

Blackburn House, West Lothian



Client: CTT (Blackburn House)L td

Year: 2008

Value: £3M

Awards: Georgian Group Awards 2008.; EAA Conservation/Regeneration medal 2008; RICS Scotland Awards Commendation.

The category A-listed 18th century Blackburn House was commissioned by George Moncrieff, a West Indies plantation owner returning to Scotland. It stands on the A705 which was once the main road between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The building had been abandoned since 1972 and had fallen into a serious state of disrepair. In 1998 the Cockburn Conservation Trust commissioned a feasibility study which concluded that a business use would offer the best opportunity for the long term and would also offer a greater amount of public access and benefit. With money from the Heritage Lottery Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Historic Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, West Lothian Council and the Architectural Heritage Fund, work started to restore the building and provide office and studio space which would operate as a Centre for the Creative Industries.

The main conservation challenge was that of the building's condition. The parapet gutters had failed and instead of conducting water to the outside pipes, water was channelled down the inside faces of the walls. In order to save the fine interior plasterwork a complex system of propping had to be designed to provide safe access to carry out the works, to support the structure for repairs, and to hold the plaster in place until it could be re-attached from above.

Externally, the west pavilion and east doocot were restored - the west pavilion providing office space and the east doocot housing some interpretation displays. One wall of the east pavilion survived and the rest was re-built using brick. A new timber-clad west doocot was built to sit within the boundary walls, and a lean-to structure on the east side was re-built based on photographic evidence, to house a recording studio. A further lean-to structure was added to the east quadrant wall providing external storage and a plant room.