for concessions relative to boundaries and fishing rights brought 
even from Lord Shelburne words of caution. In a private letter 
of October 20, 1782, Shelburne wrote:—

... I find it difficult, if not impossible, to enter into the 
policy of all that you recommend upon the subject, both of 
the fishery and the boundaries, and of the principle which you 
seem to have adopted of going before the commissioners in 
every point of favour and confidence. The maxim is not 
only new in all negotiations, but I consider it as no way 
adapted to our present circumstances, but as diametrically 
opposite to our interest in the present moment. 

Shelburne himself, however, later agreed to these same concessions ; 
and after the downfall of his ministry, its successor, the Fox-North 
coalition, was unable during six months of negotiations to improve 
the preliminary articles in the interest of Britain. The United 
States profited by the fact that once Lord Shelburne and Oswald 
had conceded the recognition of independence, both anticipated, 
in behalf of Britain, favourable commercial relations and liberal 
reciprocal rights with the new nation. Other factors contributing 
to the success of the treaty for the United States were Britain’s 
efforts to separate America from her ally, France; the necessity 
for Britain to negotiate simultaneously with Spain, Holland and 
France; and finally the astute negotiations on the part of Franklin, 
Jay, and John Adams.

The name of Richard Oswald appears as the official signature 
only on the preliminary peace of November, 1782, not on the 
definitive treaty of September, 1783. When the Shelburne Ministry 
resigned in February, 1783, David Hartley replaced Oswald, who 
then returned to his comfortable estate of Auchincruive in Ayrshire, 
where he died in 1784. Although the signature of Oswald 
does not appear on the final treaty, the imprint of his diplomatic 
labours is clearly written on the Anglo-American terms of agreement.

The estate of Auchincruive was owned successively by the 
Wallaces (-1374, the Cathcarts (-1758), a Mr. James Murray (-1764), 
and the Oswals (-1925). Its policy grounds, woodlands and mansion 
house were purchased in 1925 by the late Mr. John Hannah of Girvan 
Mains and gifted by him two years later to the West of Scotland 
Agricultural College. Since 1931 it has served as a centre for agri-
cultural education and advisory work and its mansion house was 
used as a women’s hostel.

That there were earlier mansion houses, there can be no doubt. 
Sir Duncan Wallace, the last of his line, had strong local connexions 
and it is not improbale that at times he lived at Auchincruive 
before acquiring near-by Sundrum estate, the castle of which 
became his ultimate domicile. Not until 1532, however, is a house 
specifically mentioned, and then in a charter granted to the second 
Lord Cathcart. It is again on record in 1541 when the third Lord 
Cathcart, following a period of resignation, had the charter restored 
in recognition of his services to James V. In the latter case the 
house was described as a "castell," but there is reason to question 
the aptness of this title and certainly, fully half a century later, 
Timothy Pont, the noted cartographer, gave it no such prominence 
in his map of the area.

The fifth Lord Cathcart died at Auchincruive in 1628, thus 
confirming the existence of a mansion house at this later date. 
It seems not unlikely, however, in view of the greater importance 
of Sundrum Castle. that Auchincruive was in the main reserved 
for the use of cadet members of the family.

Sir William Fraser, the eminent nineteenth-century biographer, 
states in the "Lennox," a production embodying, inter alia, 
researches into the lineage of the Oswals, that the present mansion 
house was completed in 1767 and that "it occupies the site of the 
former mansion house which was destroyed by fire about the 
middle of the (18th) century." In the light of recent evidence 
the implication of this statement, namely that the present house 
rose, within a few years, from the ashes of the manor house referred 
to is unacceptable, it being now established from a copy of a deed 
of sale of 1758, entered into between the Commissioners of the 9th 
Lord Cathcart, acting on his Lordship’s behalf, and James Murray 
of Broughton, the then purchaser of Sundrum and Auchincruive, 
that the latter estate possessed a "Tower Fortalice Manor Place." 
This manor place, it may reasonably be assumed, was the immediate 
forerunner of the present mansion house. As for the old manor 
house mentioned by Sir William Fraser, not improbably it was

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(22) Richard Oswald’s Will is in the General Register House, Edinburgh, including his will 
and testament, disposition, assignation, and tailzie in the Register of Deeds, 
vol. 236 (July 1-Dec. 31, 1784), p. 651-91, 781-47. 817(b)-971.
burned at an earlier date than that noted by him. Equally one may suppose that the “Tower Fortalice Mannor Place” enjoyed a longer tenure than a mere decade and a half.

