

ASPECTS UNSEEN

Mavisbank House & Designed Landscape

Mavisbank House, near Loanhead in Midlothian, is Scotland's first Palladian villa, built between 1723 and 1727 by architect William Adam in collaboration with Sir John Clerk of Penicuik. Once hailed as one of Scotland's most important country houses, it later fell into ruin after a fire in 1973, though recent funding aims to stabilise and conserve the remains

We created an AU 3D Digital Model of the surviving buildings and landscape and digitally reconstructed both the building and its designed landscape from information provided by a team of researchers. Drawing on this research, we redecorated rooms virtually to reflect Clerk's intended aesthetic. This reconstruction was not simply technical: it reframed Mavisbank as a site of possibility, demonstrating how digital heritage can bridge past and future. The slides shows results from the digital reconstruction.



This infamous photograph shows the elegant Palladian façade of Mavisbank juxtaposed with rows of derelict vehicles, a stark symbol of decline and neglect.

After the house was gutted by fire in 1973, restoration attempts faltered. By the 1980s, demolition was seriously considered, but local protests saved it. The scrapyards era reflects this period of uncertainty and tangled ownership

The image became emblematic of how one of Scotland's most important architectural landmarks — the first Palladian villa in the country — had fallen into near ruin, highlighting the urgency of conservation. Our work was used to raise the awareness of the possibilities.

Click on the image to see Seeker Films' "Mavisbank House". This will take you to Seeker Films YouTube Channel













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Mavisbank's story is a reminder of heritage fragility, but also of resilience. From Enlightenment villa to scarpyard ruin, and now to digital resurrection, it embodies the power of imagination and technology to reframe cultural memory. Our reconstruction stands as both a record and an invitation: to see beyond neglect, and to envision renewal.

Mavisbank House is currently under the stewardship of the Landmark Trust, working in partnership with Midlothian Council, Historic Environment Scotland, and the Mavisbank Trust. The future involves a major restoration project funded by a £5.3 million National Heritage Memorial Fund grant, aiming to stabilize the ruined shell, restore the building, and create a community greenspace.