Wester Auchentroig

The life story of a farm on the old Auchentroig lands
Buchlyvie, Drymen parish, Stirlingshire

A sample house biography by Rory J Dench

How to read this story

Wester Auchentroig is a farm on the north side of the Forth and Clyde valley, west of Buchlyvie, in the parish of Drymen [HES LB3937, for the parish]. The farmhouse itself is not a listed building. Its story is the story of the lands it belongs to, and those are well recorded.

Every fact carries a source tag in square brackets, and the sources are listed at the end. Three kinds of statement appear:

- **Recorded:** read in a source, with the page given.
- **Unverified:** found only in a secondhand source and not yet checked against the original.
- **Tradition:** a story told in print but not supported by a record.

The neighbouring listed houses, Old Auchentroig and Auchentroig House, come into this story as history only. Nothing here describes them as homes today.

1. The name and the land

On the first Ordnance Survey map, Auchentroig is one of a cluster of farm names on the slope above the Arnfaichloch glen: Spital, Greenburn, Lower Balwill and Wester Auchentroig [OS XV].

The earliest records of the land are older than any building on it. A local land-history table compiled from the medieval charters gives the following. All three points are **unverified**: they come from that one secondhand source and have not yet been checked against the originals.

- An Earl of Lennox granted three quarterlands in the holding of Garchell to the Maclachlans, and Auchintroig was one of them. The table dates the charter to about 1300 [LAS, citing the Lennox cartulary pp. 75–76] *Unverified*.
- Auchintroig appears with Gartcurrachan and Gartclach in a Great Seal charter of 1546 [LAS, citing RMS vol. III no. 3270] *Unverified*.
- "Wester Auchentroig" is valued at £5 in 1625, as a holding in its own right [LAS] *Unverified*.

If the 1625 entry holds up, Wester Auchentroig was a named farm more than two centuries before the Ordnance Survey drew it.

A nineteenth-century writer says the family dated a charter of 1394 from Duncan, Earl of Lennox, and claimed an ancestor fought at Bannockburn [Monteith] *Tradition, not checked against the charters*.

2. The Maclachlan lairds

For most of its recorded history the farm was part of an estate held by one family, the Maclachlans (also spelled M'Lachlan) of Auchentroig.

- In 1896 the local historian John Guthrie Smith wrote that the family had held Auchentroig for 600 years [Strathendrick p. 267].
- In 1702 their laird's house was built, the building now called Old Auchentroig. Historic Environment Scotland's record takes the initials carved on its date stone to be John McLachlan's, along with what are probably his two wives' [HES LB3937].
- A list of Drymen heritors (landowners responsible for church costs) from the 1750s or 1760s names Robert Maclachlan, for Auchentroig [Strathendrick pp. 90–91].
- In 1791, when a new minister was called to Drymen, William M'Lauchlan of Auchentroig signed for himself and for Graham of Duchray [Strathendrick p. 93].
- The New Statistical Account of the parish (published 1845) lists William A. Maclachlan of Auchentroig among the landowners [NSA p. 112].

The Maclachlan arms are carved over the front door of Old Auchentroig [HES LB3937].

3. 1710: Rob Roy at Auchentroig

In 1710 Rob Roy MacGregor's men came to the laird's house at Auchentroig [Strathendrick p. 267; HES LB3937]. Guthrie Smith gives the fullest account [Strathendrick p. 267]:

- The laird saw the Highlanders coming and barred the doors and windows.
- They got in by setting fire to the lower part of the door, which was heavy oak studded with bolts.
- The laird was taken prisoner, and all the cattle and sheep on the estate were driven off.

That account was printed in 1896, nearly two centuries after the event, and is best read as the story as it was told locally rather than as a court record.

The Historic Environment Scotland record adds two details that Guthrie Smith does not give: that the laird's son was taken as well, and that a ransom was paid [HES LB3937]. Neither is confirmed in Strathendrick, so both are held back here until a primary record is found *Unverified*.

The door itself survives. The original is kept inside the house, and a copy was fitted in the doorway in 1999 [HES LB3937].

For a tenant farm like Wester Auchentroig, a raid like this meant the loss of the year's stock. Whether the Wester farm's own cattle were among those taken is not recorded.

