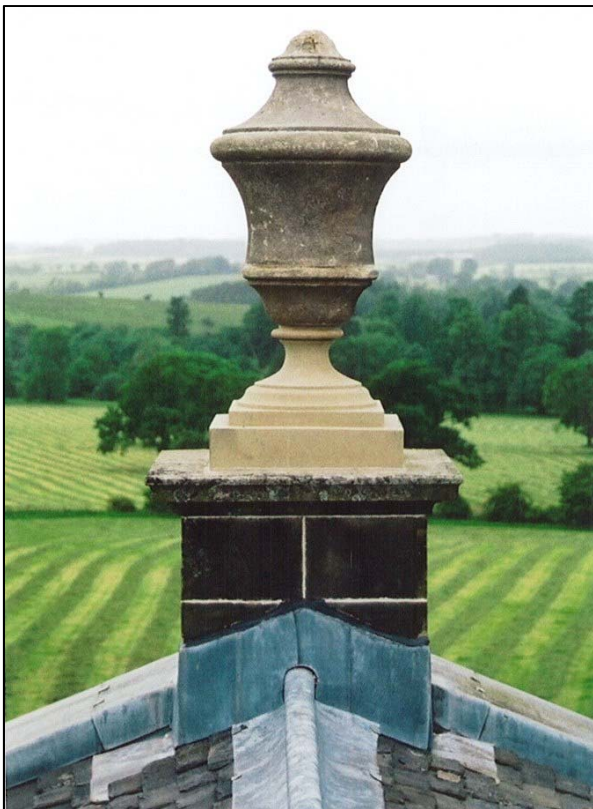
Along the corridor the original kitchen, servants' hall and wine cellar are there for visitors to discover. A caretaker's flat has been installed at the north end where we had already installed basic services. The whole house has been re-wired and re-plumbed, and central heating and smoke detection systems installed.

A new bathroom has been installed in the room below the main stairs (which from the inventories was probably a capacious broom cupboard in the past). The washbasin is a gift from the architect, James Simpson.

The formal entrance to the house is of course approached up the stone steps at the front. The steps themselves seem to have been altered after the first build: the balustrade joins clumsily with the quoins and there is also evidence in the wall that there were once iron railings. The urns, both from the balustrade and the



The assortment of urns was lovingly restored by Chris Chalmers



skyline, had been ravaged by time and vandals. We found them scattered and largely broken. They were lovingly patched and repaired where possible, and refashioned where not, by mason Chris Chalmers. They now stand in all their variety as an exemplar of today's conservation practice.

The entrance hall can almost be read as a loggia, an outside space inside, with its original stone floor. It is lit only by the window over the door. The last inhabitants had taken down the wall which originally divided the entrance hall from the antechamber or breakfast room, for a more practical hallway. We felt it was important to reinstate this wall to return to the original proportions, respecting too the distinction originally made by the different cornice mouldings in the two rooms (which were still extant) and the change in flooring (that of the breakfast room is wooden). Note too how the parade planning enables a return to the entrance hall from either the public or private rooms on this floor.

We can only speculate on how what we now call the breakfast room was used, with its simple buffet and deep wall cupboards. Even the inventories shed no light.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it was a receiving room for guests to gather before dinner, or for servants to organise their service. We had to replace all the wooden floors in the house in random width boards based on a very small sample of the original floor in the study. However, the ceiling joinery in this room is original.

Unlike the other rooms in the house, the dining room had mortice rather than rim locks. Mortice locks were a relatively recent invention and their use meant this room could not be locked. The space between the doors of adjoining rooms is a feature throughout this floor, perhaps to improve sound or heat insulation. Both doorways to the dining room are treated in this way. This elegant room had suffered much from water ingress. A border of ceiling plaster had been lost right

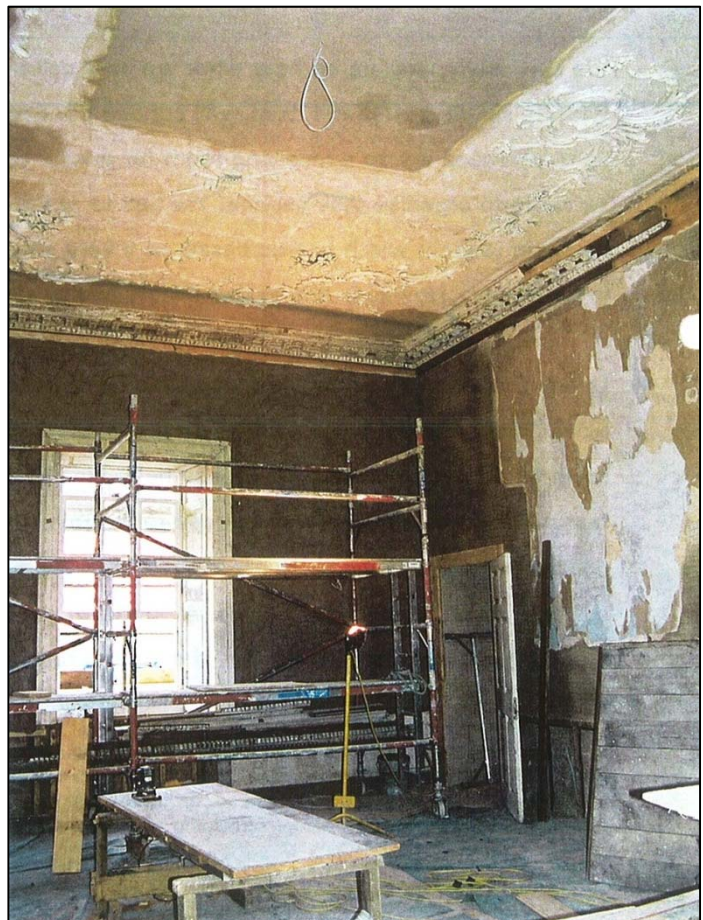
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<sup>1</sup> Probate inventories exist for 1795 (at JB's death) and 1822 (at Sir Alexander's death) and a further list taken in 1805 for no clear reason. They were closely consulted as restoration proceeded and transcripts of all three are on the bookshelves in the house. They provide fascinating insights into the earlier furnishing and functioning of Auchinleck House.



The dining room in February 2001. The ceiling perimeter had failed through water damage and the cornice is almost missing. New flooring planks are waiting to be laid.

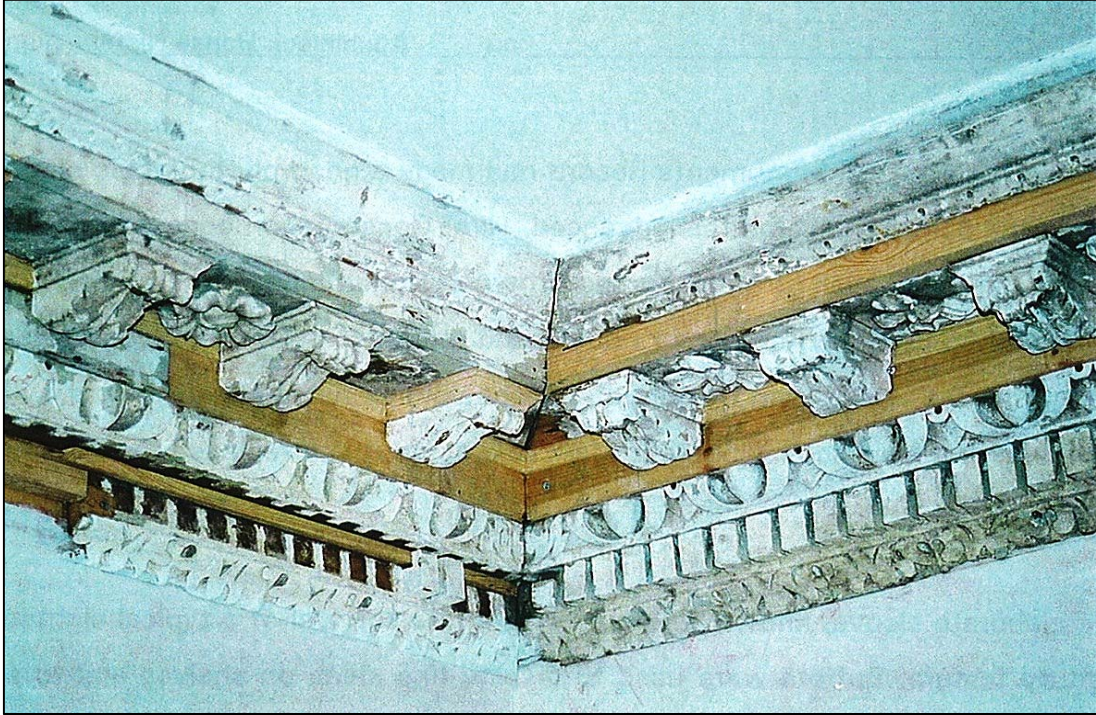
A few weeks later, the walls have their scratch (base) coat of lime plaster and the ceiling has been patched in. The ceilings mouldings and cornices have been retained wherever possible



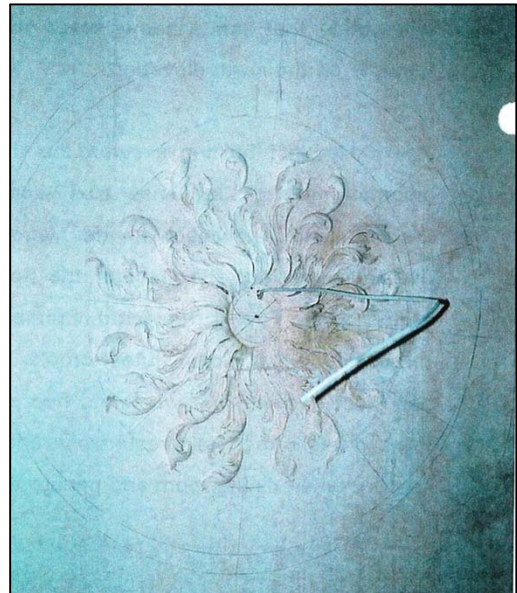
around the perimeter of the room, the central rose was gone and the floor rotten. Luckily, the Scottish Monuments Record had made a good photographic survey before the damage became this advanced. Hirst Conservation consolidated the ceiling and Sian Lovell of Simpson and Brown designed a new central rose, based on careful study of contemporary houses and references. The rose was executed in new plaster by Cliveden Conservation. The cornice was badly damaged, with many missing dentils. Hunter & Clark re-erected it and replaced the missing dentils.

The elaborate alcove, known as a buffet, is a rare survival of a typical eighteenth-century feature. Buffets were used to display fine china on shelves and to serve food from the drop-leg table leaf. A good proportion of the buffet's ornamental surround survived, although the crest had largely disappeared. We had a photograph from the 1900s from which to work, although this reference was not helped by the busyness of its wallpaper. Sian again designed the missing sections which Cliveden Conservation translated into plaster. The shield design above the alcove is based on the first quarter of the Arms of the Boswells of Auchinleck, 'Argent on a fess sable three cinquefoils Argent'. We knew the position of the shelves since they were inset to the wall and these were replaced. The observant will notice that the window space masked by the buffet appears as a blind window on the north elevation.

The mailed fist holding a sword on the ceiling in front of the buffet, with its enigmatic motto 'Je pense plus' comes from the family arms of Euphemia Erskine, Lord Auchinleck's wife. Across the room, on the ceiling in front of fireplaces presides the crest of the Boswell family (the hooded falcon with the motto 'Vraye Foy' – true faith). Suitably Arcadian emblems are scattered across the ceiling – Pan pipes, flutes, crooks and cornucopia. The original fireplace had been lost and the one we found had clearly been moved from the parlour (now the Landmark kitchen), presumably reflecting the changes made in the nineteenth century when dining room and parlour exchanged roles.

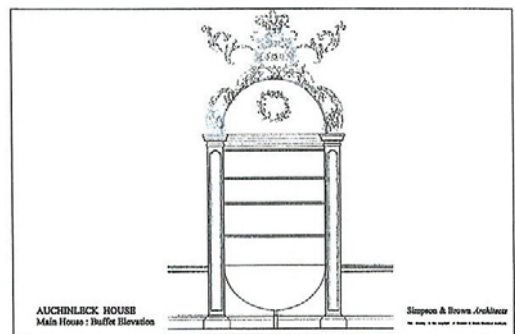
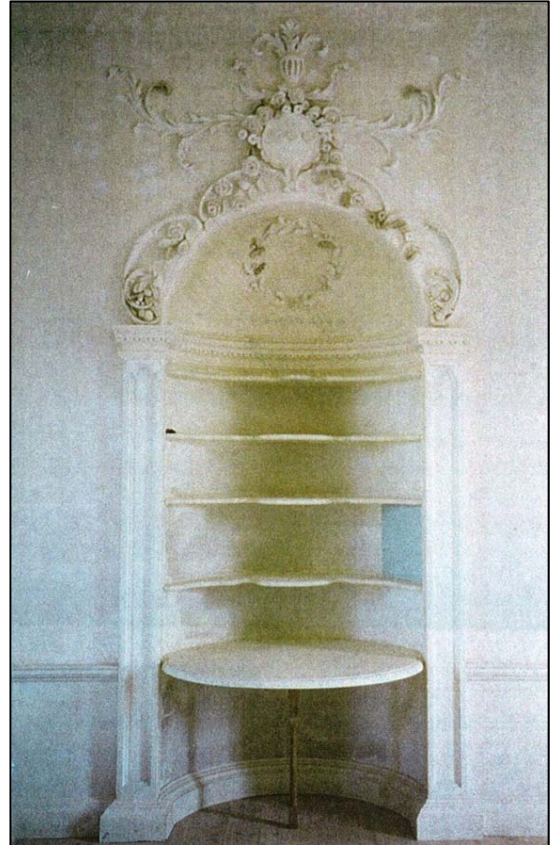
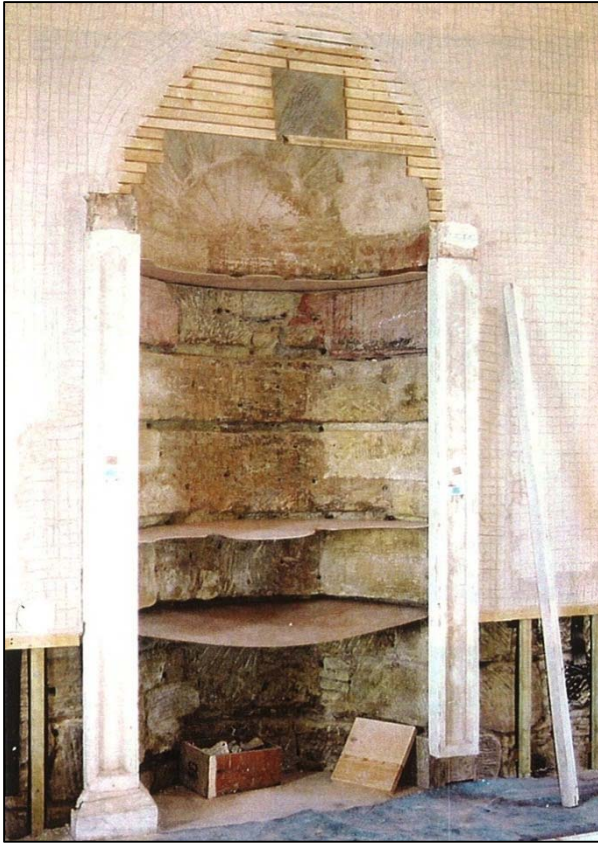


**Dining room cornice. The original mouldings have been salvaged from where they lay on the floor and reinstated.**



**One of the vases on the ceiling, new work flowing into the original.  
The half finished ceiling rose (right)**





The dining room buffet at various stages of restoration



Emblems from the dining room ceiling after restoration



**A specialist from Clivedon Conservation working on the plasterwork on the dining room ceiling.**



The kitchen nearing completion, the newly discovered wall cupboard and blind door to the right.



The principal bedroom on the ground floor, February 2001. The floor has yet to be relaid; a trough of lime plaster is curing in the middle of the floor. Much of the original plaster has been saved. A new scratch coat is drying over the door.

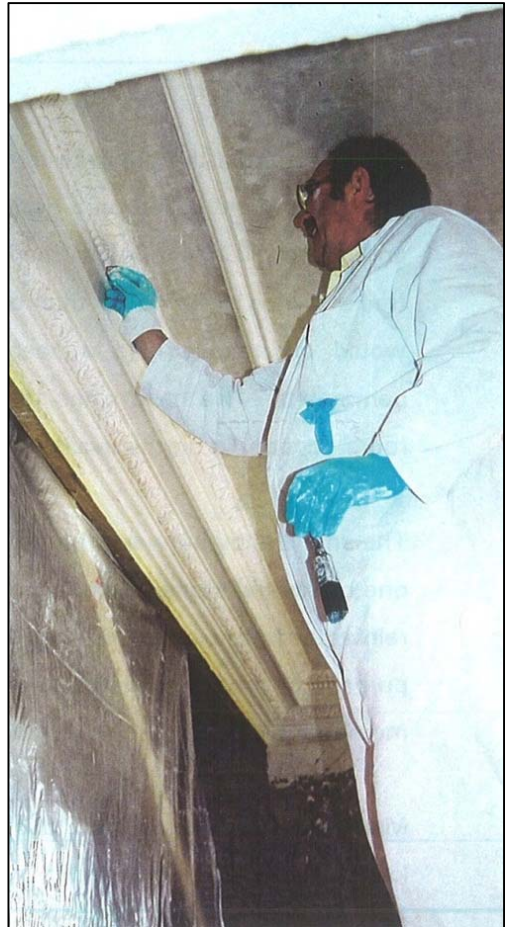
So we returned the fireplace to its original position and devised a replacement for the dining room based on a design from Hawkhill House, a building of similar age and design. To identify Landmark's intervention, the dining room fireplace holds a free-standing grate rather than a hob as elsewhere in the house. The dining room would once have held a chandelier. The current sconce lights may not be permanent – we have plans to reconsider both the lighting and pictures in this room depending on the availability of contemporary items.

The small lobby between the dining room and what used to be the parlour holds one of several stone basins cunningly concealed about the house. Flushed with rainwater from cisterns on the roof carried in pipes lined with tiles, the most likely purpose of these basins would seem to be for use as *pissoirs*, in which male members of the household could discreetly relieve themselves.

Much thought went into our decision to turn the former parlour into today's kitchen. Funds and practicality suggested that the kitchen should be on the ground floor, once the impracticality of a basement kitchen for today's lifestyle had been acknowledged. As mentioned, there had already been changes to this room's function and experience has taught us that today, the kitchen in a Landmark is often used as *de facto* living room – almost a current day parlour.

The former parlour was the room most altered from its eighteenth century state – and it was next to the dining room. So the decision was taken, although we were careful to design the units so that as much as possible of the original room could still be read architecturally.

The fireplace has been reinstalled from the dining room and we have added a new painted surround. The ceiling is mostly original, including the cornice. The walls are of particular interest since we discovered not only that a door to the bedroom had been blocked (since the dado was missing) but also evidence of a blind door in the east wall to balance the doorway through to the entrance hall, and a wall



**The stairwell. The stairs were completely covered to prevent damage.**

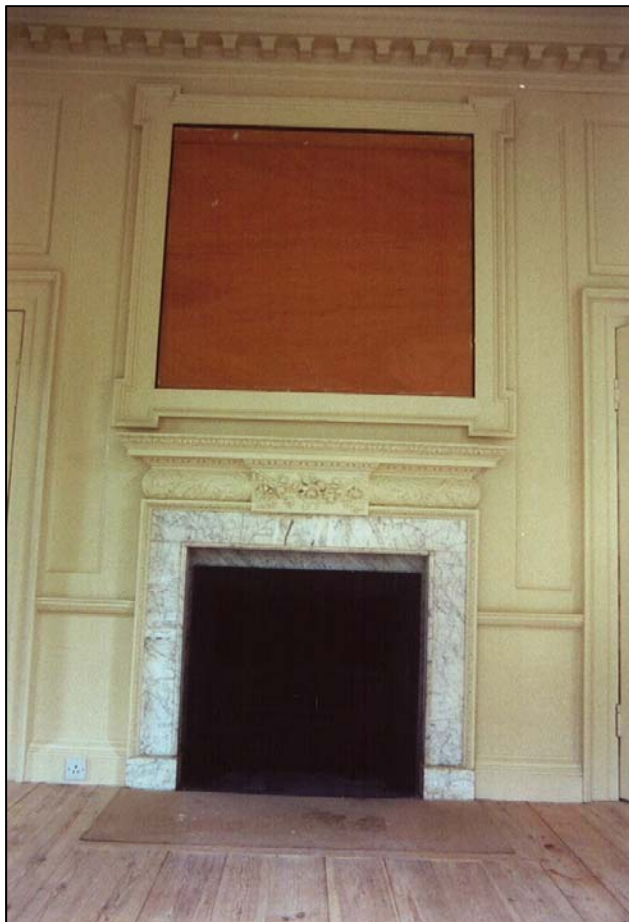
**Willy McVey and his team replaced each bead around the cornice individually by hand.**

**One of the last jobs was re-grouting the original flagstones.**





**One of the Hirst Conservation team reinstating the damaged paper mache mouldings on the stairwell ceiling.**



**'Boswell's Study' (the morning room) in February 2001. Pieces of fallen plaster are carefully laid out in the wall cupboard. The panelling was damaged relatively little in this room and this is now back in situ. The ceiling lathes are awaiting their plaster.**

**By August, with plasterwork fully restored, the room stood ready to be furnished.**



cupboard in the north wall. The blocked doorway would have been a nineteenth century intervention when this room became the dining room. The change interrupted the original 'Parade Plan' which allowed circulation in a full circle from the entrance hall and back. However, we decided not to re-open this blocked doorway, since the former door can be clearly read on the bedroom side and because the same requirements for privacy which caused its original removal still prevail today. By contrast, the cupboard and the blind door have been reinstated. It was while considering the evidence of the blind door in this room that the regimen of blind doors throughout the house suddenly fell into place, used by the designer as a means of artificially heightening the sense of symmetry.

The walls in the principal bedroom also showed the shadow of a blind door and perhaps an opening into the study. Again, we have not reinstated this because, like those before us, we realised that such an access would interfere with furnishing and the practicalities of a bedroom. The fireplace was repaired as found and the ceiling is mostly original.

By contrast, in the adjacent dressing room (now a single bedroom) we had to completely replace the ceiling. The mouldings were made specially from a remnant found in the room. The closet this leads into was always divided, probably providing a soil closet off the study. The relatively advanced plumbing of the original building phase is acknowledged in a small window in the wall to show the Delft tile-lined soil pipe, and there is another stone basin hidden behind the panelling just inside the study. The rest of the closet space was too small for anything but a shower – indeed, it held a 'shower bath' in the inventory taken in 1805.

The morning room or study was the only fully panelled room in the house and this has been reinstated. The fireplace is as we found it although the hob grate is new. There are three deep wall cupboards which were probably used to store estate documents; the two on the east wall now house items lent to the house



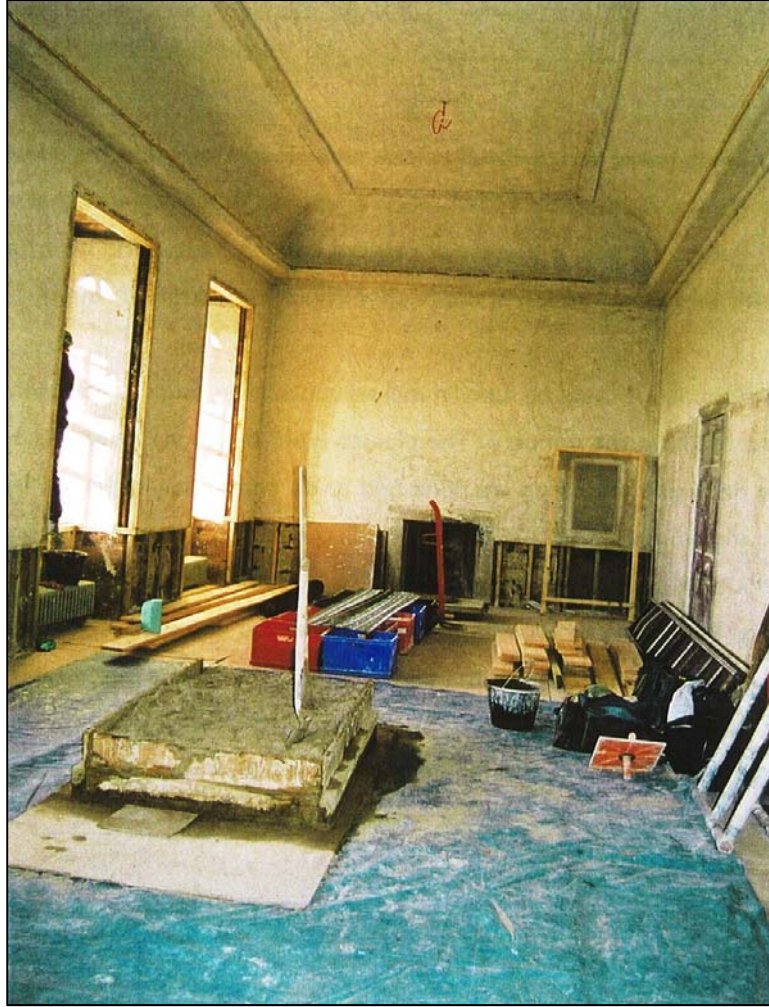
**The library at the beginning of Landmark's involvement, completely stripped out with the ceiling structure reinstated by the SHBT. Crates of hand made mouldings stand waiting to replace the lost cornice (below).**



for display by the Auchinleck Boswell Museum. These two cupboards are kept locked except on Open Days but access can be arranged through the housekeeper. The Museum also loaned many of the paintings which hang in the house. The blank panel above the fireplace was clearly intended for some particular purpose, although we have been unable to find out what that might have been. Perhaps it held a plaster or painted canvas panel. The inventories do not help with this room, which is curiously difficult to identify in them.

