



## **Once again, the ghost-of crew are out for a stroll on a demolition site!**

**We hadn't been back up to West Park Lunatic Asylum for a few months and as the place is being gradually demolished, we thought it was high time we popped back to see what had changed or gone.**

**The answer is - "quite a lot!"**

We started our day out by being very lazy, as we are usually on site for most of our explores at the crack of dawn. However, Sunday is a day of rest, so we didn't set off from base until about midday, but would have plenty of time and daylight to see by as it generally starts to get dark at around 7 this time of year.

As we were having a lazy day, none of us could be really bothered to pack any large quantity of munchies this time, apart from Agent Skyframe, who is fed up with us munching all his sarnies (well, he does make excellent cheese tomato and chilli sauce sandwiches). So it came to pass that we espyed a very handy petrol station on the way into Leatherhead and thence stocked up with that most manly of food groups - crisps and chocolate eclairs and proceeded to stuff our faces.

But this was no time to sit around and consume munchies! We had a mission to attend to.

Despite half of the site now flattened and being gradually signed over to newbuild cardboard housing, there is an alarming level of security still in the place. Using our impressive array of cake fuelled Ninja skills, we found a suitable access point and went for a walk.

Anyone who is thinking of visiting this leviathan will be pleased to know that there is still plenty to see at the present time (March 2011), but shouldn't drag their feet as demolition is progressing very fast indeed: as we have already intimated, most brownfield sites or huge empty buildings are just waiting out their time until they are bulldozed to become vast expanses of rabbit hutches for overpaid middle management.

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Mission Operatives: Ghost, Skyframe and Shades.

Infiltration date: March 2011.



ABOVE & BELOW: These 2 views show the side of the site adjacent to the road - everything appears to be in tact here and the development appears to be centred on the north-eastern corner of the site and central nucleus at the present time (march 2011), although there are signs of new build starting to shape up in the north-western corner, nearest the live part of the site.





**ABOVE:** Ah! Lovely corridors! You can't beat a good corridor. Some of them are starting to come down as part of the demolition, but the majority of them are still intact. After the notorious clambering in and out of windows we had to encounter on previous visits, it's refreshing to be able to get in and out through the doorways and gaps in the walls created to get equipment in and out of working areas.



**ABOVE & BELOW:** Unlike poor desecrated Hellingly, Westpark hasn't lost any of its photogenic qualities during the demolition process. There are still plenty of sights to be seen.





ABOVE: Loony Tunes..... Geddit??? (Hwa wa wa waaaaahhhhhhhh).

BELOW: This seems to be a well known (and particularly shitty) trick by developers wishing to get rid of buildings as quickly as possible - they strip all the tiles off the rooves and let water ingress gradually play havock with the building's structural integrity, then say "oh we can't save this bit because of water damage".

This also explains why at Hellingly, the specification for the redevelopment plans went down from saving two thirds of the original buildings to just room to house 16 dwellings from the original stock. It's down to nothing more than the developers cost cutting and being thoroughly fucking lazy. It is a damn sight cheaper to bulldoze something and build a new one than to take a little time, care and extra expense to maintain the rich architectural prowess of buildings such as these.

Sadly, the world of the Victorians has never been of any real concern to modern housing developers and thus we have to tolerate the ever present precipitation of newbuild crap wth cardboard walls that you can run through, given a good run up. Maybe if they were built with such fantastic things as good old fashioned brick walls and (God forbid) adequate soundproofing, this world would be a happier, healthier, less stressful and far less violent place to live in... Right, rant over, on with the pictures!!!





ABOVE & BELOW: Still plenty of lovely, creepy atmosphere.



**ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT:** Although never really a good thing, demolition and redevelopment can be good for opening up previously unseen parts of a site. We had never been in the ward shown here before and it had plenty of the slightly creepy atmosphere West Park is so famous for.





ABOVE: "It was the next day, brothers, and I had truly done my best, morning and afternoon to play it their way and sit like a cooperative horror show malchick in the chair of torture while they flashed nasty bits of ultraviolence on the screen... though not on soundtrack, my brothers, the only sound being music."



## The Return of the Children's Ward.



BELOW: Time for a quick map check.





ABOVE: Placed for maximum poignant effect!





**ABOVE & BELOW:** This whole ward is something of an oxymoron - there is fantastic fun colour and spectacular neglect in equal measure. The place has quite a sad, remorseful feel to it, but was never threatening and had a serene calm throughout.



