Auchinleck Old Church, 5 Church Hill, Auchinleck, KA18 2AB

JAMES BOSWELL: FATHER OF MODERN BIOGRAPHY

Auchinleck came to the attention of the wider world through James Boswell (1740-1795), the ninth Laird. James was an advocate by profession but earned greater renown for his trailblazing literary talents.

With *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) Boswell invented the art of modern biography; *An Account of Corsica* (1768) made him a literary hero in both Britain and Corsica; whilst *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) and his re-discovered diaries published 1950 onwards established him as one of the greatest diarists in the English language.

Boswell was a mass of contradictions, deeply proud of his Ayrshire roots but he could not resist the high and low life of London, much to his father’s disapproval. His devotion to Auchinleck is summed up by his close relationship with the Bruce family 13, including his first unrequited love for Bruce’s daughter.

The Boswell Book Festival is inspired by Boswell’s writing, being dedicated to biography and memoir, and takes place annually in May.

[www.boswellbookfestival.co.uk](http://www.boswellbookfestival.co.uk)

The Boswell Trust was formed in 2010 to raise the profile of James Boswell with the ultimate aim of restoring the Boswell Mausoleum and opening a visitor attraction in the adjoining Old Church. The Boswell Project and Boswell Book Festival are the first steps in fulfilling this aim.

For further information, please visit [www.jamesboswell.scot](http://www.jamesboswell.scot)
THE PEOPLE OF THE AUCHINLECK ESTATE

The biographer James Boswell became the 9th Laird of Auchinleck on his father’s death in 1782. The Auchinleck Estate was originally gifted to the Boswell family in 1504 by King James IV.

Running the Auchinleck Estate required close cooperation as it involved many different areas of work.

The Boswell family cared for the material welfare of the women and men employed in its houses, farms, mills, mines, roads and quarries and supported the Auchinleck ministers responsible for their spiritual wellbeing.

As well as paying the minister’s salary, the Boswells funded the upkeep of the church and its churchyard.

Boswell’s correspondence with his estate overseers (responsible for the productivity of the estate and its workers) are full of the terms of the time, unfamiliar to us now.

Measurements are in bolls and pecks and roods (a quarter of an acre).

Also used: bannock (cake), bear (a kind of barley), byre (a cowshed), clogbag (a saddlebag), mailing (a small farm), a park (a field).

A Baron Officer dealt with court cases affecting estate workers, most usually arrears in paying rents.

Estate accounts note occasional gifts of gin and port to elderly or unwell estate workers, revealing Boswell’s concern for his staff but also changing ideas towards the health benefits of alcohol.

The estate kept up with the pace of change, moving from mainly growing crops to a mix of farming and industry.

A youthful Boswell hoped his future grandchildren would one day discover his own improvements to the family estate. After taking charge James continued his ancestors’ extensive tree planting for beauty, shelter and timber. He improved roads, developed coal mining and contracted the Muirkirk Ironworks to provide ironstone, all significant to the local economy.

Boswell’s estate overseer Andrew Gibb described him as ‘one of the best men for a master, who ever wishes his Tenants to live comfortably under him’, but ‘at the same time he does not wish to indulge slothfulness.’

1 Boswell Mausoleum, 1754
2 Andrew Morton, d. 1784, Stonemason
3 James Wilson d. 1832, Blacksmith
4 Alexander Peden, Wright
5 Andrew Gibb, d. 1839, Overseer
6 Hugh Reid d. Nov 1796, Farmer
7 William Murray d. 1807, Quarryman and Church Elder
8 William Yule d. 1856, Miner
9 William Lennox, d. 1795, Coachman
10 Andrew Dalrymple d. 1809, Baron Officer
11 The Boswell Quill
12 Hugh Hair, Estate Labourer
13 Andrew Bruce, d. 1741, Gardener and Overseer
14 War Memorial 1921-22
15 Ayrshires Notables’ Monument

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