The single staircase for use by family and servants alike reflects the more relaxed conventions of life in the country. The plaster work in the stairwell ceiling was particularly damaged and large sections had to be completely replaced by special hand-made mouldings. Most of these, including each bead around the cornice, were individually fixed by hand by William Mc Vey and his team. Unlike the dining room ceiling, the ceiling mouldings in the stairwell are made of papier mache, a common material for such use in the eighteenth century. The bird which flies above the stairwell had lost its head, so a somewhat speculative hawk's head has been instated on grounds of the family crest. The papier mache work was done by Hirst Conservation.

A polite connection to the library from the principal floor is expressed in the scale and design of the library door and the architrave. The scale of the principal floor is also continued, the library ceiling being higher than those of the rest of the rooms on this floor. The effect of this is an unimportant reduction in height in the attic room above, whereas a similar ceiling height in the dining room results in the truncation of the two nursery bedrooms and the long bedroom corridor in a disconcerting manner. The library also has another blind door, which may once have been a full doorway. The evidence of this was removed when the fitted bookcases seen in an early photo were installed, probably by Boswell's son, Sir Alexander in 1810. The bookcases are lost and we have restored the eighteenth-century symmetry.



The library in late winter 2001. It too held its trough of curing lime plaster. The photo below shows the next stage, with the final coat of plaster drying and the cornice reinstated.



This symmetry was clearly carefully considered and the whole room is balanced on even numbers rather than pivoted around a central feature. Unusually for a room in a house of classical proportions, it has an even number of windows, the wall spaces between substituting for columns. Perhaps the artisan architect intended the windows to echo the pilasters on the front elevation; perhaps it was simply the case that four windows give more view than three. Balance was finally provided to the offset entrance by the blind door, read only on the library side.

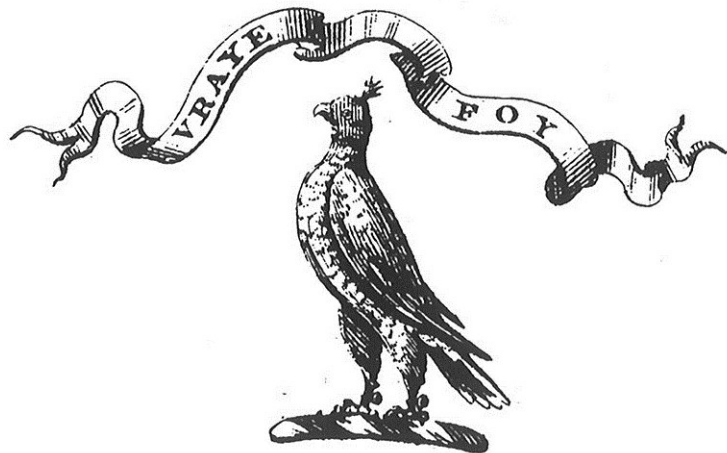
Structurally, the room is built across the main load bearing access of the house, which allows it to feed into both the main flue stacks. Two fires would certainly have been needed to take the chill off a room this size in winter. New hob grates have been placed in the lugged fireplaces and we also discovered that both chimneys posed a serious fire risk – the stone linings to both flues had disappeared so that they were open to the roof space. Needless to say, we have re-lined both.

The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust had put in a new ceiling structure in the library, which Landmark then plastered. The Doric cornice with egg and dart mouldings has been completely replaced with handmade mouldings on the basis of an early photograph and eighteenth century patterns. We believe that the library held open shelves in Lord Auchinleck's and JB's time. Certainly, the 1795 inventory describes a room that is relatively sparsely furnished. From letters, we know that Boswell's son Alexander carried out a thorough refurbishment of the library around 1810 (which is reflected in the 1822 inventory) and it seems likely that the glass-fronted, fitted shelves shown in an early photo date from Sir Alexander's day. It would have been highly unusual to have glass-fronted fitted bookcases in late eighteenth-century Scotland, and so in the absence of compelling evidence for them we decided not to rebuild fitted shelves.

In earlier times, the family would have slept in the bedrooms on this floor, unless there were too many guests when they made do with the attic rooms. When Lord Auchinleck was alive, his sons too would have slept in what are now the Landmark bedrooms. The bedrooms were mostly built with associated closets which have converted neatly to washrooms and bathrooms today, without requiring that rooms change their function too far from the original. Some of these opened onto the corridor as well as the bedroom so that they could be serviced without disturbing the occupants.

The attic stairs have been repaired and the attic is now used as storage space. The attic was once divided into rooms with fireplaces. They cannot have been very pleasant rooms, as this floor has no windows except two dormers, which have been kept for their contribution to the front exterior. The attic is now divided into large spaces and fire regulations and lack of funds meant we were able to do no more.

So ends the account to date of the largest restoration scheme ever undertaken by the Landmark Trust. One of the 'lost houses' of Scotland can again open its doors to 'company' just as it did in James Boswell's day.



## Notes on the Pictures at Auchinleck House

Several of the paintings at Auchinleck are on long term loan from the Auchinleck Boswell Society and therefore have a known association with the Boswells of Auchinleck, as follows. Landmark has also obtained accurate **reproductions** onto canvas of the best known portraits of Lord Auchinleck and James Boswell, as detailed below.

### THE STAIRCASE HALL

Next to right hand side window:

Oil portrait of a lady holding a sprig (23" x 20"). Recorded as '**Lady Elizabeth Boswell** aged 73, painted by M Friar at Auchinleck in May 1732.' Lady Elizabeth (nee Bruce) was Lord Auchinleck's mother, wife of the 7<sup>th</sup> Laird, James Boswell (and therefore JB's grandmother). However, she was born in 1673, which would make her rather 59 years of age in 1732. She died two years after this portrait was painted, six years before the birth of her illustrious grandson. The yew and pine frame is believed to be contemporary.

On the left hand side:

Oil portrait of a man reading a letter (12" x 14 ½"). Said to be **Mr. Alexander Boswell, Bart.** This is biographer James Boswell's son and heir who lived from 1775-1822. The painting would have been made before he acquired his baronetcy in 1810. Alexander was a bibliophile who refurbished the library at Auchinleck in 1810 and had his own private printing press on the estate. He was killed in 1822 in a duel over an anonymous lampoon he was accused of publishing in a newspaper.

To the left at the bottom of the stairs:

**Lord Whitelaw**, Lord Justice Clerk (27" x 32", undated, artist unknown). Lord Whitelaw was a near kinsman of James Boswell the biographer and offered him much advice and support.

To the right at the bottom of the stairs:

**David Boswell, 6<sup>th</sup> Laird of Auchinleck** (27" x 32", artist unknown). Painted in 1709. David was Lord Auchinleck's grandfather.

*To the left of the Map of Ayrshire:*

**Margaret Montgomerie**, attr. Allan Ramsay, c 1769. (25" x 29")

*Private Collection (REPRODUCTION)*

Margaret was the penniless, older cousin Boswell married for love in 1769. Shown here around the time of that marriage, she was to treat Boswell's frequent lapses into drunkenness and whoring with great forbearance. She bore him four children and died of consumption at Auchinleck House in 1789.

On the staircase next to the wall hanging:

**Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck(1740-95) by Allan Ramsay, c.1754-5.  
(50" x 40")**

*Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, Photo: Bridgeman Art Library  
(REPRODUCTION)*

In 1754, Alexander Boswell was created Lord Auchinleck, a non-hereditary title in recognition of his appointment as a Judge of the Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court. He is shown here in full legal dress in a portrait probably painted to mark his elevation to the peerage, around the time that Auchinleck House was being built.

**THE ENTRANCE HALL**

**Dame Anna Hamilton, Lady Auchinleck**, painted in 1709 (27" x 32", artist unknown). Anna was wife of David Boswell, 6<sup>th</sup> Laird, who hangs at the bottom of the stairs.

***Lord Dundas (27" x 32", undated, artist unknown). Probably Robert Dundas, Lord Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session and great friend of Lord Auchinleck's (or could be Henry Dundas, Lord Advocate and later Viscount Melville).***

**THE DINING ROOM**

To the left of the buffet:

**Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck (1740-95) by Allan Ramsay, 1754.  
762mm x 635mm Tate Gallery (REPRODUCTION)**

In this portrait we get a sense of Lord Auchinleck's strength of character and will. It is easy to see that he was not a man to be trifled with.

To the right of the buffet:

**James Boswell (1740-95) by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1785.  
National Portrait Gallery, London (REPRODUCTION).**

Boswell had been Laird of Auchinleck for three years when this portrait was painted, said by his friend Edmund Mallone to be 'a perfect and very characteristic likeness'. It provides a telling contrast with the youthful bloom and self confidence of the Willison portrait when he was younger. Reynolds halved his original fee of one hundred guineas to his friend. They agreed that his fifty guineas would be paid out of Boswell's fees from the English courts once his career in London got underway. In the event, Reynolds was never paid.

On either side of the fireplace:

The portraits which hang on either side of the dining room fireplace are on loan from the Auchinleck Boswell Society. They are thought to be of Bruce Boswell and his wife, Mary Lindsay. Bruce was the son of Lord Auchinleck's younger brother, Dr John Boswell, MD. Bruce was a Captain in the East India Company. (Presented to the Auchinleck Boswell Society by the late Mrs Sheila Boswell of



Wallingford (President of the ABS in 1973 and widow of Robert Boswell who was a descendant of Captain Bruce).

### **THE PRINCIPAL BEDROOM (GROUND FLOOR)**

#### **James Boswell in Rome, c. 1765 by George Willison (53" x 38")**

*Scottish National Portrait Gallery (REPRODUCTION)*

Boswell is shown here aged 24 on the Grand Tour, which his father permitted as a reward for completing his legal studies in Utrecht.

### **BOSWELL'S STUDY**

Above the fireplace:

#### **Sir James Boswell & Constantine, artist unknown, 1839. (37" x 29")**

*Private Collection (REPRODUCTION)*

James Boswell's grandson and namesake, Sir James Boswell was a genial and hospitable man content in his role as Laird of Auchinleck. He was particularly keen on racing and hunting and adopted two elegant greyhounds as bearers for his arms (these maybe seen on the wall of the family mausoleum next to the church in Auchinleck village).

The study also contains a collection of contemporary mezzotints, including Dr Johnson and William Chambers and his wife, all by Reynolds. The drawing desk holds an elevation of the house which probably dates to the early 1800s when Alexander Boswell was planning improvements.

Other paintings in the house are part of Landmark's furnishing and have no particular known provenance or specific association with the Boswells of Auchinleck.



**Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck and 8<sup>th</sup> Laird in 1754, when he was appointed judge of the Court of Session and made a non-hereditary peer. (Mellon Collection, Yale)**

### 3. Lord Auchinleck

Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck, has long been overshadowed by his more famous son. Those who have heard of him know him through his son's journals, where a less than flattering portrait is usually painted. James's relationship with his father was always a difficult one yet it was central to his self-image. He desperately sought paternal approval and warmth while feeling at the same time exasperated and infuriated by turns at the old man's stubbornness and rudeness. Auchinleck House is more Alexander's than James's in conception and execution, and we owe it to him to look beyond the journal entries to discover their accuracy. The best account of him is given by John Ramsay, who seems to have known Alexander and left a detailed description of his character in *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*.

Alexander was born in 1707, son of James Boswell and Elizabeth Bruce. JB remembered his namesake grandfather fondly. Ramsay says he was 'was a heavy plodding man, a good lawyer of plain sense without imagination...Old Auchinleck was a slow, dull man, of unwearied perseverance and unmeasurable length in his speeches. Arniston used to set him up whenever he wanted business protracted. It was alleged he never understood a case until he lost it *thrice*. He used to say in his cups, that his friend Arniston was like a racehorse, and he no better than a cadger's beast; but though the one went further in five minutes than the other did in an hour, they commonly stabled together at night'. Yet he was an improving laird in his tenure from 1712-1749 and the estate was in a sound financial state when he handed it on.

Alexander's wife Euphemia Esrkine had Dutch blood, a fact Ramsay regretted in a veiled reference to the mental instability that dogged the Boswell family. 'For this, however, it would seem his posterity paid dear, for most of them had peculiarities which they would better have wanted. Yet though Lord Auchinleck had a great deal of Dutch phlegm, his singularities were less striking than those of his other descendants.' Not only was JB subject to depression, his rather simple younger brother John was committed by Alexander to various mental asylums.



*The Parliament Close and Public Characters of Edinburgh Fifty Years Since.*

This was the Edinburgh milieu of Boswell and, earlier, Lord Auchinleck. Boswell was born in one of the tenements on the right. (Engraving published 1844. British Museum)

Ramsay says nothing is known of Alexander's educational progress though he was 'reputed a good classical scholar'. There are three yet unpublished letters Edinburgh University Library, written by Alexander while he was studying in Leyden in the 1720s. Many Scottish lawyers spent time at Dutch universities as the Dutch legal system, being based on Roman law, had much in common with the Scottish one. Lord Auchinleck was to dispatch Boswell to Utrecht for similar reasons some forty years later. Their respective letters make interesting comparative reading (Alexander's are appended to this chapter). Suffice to say that the youthful Alexander comes across as a studious (perhaps over studious), intense young man, who applied strict self-control and had no great appetite or aptitude for socialising. In his advice to Boswell on setting off for Holland, he is torn between a desire to prove that he too had been a bit of a lad in his time and the strictly buttoned-up behaviour that is his usual mien:

*'....When you are in Utrecht I would have you Set up on the footing that you have declared Yourself to be a man of discretion prudence observation And a Scholar, And as you have determined as the Roman Ceremony was Spargere Nuces to give up with trifles & whims & to become a new man tho' this change at first will be irksome and occasion what they call low Spirits. There is nothing for it but resolution & firmness. Do the thing at once and hold to it, there is no possibility of doing it by halves, a Man who is a slave to game or to drink must give up Cards & Strong drink totally else he will find himself by degrees brought back to the original fascination I can give it no oyr name, It is a Sort of Inchantment which carrys us along in Spite of reason, I can say from experience That when I was in Holland I became an absolute Slave to smaoking of Tobacco my common dose was 25 pipes a day. I found it hurt me and yet went on. When I came to ffrance I gave it over which made me vastly uneasy. I always thought I wanted something so it occurred to me I might take a pipe of two in the morning. Accordingly I began this moderate Regimen but before eight days were passt I was returned to my old Excess, Whereupon I gave it over quite And banished the longings by other entertainments, I have mentioned a sort of Absurd pleasure that renders a man a Slave but the Same thing will hold in every other improper taste, the great point in Life is to get in to good Company.'* (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1763).



**Euphemia Boswell (nee Erskine), Lady Auchinleck**

'an extremely delicate girl, very hypochondriac; she had been brought up quite out of the world and her notions were pious, visionary and scrupulous. When she was once made to go the theatre, she cried and would not go again.'

Sir Arthur Elliott of Stobs, Bart.

Euphemia's mother had died when she was two and she was brought up by her grandmother. This perhaps explains both her inability to relate well to her children and her strait-laced attitudes.

(His son tried his hardest to follow this advice. In Frank Pottle's words "For ten months in Holland, [JB] was by heroic effort modest studious, frugal, reserved and chaste. And he almost went out of his mind." Tobacco was one vice to which he did not succumb). We know of just one moment of notoriety in Alexander's life, one that smacks of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. According to Ramsay, 'When the late Mr Drummond of Blair, who was then at Paris, told [JB] at Lord Kames's table, that he had seen his father strutting abroad in red-heeled shoes and stockings, the lad was so much diverted with it that he could hardly sit on his chair for laughing'.

In 1738, Alexander married Euphemia Erskine, who was ten years his junior. They were both descended from the Dutch Countess, Veronica van Aerssen of the Sommelsdyke family. She was JB's great-grandmother and original owner of the Ebony Cabinet (of which more may be read in the chapter on the Boswell Papers). She also claimed a rather tortuous descent from the Earl of Darnley, second husband of Mary Queen of Scots, pretender to the English throne and James VI's father. We know of no mention by Lord Auchinleck of this connection, but James Boswell made much of his supposed royal blood.

Euphemia was a highly religious woman who showed her children little affection except when they were ill. Boswell hated school when he was young and had been told by his father never to lie. So, he tells us, he would induce a headache by hanging his head: he could then truthfully get out of school and receive attention from his mother. He hardly mentions his mother in journals, to the extent that it seems he repressed her memory. It was she who instilled in him his lifelong fear of Calvinist damnation and when he thinks of her, there is an almost direct association with these horrors, which were also a typical trigger of his depression. Boswell's first extant letter was to his mother, written when he was 14 in condolence for the death at birth of a younger brother. It reveals clearly the frame of her communication with him and is quite unlike his own voice:

*MY DEAR MAMA: You may be assured that your safe delivery gave me great Joy. I was indeed very sorry to hear of the death of my poor little Brother, but however We must be submissive to the hand of a wise Providence that superintends everything that is done here below. Perhaps the Almighty Lord and Sovereign of the universe, saw some storm impending that might have proved fatal to the eternal salvation of his precious and immortal Soul and therefore for wise ends and purposes (though unknown to us) removed him out of this Valley of tears, this World of Sin and Misery unto the world which is above, that new Jerusalem where there is Joy and pleasures for evermore. Better it is My Dearest Mamma to think that instead of it maybe living a bad Life in this World he is now singing Hallelujahs to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb that redeemed him and shed his precious blood for him....'*

Very few letters survive written by Euphemia. Indeed, it seems she was barely literate. One example will suffice to show how she addressed her eldest son, now in his twenties and lingering in London:

*'...you need not doubt but what it would have given me Pleasure to have heard that you was Layving of London & thincking of comeing home & Settling to Business hear. I Supos you have no Expectations new of A Comision in the Gaurds & as you are folowing no other Business I belive no Body woud thinck it reasonable or advise your Father after your year is out to Continou your Alouance to live idely at London. I know no young gentelman of this Country that lives ther in that way. Your poor Father is stil in great distress about you. Your showing A dislike at this Country is a thing very disagreeabl to him. However I hope you will Come to See that it is both your duty & intrest to Setel hear befor the End of this year. We have had a very full toun & very gay for some time with races & Balls but I have had no share of them. I have no leasure time to Spend that way. I am your affect. Mother,*

*EU. BOSWELL*

Euphemia would have shared with Lord Auchinleck in the planning of Auchinleck House but did not enjoy it for long. She died in 1766 aged only 49.

By the start of Civil War (or Jacobite Rebellion, depending on your sympathies) in 1745, Alexander was 'a lawyer much esteemed but not much in practice'. We know that he was always interested in the Classics and took an active part in the administration of the Advocates' Library. In 1744 he presented it with the



Auchinleck Manuscript, still described today as 'one of the most precious possessions of the Library of Scotland.'<sup>2</sup>

According to Ramsay, 'If not an eloquent or philosophical lawyer, [Alexander Boswell] was considered a sound and useful one, having a goodly share of erudition and ingenuity. His courtesy, manliness, and candour of disposition made him much liked both by the Faculty, and by men of business, to whom his unwearied application, accompanied with much sagacity and good sense recommended him not a little. In his pleadings and law papers he displayed a vein of art and irony which produced much mirth, though he himself never deigned to smile. And he was universally esteemed a man of truth and sterling integrity.'

His preferment to the Justiciary 'gave general satisfaction'. 'If there was little eloquence or originality in his opinion, they were always very much to the purpose, touching with great force upon the material points in the cause. And the thing that made the deeper impression, that he appeared to speak from the heart with a plainness and candour which were very taking. Even those who found fault with his vulgarisms, confessed him to be indefatigable and superior in every form'. For we must certainly imagine Lord Auchinleck speaking with a vigorous Scottish accent. This comes across in Boswell's transcriptions of his father's remarks, and is in marked contrast with his own attempts to modulate his native burr and his concern that his children should be educated in England. Lord Auchinleck however 'was at no pains to improve his colloquial Scots, which people of fashion would have considered vulgar, in the beginning of the century.' Ramsay is critical of this: 'Why adhere pertinaciously to a dialect which, from the nature of the thing and the spirit of the age was changing with great rapidity?'

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<sup>2</sup> This manuscript of nearly 400 folios, written by six scribes working around London in about 1330, is a collection of the earliest and best known texts of much romance literature. It represents the English of the capital just as London English was about to become the written standard. The project to transcribe these texts is ongoing.

Lord Auchinleck on the bench cannot have been a welcome sight to the criminal nor, on occasion, to his fellow lawyers. According to Ramsay, 'As a criminal judge his character stood very high. His mind and body were, for a number of years, so strong that he seemed to take a delight in a very long trial, which some of his brethren considered as an intolerable burden.' These powers of endurance became a source of weakness. For the last two decades of his life he was troubled by retention of urine brought on by these over-long trials.

Politically and temperamentally, Lord Auchinleck was a Whig (in other words was generally critical of the Hanoverian Court) and a Presbyterian (a term which carries its own scepticism towards Church and State). 'This venerable man's principles and prejudices....were closely interwoven', wrote Ramsay. '...No man was ever a warmer friend to truth and to the best interests of society than he....Perfectly persuaded that Presbytery, as established at the Revolution, came nearest of any National Church to the model and spirit of the primitive one in the first two centuries, he perhaps loved it more that it was a cheap religion, and narrowed the power and jurisdiction of the clergy, to which he was no friend.'

Moreover, he was a Whig 'of the old form'. This means that he was not one of the opportunists who were assembling themselves around the Prince Regent and was sceptical of all royal power, Hanoverian or otherwise. Not all Scots in the eighteenth-century were romantic Jacobites by any means, and those that were not equated the remnants of the Stuart royal family with tyranny and imposed religion. 'His dislike of the Stuart family bore some proportion to his veneration for the memory of our great deliverer, [Oliver Cromwell] in which he was much confirmed by private as well as public considerations, no part of the kingdom having been more oppressed before the Revolution than Ayrshire and Galloway.' Such views inevitably set him at odds with his Tory, Anglican son and of course with Dr. Johnson. Boswell imagines the two old men meeting in another and higher state of existence, 'where there is no room for Whiggism'. This is a glorious final snipe at his father – God must be assumed to be a Hanoverian and a Tory!

At the head of the circuit table, Lord Auchinleck had 'a kindness mingled with dignity'. 'It was his rule to spend every shilling of his allowance for the circuit – a thing less to have been expected given that in every thing else he was supposed to be fond of money and abundantly economical. He had a plentiful table; and as most of his guests liked a bottle of wine, he did not balk them, taking care to avoid every appearance of excess.... After dinner he commonly said: "Gentlemen, claret is my liquor; if anybody chooses port or punch, let him call for it."' Again there is that sense of control. We have many accounts in JB's writings of raucous behaviour among other senior lawyers. His professional hospitality is also in marked contrast to how he sometimes treated James at his table, to whom he begrudged claret.

Lord Auchinleck seems to have enjoyed playing the raconteur on such occasions. Ramsay tells us 'he had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, which in his better times, he introduced with propriety, and told with much *naivete*, without relaxing a single muscle of his face' and some of JB's happiest times with his father was when they had time alone at Auchinleck, working in the library or just talking.