**ABOVE:** Shades photographing Ghost photographing Shades...

**BELOW:** As this location no longer physically exists, no-one can prove we were ever there, so we can show our ugly fizzogs in the photos.





**BELOW:** Despite having been empty since 2003, we almost expected to see kids running around in here playing and laughing. It is so easy to think of Lunatic Asylums as huge, austere places designed to keep the insane out of sight and out of mind, but towards the end of the life of this kind of institution, the benefits of bright open spaces from a therapeutic point of view add a welcome element to the history that would change a lot of peoples' perceptions of them...





Where's it gone?



ABOVE & BELOW: Looking through the windows of the corridors, it appears that another ward and possibly a whole lot more has bitten the dust since we were last up here in January.



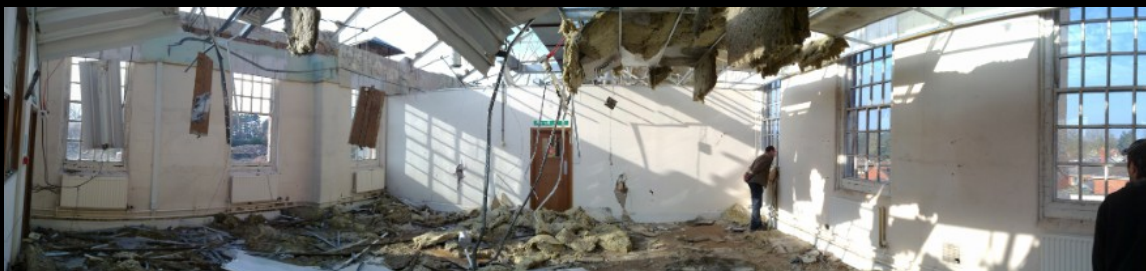


**BELOW:** The Laundry and its spooky old chute between the upper and lower floors has been demolished, as seen in this view.





## Aircooled Offices.



ABOVE: Another ward on its way to the great brickfield in the sky: this area was originally totally inaccessible, but was originally the administration centre for outpatients towards the end of the hospital's life.



ABOVE: If you want to give your position away to security really easily, go where there are loads of pigeons. There were loads of the little buggers in here, plus the demolition team had crunched the roof off, so we took our time through here and tried not to dislodge too many.



## The Water Tower.



ABOVE: Hello baby, daddy's back....!

BELOW: First floor inside the Water Tower.



BELOW: if like me you're not too good with heights, you'll want to try your best to forget that there are several hundred thousand gallons of water above your head, as seen in this shot up the side of the lowest of the 3 water tanks.





ABOVE: On top of the second water tank.