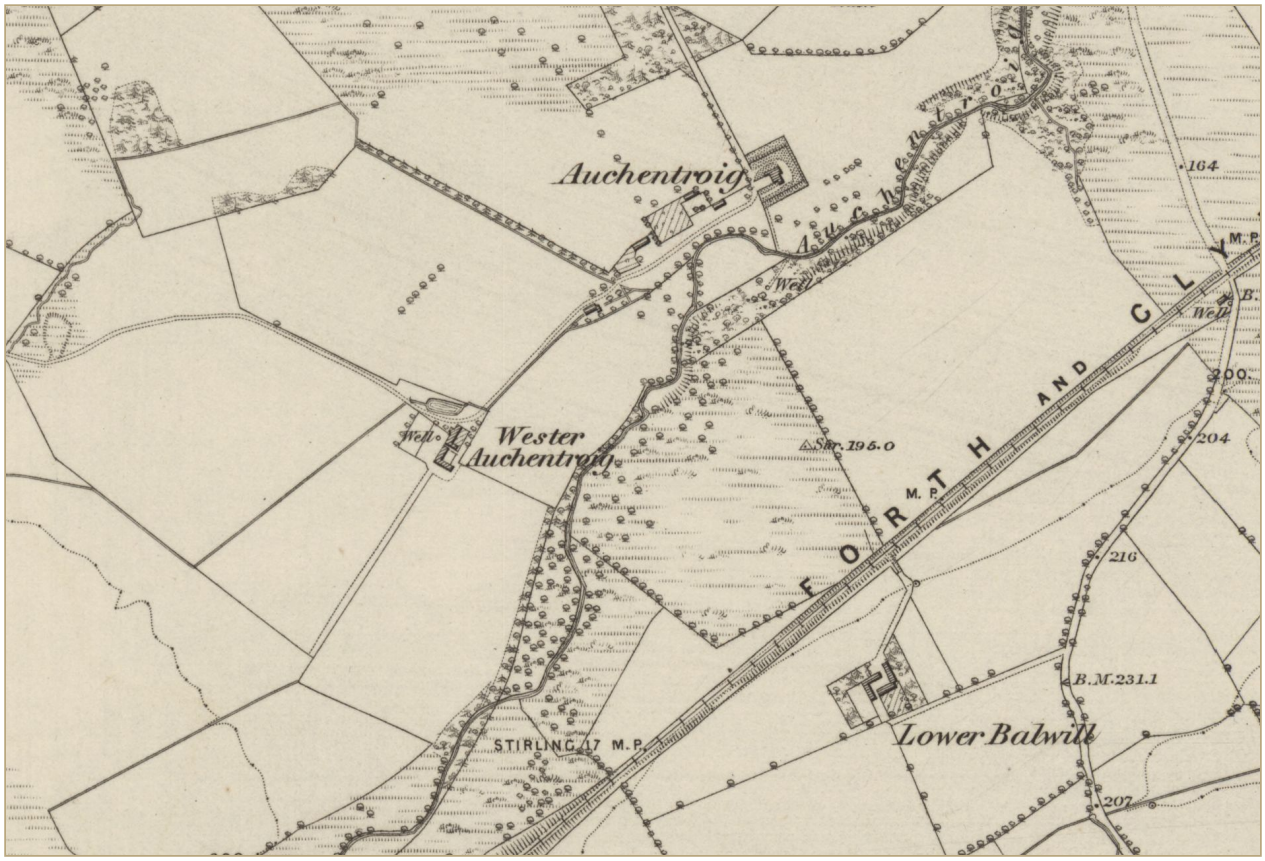
4. The parish around the farm

Three records show what life around Auchentroig was like before the railway came.

- **The roads.** In 1658 the Presbytery asked for Auchentroig, Balwill, Garchell, Cashley and the Myes to be made a separate parish. These places were so far from Drymen church that people were “all disaccomodat” by the “Bad, Murish, and Mossie ways”. The split never happened [Strathendrick p. 81].
- **The Spittal.** A Spittal stood close to Auchentroig. Guthrie Smith thought it was church land given by the Earls of Lennox to the Knights Templar or the Knights of St John [Strathendrick p. 74]. The 1865 map marks “Spital” with a ruin and a well just north of Auchentroig [OS XV]. The Templar link is his opinion *Tradition*.
- **The school.** By about 1840 there was a school at Auchintroig with 28 pupils. Its teacher was paid from the interest on £88 left by the late Miss M’Lachlan of Auchintroig [NSA p. 113].

The school is the strongest single record of daily life here. Children from the farms around, very likely including Wester Auchentroig, were taught on Maclachlan money. The “very likely” is an inference; no pupil list has been read.

5. On the map, 1865



Ordnance Survey six-inch 1st edition, Stirlingshire Sheet XV (1865). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, maps.nls.uk (CC-BY).

The first edition six-inch map, surveyed 1861–63 and published 1865, names **Wester Auchentroig** as a farm of its own [OS XV]. It shows a small group of buildings set back on a farm track west of the glen. Auchentroig itself, with its house and trees, sits on the other side of the burn [OS XV].

Running south of both is the Forth and Clyde Junction Railway, with a milepost marked "Stirling 17 M.P." [OS XV]. That line opened through here in 1856 [RailScot].