*'It was one of the wettest days that I ever saw. My father and I sauntered a good while in the dining room, and I listened to his stories, which really entertained me in a peculiar way.'* (Journal, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1778)

In later life this talent for anecdote began to let Lord Auchinleck down. 'The first symptom of mental decay,' Ramsay tells us, 'was the repetition of his stories, and the introducing of them without connection. At length his memory and judgement were so much impaired that his conversation, which had once been highly pleasing, became a string of stories, good in themselves but misapplied.'

In his prime, there is no question that he loved Auchinleck deeply. Ramsay tells us that 'Every moment of the vacation that could be spared from the circuit was spent by him at Auchinleck, of which he was passionately fond. Then he built an excellent house, so slowly and prudently, that he himself hardly felt the expense....the planting of forest trees was his favourite recreation; and as he began early, he lived to see them well advanced. At his country seat he lived

many years most hospitably and rationally without much show or expense. He lived to see his friends and neighbours in the easy, unceremonious way he had been accustomed to from his early years. In a word, few men saw more company, and that in a way to his own satisfaction and that of his guests.' This is an important reference for hospitality at Auchinleck House, since JB was there much less than his father and treated it rather as a retreat on many occasions. In its eighteenth-century heyday, it is Lord Auchinleck's friends and neighbours we must imagine seated in the dining room and browsing in the library rather more than Boswell's.

We also have little vignettes of Lord Auchinleck's behaviour on the estate, both from Ramsay and his sons. He was a great planter of trees (receipts at Yale show that trees were planted by their tens of thousands under both Lord Auchinleck's and Boswell's tenure). He also enjoyed pruning them: 'One of his favourite recreations in the country was to prune with his own hands the trees he himself had planted. Beginning at five in the morning, he wrought with his knife and chisel every spare hour.' He also taught his sons James and David to wield a pruning knife, something the latter seems to have enjoyed more than the former. Perhaps this was one route to the 'animus aequus' of the pediment; certainly Lord Auchinleck seems to have enjoyed minutiae of estate care. JB wrote a Memorabilia about another similar quirk in 1767:

*'Lord Auchinleck used to pass his time in the country in continual attention to the improvement of the place, but would often busy himself with very small matters. He would, for instance, gather stones off the land for hours; nay, he would very gravely fill his pockets with them, and carry them to mend a broken part in some favourite part. His sons, though they had a high respect for him, could not but exercise their humour on such oddities in a great character. David said, "He carries the stones in this manner upon the principle of great utility, and no doubt does some good to the road. But he would also do some good were he to fill his nails with sand, and sprinkle it upon the road. Why does he do not good in some more important manner?"'*

Lord Auchinleck's sons may have laughed at him on occasion, but he wielded a stern patriarchal power over them throughout their lives. The strain fell particularly on JB as eldest son and heir. JB's *Journal* is full of references to their

disagreements and disputes, some petty and some less so. Yet it is also apparent that this was one subject upon which JB was reluctant to write with the full intensity of his feeling in his journal. He occasionally vents his frustration in letters to good friends, as when he writes during a stay at Auchinleck to William Temple:

*'It is hardly credible how difficult it is for a man of my sensibility to support existence in the family where I now am. My father ... has a method of treating me which makes me feel myself like a timid boy, which to Boswell (comprehending all that my character does, in my own imagination and in that of a wonderful number of mankind) is intolerable. His [second] wife, too ... is so narrow-minded, and, I don't know how, so set on keeping him so totally under her own management, and so suspicious and sourishly tempered that it requires the utmost exertion of practical philosophy to keep myself quiet. I, however, have done so all week to admiration, nay, I have appeared good-humoured; but it has cost me drinking a considerable quantity of strong beer to dull my faculties.'* (2<sup>nd</sup> September 1775)

The account of this visit in the journal gives little hint of the strain JB was feeling. Jealousy is here too; he desperately craved affection and approval from his father and bitterly resented the latter's second marriage in 1769. (Euphemia died in 1766).

Lord Auchinleck never approved of JB's natural exuberance and flamboyance, either on the page or in person, and this clash of temperaments threatened for a long time to have serious consequences for JB. For many years, he lived in real fear that his father would disinherit him for his profligacy. It is here that the full poignancy of the quest for the 'animus aequus' can be understood. As early as 1763, when Lord Auchinleck was furious with his son for publishing his *Harvest Journal* and some private letters, he could write,

*Be assured of this; for even I, who am your father....by your strange conduct had come to the resolution of selling all off, from the principle that it is better to snuff a candle out than leave it to stink in a socket.'*

On this and other occasions, Lord Auchinleck uses the threat of disinheritance to force JB to buckle down to a legal career. In March 1762, convinced his son was a wastrel, Lord Auchinleck had already threatened to sell the estate and coerced JB to waive the claim he had under his mother's marriage contract to unrestricted succession to the estate. Instead, he was to consent to be put under trustees of his father's choosing if he inherited, in exchange for a current allowance of £100 a year. He added increased force to the threat by planning to change the entail on the estate. JB's grandfather had settled the estate by entail upon 'heirs male whatsoever' of the body of the founder of the Auchinleck Boswells, Thomas Boswell. This theoretically opened up the succession to a whole range of cousins as well as the direct line of descent. Lord Auchinleck deplored this idea (being especially concerned that the estate might pass to a certain cousin who was a dancing master in Leith). If his own male progeny were failing him, his preference was for 'heirs whatsoever of his own body'. In fact, this was a practice followed by many Scottish landowners of the day so need not necessarily be read as an attempt to disinherit JB – but it still threatened a categorical and humiliating assertion of authority. It also opened up the possibility of female succession, total anathema to Boswell.

*I argued...that females, in a feudal light, were only vehicles for carrying down men to posterity, and that a man might as well entail his estate on his postchaise, and put one into it who should bear his name, as entail it upon his daughter and make her husband take his name.*

Lord Auchinleck kept Boswell in a state of suspense over his inheritance right up to his own death in 1782. It did not serve to moderate Boswell's behaviour; if anything it intensified the feelings of inadequacy and frustration that drove him to excess. And in fact Lord Auchinleck was bluffing over the entail all along, as Boswell discovered on a rainy day in the library in October 1778.

*'It was one of the wettest days that I ever saw... I then began in the library to read Erasmus de Praeparatione ad Mortem....Mr Stoby had told me where my mother's marriage contract lay. I had often wanted to see it, but my father evaded it, which was not right. He seemed now to acquiesce in my looking through all the family papers; so I got it this forenoon and found that for all the work that my father had made about the order of the succession of the estate, it had never been in his power, even with my consent, to alter the destination to the heirs male.'*

The marriage contract proved that Lord Auchinleck had power only to dispose of lands he himself had acquired, but not to otherwise entail the estate of Auchinleck which he had received from *his* father. The threat of disinheritance which had haunted Boswell all his life was a hollow one. (As a footnote, the original entail was re-examined in 1852 when it became clear that Sir James Boswell, JB's grandson, would have no male heirs. It was found to have been invalid all along due to a single word having been written over an erasure. Postchaises or no, Sir James's daughters were able to inherit without further amendment.)

We of course see the relationship between JB and his father almost entirely through JB's eyes. Contemporaries mostly interpreted the situation differently. 'The evening of Lord Auchinleck's life was much clouded by the absurdity, eccentricity, and mischievousness of his son James' writes Ramsay. 'It was assuredly one of the cruellest mortifications [Lord Auchinleck] could have met with in the evening of life, to see his son entirely under the influence of a Tory and High Churchman [Dr. Johnson] who, (to use his own phrase with regard to another person) was as narrow as the neck of a vinegar cruet.'

Yet did Lord Auchinleck but know it, perhaps the wisest commentator on the fraught relationship between father and son was Johnson himself. Lord Auchinleck finally died of kidney failure in 1782. Boswell raced to be at his deathbed, only to be initially denied access by his stepmother with the words 'Don't torture his last moments.' 'I was benumbed and stood off', wrote Boswell. 'Wept; for alas! There was not affection between us'. Lord Auchinleck had belittled and humiliated him constantly, demanded standards of behaviour and achievement that were beyond even the adult JB. He left JB lacking in self confidence and rebellious. Yet paradoxically, Boswell was always dependent on his father, always craved an expression of approval or affection. Lord Auchinleck had the strength of character and self discipline to conquer both melancholy and vice, to sustain the 'animus aequus'. This allowed him to feel a sense of moral superiority over his son that condemned JB to the role of naughty child



**Dr Johnson, dressed for the Tour of the Hebrides. The coat pockets, said Boswell, were large enough to hold the two folio volumes of Johnson's Dictionary.**



throughout his life. It is significant that even when he was old and cantankerous, Lord Auchinleck never relinquished the parental role. JB's failure to provide such a role model for his own children not only left his own sons in moral charge of him towards the end of his life, it paradoxically meant that he had a much more balanced relationship with them than with his own father.

Let Johnson have the last word:

*'...Your father's death had everything that could enable you to bear it; it was at a mature age and was expected; and as his general life had been pious, his thoughts had doubtless for many years passed been turned upon eternity. That you did not find him sensible must doubtless grieve you; his disposition towards you was undoubtedly that of a kind, though not of a fond, father. Kindness, at least actual, is in our power, but fondness is not; and if by negligence or imprudence you had extinguished his fondness, he could not at will rekindle it. Nothing then remained between you but mutual forgiveness of each other's faults and mutual desire of each other's happiness.'*

## Essay towards a Character of Lord Auchinleck

In the Parish Register for Auchinleck, now held at New Register House in Edinburgh, a poem in praise of Lord Auchinleck has been inscribed immediately after the entry recording Lord Auchinleck's death. The only other instance known by staff at the NRH is a much shorter poem written at the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1836 and to warrant such a tribute, Lord Auchinleck must have been held in no small esteem by the villagers. Until now, the poem has languished unpublished but the re-opening of Auchinleck House seems a fit time to resurrect it after generous prompting by Gordon Turnbull in Yale. The poem is unsigned, but is in the same handwriting as the rest of the Register so was probably composed by William Halbert, schoolmaster of Auchinleck, and also Clerk to the Kirk Session and Precentor. The Auchinleck Parish Register reveals the life of the village in all its detail. In the entries immediately preceding and following that for Lord Auchinleck's death, we find the death of John Halbert, aged 82 years, 'Of a Looseness' at the Schoolhouse of Auchinleck. Was this William's father? Then on 1783 Jan 12<sup>th</sup> 'Died of a Lingerin Illness Jean White, spouse to James Bruce Gardener of Auchinleck'.

From May 1782, there had been a smallpox epidemic in the village from which 12 children had died. John Clarke, a shoemaker in Auchinleck, lost a 4 year old daughter and a two year old son within two days of each other in June. 'Both the last two Children were carried on the same bier and laid in the same grave'. A week later, they lost a third child, a 6 month old daughter. George Goudie lost a year old child – perhaps the same George Goudie who was working on the pavilions at the House in 1774.

### Entry recording Lord Auchinleck's death:

'August 31<sup>st</sup> [1782] Died at Edinburgh of a Complaint in the Bladder and Kidneys Alexander Boswell Esqr, Lord Auchinleck, One of the Senators of the College of Justices in the seventy seventh year of his age. Was with great Reputation for the space of Twenty seven years, an advocate, and afterwards for the space of Twenty eight years one of the Lords of Session, and for years a Lord of the Justiciary.'

Essay towards a Character

Lord Auchinleck

For every Sovereign Virtue, much renown'd  
Of Judgement steady, and in wisdom sound;  
Through a long life in active business spent  
For Justice and for prudence eminent;  
Well qualified to occupy the line  
Allotted him by providence divine;  
Employ'd with indefatigable pains  
In numerous, and important scenes;  
And as his fame for Justice was well known  
His Clemency no less conspicuous shone;  
Reliever of the needful and opprest,  
The Generous Benefactor of distrest;  
Ready to hear, and rectify a wrong,  
To reestablish harmony among  
Contending friends, or such as disagreed  
And of his interposing aid had need.  
Successfully he labour'd much and long  
As Healer of the Breaches, us among;  
And still from Jarring, order brought about  
Carefully searching unknown causes out.

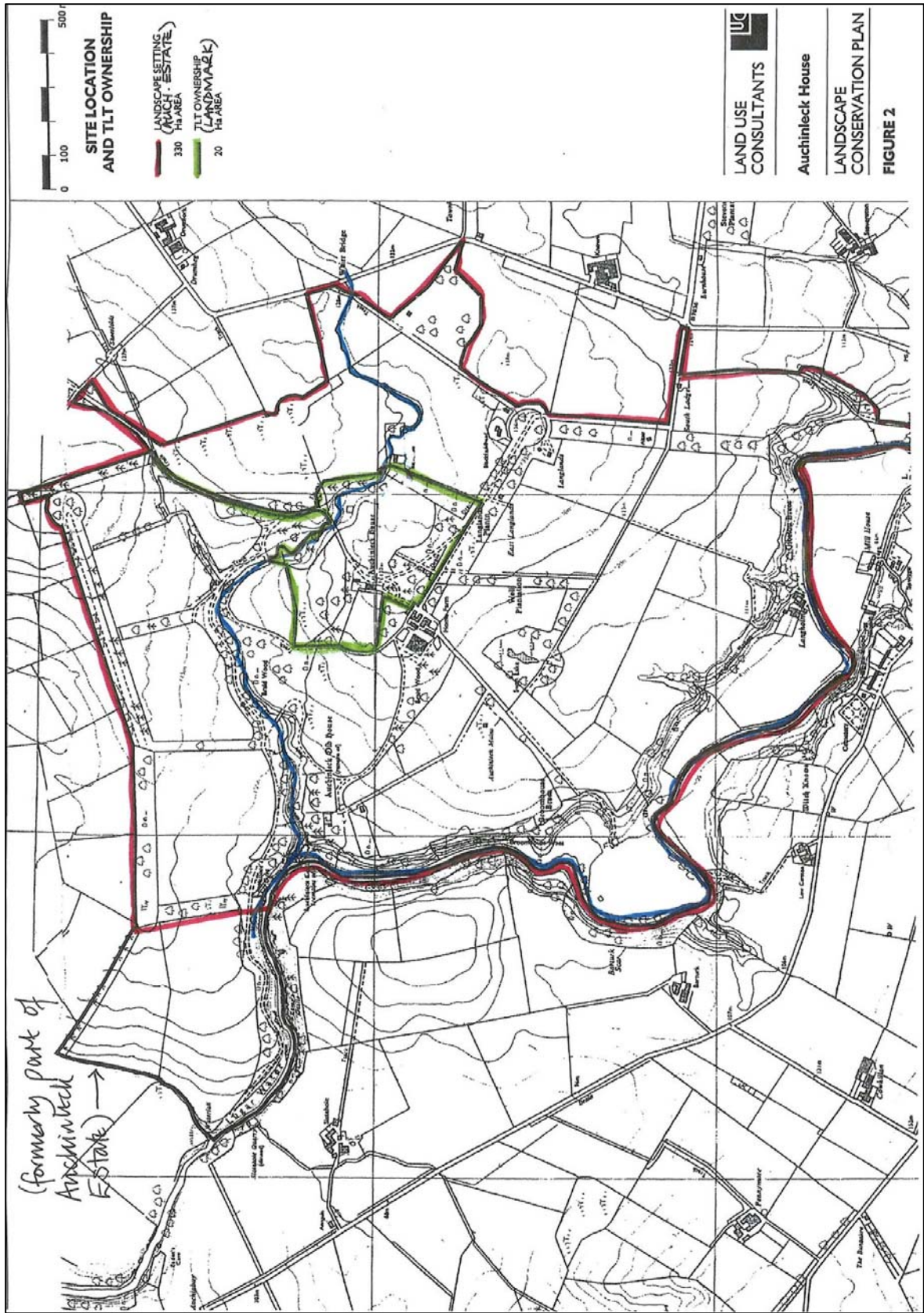
A foe to vice, detesting liars much,  
Of shrewd acuteness in discerning such;  
Averse to flattery, hating all deceit,  
Tho' in resentment mod'rate and discreet;  
And ready still, with sympathizing grace,  
To wipe the tear from every Mourning face,  
Whether we see him toiling at the Bar,  
Or on the Bench, a step exalted far,  
Display the spirit of his Country's Laws,  
Or Ruminatè the merits of a Cause;  
Or, in Retirement from such Legal strife  
View him a Gentleman in private life  
For all connections, And in him we find  
The Husband loving, and the parent Kind  
The easy Master, and the faithful friend.  
The Honest Counsellor as all will own,  
And most indulgent Landlord ever known.  
In all departments on this earthly stage,  
In every scene in which he did engage  
Such steadiness, such Truth and Candour shone,  
As equal'd is by few, surpassed by none;  
In everything, important less or more,  
Supporting well the Character he bore.

A person thus dispos'd, and thus endow'd,  
Must have been universally allow'd  
The Tribute of our praises Heretofore,  
And Claims our Tears when now he is no more.

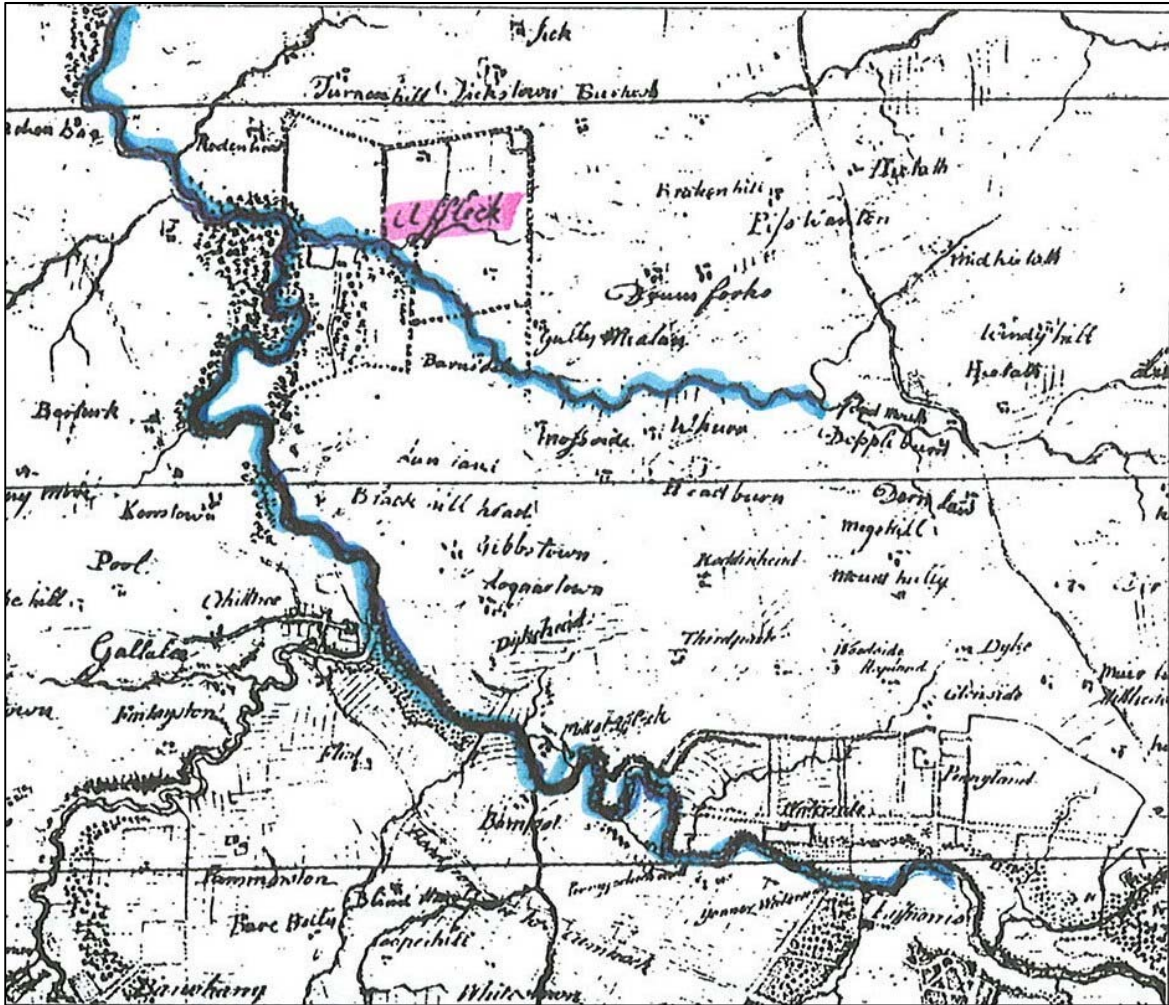
All Ranks, in him, a mighty loss sustain,  
Both Rich and Poor, the noble and the mean;  
For why, his services did far extend;  
Through Town and Country, to the Kingdom's end:  
The whole to him in Obligations bound,  
As to his Honour, ever will redound.

Revere his mem'ry, and his death lament,  
As well becomes, with uniform assent;  
Your High concern, by loud encomiums show,  
Unite the shout of praise, and fear of woe;  
Your warm effusions, can only reveal  
(And faintly too) what every heart must feel,

His Benefactor lost, the meaner mass  
May grieve, and so he will, that's all he can;  
Let those descended of a station higher  
To imitate his virtuous life aspire;  
Transcribe the bright example set by him,  
Best way to evidence their true esteem.  
May after Generations who succeed,  
From Register, his fam'd Remembrance read  
Alive, his Character afar was known  
So may it long Continue when He's gone;  
And let the undissembled voice of fame  
To distant ages Celebrate his name;  
A Name of veneration, and Respect,  
Of Honour and Esteem. Lord Auchinleck.



Map 1: Land owned by the Landmark Trust within the Auchinleck Estate.



Map 2A: General Roy's Military Map (1747-55) Shows the Old Place\* and gardens. The entrance drive is shown from the south over the Lugg Water.  
 \* as 'A'ffleck' – an alternative eighteenth century spelling. James Boswell always used 'Auchinleck'.

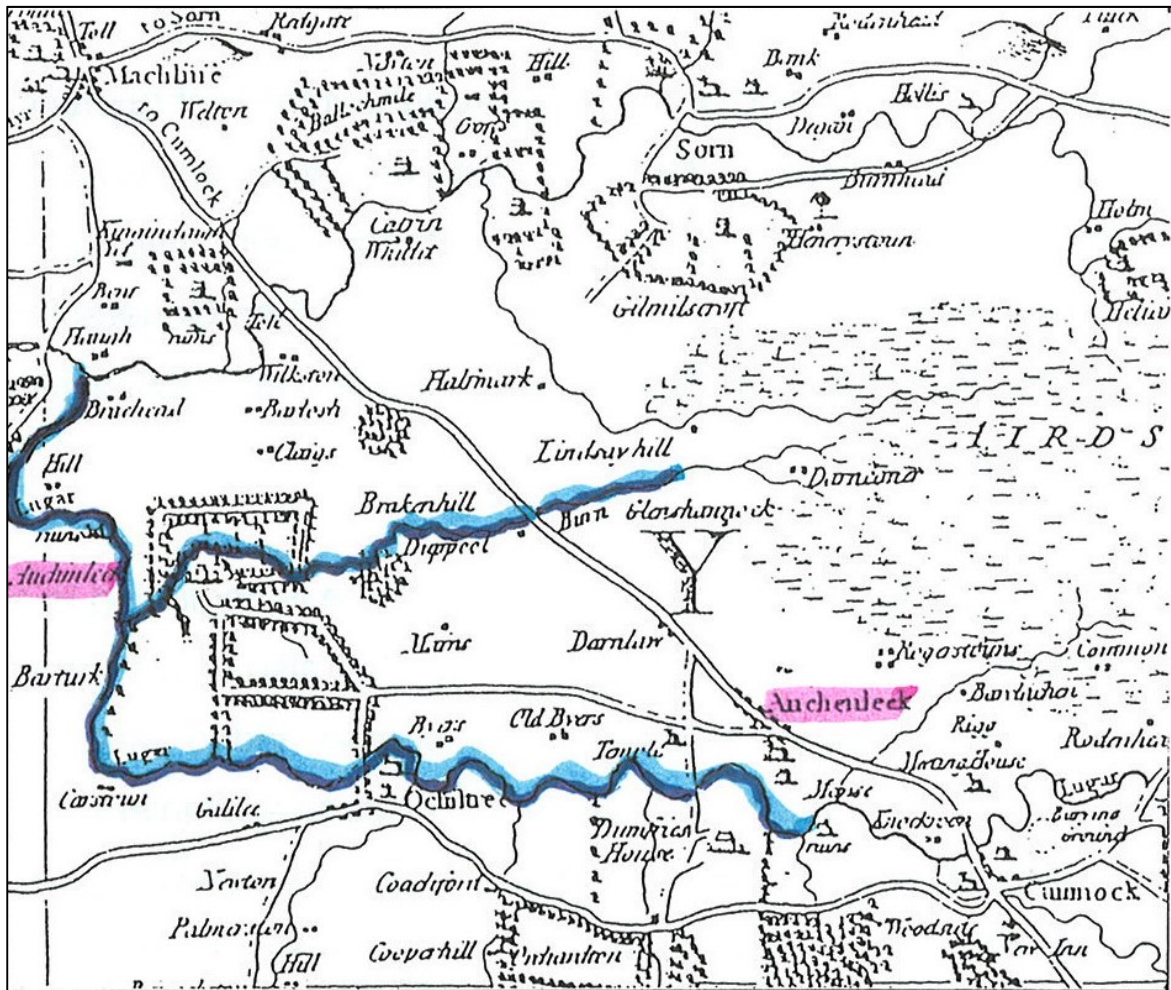
#### 4. Development of the Auchinleck Estate

Auchinleck Estate was moulded and developed by successive Boswell lairds throughout the eighteenth century. Map 1 opposite shows the extent of the estate as it exists today and within it, outlined in green, the portion owned by the Landmark Trust. Comparison with earlier Ordnance Survey maps suggest that today's full estate has remained remarkably consistent with its original boundaries. The easiest way to identify the heart of the estate on the maps which follow is to look for the confluence of the Dippol Burn and the deeply incised Lugar Water. The Lugar forms most of the western and southern boundary of the estate.

