

HISTORIC SCOTLAND



THE SCOTTISH
BURGH SURVEY

HISTORIC MAUCHLINE

Archaeology and development

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*Front cover: Aerial view of Mauchline (by courtesy of RCAHMS; © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS)
Abbot Hunter's Tower, from F Grose, The Antiquities of Scotland (London, 1789)*



FIGURE 22

Poosie Nansie's Tavern, 2002
(photo: Kirkdale Archaeology)

Probably the greatest innovation, however, came with the street pattern alterations. The later eighteenth century saw the introduction of a new road system through Ayrshire with the building of turnpike roads, mostly financed by local improving landowners. This made long-distance transport more viable. The Ayrshire Turnpike Act of 1766 included two turnpike roads that intersected at Mauchline, that from Ayr to Muirkirk and the road from Kilmarnock to New Cumnock.¹⁰² To assist with the maintenance of these roads, dues were collected at toll gates. A toll gate and its accompanying keeper's cottage formerly existed on the road to the north of the town, opposite the north lodge of the former Netherplace House (NS 4960 2728).

Mauchline and its parish were increasing in population. In 1755 there were 1200 in the parish; by 1791, 1800. This seems to have dropped to 1700 by 1801, but had risen again to 1900 by 1811.¹⁰³ The most famous resident was Robert Burns. In 1788 Burns took up residence in Mauchline for the eight remaining years of his life, having married Jean Armour.¹⁰⁴ It is alleged that his twins were born in his Mauchline apartment and that the ground floor was used as a school (fig 23). An interesting description of the view from this apartment tells a little of the layout of the town. Looking towards Mauchline Castle from that apartment (this is now impossible due to the building of the church halls in 1895), there existed 'a square of houses, one of which was a hotel (the