It is generally assumed that the building of the present mansion house was begun by Richard Oswald when, in 1764, he purchased Auchincruive, but doubt is cast on this by a letter contributed to one of the local papers in 1853 by someone claiming to be conversant with the details of the Oswald family. In this the correspondent avers that when Richard Oswald made his purchase from James Murray (Sundrum and Auchincruive were sold separately) some slight progress had already been made with the new building and that it was on the former’s instruction that the brothers Adam were called in as architects. Be that as it may, the work was completed in 1767, the date on the front of the building bearing witness to this. Further additions were to be made later.

The writer has in his possession an engraving of the mansion house and foreground giving a view from the Coylton road and bearing as a water mark the date 1808. Under it is the caption “Auchincruive, the Seat of Richard A. Oswald, Esqr.” This member of the family, a grand-nephew of the aforementioned Richard Oswald, occupied the mansion house from 1793 to 1842, and although he did not succeed his father in ownership until 1819—the latter lived first at Scotstoun and later in Glasgow—he was virtually de facto landlord during that period of almost fifty years. Because of this it is possible that the engraving may actually have been made between 1808 and 1819 instead of after the latter date. By this time, at any rate, the mansion house had not as yet taken its present form.

No information is available as to when the subsequent alterations and additions were made, though, if a guess be hazarded, the likeliest period would seem to be before or around 1830. Prior to that date Mr. Oswald spent money lavishly on a number of his farm steadings and it is not unlikely that he exercised the same inclination towards his mansion; in later years he suffered some measure of financial embarrassment and was presumably not in a position to bear the cost involved. Moreover, his son and heir, who pre-deceased him by nine years, was still alive in 1830.

In the engraving referred to no west wing is shown, nor is there a verandah at the main entrance, while the east wing, longer than the present one, has deep narrow windows, four separate chimneys, and a high wall extending towards the river. Connecting it to the main building and surmounted by a balustrade is a slightly higher section with ornamental windows. In the reconstruction that followed, this part of the wing was raised to the same elevation as the main building and merged into it, thus extending the frontage of the latter and reducing the length of the wing. At the same time the balustrade, common also to the main building, was exchanged for solid masonry. The general effect seems to have been to increase accommodation at the expense of beauty of outline, this the more so by reason of the addition of the less attractive west wing.

When Auchincruive was gifted to the West of Scotland Agricultural College in 1927 the mansion house was empty and alterations were soon under way to fit it out as a women’s hostel. Fortunately few external changes were necessary, other than the lowering of the carriage-way in front of the main entrance and the removal of some out-houses beyond the west wing, while the main structural change within involved the introduction of a new stairway from the basement facing the river to the ground floor above. The mansion, as we now know it, is therefore pretty much as it was a century or more ago and though, for its present purpose, it lacks the convenience of a modern structure, there is compensation in its general appearance of dignity and stability, both reminders of the more spacious days of its earlier occupants.

It may be apposite to add that in one of the alcoves in the dining room there is a beautiful statuette of the first of the Auchincruive Oswalds. It bears the simple inscription—on the one side “Richard Oswald 1705-1784,” and on the other “Peacemaker.” Apart from the epitaph, there is a point of interest in the dates given, which are those commonly alluded to in the public prints. The date of death (4th November, 1784) is indisputable; on the other hand, the particulars on Mr. Oswald’s tomb in St. Quivox church show clearly that he died “aged 84 years,” a fact that would indicate his year of birth as 1700 and not 1705.