Under the eighteenth-century lairds, including Lord Auchinleck and James Boswell, the estate grew as farms were added. No matter that money might have to be borrowed to cover the cost of purchase or that the price might be considered too high (as when JB bought Dalblair), a successful laird was one whose policies were growing.

There was also a great vogue for tree planting throughout the eighteenth century. Before the tree planting campaigns, the countryside was bleak and open. Trees take a long time to grow and those who created the plantations were unlikely to see them to maturity. Even in the middle of the eighteenth century when General Roy's Military Map was drawn up (Map 2A), the enthusiastic planting of Lord Auchinleck and his father hardly show up.

By 1775 in Armstrong's Map of Ayrshire, greater structure is beginning to show. Trees were planted not just in swathes as future cash crops but also to line vistas and walks and to provide a buffer around the estate. They must have added greatly to the regular perambulations recorded by Boswell on his visits to Auchinleck. There was great interest in different species and lairds would exchange seedlings and seeds from their estates, as in this uncatalogued letter from Lord Hyndford to Alexander Boswell in 1753:



**Map 2B: Armstrong's Map of Ayrshire (1775). The Barony Road links the new house with the newly established settlement of Auchinleck. New tree plantations are also clearly shown.**



*Dear Mr Boswell,*

*I had the pleasure of your letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> past, which I would have answer'd sooner, but that I waited till I should be able, my self, to go to my nurseries, to see what plants were fit to be moved, that are not in your list, and I have accordingly mark'd a certain number of them which you will find in the enclosed list [lost], with an order to my operator, to deliver them to Your Gardner, or anybody that you shall send; & I have likewise a little Bagg of Siberia Cedar Cones, & some archangel Red & white Turnip Seed, & some Cabbage Seed for your Potager which I will give you when we meet in Edinburgh.*

Sometimes the species seem a little exotic for the Scottish climate, like the seeds for the strawberry tree that Boswell sent from Corsica. James Bruce was certainly sceptical about its chances.

A letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 1792 from JB's second overseer at Auchinleck, Andrew Gibb to Bruce Campbell, Kilmarnock, is representative of the scale of planting of native species:

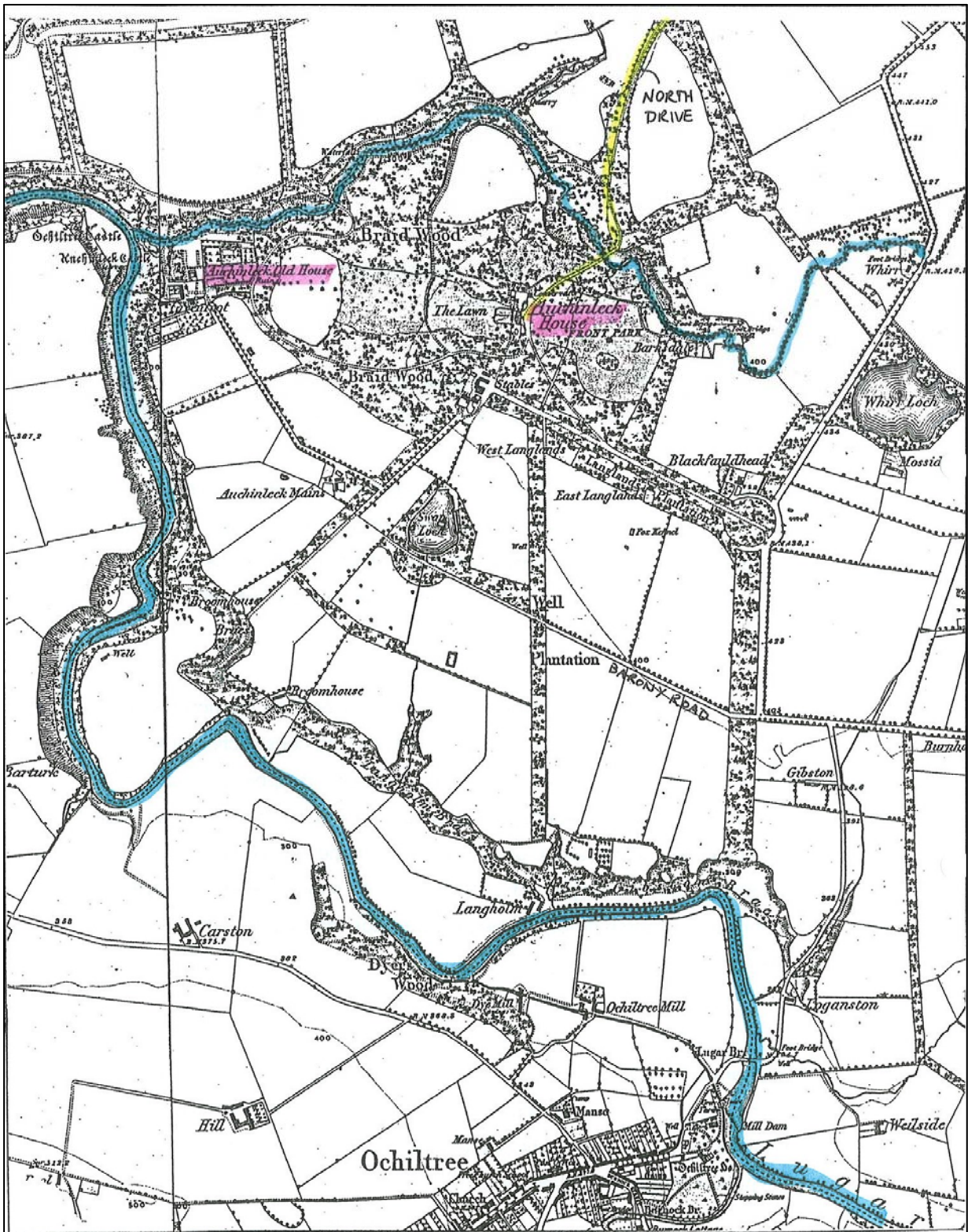
*'Sir*

*Having filled up the Woodston plantation I can now calculate what plants we'll need for Rogerton belt, in which there is not above 4 ½ acres, and accounting the distance betwixt each plant to be 3 ½ feet which I suppose will be rather thick; but at that rate an acre will take 4,464 trees reckoning 5 score to the hundred, and as they go by the long hundred 3,720 will plant an acre; at that rate the belt'll take 16,740 to do which have*

<i>Of scotch fir.....</i>	<i>4,000</i>	
<i>" Ash.....</i>	<i>500</i>	
<i>" Larch.....</i>	<i>900</i>	
<i>" Sprushes [sic].</i>	<i>1,000</i>	
<i>" Alms.....</i>	<i>1,000</i>	
<i>" Beetches.....</i>	<i><u>1,000</u></i>	<i><u>2,400</u></i>
<i>Trees wanting.....</i>		<i>8,340</i>
<i>To do which I have sent for from Mr Samson</i>		
<i>of good 3 year old firs .....</i>	<i>8,000</i>	
<i>Good start oaks.....</i>	<i><u>2,000</u></i>	<i>10,000</i>

*And for the nursery as follows*

<i>Scotch fir.....</i>	<i>10,000</i>
<i>Larches.....</i>	<i>1,500</i>
<i>Sprushes.....</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Alms.....</i>	<i><u>1,000</u></i>
	<i>13,000</i>



Map 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1857)

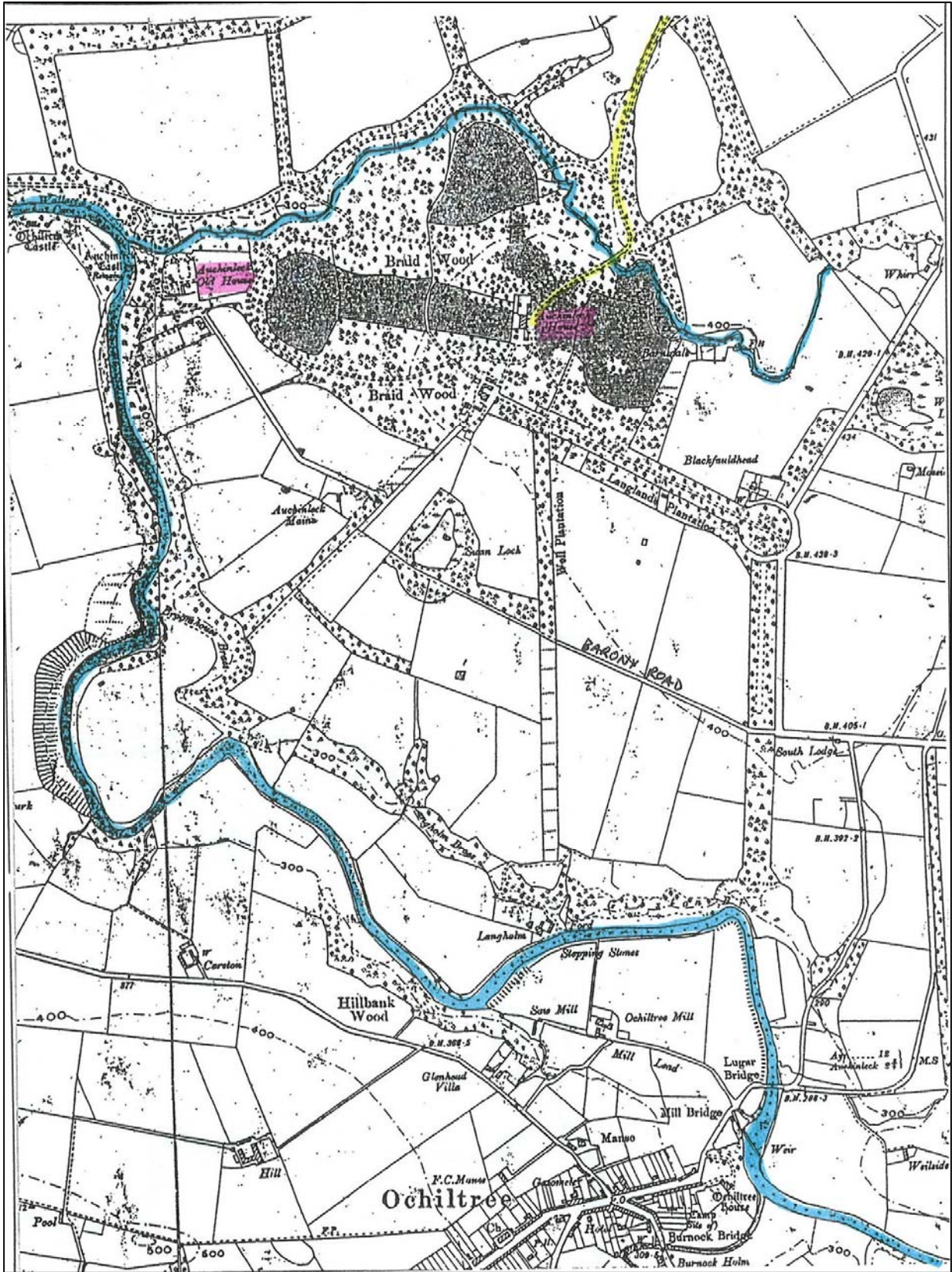
*I had a letter from London, & if you have not made any bargain of Kilburn, Mr Boswell accepts of John Lindsay's offer for it in grass which is £8 for his usual possession....'*

The belts of trees that resulted from such campaigns give structure to the open countryside. They enclose the house itself and provide a buffer around the estate boundaries.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1857 (Map 3) shows the plantations at their full maturity, some eighty years after Lord Auchinleck's death and sixty after JB's. Sir James Boswell, JB's grandson was laird by now. There is a comprehensive network of drives, pleasure walks and structure planting. By the next Ordnance Survey edition of 1893 (Map 4) the estate is beginning to decline. Half the broad belt across the middle of the estate known as Well Plantation has been felled. No new plantations are apparent. By the end of the twentieth century (Map 5) the picture has changed even more dramatically. By now, large areas of woodland and entire tree lines or avenues have been felled, their value as crops presumably realised.

These old maps are also useful for tracing the building phases on the estate. Roy's Military Map (1745-55) indicates only the Old Place and its walled garden. The entrance drive approaches from the south, crossing the Lugar due north of Ochiltree. Barnsdale, the house in which Sir Alexander Boswell's printing press was to operate in the early nineteenth century, is already built. Auchinleck village is not marked.

On Armstrong's map of Ayrshire (1775) the new house is sketched in, as are its brand new pavilions. Lord Auchinleck's planned settlement of Auchinleck is also marked, linked to the house by the Barony Road or Via Sacra. This straight, three mile avenue was to link the house with the church in Auchinleck – hence Lord Auchinleck's nickname for it.



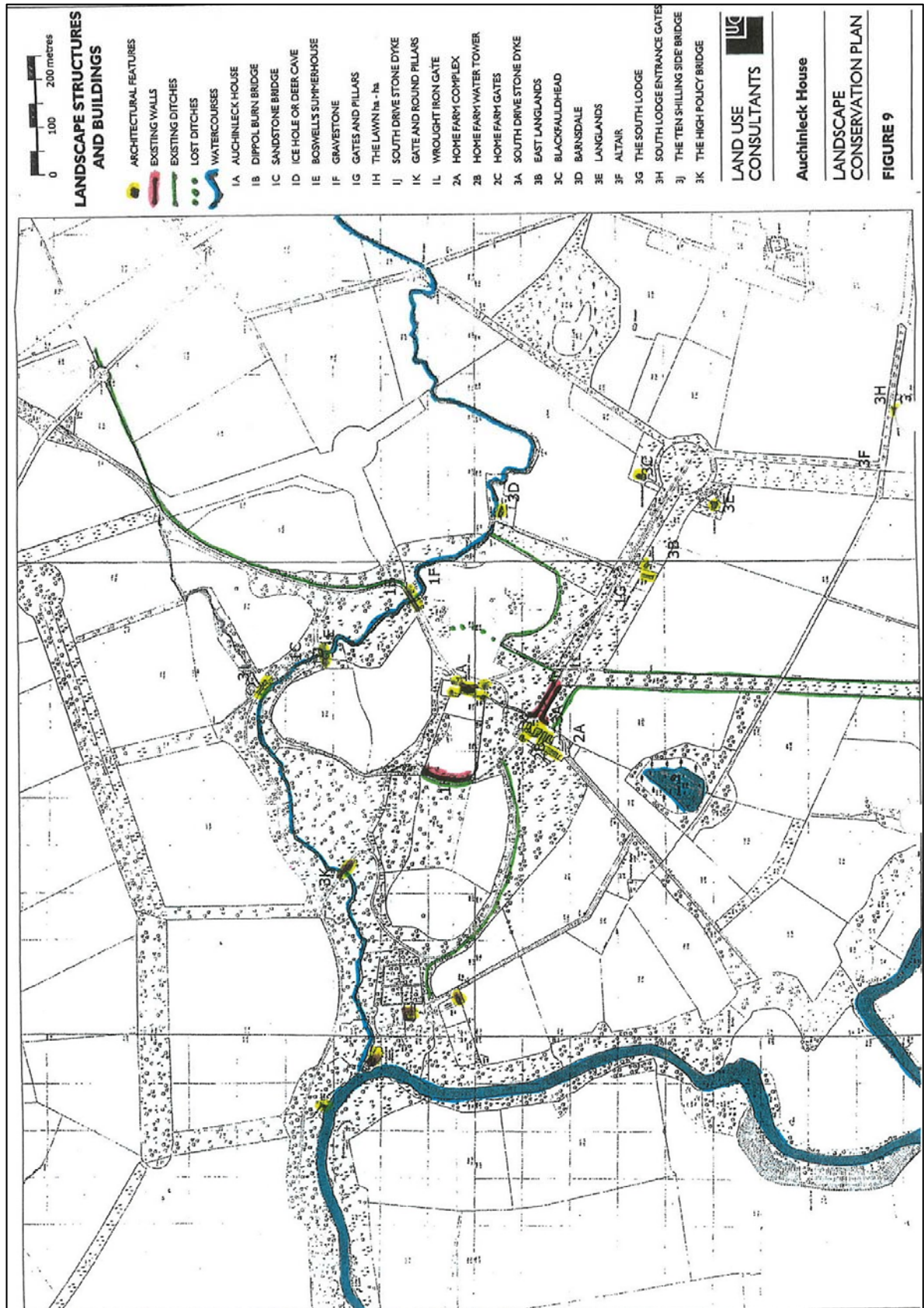
Map 4: Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1893)

By 1857, two new access drives are shown. One approaches from the north along a tree lined avenue across the Dippol Burn, consistent with the construction of the bridge in the 1830s. This is the drive along which Landmarkers approach today. The other meanders west to cross the Lugar Water at the High Policy Bridge. This bridge is another picturesque single span across a steep gorge and still stands today, although in a state of some disrepair. The 1857 map also shows the walled gardens around the Old Place in some detail, suggesting perhaps that the gardens were still maintained at this time.

After the decline of the estate through the nineteenth century, it is perhaps ironic that, to walk in the same woodlands as did Lord Auchinleck, James Boswell and Dr. Johnson, we must return to the old native woodlands along the Dippol Burn and Lugar Water rather than the lairds' proud new plantations. But these, after all, are the same picturesque spots that they too sought out.



Map 5: Formal Tree Planting Remaining on the Auchinleck Estate Today



Map 6: Key to location of Landscape Structures and Buildings at Auchinleck.



**The young James Boswell aged 25 in Rome, painted by George Willison in 1765 (Scottish National Portrait Gallery)**



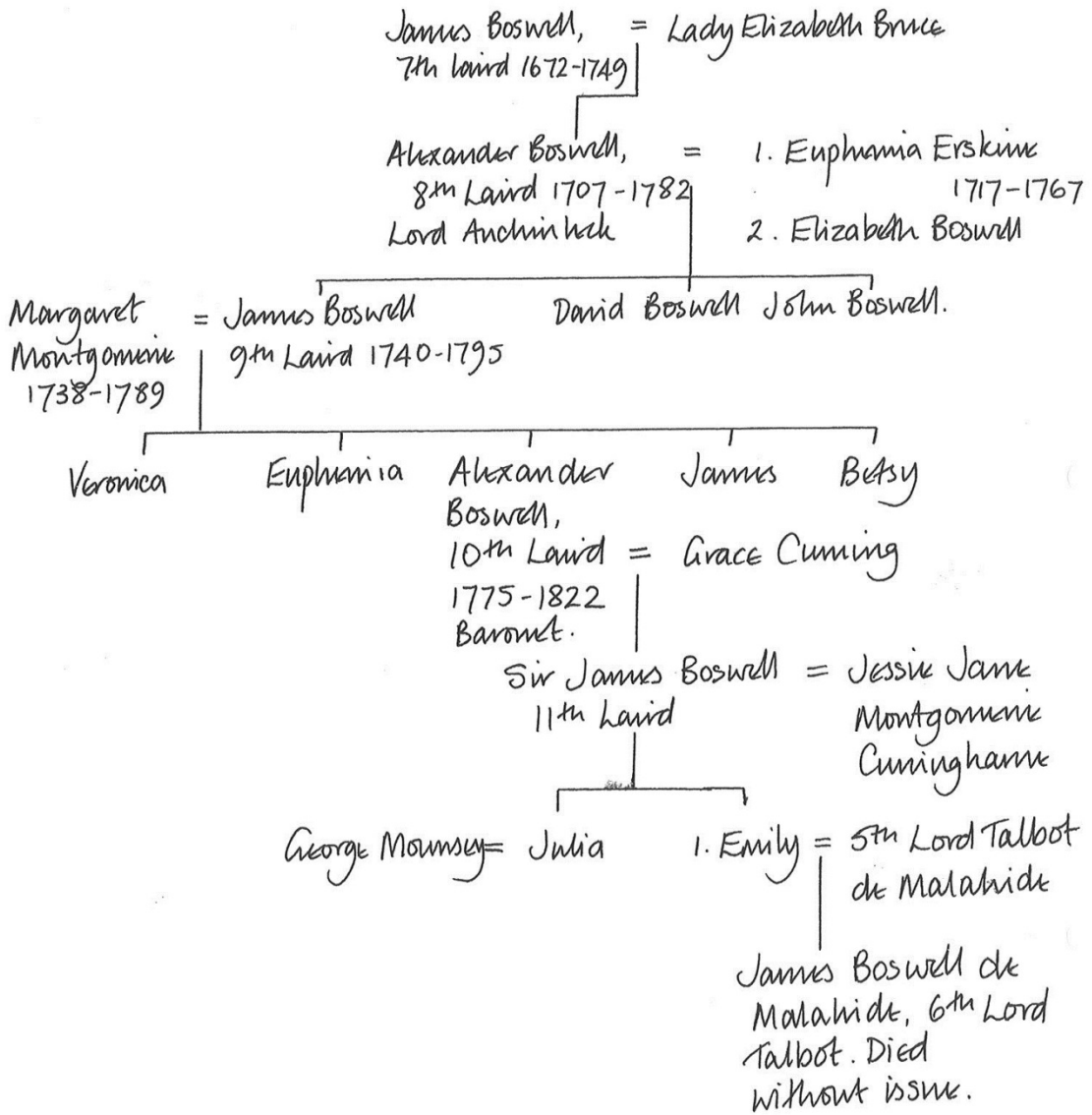
## 5. James Boswell – a Brief Life

More than any other historical figure, James Boswell can be left to speak for himself. One of the greatest pleasures for anyone staying at Auchinleck must be to curl up in a corner of the library with a volume – any volume – of his journal, to be instantly in conversation with one of our most vivid literary personalities. His output is staggering; his honesty and need to unburden himself disarming. We recognise above all a fellow human being, even if few of us will share the extremes of his existence. So in coming to write an account of his life, the instant response is that it is presumptuous. The path has been trodden by many great Boswellian scholars past and present and the introductions to the successive volumes of the journals (all on the bookshelves in the library at Auchinleck) provide readable and entertaining *precis* of Boswell's life. The gentle reader should really be encouraged to make his or her own acquaintance with this colourful gentleman and his friends.

All this, of course, would be shirking the history album's duty, so what follows is a framework of themes rather than a chronological account (the main events of his life are summarised opposite). Anyone new to Boswell will then be able to identify these themes for themselves almost wherever they dip into his writings – for Boswell's character is remarkably consistent in its volatility. In short, readers will not be deprived of the delight of discovering Boswell for themselves.