This is the earliest map read so far that labels Wester Auchentroig. Earlier maps by Blaeu (1654) and Roy (1747–55) are cited in text only [LAS] *Unverified*.

6. The farm in the parish records

The people who lived and worked at Wester Auchentroig in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be named from the census returns for Drymen parish (1841 to 1921) and the Stirlingshire valuation rolls (1855 to 1925). Each valuation roll gives the owner, the tenant and the yearly rent. Together they show when the farm passed from the Maclachlans to later owners. A finished book reads these and names the households in order.

What the records already say about the area:

- About 1840 the parish had 29 owners of land worth £50 a year or more, and nine of them farmed their own land [NSA p. 112].
- The parish drains partly to the Forth and partly to the Endrick. The road west from Buchlyvie crossed the Bog of Ballat, “famous for its meadow hay” [Strathendrick p. 267].

7. After the Maclachlans

By 1896 Auchentroig had been sold. Guthrie Smith says William Smith bought it from the heirs of the late William Alexander M'Lachlan [Strathendrick p. 267]. HES gives 1884 as the death of the last of the family [HES LB3937].

The next owner named in the records is Colonel Ewing Crawford [HES LB48991]:

- In 1903 he had a new mansion built at Auchentroig to designs by Eben Simpson of Stirling.
- In 1923 a fire destroyed its interior.
- He had it rebuilt, and the work was finished in 1930.

Whether Wester Auchentroig was sold with the estate in these years, or separately, is not yet known. The valuation rolls from 1885 to 1925 would answer it. This sample stops at 1925; the story after that belongs to the family.

What a finished book can include

A finished life story adds what only the people who know the farm can supply, always with their say-so:

- **Deeds:** the earliest title deed or search sheet, summarised, showing when the farm left the estate.
- **Rent receipts and leases:** naming the laird the tenants paid.
- **Photographs:** the farmhouse today, and any pictures from before living memory.
- **Memories:** how the farm came to the family, what it has grown and raised, and where the old school stood.
- **The records:** the census and valuation rolls read in full, naming each household.

Timeline

Date	Event	Status
c.1300	Lennox charter grants Auchintroig to the Maclachlans	Unverified (LAS)
1394	Charter said to be confirmed by Duncan, Earl of Lennox	Tradition (Monteith)
1546	Auchintroig in a Great Seal charter	Unverified (LAS)
1625	Wester Auchentroig valued at £5	Unverified (LAS)
1658	Presbytery asks for a separate parish for Auchentroig and its neighbours	Strathendrick p. 81
1702	Laird’s house (Old Auchentroig) built	HES LB3937
1710	Rob Roy raids the laird’s house, door set alight	Strathendrick p. 267; HES
1750s–60s	Robert Maclachlan listed among the Drymen heritors	Strathendrick pp. 90–91
1791	William M’Lauchlan of Auchentroig signs the call to a new minister	Strathendrick p. 93
c.1840	School at Auchintroig, 28 pupils, funded by Miss M’Lachlan’s bequest	NSA p. 113
1856	Railway opens below the farm	RailScot
1861–65	First OS map names Wester Auchentroig	OS XV
1884	Last of the Maclachlans dies; estate later sold	HES LB3937; Strathendrick p. 267
1903	New Auchentroig House built	HES LB48991
1923	Auchentroig House gutted by fire	HES LB48991

Sources

- **[HES LB3937]** Historic Environment Scotland, Old Auchentroig, portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB3937 (read 27 Oct 2026). Facts put in our own words; no listing text is copied. Canmore ID 44659.
- **[HES LB48991]** Historic Environment Scotland, Auchentroig, portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48991 (read 27 Oct 2026). Facts put in our own words.
- **[Strathendrick]** J. Guthrie Smith, *Strathendrick and its Inhabitants from Early Times* (Glasgow, 1896), pp. 74, 81, 90–91, 93, 267. archive.org/details/strathendrickits00smit
- **[NSA]** *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 8 (1845), Drymen, pp. 112–113. archive.org/details/newstatisticalac08edin
- **[OS XV]** Ordnance Survey six-inch 1st edition, Stirlingshire Sheet XV (1865), maps.nls.uk/view/228780964. National Library of Scotland, CC-BY.
- **[LAS]** Land Assessment Scotland, “Drymen Table”, las.denisrixson.com/2016/11/drymen-table/. Secondhand; every point from it is marked unverified.
- **[Monteith]** *Summer at the Lake of Monteith*, chapter “The M’Lachlans of Auchentroig”, electricscotland.com/History/perth/monteith/chapter18.htm. Family tradition only.
- **[RailScot]** railscot.co.uk, Forth and Clyde Junction Railway.

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