Then as now, James Boswell's name is inextricably linked with Dr. Samuel Johnson, who became a father figure and mentor, so let us deal with Johnson first. Johnson was a great bear of a man who never suffered fools gladly. He had won the esteem in which he was almost universally held solely through his intellect and often struggled to survive financially in the London he loved. He too suffered from a 'diseased imagination' as he called the melancholy which also plagued Boswell. When he and Boswell met in Thomas Davies' bookshop in Russell Street on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1763, Johnson was a feted literary giant, author of the first English Dictionary, critic and poet. Boswell was a Scottish upstart, newly

BOSWELL FAMILY TREE



Key dates for Auchinleck House and the life of James Boswell

- 1609 James Boswell 4<sup>th</sup> Laird of Auchinleck built the Old Place
- 1707 Alexander Boswell born.
- 1740 James Boswell (JB) born.
- 1754 Alexander, by now 8<sup>th</sup> Laird, is made judge in Scottish Sessions Court and given a non-hereditary title, Lord Auchinleck.
- 1755 Lord Auchinleck is made judge in the court of Session, the supreme Scottish Civil Court
- 1755-62 Building of Auchinleck House
- 1760 Family moved from Edinburgh to new house at Auchinleck
- 1763 JB makes first trip to London and meets Dr. Johnson in a bookshop.
- 1764 JB goes to Utrecht to study
- 1765-6 JB is on the Grand Tour, through German states, Italy, Corsica and France
- 1765 Death of Euphemia Boswell, Lady Auchinleck, JB's mother
- 1768 Publication of *An Account of Corsica*
- 1769 JB marries Margaret Montgomerie, Lord Auchinleck marries Elizabeth Boswell, both the each other's wills.
- 1773 Boswell visits Auchinleck with Johnson on their way back from a tour of the Hebrides. Argument ensues between Lord Auchinleck and Johnson over Charles I and Toryism in the library at Auchinleck House.
- 1774-5 Pavilions/wings added to Auchinleck House
- 1782 Death of Lord Auchinleck in Edinburgh. Boswell inherits Auchinleck as 9<sup>th</sup> laird.
- 1785 Publication of *A Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D*
- 1786 Death of Dr. Johnson
- 1787 JB and his family move to live permanently in London.
- 1789 Death of Margaret Boswell (JB's wife) at Auchinleck from TB
- 1790 *Life of Johnson* published
- 1795 Death of JB in London. Son Alexander becomes 10<sup>th</sup> laird. Wife Grace disapproves of JB's association with Johnson; start of suppression of family papers



**Dr Johnson and Boswell with Flora MacDonal on their tour of the Hebrides in 1773. Flora was the Jacobite heroine who had helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape 'over the sea to Skye' at the end of the 1745 rebellion.**

arrived in the capital (and, typically, he had been angling for an introduction to Johnson from Davies who was Johnson's publisher). The two men took to each other immediately and genuinely. Boswell perhaps substituted for the son Johnson never had and Johnson gave Boswell the affection and supportive advice that he so craved from Lord Auchinleck. Johnson's comments on Boswell's relationship with Lord Auchinleck shine like beacons of good sense through the pair's bickering.

Shortly after Boswell and he met, Johnson put the matter in a nutshell in July 1763 in an exchange recorded by Boswell in his journal:

'I said, "You and I, Sir, are very good companions, but my father and I are not so. Now what can occasion this? For you are as old a man as my father, and you are certainly as learned and as knowing." "Sir," said he, "I am a man of the world. I live in the world, and I take in some measure the colour of the world as it moves along. But your father is a judge in a remote part of the country, and all his notions are taken from the old world. Besides, there must always be a struggle between a father and son, while the one aims at power and the other at independency.

*'I told him I was afraid of my father's forcing me to be a lawyer. "Why, Sir," said he, "you need not be afraid of his forcing you to be a laborious, practising lawyer. That is not in his power. For, as the proverb says, 'One man may lead a horse to the water, but twenty cannot make him drink.' He may be displeased, but it will not go far. If he only insists on you having as much law as is necessary for a man of property, and endeavours to get you into Parliament, he is quite in the right.'"*

In fact, Johnson and Boswell spent relatively little time in each other's company, but with Johnson above all, Boswell practised his extraordinary talent for recording conversation. He decided early on that he would write a biography of Johnson and assiduously collected material for it – on occasion to Johnson's annoyance. The *Life of Samuel Johnson* when finally written some six years after Johnson's death in 1784 was a literary tour de force in every sense. It remains an outstanding example of biography. Yet it was written at a very low ebb in Boswell's life and it is remarkable that he managed to pull it off. Recently left a widower, he was debt-ridden, disillusioned with the law and anxious for his children's futures. The *Life* might never have been written at all were it not for

About Easter 1785 should  
 be published in one volume octavo  
 Printed for Charles Dilly London  
**The Journal of a  
 Tour to the Hebrides**  
 in company with Samuel Johnson LL.D.  
 By James Boswell Esq.

while along the stream of time thy name  
 expand'd files and gathers all its fame;  
 shall my little bark attendant sail,  
 to prove the triumph and partake the gale.

Pope

I have been collecting materials for upwards of twenty  
 years being which he was honored with the  
 intimate friendship of Dr Johnson to whose  
 memory he is ambitious to erect a literary  
 monument worthy of that illustrious  
 Author and most excellent Man. He  
 wishes first to have before him the papers  
 lives and memoirs with which the publick  
 curiosity is so justly conversant from a  
 that in addition to the great stock which  
 is peculiar to himself, and lies in his  
 repositories secure from invasion, he may  
 receive any particulars of value, may select  
 what is genuine, correct what is erroneous  
 and

Draft of a publication announcement for Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson LL.D* in Boswell's own hand.  
 (Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Yale)

another great friend, Edmund Mallone, a renowned Shakespearian scholar who put his own writing on hold to support Boswell through the discipline of constructing the book. This involved not just the editorial rigours of meticulous composition, revision and cross-checking, but also considerable nursemaiding – making sure that Boswell did not drink too much, or dissipate his energy or resolve through too much socialising, or fall prey to melancholy.

The book was eagerly anticipated by the public and was an instant bestseller. At last Boswell received acclaim for the talents which mattered most to him – and the royalties went some way to paying off his debts. It is chiefly why Boswell is still remembered today. Yet it came almost at the end of his life and we have cheated by reading history backwards to deal with Dr. Johnson first. The *Life* represented the climax of Boswell's existence – but what of the strengths and inadequacies which made up this brilliant if erratic biographer?

His literary skills are clear, his output compulsive and staggeringly large. Apart from his journal and the *Life of Johnson*, he wrote copious letters, many pamphlets and articles and two more books, *An Account of Corsica* (1768) and *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (not published until 1785). His confessional letters to William Temple and John Johnston of Grange, friends from his student days and lifelong correspondents, are another significant body of work. During his travels on the Continent in the mid-1760s, Boswell had become friends with General Pasquale de Paoli, leader of the Corsican struggle for independence from the French and Genoese. Paoli eventually came to live in England and indeed spent two nights at Auchinleck in September 1771. The friendship was to prove a lasting one. Lord Auchinleck, predictably, did not approve, and is said to have called Paoli a 'land louping scoundrel of a Corsican'. Once Boswell inherited Auchinleck, he hung a portrait of Paoli on the stairs there. Boswell's association with the Corsican cause, though ultimately ineffectual, became part of his public persona. He was proud to be known as 'Corsica Boswell' and at a masquerade ball at Garrick's Shakespearian Jubilee in Stratford in 1769, he appeared in full Corsican national dress. It was a



*J. Miller del.*  
**JAMES BOSWELL Esq.**  
*In the Dress of an Armed Corsican Chief, as he appear'd, at  
Shakespeare's Jubilee, at Stratford upon Avon September 1769. —*

**Boswell depicted in Corsican national dress, as he wore at the Shakespeare Jubilee. A year after its publication in 178, his Account of Corsica had already been through three editions and been printed in four languages.**



bitter blow twenty five years later when Lord Dundas rejected his suite for a diplomatic appointment in Corsica.

For the dilemma which lay at the heart of Boswell's life was a sense of his own perceived greatness and worth, paradoxically forever assailed by his acknowledgement of his actual inadequacies. He came from an old family but not an aristocratic one; he was required to earn his own living. Writing was what he did best, but his father did not think this a fit profession and it did not bring wealth. Boswell flirted with the idea of gaining a commission in the Guards: again, Lord Auchinleck disapproved. He was obliged on his return from the Grand Tour to buckle down to the law, a profession which demanded a greater degree of steady commitment and hard work than Boswell could ever provide if he was to succeed to the heights to which he aspired. It was not a fast route to high society, which was where Boswell saw himself. He nursed ambitions to become an MP, to be seen at Court. He ceaselessly pursued the titled and the powerful whenever he could in London, but with no success. He was Scottish and out of his own milieu. While he was soon part of a tight knit group of literary and artistic figures which included people like Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Malone and radical politician John Wilkes, for many of his contemporaries he was something of a joke.

All this was most inconvenient for Boswell, who found himself most alive in London. He thrived upon the bustle and sense of being close to the circles of 'the great, the gay and the ingenious.' The extent of his unhappiness away from London led him, after years of indecision, to uproot his family and move to live permanently in the capital in 1787. By then he was in his late forties; the move allowed him to indulge his own taste for the metropolitan life but it came too late for him to further his professional career significantly.



**The Boswell family mausoleum, next to the old chapel in Auchinleck village. It was built by Lord Auchinleck in 1754. Here Boswell buried his father (he missed his mother's funeral) and was eventually laid to rest himself.**

(Further details of the family mausoleum may be found at the end of this album.)

His progression in the Scottish courts had been hindered throughout not just by his own erratic temperament but also by his lifelong tendency to identify with the underdog. Often he would not give up on a cause until the very end, as in the case of his first criminal client, John Reid, who was a persistent sheep stealer and eventually was hanged despite Boswell's best efforts. Such generous but misguided loyalty from a criminal lawyer could lead to the disdain of more hardened senior lawyers.

Reid's fate also leads to another of Boswell's lifelong preoccupations – with death. In truth, Boswell was not a particularly religious man however regularly he attended the Sunday sermons in Edinburgh. Deep religiosity hardly sat comfortably with the lifestyle in which he habitually indulged. He had been put off the Scottish Presbyterian church by his mother's narrow Calvinist views of hellfire and damnation. Temperamentally and politically, he was more attracted to the Anglican church (and even flirted briefly with Catholicism to his father's horror). His fascination with death and the afterlife transcended all religious persuasions. This morbid obsession led him to haunt public executions and seek out condemned prisoners in their cells. He often then needed to blot out the horrors of the gallows by seeking out a prostitute.

Boswell desperately wanted to believe in an afterlife. It was unthinkable for him from the intensity of his own existence that there should be only oblivion. It was this fear and uncertainty, rather than any twisted pleasure, that led him to the places of execution. It also led him to the famous deathbed interview with David Hume, the most famous sceptic of the day of whom Dr. Johnson, good Tory and Anglican that he was, strongly disapproved. Surely, Boswell thought, as Hume lay dying, he would reconsider, thereby giving Boswell a ray of hope. But Hume, weak though ever courteous, stuck firmly to his belief that 'it was a most unreasonable fancy that we should live forever.' His quiet determination threw Boswell into turmoil and it was reflecting on such matters that often tipped him into hypochondria.

This word had a different meaning in the eighteenth century, being another word for what we would call depression. He described the condition in a thinly disguised autobiographical essay, in a series he published under the pseudonym 'The Hypochondriac':

*'Let me select some of these thoughts, the multitude of which confounds and overwhelms the mind of a hypochondriac.'*

*His opinion of himself is low and desponding. His temporary dejection makes his faculties quite feeble. He imagines that everybody thinks meanly of him. His fancy roves over the variety of characters whom he knows in the world, and except some very bad ones indeed, they appear all better than his own. He envies the condition of numbers, whom, when in a sound state of mind, he sees to be far inferior to him. He regrets his ever having attempted distinction and excellence in any way, because the effect of his former exertions now serves only to make his insignificance more vexing to him. Nor has he any prospect of more agreeable days when he looks forward. There is a cloud as far as he can perceive, and he supposes it will be charged with a thicker vapour the longer it continues.*

*He is distracted between indolence and shame. Every kind of labour is irksome to him. Yet he has not the resolution to cease from his accustomed tasks. Though he reasons within himself that contempt is nothing, the habitual current of his feelings obliges him to shun being despised. He acts therefore like a slave, not animated by inclination but goaded by fear. (Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 1780 *The Hypochondriac* No. 39)*

All his life, Boswell suffered periodically, and at times debilitatingly, from this depression. The attempt to stave off such black moods explain much of his frenetic socialising. There was a rumour that mental instability ran in the family, which some uncharitably attributed to the Dutch blood in Boswell's paternal grandmother. His brother John, probably simple-minded rather than insane initially, was incarcerated for much of his life in asylums by Lord Auchinleck. Boswell treated John with compassion, deplored their father's harsh treatment of him and came away from visits to John fearing that their shared blood might condemn him to a similar fate. He rationalised it thus:

*'Walked about with Mrs Cuninghame; recalled old stories. Spoke of the family hypochondria quite seriously; saw it was believed in the country. Both you and honest David have a certain pride to think of it to a certain degree. But it would be very bad should it be universally known. There are also two*

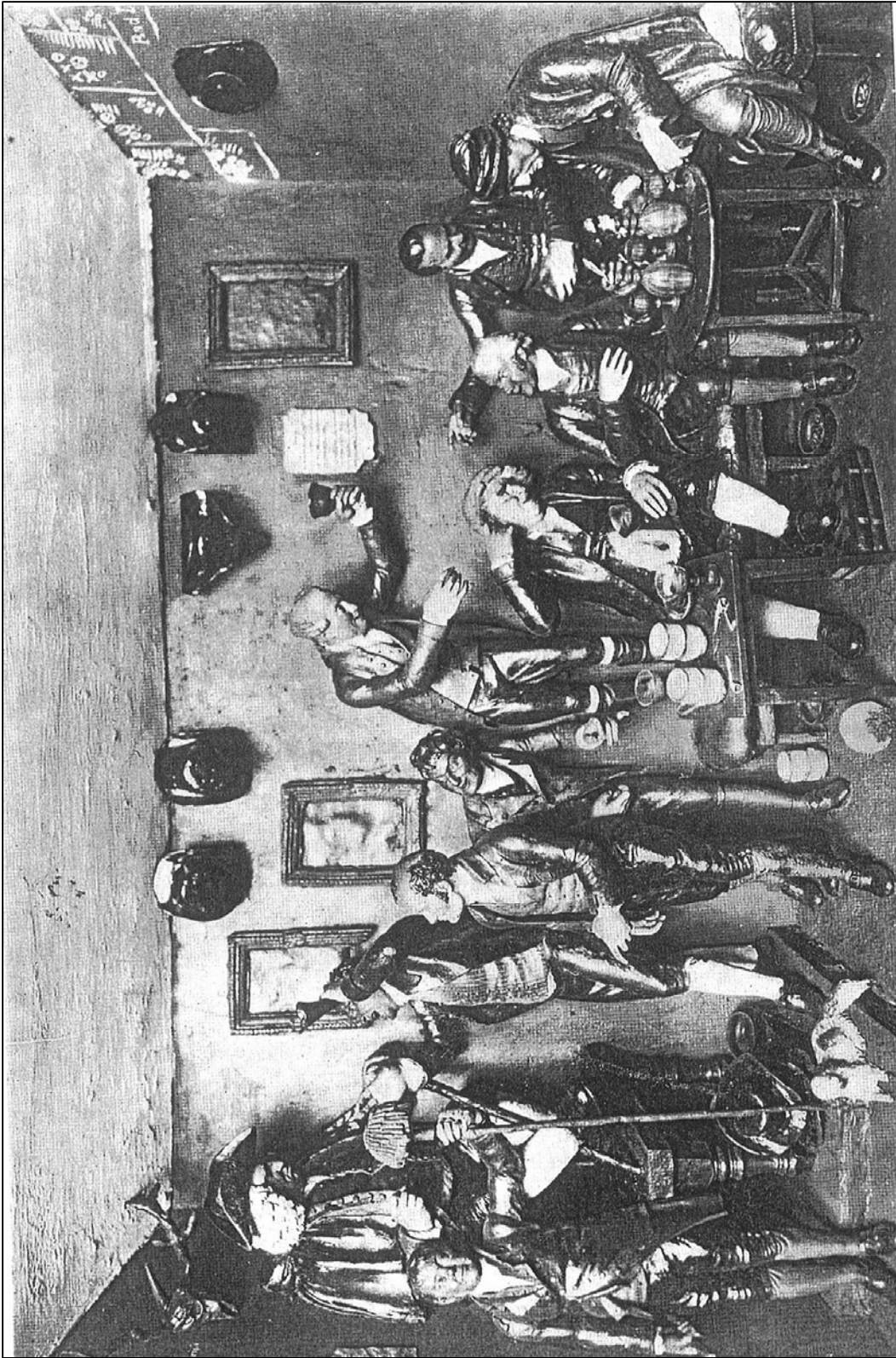
*ways of looking at it. Either thus: there is a distemper in the family, all crackbrained; or thus: that family is remarkable for genius and worth, though they have a cast of melancholy, often the attendant of distinguished minds. I am now perfectly well upon the whole. Let my actions bear evidence.'*  
 (Journal, Auchinleck, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1767)

Lord Auchinleck's middle son, David, appears as the most reasonable (and likeable?) of the three. He would perhaps have made a better heir to the estate than James, but this seems never to have been explicitly considered by Lord Auchinleck. James and David generally got on well and shared another persistent characteristic – a deep-seated respect for what Boswell called 'Old laird and family ideas' and a love of the land on which that family had its roots. Just before David departed to begin a career in business in Spain, Boswell instigated a solemn ceremony at the Old Place, witnessed by overseer James Bruce and his sons. In a scene typical of Boswell's sense of theatre, David was made to swear an oath:

*'..I have stood upon the old castle of Auchinleck and have there solemnly promised to stand by these old walls with heart, purse and sword that is to say that in whatever part of the globe my fortune should place me, I should always be faithful to the ancient family of the Auchinleck, and give a reasonable obedience to the representative thereof.'*

On another occasion, just before his marriage, Boswell stole over to Auchinleck from Lainshaw and 'with a piece of the Old Castle in my hand, I knelt upon the ruins and swore that if any man had the estate in exclusion of the rightful heir this stone should swim in his heart's blood.'

He loved the grand gesture, which could backfire against him in polite company. He himself admitted that he was willing to go out on a limb – even at his own expense – to draw out the *bon mot* or witty exchange. Boswell delighted in repartee and the exchange of ideas, and in this context we must mention his love of alcohol, facilitator of so many merry evenings.



**A Tavern Scene, executed in was (c 1810). The revellers are traditionally identified from left to right as Dr Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, (unknown)), Gainsborough, General Paoli (standing on the bench), Charles Fox, James Boswell, the landlord and another. A servant stand steady at the right with a mop. (London Museum)**

Was Boswell an alcoholic, as is so often stated? By today's standards, the answer is probably yes. Certainly, his level of consumption often led him into behaviour that he later regretted. Towards the end of his life, he could be a pitiful figure in his cups. There is a poignant anecdote in 1787 of his younger son, Jamie (then aged eleven), picking him out of the gutter outside their London house. Mrs Boswell was dying of consumption; Boswell had returned from an evening's drinking already inebriated and then decided to go out again looking for a whore. And Boswell records this in his journal; there seems nothing he would not confess, even though we sometimes sense special pleading in his accounts. From his early life, he had tried to moderate his consumption of alcohol, aware of the loss of control it brought. Yet in his role as *animateur* it was the alcohol that made his talk take flight and gave him the sense of camaraderie that he craved.

He had always used Auchinleck as a place of recuperation, from recurrent malaria contracted in Corsica, from bouts of gonorrhoea and also from alcohol. In his father's day, not much of the latter was on offer and Lord Auchinleck sometimes used alcohol as a weapon in his armoury of ruses to humiliate his son, on one occasion limiting Boswell to sherry when his other guests were served claret. We see the incident through Boswell's eyes, but could it be that his father was simply trying to keep him sober?

*'I dined at my father's with Commissioner Cochrane, Dr. Webster, Dr. Gillespie, and David Cunninghame. A very disagreeable scene of ill humour in my father happened after dinner. For all the money that is spent by his women [Lady Auchinleck and her spinster sisters], there is a meanness at his table in grudging claret, which very seldom appears. When Dr. Webster is there, a bottle is set down to him; and as it is a great chance no more will be allowed, I generally never take any of it. Today I chose a glass of it, and said easily, "Doctor, will you give me a glass of your wine?" He made me welcome, to be sure. As I was taking the bottle to me, my father said with a snarl, "That's Dr. Webster's bottle, man." "I know," said I. "But the Doctor makes me welcome, and I like to take a glass of claret when I'm with a man who can afford it. But if it is disagreeable to you, I shall not take any of it." He was ashamed when I thus spoke out. But he looked displeased. I repeated, "If it is disagreeable to you that I should drink claret, I shall let it alone." He wished to have the meanness concealed, and said, "Never fash your head." So I drank claret. Lady Auchinleck called for another bottle of*

*claret. This roused him and with a vengeance he filled my glass with sherry. I was stunned and hesitated for a little what to do. I once thought of instantly leaving the company. But I luckily restrained myself; said, "It's all one"; and then putting some claret into my glass, said, "I'll make burgundy of it." After this the second bottle of claret was decanted; I partook of it as if nothing had happened, and he was quiet. It was really wretched treatment.'* (Journal, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1780)

When Boswell inherited the estate, he kept a Book of Company and Liquors, a journal comparable to those kept by James Bruce for the estate at large. We are lucky enough to have a facsimile copy of this book, presented by Mary, Viscountess Eccles who had the volume printed for the Roxburghe Club (it is kept in Boswell's Study) . In it, Boswell recorded his guests and the alcohol they all consumed while staying at Auchinleck. He kept it partly to act as a prompt to 'clusters of ideas' that he might write down later but also, we may suspect, to keep an eye on his own consumption. On days without company, little or no alcohol might be drunk. Yet we also have records of prodigious all day sessions. Over two days in October 1783 with six and then seven guests present, the equivalent of nineteen and then twenty bottles were drunk. This was not just wine: the totals include six bottles of port, three of Madeira and four of rum.

To be fair to Boswell, this is not unrepresentative of eighteenth-century drinking habits. It was an age when people drank from morning till night, breakfasting on ale, indulging in port at lunchtime and moving on to bumpers of claret and punch in the evening. For someone like Boswell with an in-built propensity to over-indulge, temptation was impossible to avoid in the daily social round. Alcohol almost certainly contributed to his death at the relatively early age of fifty-four.

And then there were Boswell's women. His portraits do not show a particularly handsome face, but from his late teens until his marriage at 29, he never lacked liaisons. Many of his mistresses were of a similar social status to himself and he seems to have had a certain sense of honour which prevented him from seducing the socially vulnerable outside a financial arrangement – a pretty chambermaid, for example, or the daughter of James Bruce. Then there was the Siennese



matron with whom he had a passionate affair during his Grand Tour and who pursued him with letters, and Rousseau's mistress, whom he accompanied from Paris to London and who opened his eyes to the fact that, while successful in getting women into bed, his lovemaking then left something to be desired from a woman's perspective.

Boswell also frequented prostitutes throughout his life, in Edinburgh as in London. These encounters were typically drunken or brutish or both. He blamed them on 'the foul fiend of the genitals' as if he had no control in the matter. Aged 23 we find him in the Park in London feeling 'lowish' so he 'took the first whore I met, whom I without many words copulated with free from danger, being safely sheathed. She was ugly and lean and her breath smelt of spirits'. A few days later he had a whore in the middle of Westminster Bridge in broad daylight: 'The whim of doing it there with the Thames rolling below us amused me much.' Venereal disease was a constant hazard. Boswell endured his periodic bouts with philosophic resignation, went to his favourite quack for a cure, abstained until the infection passed and then soon fell back into his old ways.

Eventually, of course, marriage was required of him. He devotes many pages of correspondence to his great friends William Temple and John Johnston of Grange on the respective merits of various possible mates. In the end, love took him by surprise. He had known his cousin Margaret Montgomerie for years. She was 31 and two years older than him, almost an elder sister figure. Their letters are at first an easy exchange between friends. In 1769 Boswell was courting Mary Ann Boyd, a young Irish heiress – a typical infatuation. He had been successful enough to contemplate meeting her family, so set off for Dublin. His companion on this voyage was Margaret, who had first introduced him to Mary Ann Boyd to whom she was also cousin. During their fortnight together, Boswell realised he was falling in love with Margaret instead. He responded to her good sense and equanimity: even when he was rude to her in his cups, she was ready to forgive him in the morning. Ever aware of his own shortcomings, Boswell recognised in Margaret the steadying influence he knew he lacked. It soon became clear that



**Margaret Boswell (nee Montgomerie), Boswell's wife.**

the affection was mutual. The Dublin visit went ahead, but half-heartedly and a few weeks after their return to Scotland, Boswell proposed by letter (coincidentally suffering from his tenth venereal infection) and was accepted.

Emotionally, Boswell had made a sensible choice, one of his few. Socially, and in his father's eyes dynastically, it was a disaster. Margaret's family was less well-off and so she brought with her neither a dowry nor connections. Lord Auchinleck had been waiting several years for a daughter-in-law to care for him in his old age, but not for this one. In his turn, he had been pursuing another family cousin, Elizabeth Boswell of Balmuto, who was only in her forties and so theoretically capable of producing an alternative heir. Lord Auchinleck seems to have tetchily engineered that his marriage to Elizabeth should take place on the same day as that of Boswell to Margaret, on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1769. Boswell, meanwhile, was disgusted by what he saw as his father's libidinous betrayal of his mother's memory, not to mention the potential threat posed by this marriage to his own inheritance. His complicated relationship with his father has been described in the previous chapter. To this must now be added his ongoing resentment and dislike of the new Lady Auchinleck (to whom he referred sarcastically as 'the noverca' or cruel stepmother) and Lord Auchinleck's refusal to invite Margaret or her eventual children to Auchinleck. While the courts were in session in Edinburgh there were many dutiful family visits and Sunday lunches, but while Lord Auchinleck was alive, neither his daughter-in-law nor his grandchildren visited the estate.

So was Boswell's a happy marriage with Margaret? For the first years, through the early 1770s, the answer must be yes, so happy that Boswell did not even keep his journal. He threw himself into building up his professional career as lawyer in Edinburgh. He recognised that he now had family responsibilities to live up to, drank less and for a while whored not at all. He soon acquired a family of his own. A first child died at childbirth in 1770, followed by a miscarriage in 1771. Two daughters, Veronica and Euphemia were born in 1773 and 1774. A middle son, David, died shortly after birth in 1776 but two more healthy sons,



**James Court, off the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, where James and Margaret were living in the 1770s. Johnson stayed here on his tour to the Hebrides, of which he also published an account.**

In 1781 Boswell wrote on his return from a trip to London, 'Edinburgh operates like the *Grotta del Cane* on my vivacity,' (The Grotta was an Italian cave he had visited where a dog was used to demonstrate the suffocating effects of carbon dioxide.)

Alexander and James, followed in 1775 and 1779 and a last daughter, Betsy, in 1780.

As a couple, the Boswells joined in the Edinburgh social round, going to the theatre and dining with friends. But Boswell soon began to feel constrained and began annual trips in the spring. Even here, he managed at first to stay on the straight and narrow. He was diverted in 1773 by his expedition to the Hebrides with Dr. Johnson about which he then published his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D* to great acclaim. Once back in Edinburgh again, his frustration grew. He took to staying out late drinking and, increasingly, gaming with stakes he could not afford. The wife he had chosen for her moderation and good sense began to seem boring. On occasion, he was abusive towards her. He was always contrite afterwards and confessed everything to Margaret who was usually forgiving but had pressures of her own in bringing up a young family. Boswell began frequenting whores again, sometimes in broad daylight. He knew he risked infection and reputation yet was incapable of restraining himself. In a sense, it was a Jekyll and Hyde existence, since through all this he remained a (mostly) affectionate husband and loving father. Despite the unsatisfactory nature of his relationship with his own father, Boswell showed his love for his own children and worried increasingly about the best way to bring them up.

He had always longed to see Margaret installed as mistress at Auchinleck, but it was only at his father's death in 1782 that this became possible. Margaret and the children spent more time there than Boswell over the next years and it was to Auchinleck that Margaret returned to die just seven years later. Consumption ran in her family and she had never been strong, worn down further by seven pregnancies in a decade. She had been spitting blood periodically since 1777 and had faced up to an early death from then on. Although she often rallied, by 1787 she was seriously ill. The family nonetheless moved to London in that year, but Margaret felt there was 'no comfort in view but being at home at Auchinleck'. She returned for the last time in May 1788 with her daughters. Boswell was with



**James Boswell aged 45, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1785. Edmund Malone described the portrait as 'a perfect and very characteristic likeness'.  
(National Portrait Gallery)**

them intermittently, but was then in thrall to the awful Lord Lonsdale in a last attempt to revive his legal career. Boswell was awed by his wife's fortitude and genuinely distressed by her suffering, but he found it so painful to watch that, even when he was at Auchinleck, he spent most of his time out, carousing until the small hours.

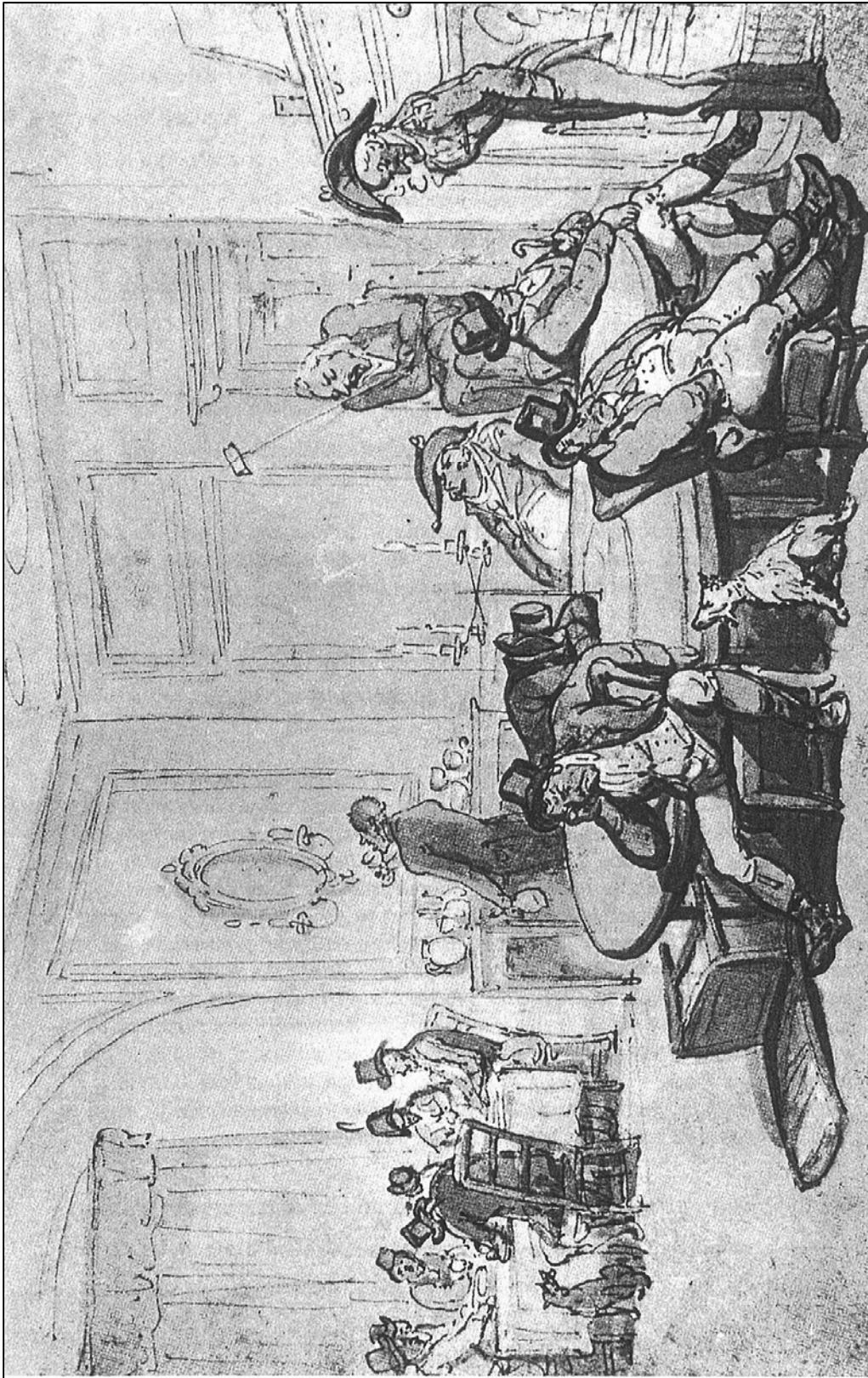
In fact, the Auchinleck air meant that Margaret lingered for a year after her arrival there. James Bruce wrote to Boswell of the poignant rallies that attend any terminal illness, as in July 1787:

*My Lady is now surprizingly better, Walkes and rides about with As much Spirits as farmerly, even far above what I ever expected....I hope these sort of Busseness may be of Service to her Ladyship.*

When the final crisis came, Boswell was in London. He gathered Sandy and Jamie into a coach and arrived at Auchinleck sixty four hours later. He was too late. He wrote to Temple:

*But alas! Our haste was all in vain. The fatal stroke had taken place as we set out. It was very strange that we had no intelligence whatever on the road, not even in our own parish, nor till my second daughter came running out from our house, and announced to us the dismal event in a burst of tears... I could hardly bring myself to agree that the body should be removed, for it was still a consolation to me to go and kneel by it and talk to my dear dear Peggie. She was much respected by all who knew her, so that her funeral was remarkably well-attended. There were nineteen carriages followed the hearse, and a large body of horsemen and the tenants of all my lands. It is not customary in Scotland for a husband to attend his wife's funeral. But I resolved, if I possibly could, to do her the last honours myself, and I was able to go through with it very decently. I privately read the funeral service over her coffin in the presence of my sons, and was relieved by that ceremony a good deal.*

Boswell's treatment of his wife is one of the least attractive features of his life. That he seems, at bottom, to have loved her does not excuse the pain he caused her. Amid all the salacious detail so often reproduced today about his whoring and venereal infections, we should not forget the wife who had to tolerate this behaviour.



Gaming at Brook's Club by Rowlandson c 1810.



The last years of Boswell's life were not happy ones, apart perhaps from the accolades which greeted his *Life of Johnson* in 1790. He was full of grief and remorse at his wife's death, he had also lost his great friend and mentor Dr. Johnson in 1784. From time to time he would rehearse his litany in his journal:

*'I am now a barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple, have a house in London, am one of the distinguished literary men of my age. And at the same time [I] have an extensive estate, a number of tenants all depending upon me; in short, have, when I please, the potentiality of a prince.'*

But having made the decision to move his family permanently to London in 1787, there was no longer any excuse for the failure of his career to take off either at the English bar or in politics other than his own inadequacies. Not only had Margaret been desperately homesick for Auchinleck, the children were often unhappy at their expensive English schools. Debts were an ever-increasing burden. Boswell did not give up trying with his career, but it became increasingly clear that the few powerful contacts he had were not prepared to give him the break he felt he deserved. For this, his own behaviour was probably to blame. His drinking and carousing were of course known about by his contemporaries, and that the scale of this behaviour was not conventional for the eighteenth century must explain in part his failure to achieve his ambitions.

Only the nasty Sir James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, had been prepared to give him a chance. In 1787 Boswell had written asking to be made Recorder of Carlisle and Lowther invited him to ride north with him, which had meant leaving Margaret, very ill, in London. It was to be a test in more senses than one. Lowther was a bully and seems to have used Boswell mainly as the butt of the entourage's jokes. In one instance Boswell's wig mysteriously disappeared. In the end Boswell made his own break with Lonsdale.

He was increasingly depressed and less and less able to control his drinking. He was endearingly bolstered and advised by his young sons, especially Jamie. The writing of the *Life* had given him purpose, disciplined to it as he was by faithful



**Drawing of James Boswell in 1793 by George Dance.**  
(National Portrait Gallery, London)

Edmund Malone. It had made him famous, but brought no increase in legal briefs. He made various half-hearted attempts to court a new wife. He turned increasingly to another great friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds, for companionship but Reynolds too died in 1791.

James Boswell himself died in 1795. The immediate cause of his death was progressive kidney failure but his health had been worsening for some time as a result of his irregular habits. He was only fifty four. His body was interred next to his wife's in the Boswell family mausoleum in Auchinleck village. It is as well for Boswell that he wrote well. Were it not for his felicitous turn of phrase, anyone reading an account of his life would find little to admire. But admire him we do. Just when we are most repelled, he comes up with some phrase that so epitomises the moment that we cannot help but be drawn back into his world. Just when he is at his most posturing we glimpse the vulnerability that lies at the heart of being human.



Tuesday morning died, at his house in Great-Portland-street, JAMES BOSWELL, Esq. well known in the Literary World; and much regretted by all his acquaintance, for the many excellent and benevolent qualities of his heart.—Qualities, which though tinged with an eccentricity too frequently the companion of genius, endeared him to all who were honoured with his friendship.—His social and convivial talents led him, perhaps too frequently, into publick company; and this circumstance, it is believed, hastened his dissolution.—His last and longest work is his *Life of Dr. Johnson*; a tribute of gratitude and esteem to a great and good man; his first, (and which introduced him to publick notice), his *History of Corsica*; in which the spirit of Rational Liberty is enforced with a fire and enthusiasm, which do equal honour to the head and the heart of the Writer.



Caricature of Boswell from Thomas Rowlandson's *Picturesque Beauties of Boswell* (1786). Here Boswell is shown as the Journalist in his native land. His setting is a reference to Auchinleck – which means the land of stones.

## 6. James Boswell and the Auchinleck Estate

Boswell's relationship with his family seat was as ambivalent as his feelings for his father. On the one hand, he valued greatly the pedigree that the estate embodied and "Old laird and family ideas" as he called them were at the heart of his being. Yet Auchinleck was rarely a place where he found contentment while his father was alive. The situation was complicated by Lord Auchinleck's refusal ever to welcome Boswell's wife and children at Auchinleck House (their home was in Edinburgh from their marriage until Lord Auchinleck's death). The fourth volume of this album is an informal 'Boswell at Auchinleck Reader' which collates the various references Boswell makes to Auchinleck (and other significant moments in his life). This gives a fair idea of his varying moods about the house and estate.

He had happy memories of childhood days at the Old Place, before Auchinleck House was built. In 1766 he fell in love with the overseer's pretty daughter, Euphemia Bruce. His letter of confession to his great friend Temple gives us glimpses of the youthful Boswell. Euphemia and he had played together as children- *'As far back as I can remember, we used to build houses and make gardens, wade in the river and play upon the sunny banks'*. Now *'she is so very pretty that I am entirely captivated by her... I pretend great earnestness to have the library in good order and assist her to dust it. I cut my gloves that she may mend them. I kiss her hand. ....That we may not be seen too often together, she and I write notes to each other, which we lay under the cloth which covers the table.'* For once this was a chaste dalliance, Boswell constrained by respect for her father and Euphemia, we sense, knowing exactly what her young master was about!

In his adult life, he was more likely to visit Auchinleck out of a sense of duty to his father (in full awareness that his position as heir was precarious), or for a course of legal instruction, or to recover from illness, either recurrence of the

malaria he had contracted in Corsica or one of his many bouts of venereal disease. There were periods of intellectual engagement and contentment: in 1768 he wrote his *Account of Corsica* at Auchinleck, while also corresponding with Voltaire and William Pitt and preparing his legal cases. Even in later life, his visits to Auchinleck usually began well:

*'Every morning James Bruce comes into my room before I am up, which does me good. A fine day. Made Sandy Bruce show me how he collects the cess [land tax]. Had first Thomas Edmundson and then James Bruce with me looking for pebbles [agates] from the old washing-green to the Broomholm with a very little interruption, did not get one. Gathered some nuts for my children. Was as happy at Auchinleck as in my earliest days. Hoped to see my wife and children happy here. (Sept, 1780).*

Yet he would soon long for company, dragged down by the abstemious routine of his elderly father and his second wife and her unmarried sisters, which he summed up as 'What a life is this! Talk without ideas and card-playing without a stake!' Once he inherited the estate in 1782, he thought, he might be able to settle down and be happy there:

*'I have for some time risen easily between six and seven, which braces my frame; and every morning before breakfast I read a portion of the sacred scriptures and of Thomas a Kempis, by which my mind is calmed and sanctified. I read in the dressing-room of the family apartment; and it seems a chapel from this daily celestial habit....But I should lament that I neglect study shamefully. I find myself at present sufficiently occupied without it. The occupations of the estate, even in speculation content me. I this day began to take lessons in arithmetic from Mr. Millar.'* (November, 1780)

Boswell was again deceiving himself. Even after he inherited the house and estate, he would soon weary of the limitations of bucolic life and be chafing to return to city life in London. Once Auchinleck was theirs, his wife Margaret and the children were to spend more time at Auchinleck than he.

When Boswell did finally inherit at the age of 41, it was to an estate that guaranteed him recognised status among the Ayrshire gentry though not necessarily financial security. Lord Auchinleck had £900 pa as a judge plus rents from all 104 farms on the estate. In his will, he settled 24 of the best of his

farms on his widow for her lifetime. Boswell earned only about £200 pa in legal fees; when he entered his inheritance, he estimated his personal debts at £1,500 (in fact the sum was higher) which cost up to £200 pa in interest. Lord Auchinleck left him less than £50 in cash and the funeral cost almost £300.

Early in 1784 Boswell procured a new Crown charter to the estate even though this was not strictly necessary. In December 1784 he obtained legal possession by taking sasine – the symbolical seizure of earth and stone, although Boswell was not actually present at either of these. Such events were important to him and to his neighbours as an expression of authority. At that time the estate extended over 24,000 acres and contained some 800 souls. When in the mood, it pleased Boswell to receive his rents in front of an open fire with James Brown, the old bellman in attendance, and to entertain his tenants after harvest with mutton and ale.

Boswell required frequent – even weekly – reports from his overseer, James Bruce and then Andrew Gibb. He tried hard to understand the minutiae of the estate, not always with success. While he appreciated the notion of feudal bonds, he was temperamentally unsuited to the minutiae of estate management as recorded in the Estate Journals:

*‘Agriculture has much variety but it is a sober variety...A man of vivacity, unless his views are kept steady, by a constant golden prospect of gain, cannot long be pleased in looking at the operations of ploughing, dunging, harrowing, reaping, or threshing’ (Hypochondriack essay)*

James Bruce was overseer from 1741 to 1790, succeeding his father, Andrew, who also served on the estate for thirty years. He had known Boswell since he was a boy, was a true friend to Boswell and often mediated in his quarrels with Lord Auchinleck. Boswell wrote to Bruce during his travels, often confessionally - some of these letters were later (uniquely?) destroyed by Boswell.

At Bruce’s death JB wrote: ‘To hear that an old servant to whom I had been habituated from my infancy, or rather indeed a kind of friend and tutor with

whom I had in my early years confidentially associated, who was born at Auchinleck, was a most knowing and ingenious man, and seemed in imagination to be an inseparable circumstance about the Place – to hear that he was gone was a sad momento of the transitory nature of human life'. (*Journal*, 23 Aug. 1790. JB was deep in preparation of *Life of Johnson* for publication).

After Bruce's death, Andrew Gibb took over as overseer, again from an old Auchinleck family. He was only 22 when he took over and was to have same relationship with Sir Alexander Boswell as did Bruce with Boswell, serving for 46 years under three lairds. After careful management by Bruce and Gibb, estate income rose from £500 pa after expenses to more than £1000 in 1795. Boswell also extended the estate, albeit on borrowed money. He fared better than many at this time, despite debts on the estate of £9,000 at his death.

Some six months after he inherited the estate, Boswell wrote to Bruce ' I shall do all the good I can as Laird consistent with my love of London.' The qualification is an important one, for of course London was his first love. He was there most of 1785, and in 1787 came the move south to London with his whole family to pursue his political dreams and make his half-hearted transfer to the English bar. He made only brief visits to Auchinleck 1786-7. In 1788 he brought back Margaret, ill with consumption, and stayed for six months. He was in London when she died in June 1789 at Auchinleck. Boswell then visited Auchinleck only twice in the next four years. He found it cheaper to live in London than on his estate, where he had to bestow Laird's hospitality and entertain guests. But 'Rather than let the house of Auchinleck, I would set fire to it,' he wrote in December, 1789.

### **Agricultural improvements**

Progress slower in Scotland than in England. Boswell succeeded to an estate where not all the farms were enclosed, where improved crop rotations were still needed, riggs yet to be levelled and soil to be improved with applications of lime. He was required to digest the basic principles of husbandry but 'Agriculture, to a



great proportion of people, is very indifferent, and a very dull topic; and although Addison....tells us that Virgil, in his Georgicks, tosses about his dung very gracefully; there is to most of us no grace in any part of farming.' He took advice from Alexander Fairlie, factor to his neighbour, the Earl of Eglinton, whose Fairlie Rotation practices became and remain the basis of dairy farming in Ayrshire.

### **Industrial developments**

Liming of fields to reduce acidity had been a common practice since the early sixteenth century. Local limestone was burned with coal to produce the lime. As early as 1727, coal was being delivered to Auchinleck fifty loads at a time, suggesting lime spreading was already common. Lord Auchinleck had surveyed the estate for coal, and in 1766 sank pits at Barglachan. Boswell also surveyed and improved mining methods. He participated in the activities of the Muirkirk Iron Company, formed in 1787 to exploit the mineral resources of East Ayrshire. By 1792, the mines were producing 2,200 tons pa. In 1793 Boswell had six single-apartment houses built for the colliers' families. In this he was following in his father's footsteps, since Lord Auchinleck had laid out the centre of present day Auchinleck as a planned village in 1756.

The estate was also affected by cotton. Boswell agreed to David Dale's scheme 'of erecting a Cotton Mill ...above my property' and even considered a scheme for a small mill in the village of Auchinleck although this came to nothing. Lord Auchinleck had encouraged building in the village with long leases through the 1760s and 1770s; many villagers were weavers of wool, linen and silk. But in 1791, the Rev. John Dun could report that Auchinleck 'has for these two or three years past been on the decline, and several houses are now empty, owing, in some measure, to the Muirkirk Iron and Coal Tar Works, but more especially to the Cotton mill at Catrine, which have attracted inhabitants from this parish.' (*The Statistical Account of Scotland: Ayrshire* ed. Sir John Sinclair).

### **Parochial responsibilities**

Lord Auchinleck had repaired the parish kirk, adding an aisle in 1754. In 1756 he built a new manse with a glebe of six acres. The minister's stipend of £50 plus meal was not over-generous: 'the same that was settled by decret in 1649' as Reverend Dun noted dryly in 1791 (and less than half that of neighbouring parishes). However, Lord Auchinleck and Boswell regularly donated to the poor.

As parish patron, Boswell took appropriate care of church and manse though chose not to become an elder, unlike his father or grandfather. He did attend services when resident and insisted his children did likewise. There were two services on Sunday, each of four hours with sermons which often lasted more than an hour and extempore prayers of up to three quarters of an hour. Boswell always found Scottish Presbyterian predestination deeply depressing and sometimes chose to stay away from Auchinleck during the preaching week in summer.

When he was twenty two, Boswell listed his ambitions to the Earl of Eglinton:

*'O that my grandchildren might read this character of me: James Boswell was a most amiable man. He improved and beautified his paternal estate at Auchinleck; made a distinguished figure in parliament; had the honour to command a Regiment of footguards, and was one of the brightest Wits in the court of George the Third.'* (Journal, 7 Feb. 1763).

It is an insight into the hollowness he felt in later life that even the first of these ambitions could only be judged to have been fulfilled to a limited degree.

As for life on the estate, Nellie Hankin Pottle, joint editor of the Yale volume of estate correspondence, wrote a description of a typical day on the estate based on her knowledge of the papers:

'Hugh Hair was clipping the hedges; James Bruce, the overseer, was instructing his son, Sandy, the gardener, in the skills of the kail yard and in planting the grounds in a style befitting 'plans of noblemen's seats'; Quintin Dun was spreading burnt limestone on Tenshillingside Park; old John Wyllie was busy washing bottles in the brew-house; William Lennox, the coachman, whose allowance for boots and breeches was one pound from

Martinmas to Whitsunday, was readying the chaise and comparing the merits of Dash, Old Browning and Sharper as coach horses. On the washing green, John Wilson's wife was bleaching the holland (linen) which she herself had woven; Grissie Wilson was gathering eggs; and Jenny Watt, the milkmaid, was caring for a cow 'of an excellent kind'. Inside the house, Bell Bruce, the housekeeper was supervising the bottoming of press bed; James Morton was sweeping the chimneys, and Alexander Pedin was repairing the spit in the kitchen; Agnes Warden, a housemaid, was leaving her tasks for a moment to enjoy the tea which was supplied to her in addition to her annual £4 of wages; and in the sun-filled window the pet finch was singing'.

In the end, this is a far more representative picture of daily life at Auchinleck House than all its more literary associations.

**EXTRACTS FROM BOSWELL'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS OVERSEERS.**

**From Bruce 19 July 1766**

We are still going on with building sunk fences. That down at the wood is finished and now they are working at these on the sides of the avenue by the office houses and just now we are casting earth for the sunkfence in front of [the] House and leveling at the court. And [we] continue to go on with summerfallowing. But of this you say as yet your taste is not that way. But I'm sure you'll be pleased to see nate rich fields about a House, than this is one of the proper methods for that purpose. But these things I hop will come in course.

[Summerfallowing: repeated ploughings without sowing to level ridges and improve tilth. This was still a relatively novel practice in Scotland.]

**From Bruce 22 Nov 1766**

Since you left this we have been employed in planting trees in several places viz. in Broomholm, among the avenus and by the Court in front etc.

**From Bruce 11 July 1769**

For some time bygon in this Country we have enjoy'd fine weather and every thing springing from the earth makes a gay appearance. We go forward boldly in preparing for the finishing of the Building etc.

**From Bruce ?25 Sept 1778**

'Not reported:' [i.e. from Boswell's record of his own correspondence] 'Mr James Bruce that my Father had a pain in his back but is now well again, and is busy repairing the wall at the Waterside.' Boswell had visited Auchinleck a month earlier and had inspected 'the bank at the old washing green which my Father had now repaired.' (*Journal*, 24 Oct 1778). This spot had sacred associations for Boswell: 'I went to the seat at the Waterside, which has often been the scene of my Sunday's devotion, where I used to read prayers' (*Journal*, 4 May 1777). This was much more to his religious taste than the family pew.

***Journal*, 4 Nov 1778**

Sandy Bruce and some men had gone down before me to Creochhill. I planted with my own hands several oaks and beeches. ('The plantation still survives'.)

**To Bruce, 4 Dec 1782**

As soon as weather will permit, let fence be made to compleat enclosure of Stevenstown. I wish to see myself when I am out at Christmas the fence completed along Woodside Park. If you have not Hollies to plant on it as on other parts of the fences along old Avenue let them be bought.....Let the family room be well aired and do you see once a Week a fire at each end of the Library.

**To Bruce, 5 April 1783**

Let me have your thoughts on what I shall do with the Woodside park this year which being only six acres, I have resolved shall be my own farm for learning

upon. Shall I plow it well first, and then lime it, and plow it again, or shall I lime it on the sward in summer. In the last case, I suppose it may be of some little use as pasture ground in summer, the lime to be laid in heaps and not spread till winter. I intend to try turnips and cabbages and all different things upon it, just to have some notion of them upon a small scale.

[Boswell is much less mannered and considered in his estate correspondence. But here he's playing – he had just been enthused by a walk on Lord Bute's progressive farm near Richmond Park. Cabbages and turnips were novel crops in Ayrshire at this time.]

**From Bruce, 5 May 1783**

At Auchinleck Place Saturday the third day of May One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty three Years bewtixt the hours of twelve and one oClock at Noon

Assembled in my dwelling place at Auchinleck place My son Alexander Bruce Gardener at Auchinleck, And Issobell Ronald his wife with there Son James Bruce My Grandson being this day Five months and Eight days old. And by Special Order from James Boswell Eqr. Of Auchinleck, and as a present from him put into each hand of the said James Bruce My Grandson One Guinea of Gold. And by these two Guineas as per Order he is hereby Nominate in Succession To be Gardner and oversseer at Auchinleck place. All this being done in the presence of Rebecca and Jean Bruce's my daughters.

[But this was not to be realised. Sandy Bruce left Boswell's employment in 1787, taking his young son with him. It is not clear why.]

**To Bruce, 7 July 1783 (Edinburgh)**

The children at Auchinleck will be very happy. Tell me allways about them.

**From Bruce, 12 July 1783**

The young folks here continue very happy and well. They begin now to get a country colour. Mr. Sandy tell me he had wrote you to go by courier next Monday. But had omitted desiering you'd Please send two goff clubs and a ball, a large one for Mr. Millar and a small one for him. [Millar was Sandy's tutor. Golf balls then were feather stuffed leather balls, available for 6d each]

**To Bruce, 16 July, 1783 (Edinburgh)**

It pleases us much to hear the Children are so well. We long to be at Auchinleck.

**From Bruce, 19 July, 1783**

Mr. Sandy and Miss Bett is in good spirits and well. Mr. Sandy got his Spaid But was disappoointed Sadly of not getng the Golf clubs and Balls – He says Next opportunity he will be Obliged to Apply to his Mama. They have all got little carts which gives great employ.

**From Bruce, 26 July 1783**

Mr. Sandy and Miss Bett is now real Auchinleck folks.

**From Bruce, 13 Dec 1783**

Janey Watt is now pretty well recovered of the fever, But whither the House is clear of that infectious disorder I cannot say, There is about the country Many under fevers.

[This may explain Boswell's later instruction on 24 December to light fires daily in the family bedroom and nursery: fires thought to drive away infection. Boswell was not sure when he was coming home as he had been ill himself, possibly with a recurrence of gonorrhoea. He gave a similar instruction in February 1784 when 'a dreadful disease' was prevalent in the neighbourhood.]

**Journal, 7 Jan 1783** (at Edinburgh)

It hurt me a little that I did not get out to Auchinleck to receive my rents myself, and have my tenants about me, and as Dr Johnson advised me...wrap myself up in my hereditary possessions, which I should have done, in my good house, with a wood fire...The consciousness of being Laird of Auchinleck was a *constant* support.

Boswell sends Bruce the occasional pound of tobacco (Bruce is grateful for 'that pernicious plant') and a copy of his pamphlet *State of the Nation* which comments on individual employees who seem under-employed.

**From Bruce, 14 Feb 1784**

Sandy [his son, gardener] desires to Mention As last Season the Garden Peas was complain'd of not beeing good or well teasted in the Old Garden. He has prepared, and intends Sowing a quantity in Woodnook Yard. Please therefore procure A parcel of these sorts Sir Alexr. Dick mentioned, or any others recommended, and he will do All Justice to there cultivation etc. [Boswell replies on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 'I fancy the old garden will do best for white pease'.]

**To Bruce, 5 June 1784**

I am heartily sorry for poor Andrew Mortons death [after quarrying accident nearby a few weeks earlier]. I shall be glad if his son does well. You will recollect I wished to have the sheep feed on the grass about the house particularly in front. Pray try to get them confined by some kind of moveable fence.

**Journal, 7 Jan 1785**

Arrived at Auchinleck from Edinburgh and 'found my three youngest children well...It was hard frost, and I had for the first time a trial of the diversion of *curling*, or playing with the stones upon the ice, which diverted me much' [Johnson had died on 13 Dec 1783]

In January 1785 Boswell began to employ Bruce Campbell to oversee his farms as James Bruce was by now getting on in years. Boswell had always been

assiduous in sending remedies from his own doctor whenever Bruce mentioned any ailment – which we sense the good old man always understates.

**To Bruce, 3 June 1785**

[Bruce had written to JB that the works demanded for the summer took a lot of thought and fatigue, which he was not so able to cope with, but would do his best for that summer]

‘As to the thought and fatigue for which you tell me you will not be able I have repeatedly assured you that I do not wish you to hurt yourself in any degree; and I now assure you that you shall be heartily welcome to your present income...all the days of your life; without any obligation to do more than you find easy to you, which I suppose it will be, to take a general superintendence of the *Place* and to keep accounts and a Journal of what I may be carrying on, which will not be much. ’

**To Bruce, 28 Jan 1788** (from London) [Boswell’s wife Margaret was now in the last stages of tuberculosis. She was willing to follow Boswell wherever his fortunes led, but London always aggravated her illness.]

‘My Wife is still not at all well. As it may be necessary for her to go soon to Auchinleck order fires in her room and dressing room, and the dining room. Let the childrens beds be aired in her room. Let all be speedily comfortable.’

**From Bruce, 1 April 1788**

Yours of the 20<sup>th</sup> last Month came to hand last night. It give us much concern to hear of My Ladys continued distress. But as you mention her being a little better would faintly hop she might yet be continued a little longer in life for the comfortable benefit of Her Young Family. If the weather does not prove more favourable After so severe a Stroke it might be dangerous for her to Attempt to takeing Such a long Journey. And as you know in this Country Vegetables cannot be expected for Months to come of any consequence. However as you Mention, the House Shall be continued in Seasoning and everything in my power Shall not be omitted – Shall be glad to hear more favourable Accounts of her Recovery etc.

**To Bruce, 5 May 1788**

My Wife has been a good deal worse and I am exceeding apprehensive about her. I am satisfied that the most probable remedy under GOD will be getting her to Auchinleck: and therefore I hope that she shall set out this week. Indeed I shall be determined and oblige her to go if she does not grow worse. I am not sure whether I shall accompany her all they way; but I will go so far with her. You will say nothing as to the particular time of her coming but take care to have the house in best order for her and the children, and as many chicken as can be had.

[MM was much worse. *Journal* , 29 April: ‘ At night was much distressed by seeing my wife in one of the feverish fits which come upon her at that time. She wandered and roved strangely... She was so emaciated that it was a pain to sit

her up in bed. I was full of apprehension.' Leaving 16 year old Veronica at a boarding school, Boswell and the rest of the family arrived at Auchinleck on 21 May. Boswell left Auchinleck on 1<sup>st</sup> July to attend Northern Circuit]

**From Bruce, 28 July 1788**

Yours from Durham the 19<sup>th</sup> current enclosing the flower and leaf of the Tuleptree from the Archbishop of York's Garden came to hand Friday last. The flower had been pretty, but was much defaced by the carrying however I could see a Dale of its beauties etc.

My Lady is now surprizingly better, Walkes and rides about with As much Spirits as farmerly, even far above what I ever expected....I hope these sort of Busseness may be of Service to her Ladyship.

[Boswell wrote to his friend Edmund Mallone that 'country air, Asses milk, the little amusements of ordering about her family, gentle exercise, and the comfort of being at home and amongst old and valuable friends had a very benignant affect upon her.']

Margaret Montgomerie died at Auchinleck on 4 June 1789, just before Boswell left London. He wrote to his lifelong friend William Temple:

My two boys and I posted from London to Auchinleck night and day, in 64 hours [and] ¼ . But alas! Our haste was all in vain. The fatal stroke had taken place as we set out. It was very strange that we had no intelligence whatever on the road, not even in our own parish, nor till my second daughter came running out from our house, and announced to us the dismal event in a burst of tears... I could hardly bring myself to agree that the body should be removed, for it was still a consolation to me to go and kneel by it and talk to my dear dear Peggie. She was much respected by all who knew her, so that her funeral was remarkably well-attended. There were nineteen carriages followed the hearse, and a large body of horsemen and the tenants of all my lands. It is not customary in Scotland for a husband to attend his wife's funeral. But I resolved, if I possibly could, to do her the last honours myself, and I was able to go through with it very decently. I privately read the funeral service over her coffin in the presence of my sons, and was relieved by that ceremony a good deal.

Bruce's House Book lists various expenses: 'Three quire mourning paper...two sticks Black wax...Expresses with Burial letters... mounting up a Table in the Library...Women Sitting up at Night by the corps in all Eight at 8d each...Candle Sockets for the Burying Vault at the Kirk...Burial Bread...Three Pints Brandy...20 pints Ale got for tenants Burial Service...22 Pounds of Cheese for Ditto'. She was interred on 11 June, at about five in the afternoon of a showery day.

James Bruce died 18 August 1790, aged 70. Andrew Gibb took over as overseer at Auchinleck and letters become less personal and more businesslike. Boswell



rebuked Gibb for addressing him as 'Good Sir' – 'But Sir is the proper way to a master'. (Bruce always began 'Honourable Sir'.)

**To Gibb, 6 Nov 1790**

'I am very anxious that all things about Auchinleck should be kept in good repair, and not suffer by my absence. You must therefore be particularly careful to stop all persons who attempt to pass through my parks or plantations, especially near to the old house, or the new house...but see that they keep to the patent publick roads. If any person insist to pass and accordingly do so, let me have a list of their names and I will order them to be prosecuted.'

**To Gibb, 4 Jan 1791**

'As I am not to be at Auchinleck before the month of August nothing need be in the garden for me before that time, and then very little as my stay can be but short. Let the ground be chiefly employed in nursery for thorns which are needed in considerable quantities [for hedging].'

**To Gibb, 13 April 1791**

'Let the house and offices be cast without delay...  
Do all in your power to discover the villains who have robbed the lead.'

**To Gibb 29 June 1791**

'I am not much anxious about the appearance of the gravel. Therefore do not lay out much upon it. Old Johnnie Wylie may gradually clear it with some help. [this was gravel for the avenue or 'Via Sacra'.

Late in 1789 Boswell had written to Bruce: 'Your account that the tenants refuse to gravel the avenue provokes and vexes me'. Boswell suspected that 'a certain medium' – Bruce - wished to hire hands rather than enforce obligations. 'Some of the tenants are bound to furnish only a man, some also a horse and cart. I will hire no man whatever for this work; they shall be compelled to work year after year till the road to the head of the avenue is completely done.'

**To Gibb 28 Nov 1791**

'I am sorry that the Auchinleck colours are locked up in a cabinet which cannot be opened in my absence; otherwise I should gladly have lent them to the Beneficial Society.' [presumably this refers to a family flag or banner. Benefit Societies were springing up at this time – a form of welfare insurance].

**From Gibb 5 Jan 1793**

Mr Alexander of Ballamile proposes to take the Post from Killmarnock to Cumnock round by his house, and Village of Catrine – if he can accomplish this, it will be very great disadvantage to this house, for in that case the letters etc. cannot be forwarded from the Office to Howfoard Bridge by the Post, and from thence to Auchinleck as formerly; Can he take the Post off the County Road? [the post was collected for Auchinleck from Howford Bridge at this time; Alexander

was proposing to divert the mailcoaches from this stretch of the Kilmarnock-Cumnock road.]

**To Gibb 24 Jan 1793**

I cannot think that Mr Alexander will prevail in taking the post round. If the matter be now in agitation, let a petition be sent to the Postmaster General at Edinburgh for me and the inhabitants of the parish of Auchinleck, stating the hardship and opposing it. I myself will apply at the post office here [London].

**From Gibb 2 Feb 1793**

The Old House continues to tumble down in consequence no work can be carried on at the Closs [courtyard] till all danger may appear over.

**To Gibb 31 May – 3 June 1793**

As to yours of 18<sup>th</sup> May, I am to make the garden wall at least 18 feet high, and to line it with brick. I will inform myself as to the particulars, and then send my orders. I doubt if I shall have it done this year. [this wall possibly to be built with stone from the Old House. Presumably Boswell has some particular cultivation plans in mind]

Correspondence on the purchase and provision of coal and lime feature largely through all the estate correspondence. Huge quantities of both were used; the coal was needed to burn limestone to provide lime for fertiliser.

**To Gibb 18 June 1793**

Both your Letters of the 8<sup>th</sup> current lie before me. I was afraid I should not have been able to write to you again having been knock'd down on the night of Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> by one of those Robbers with whom at present our Streets here abound. I was cut and bruis'd so as to be sever'ly pained and feverish for many days. I am now thank God in a fair way of recovery but must use my Servants hand to write for me. I am sincerely happy that the People of Auchinleck are so much pleased with Mr. Lindsay. [the new minister]

**To Gibb 30 Aug 1793**

Pray try and get two or three pints of good honey to send to me. I hope Jenny Watt has made Currant Jelly.

**To Gibb 2 Feb 1795**

'I am glad our parish has gained such honour on the ice. Tell Terry Watt to kill two of the turkies, and send one to Lady Auchinleck and one to Mr. John Boswell of Ayr. The cock, the hen and the young one must be kept.'

[Curling was 'the chief amusement in the winter...often one whole parish against another, - earnestly contended for the *palm*, which is generally all the prize, except the victors perhaps claim from the vanquished, the dinner and bowl of toddy, which, to do them both justice, *both* commonly take together with great cordiality.' – *Old Statistical Accounts of Ayrshire*) . Curling 'was indeed a joyous

scene, - to occupy which the old and the young, the boy and the man of grey hair, persons of both sexes and all classes, turned out with much alacrity.' – *Memories of Ayrshire*, p. 287). Boswell's son Sandy had a passion for curling, which was shared by *his* son and heir, Sir James, who was a member of the local Curlers Club.]

**To Gibb 27 March 1795**

'If you cannot get the green behind the house limed this year in time for it's being ploughed, let it be well limed and lye upon the sward. You must not put any of the dung upon it; nor let any of it be used except for the garden. I shall not be down till August... Cannot the piece of ground called the New Garden be dressed so as to be in clover this year. I am your wellwisher,

JAMES BOSWELL

- this is JB's last surviving letter to Gibb. He became seriously ill on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1795 and died on 19<sup>th</sup> May. His body was brought to Auchinleck and interred in the family vault at Auchinleck.

November							
Day	Mr. John Wright	Mr. Hamilton Wright	Mr. Duncan Longlands	Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Crawford	Mr. Wylie
1	Binding of the roof in Pavilion	Binding roof for pavilion	At putting up ends of bridge	Mending the dock dyke	At road by the new bridge	At road by the new bridge	At mending the road by the bridge
2	Binding D°	Binding D°	At mending the dock dyke	At road to the bridge	At bridge road	Mending D° and packing boat	At bridge road
3	Binding D°	Binding D°	At bridge	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road
4	Binding D°	Binding D°	At bridge	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road
5	Binding D°	Binding D°	At bridge	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road
6	Binding D°	Binding D°	At bridge	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road	At D° road
7	S a b b a t h						
8	Binding and binding roof	Binding	Planting	Mending the bridge		Edin°	Planting
9	Binding D°	Binding D°				Edin°	
10	At Dille				Planting	Returned about two o'clock	Planting
11	Making the mangle	Making the mangle for roof			Planting	Mending the mangle	Mending dykes
12			At road water		At road water	Mending dykes	Mending dykes
13	Making D°	Making D°	Mending dykes	Mending dykes	Mending dykes	Mending dykes	Mending dykes
14	S a b b a t h						
15	Making D°	Making mangle	Planting trees	Planting trees	Planting trees	Planting trees	
16	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke
17	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Mending dykes	Mending dykes	Mending dykes
18	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Mending dykes
19	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Planting	Planting	Planting
20	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Mending dykes
21	S a b b a t h						
22	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Planting D°		Mending dykes
23	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Planting D°	At D° dyke	Mending dykes
24	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	In garden	In garden	Mending D°
25			At D° dyke	At D° dyke		In garden	At D° dyke
26			At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Making mangle	Making mangle	Making mangle
27	Making D°	Making D°	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Making mangle	Making mangle	Making D°
28	S a b b a t h						
29	Making the mangle	Making the mangle	At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Mending mangle	Mending mangle	Making D°
30			At D° dyke	At D° dyke	Mending mangle	Mending mangle	Mending D°
22	21	20	21 1/2	23	22 1/2		

Page from the estate journal for 1774 recording work on the pavilions at Auchinleck House.  
 Courtesy Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library, Yale

## 7. The Auchinleck Estate Journals

These immaculate and beautiful journals were kept by overseer James Bruce on a daily basis. The Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library holds a complete run of annual volumes from 1772 to 1792. As they appear in consistent form from the first of these, it seems likely that they were already a long-established convention in 1772. They were kept by James Bruce and overlap into Lord Auchinleck's tenure. Indeed, their meticulous, repetitive details reflect rather Lord Auchinleck's approach to estate management. The earlier estate volumes, should they ever turn up, will hold the key to the building of the house.

The journals are written in a beautiful copperplate hand, with some embellishments in red ink. They record the employment of estate workers and the weather day by day throughout the year. Recording the showing of leaves for the various species and the first sighting or hearing of migrant birds, the journals reveal Bruce's intimate knowledge of and relationship with the estate. It is a great shame that no comparable volumes have survived for the house. A facsimile copy of the journal for 1774 may be found on the bookshelves in the library and a browse through is strongly recommended to get a flavour of the daily round on the estate.

In these journals we get a sense of the sheer hard, repetitive graft that underpinned an eighteenth-century estate – ploughing, harrowing, threshing, spreading earth, filling earth, making dykes, clearing dykes, mending dykes, clenging dykes, rooting out brush, spreading lime, gathering stones, filling stones, casting [lining] a washing pond, weeding the nursery, at hay, cutting hay, carting hay, pulling up & thatching hay, weeding hedges, pulling thorns, filling gravel, clipping hedges, culling fir, squaring timber for rails, putting up rails, pruning firs, making baskets, about the stables, sowing oats & pease, brewing, baking in oven, mending tools, shafting tools, raising gravel, carting gravel, laying for gravel on front of house, dressing court before house<sup>3</sup>, stacking peats, shearing

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<sup>3</sup> June 21, 1773 & 1-6, July 1773, John Wyllie

wheat, mending wains, made harrows, sawing, turning dung, carting dung, casting dung, making a barrow, dressing potatoes, taking up potatoes, making roads, clipping sheep, peeling oak bark, unroping fruit trees, rooting out old trees, thinning plantations – these things Alexander Bruce, David Boswell, James Mitchell, John Crawford, John Wyllie, David Bryden, John Bryden, David Aird, James Wallace, James Gibb, John Black and others did six days a week, year in and year out.

They were joined intermittently by specialist craftsmen – the Jamiesons, William, Huw and John, who were wrights or builders. They did much of the sawing for new houses being built on the estate, made painted and glazed hot bed frames, made rails, harrows and barrows, dressed carts). Alex Pedin, John Hamilton and George Goudie were also wrights. The activities of these men are of particular interest since they are the only traces left besides a few receipts to date building activities on the estate. The summer months in the early 1770s seem to have been a hive of activity quite apart from the estate duties – the wrights were busy sawing and building as the finishing touches were put to the offices and landscaping of the house.

Some snapshots:

At court/causeway in front of house – most of the men, June 1773

Raising, carting and casting gravel – ditto, July 1773

Levelling about the house – Alexander Bruce and others, July & Aug 1773

Making 'trapes' for masons – David Boswell (no relation?) 4 Aug 1773

Through August and October 1773, several are often 'serving masons'.

October & November 1773 work on bridge (unspecified), making doors and fixing locks.

November 1773: Alexander Pedin & John Hamilton (wrights) are 'Binding the roof for Pavilions', 'Sawing and binding roof'. They have been employed since August, although mostly 'at repairs' or on non-specific work. Occasionally they are 'serving' or 'with' the masons, as are other workers on occasional days.

**Journal: The Ominous Years, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1775**

'On Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August Treesbank and Mrs Campbell went with me to Auchinleck. It was a fine day. The dry gravel roads and new whitened pavilions gave a fine air to the place, which looked really grand. Mrs. Campbell went home that night. Treesbank stayed till Wednesday afternoon. He and I sauntered about the old house, the Mains, Tenshillingside, etc., with ideas of my grandfather, etc., quite fresh. James Bruce was just the same man as ever.'

Oct 1775 Pedin and Hamilton are making a 'bottle rack' – the one still in the servants basement?

The wrights appear periodically for employment on various repairs, making windows and doors, putting up rails (fences), making partitions and furniture and other 'sundry' works. They are usually working on the estate during the summer months.

**1778**

April – making a press, hoops for barrels.

June – making a screen, 'making frames for paper' (to make paper?)

July 1786 James Morton, Mason, is pointing the House and offices, and plastering the garrett sarking.

**1788** 14<sup>th</sup> January 'About the middle of this week the snow drops appeared in flower on the bank head west of the Garden' [is this Snowdrop Valley?]

**1790** April 19<sup>th</sup> 'This week the House Swallows appeared. The weather more mild with some rain the Grass looking better & Gooseberries fully leaved & showing fruit.'

May 11<sup>th</sup> This day the Cuckoos begun singing here.

James Bruce died later the same year. Boswell had lost far more than just an overseer, he had lost a friend, advisor and comforter. Perhaps the journal entry

most revealing of his relationship with Bruce was written when news arrived that Matthew Hay, a petty criminal and former client of Boswell's had been condemned to death.

*'I was more affected than I could have supposed. Was rendered faint and dismal. Walked down to James Bruce's and told him. Was obliged to take a little peppermint-water. Felt myself as weak as in my youngest days. Made James walk in the dusk with me almost to the house. ....My father said to me "Strange! Have you been in James Bruce's all this time?" [and that] I ought to be on my guard not to lessen my dignity too much by indulging kindness. (9<sup>th</sup> Sept 1780)*

Bruce represented an anchor in Boswell's life, of which he had few. Boswell's relationship with Andrew Gibb, Bruce's successor, was never to be on the same footing.



**Sir Alexander Boswell (1775-1822) by Raeburn**



## 8. The Later Boswells of Auchinleck

Boswell's eldest son Alexander (whom he called Sandy) is of particular interest to this album both for his association with Auchinleck and the manner of his death. Born in 1775, he inherited the estate at the age of twenty. Despite his mounting debts (many of which Alexander also inherited), JB had taken care that all his children received predominantly English education, and Alexander had attended Eton.

He married Grace Cuming, daughter of an Edinburgh banker. They entertained extravagantly both in London and at Auchinleck, and Alexander was a Mason and a keen huntsman and curler. He was also MP for Plympton Erle from 1816-21 and a baronetcy followed in 1821. There was also a more literary side to him. In 1871 Robert Howie Smith published *The Poetical Works of Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck*. Only an impromptu composition is known at all today, and this only because it is associated with the collapse of the Old Place in 1792, when Alexander was seventeen. He called it *The Swallow's Lament on the downfall of the old House of Affleck*<sup>4</sup>:

To Regions afar where Soles temperate beam  
 Enlivens the prospect & plays on the Stream  
 I flew from the well known approach of the blast  
 O'er Ocean's expanse on light pinions I past

And now warned by instinct a more gentle air  
 Invites my return to Affleck and loves care  
 But ah! What a change, what a ruinous scene  
 The Mansion is level, alas with the Green!

Here in the windows I happy could build the round nest,  
 No Chamber Maid dire with her broom to molest,  
 But time, Crewel time, has this Mansion destroy'd  
 And envied poor Swallows the bliss they enjoy'd.

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<sup>4</sup> Affleck is an alternative eighteenth-century spelling and pronunciation for Auchinleck, which is affected by some as the true one. Lord Auchinleck uses it occasionally, James Boswell hardly ever in his writings and so we have preferred to stick with today's accepted pronunciation and spelling, almost as accepted in Boswell's day.

columns Blank so that I have only to mark the place of each book with a pen & when I remove a Book note the removal & when a Catalogue is made de face order a Clerk to note the places in any other. — I have changed my ideas about the alteration of the House. The present Library remains. It is now undergoing a thorough repair the Panels filling & is to be painted the following week, & to get Windows Curtains. The Pictures are all taken down & the authenticated ones are to be replaced the spurious removed. Of these I am glad to say there are but few. It was a vile trick of so honest a man to shake our belief by adopting daubs. I would fain give Johnson a place but he is of so unmanageable a size that I don't know where to put him. My Mother's Picture I have cleaned & varnished & as soon as I get a frame to correspond with my Father's shall hang it in the Dining room. In spite of your disinclination to change I think you will be pleased when you see the Library again although I want

Extract from Sir Alexander's letter to his brother about the library at Auchinleck,  
June 1810

Courtesy Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library, Yale

Perhaps it is not surprising that the rest of these poems have not stood the test of time. The book is most interesting for its introduction about Alexander's life. Smith writes that

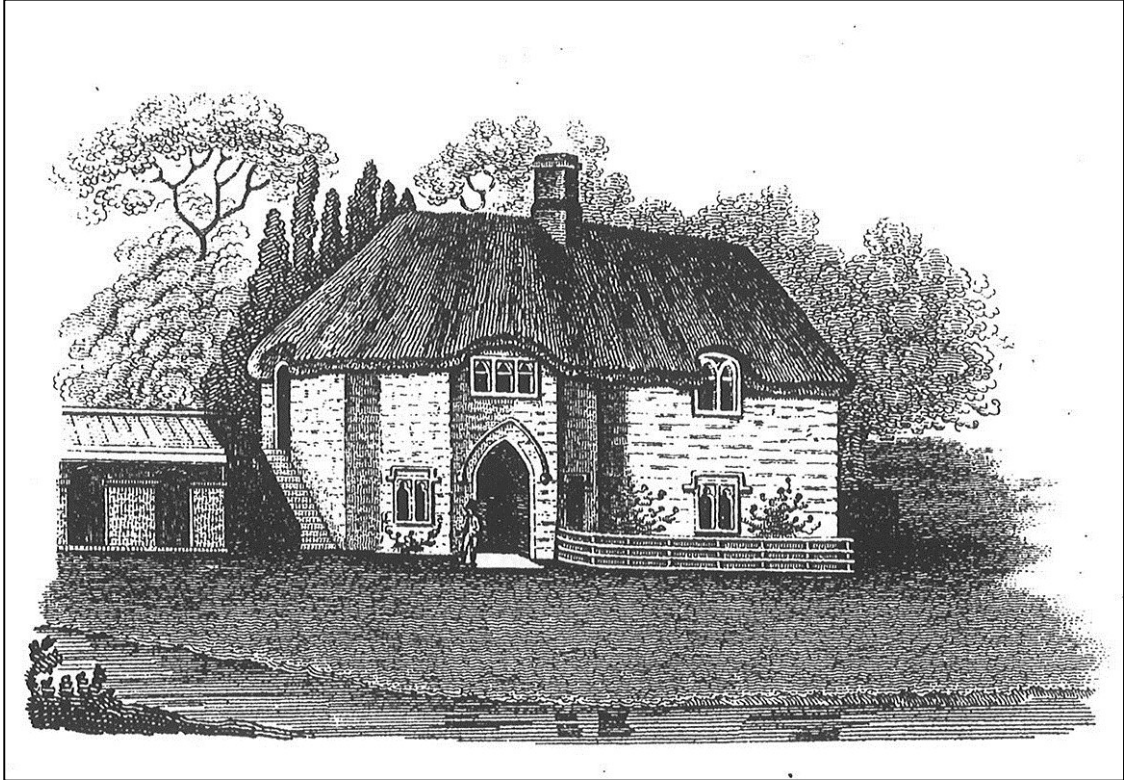
*'Of the famous family library Sir Alexander was pardonably proud. In its rich repositories he had gratified his strong literary tastes, and he was so unwearied in his efforts to repay the debt by increasing its treasures that at belles lettres auctions he was the terror of every bookhunter. About the year 1810 we find him engaged in the preparation of a general catalogue, which was printed at Edinburgh and extended to 111 pages octavo, but not being executed in a satisfactory manner was never completed.'*

This ties in exactly with a letter Alexander wrote from Auchinleck to his brother Jamie on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1810 about not just a cataloguing exercise but also a refurbishment of the library. He wrote:

*'I have changed my ideas about the arrangement of the house. The present library remains. It is now undergoing a thorough repair...and is to be painted the following week and to get window curtains. The pictures are all taken down and the authenticated ones are to be replaced the spurious removed...I would fain give Johnson a place but he is of so unmanageable a size that I don't know where to put him. My mother's picture I have cleaned and varnished and as soon as I get a frame to correspond with my father's shall hang in the dining room. In spite of your disinclination to change I think you will be well pleased when you see the library again although I want your aid much...You are wrong to despair of ever seeing me in London but I cannot do everything. Improvements are going on. The ground at the back of the house draining and dressing off like you saw in front last year. A new approach to the church passing through the plantation and front of the house so as to avoid the stables. 30,000 trees planted on the lands with my own hands....*

It seems very likely that it was Alexander who installed the fitted, glass fronted bookcases seen in an early photo of the library. This is consistent with the apparent dating of the bookcases fronts found in the house at the point of restoration (and which are now in safe storage).

In time, Alexander was to extend his love of books to actually producing them. First he acquired a portable printing press, but when his brother asked him to print a book called 'Barnfield' for presentation to the Roxburghe Club, he decided



**Sir Alexander began his printing activities with a portable printing press which he housed in one of the pavilions. When he acquired a full-size press, he ran it in a house on the estate called Barnsdale, on the banks of Dippol north west of the main house.**

(Engraving done for T.R. Dibdin's *Bibliographical Decameron*, 1817)

to invest in a full size press which he housed in a house by the Dippol Burn called Barnsdale. He then produced limited editions for select circulation.

We have another vignette of life at Auchinleck from one of yet Sir Alexander's unpublished letters: the celebrations on the fall of Napoleon. He described them in a letter to his brother James dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 1814:

*The blaze of your London Illuminations makes a great figure in the Newspapers. And indeed such wonderful events call for no common expression of triumph. We too in an humble way have expressed our joy. The night the News arrived of the entrance of the Allies with your corroborating Letter we illuminated the House all round which made a fine appearance to a very great distance. Every engine of noise was in requisition and the people flock'd in from the neighbouring Villages and stimulate[d] their enthusiasm with Porter & Whiskey which I ordered them. Not a rusty Gun but had its share in the disturbance of the Echos and every Cottage its Lights burning.*

(Jamie Boswell seems to have inherited his father's literary interests without his unstable temperament or tendency to dissolution. A mild, likeable man, he was unmarried at his early death, a writer and a scholar. He became almost like a son to Edmund Mallone, the friend of his father who had helped edit the *Life of Johnson* and was one of JB's literary executors.)

Sir Alexander achieved one of his father's ambitions by being elected to the House of Commons in 1819 and was made a baronet in 1821. But then the Boswell family temperament reared its head. JB had narrowly avoided several duels in his time and it was a convention of his time that individuals might call each other out over a point of honour without death or injury being necessarily consequent. However, this was rarer by the 1820s, and it was rarer still that a duel should lead to a fatality. The last days of Sir Alexander's life read like a Victorian melodrama, made all the more poignant by a reading of the inventory of Auchinleck House taken immediately after his death, where we find in his room 'a Case & brace of Pistols, a pair of Pocket Pistols, a pair of Horse Pistols'. It is a snapshot of a man preparing himself for a duel, carefully weighing and choosing between the weapons with which he will defend himself.

The dispute was over an anonymous satire in the Glasgow Sentinel. It is not even clear whether Sir Alexander actually wrote the verses since the contributors had taken a vow of silence. However, he shared his father's taste for the anonymous lampoon. Rightly or wrongly, Mr James Stuart the younger of Duncearn attributed authorship to Sir Alexander and demanded satisfaction. Alexander did not reply and so the affair was referred to the Honourable John Douglas, later Marquis of Queensberry (and father of the 8<sup>th</sup> Marquis who famously formulated the Queensberry rules for boxing in 1867. It was clearly a family who knew about such things). Douglas arranged a hostile meeting for fourteen days later. Meanwhile, Alexander had rushed off to London where his brother Jamie was dangerously ill. He arrived only in time for the funeral. He returned to Edinburgh on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, arriving at ten at night, to be met before he had stepped down from the mounting block by a letter from the Earl of Rosslyn requesting an interview on the Monday. At that interview, Rosslyn issued a formal challenge to him and again asked him directly whether he had written the verses. Alexander held to his vow of silence.

The same day, he saw to the provisions of his will. Meanwhile, the Sheriff had been informed of the dispute and had bound both parties over to keep the peace. Concerned that news of the duel might spread, Douglas decided it would be best to bring the meeting forward to the following day. Sir Alexander was woken in the early hours that Tuesday morning to make what was to be his last journey. No doubt still grieving for his brother with whom he had been close, he weighed his choice of pistols before dawn and left at 5am with his second and Dr. George Wood. On the way he declared that he intended, as was usual, to fire into the air, bearing no ill will to James Stuart. This he did, but Stuart shot him through the middle of his right clavicle. The surgeons removed two pieces of bone on the spot, but failed to find the bullet. They also reassured him that he had made his intention to fire into the air clear. Stuart, badly shaken, claimed that he too had fired to miss. Alexander was taken to the nearby seat of Lord Balmuto, an elderly cousin, but it was soon found that the bullet had touched his spine, paralysing him from the neck down. He died at 3.30 pm the next day.

What would Lord Auchinleck have said? What indeed, when JB's own defence of duelling was cited in defence of Stuart in the ensuing trial, in which he was cleared of murder. Sir Alexander died hopelessly insolvent. It was many years before his son James (only fifteen at his father's death) dared enter into his succession. His mother, Grace, inevitably took on a heightened role in family affairs and indeed this formidable matriarch was to outlive her son by a decade. She was now encumbered with the debts of the last two generations of Boswells. Grace had always been highly critical of her deceased father-in-law, as much for what she saw as his fawning upon Johnson as his own lifestyle. It was Grace who encouraged the rumour that all Boswell's papers had been lost. She was helped by a simple misprint in the fifth edition of the *Life of Johnson*, published by Malone in 1807. A footnote by Mallone stated that the papers had all been burned at Auchinleck. It should have read 'buried'. The story of the Boswell papers and their discovery in the twentieth century is explained more fully in the following chapter (see Volume III).

Grace has also been accused of selling off Sir Joshua Reynolds's fine portrait of JB and Sir Walter Scott (sensing a rival in JB to his own pre-eminence?) mischievously spread a tale that Sir Alexander himself had banished the portrait upstairs out of the dining room. Neither of these anecdotes was true. As we have seen, Alexander was planning to hang his father and mother's portraits in the dining room. Grace did indeed sell the portrait, and admitted that she did not like it. But she sold it after Sir Alexander's death towards James's executory fund. She had been advised that it would fetch over £500; in fact, it only raised £76 13s and she later wrote that she would not have sold it had she realised how little it would fetch.

Sir Alexander's son James, meanwhile, was to lead a contented life without any of his father's or grandfather's literary pretensions or ambition. He attended Brasenose College Oxford briefly in 1824 but left without a degree. He returned to live at Auchinleck, where thanks to his mother's frugal management to clear the family debts, he eventually led the life of a country gentleman. He enjoyed

entertaining in the house and installed a pool table in the library. His life followed the seasonal round of farming, hunting and horse racing. In 1830 he married a cousin, Jessie Jane Montgomerie Cuninghame, who shared his love of entertainment and it was probably Lady Jessie Jane who turned the dining room at Auchinleck into a Victorian parlour and vice versa.

The couple had two daughters, Julia and Emily. It was to ensure their right to inherit that Sir James instructed the investigation which finally uncovered the truth about the entail of the Auchinleck estate about which JB and his father had argued so bitterly. The original seventeenth century entail on male heirs had been invalid all along and it was set aside in 1852. Julia married George Mounsey, a Carlisle solicitor, and at Sir James's death in 1854 they inherited the Auchinleck estate. Both Lady Grace and Lady Jessie Jane lived on at the house, until they died in 1864 and 1884 respectively, when the Mounseys took over. George Mounsey died in 1904, his wife the following year. They had no children, so the right of inheritance passed through Julia's younger sister Emily (who had died in 1898) to Emily's son. Emily had married the fifth Lord Talbot of Malahide, which is just outside Dublin. They had one son, James Boswell Talbot de Malahide, although Lord Talbot had since married again, to Isabel Gurney. (It would seem Emily at least was prepared to acknowledge the connection with her illustrious forebear, since she named her son after him).

Acting for his young son James, Lord Talbot managed the Auchinleck estate although the family lived at Malahide Castle and returned to Auchinleck only occasionally for hunting. James was the last direct descendant of James Boswell the biographer to own the estate and the last of the line of Boswells of Auchinleck which had held it since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. James became the 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Talbot and seems to have been an ineffectual man, perhaps even a little slow. Most of his affairs throughout his life were handled by his father or his wife, a former actress called Joyce Gunning Kerr, and he died without children in 1948

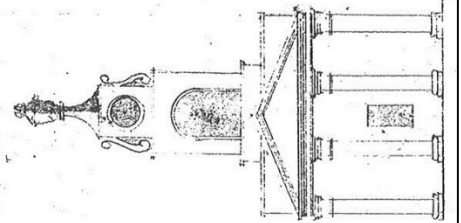
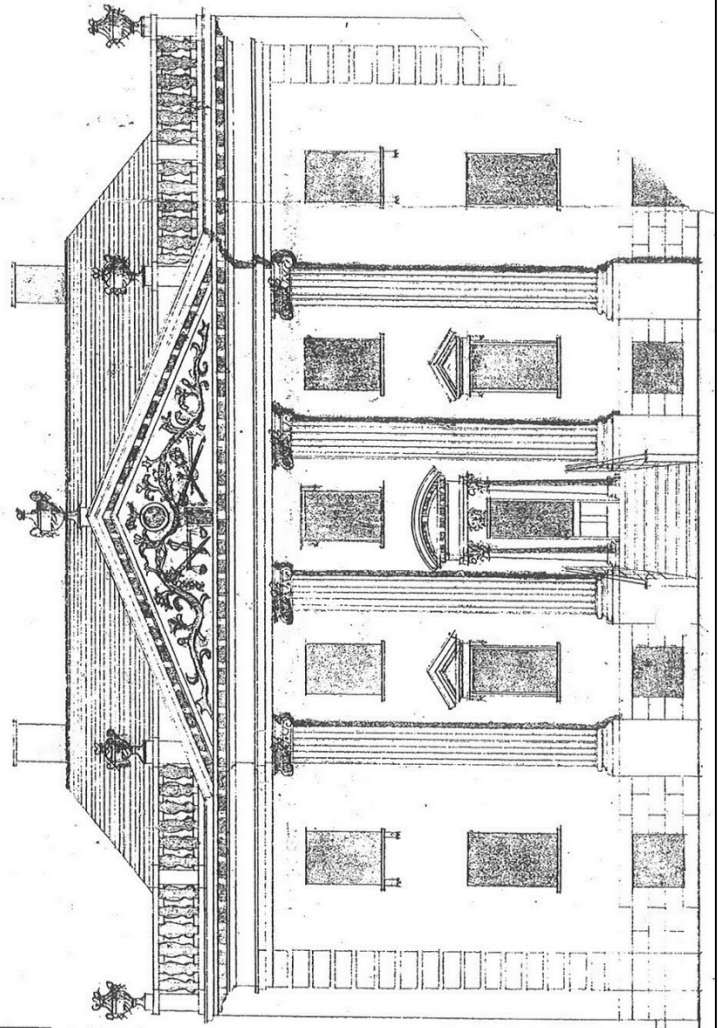


The house was progressively closed down under the Talbots. Julia Mounsey had held a sale of many of the books in the library in 1886 and some of the furniture in 1893. The Talbots began a more systematic dispersal. Some furniture was moved to Malahide including the famous ebony cabinet which had belonged to JB's grandmother. Further furniture sales followed in 1906 and 1917, with book sales in 1916 and 1917. The house was rented out from 1918. By 1920, Lord Talbot was in poor health and, again acting for his son, he sold Auchinleck House and its nine hundred acre estate to a descendant of a the cousin Lord Auchinleck knew as John Boswell, 'Old Knockroon'. This was Colonel James Douglas-Boswell of Garrallan.

In the Second World War the Colonel made the house available to troops from the Free French, Canadian and Polish forces. The men were encamped in rows of Nissan huts on the west lawn stretching as far as the ruins of the Old Place. The officers were billeted in the house. Colonel Boswell's then daughter-in-law, Linda Mackay, remembers the basement being inches deep in mud in these years. It seems likely that the house never fully recovered. When the Colonel Boswell died in 1948, his son John Patrick Boswell inherited the estate. The house was not lived in after 1962 and became derelict and vandalised. Upon John's death in 1966, it passed to his second son, James Boswell. James did what he could to instigate the necessary repairs but was unsuccessful. The house became at risk and in 1986 James Boswell agreed to sell it to the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust with 35 acres of land as the only means left to ensure its survival.

*Plan*

One of a pair of elevations from the Auchinleck Boswell Society's collection, undated but probably belonging to Sir Alexander's tenure (1795-1822). The front steps are shown with iron railings, not today's stone balustrades. Evidence for the railings may still be seen next to the pilasters, and the clumsy keying-in of the balustrades also suggests they were a later addition. The door itself is shown with its unusual 'sash' joinery. The arrangement must have worked, since, had it not, we may feel it would have been altered by the improving Sir Alexander. There is no further evidence of the lion's head.





The Boswell family mausoleum in Auchinleck. The vault is easily accessible and holds a series of stone shelves identified with the initials of the deceased

FIGURE ONE

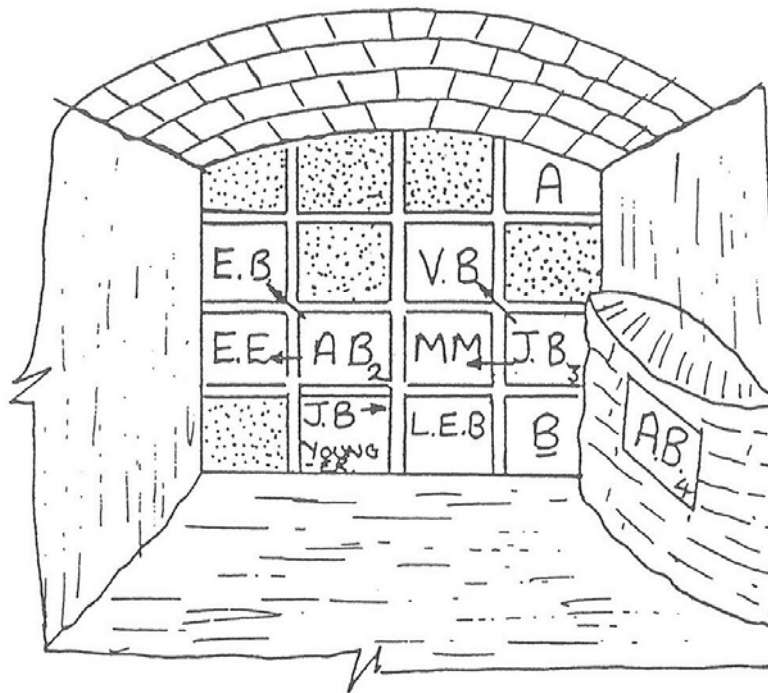
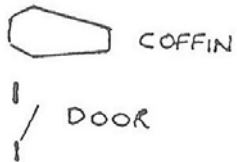
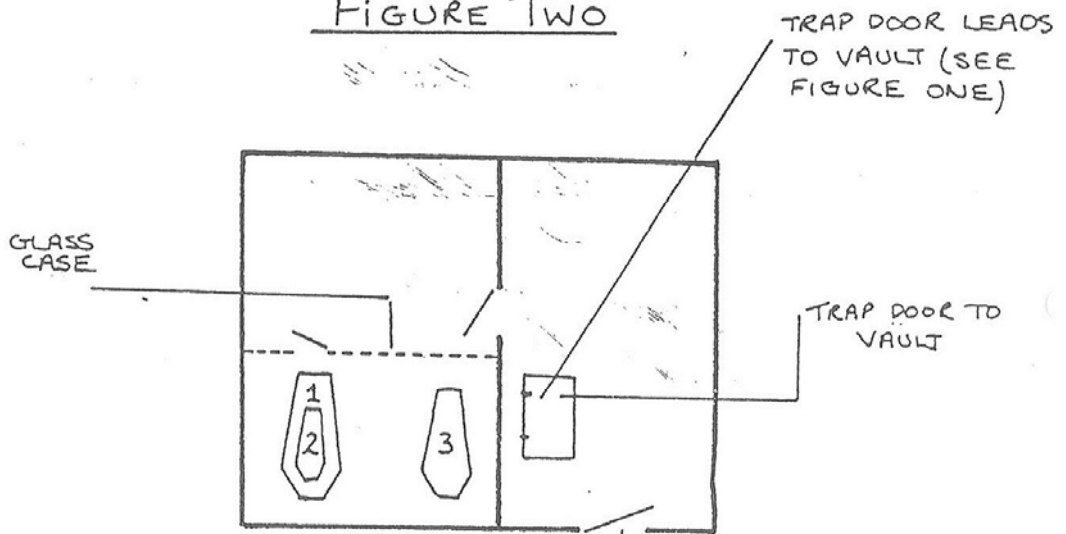


FIGURE TWO



COFFIN NO'S

- 1) SIR JAMES BOSWELL
- 2) THRESA LOUISA BOSWELL
- 3) JESSIE JANE CUNNINGHAM



**Key to Boswell family tombs in the mausoleum**

1. J.B. James Boswell 7<sup>th</sup> Laird (1667-1748)  
L.E.B Lady Elizabeth Bruce (his wife)
  
2. A.B. Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck (1707 -82)  
E.E. Euphemia Erskine (first wife)  
E.B. Elizabeth Boswell (second wife)
  
3. J.B. James Boswell, writer and 9<sup>th</sup> Laird (1740-1795)  
M.M. Margaret Montgomerie (wife)  
V.B. Veronica Boswell (daughter)
  
4. A.B. Sir Alexander Boswell, 10<sup>th</sup> Laird (1775-1822)  
Grace Cumming (wife)  
Grace Jane (daughter)

On floor above vault:

1. Sir James Boswell, 11<sup>th</sup> laird (1870-1857)
2. Theresa Boswell (daughter)
3. Jessie Jane Cunningham (wife)