BELOW: The third water tank

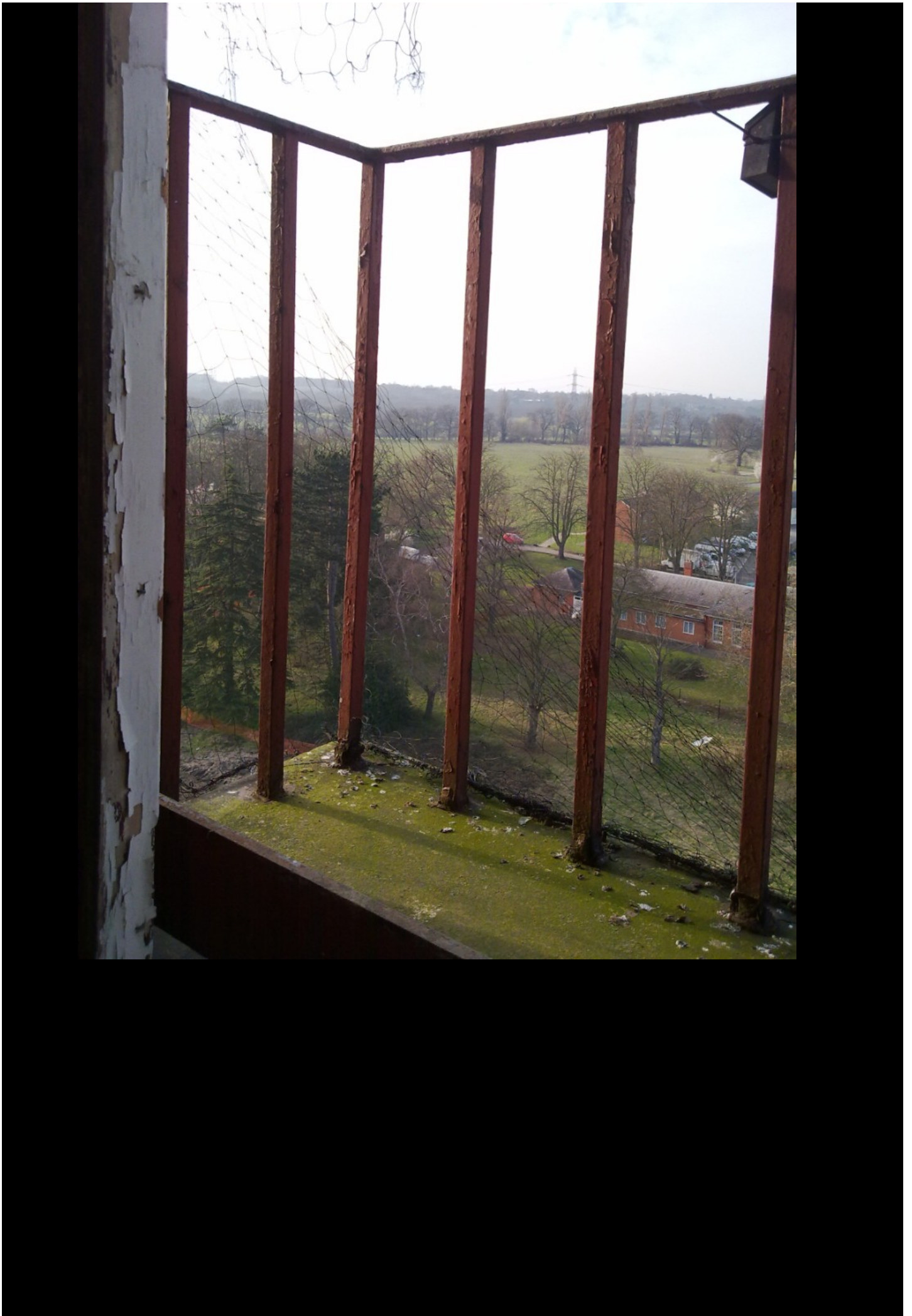




ABOVE & LEFT: Masses of stairs to the top, but....

BELOW: .....a decent view from the top. No matter how hard I try, I can't go to the edge or stand up here because the floor starts to move and I have to hang onto it for dear life. It's worth noting that we think the box attached to the railings might be a bat box. It doesn't look like a PIR and it's pointing the wrong way.







**ABOVE:** Although it can't be seen in this photo, West Park is just opposite Chessington World of Adventures and can be clearly be seen from the tops of some of the roller coasters. Likewise, it is also possible to see the big ferris wheel at Chessington from the top of the Water Tower.





**Workshops and Woodwork Shop.**



**ABOVE & BELOW:** These photos show the maintenance section of the site - an area we hadn't been able to get anywhere near to on previous trips, but which was now wide open as it served as a temporary plant storage yard for the contractors.





ABOVE: Wilson PL450 lathe. Ghost used to use one of these when he was training for his Engineering Diploma. Good machine - I wonder if anyone's going to save it or if it'll just get scrapped along with everything else? It'd be a great shame.

LEFT: CAAFE type Electrical Multimeter. Again, Ghost used these at college. These are quite sought after in good condition and worth quite a lot of money.

BELOW: This was probably the highlight of our day - finding a room off the workshop complex absolutely stuffed full of plans of old Asylums from the original Epsom Cluster, a group of 5 Lunatic Asylums in this area to serve the insane of London.

Amongst them were highly detailed plans of West Park (seen with Skyframe, below), Long Grove, Horton Park and Cane Hill. Sadly, we didn't have a rucksack with us otherwise we'd have saved the lot for prosperity. We ensured that at least some survived, though :o)





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**ABOVE & BELOW LEFT + RIGHT:** Plenty of access to those lovely tunnels, but no easy way down from here (those wooden steps weren't great). Also, on this visit a lot of the entrance ways to the tunnels had been covered over with the polythene asbestos tents whilst removal was taking place in the tunnels...





BELOW: The 'Bird Barn' is still fully intact. Now that we were able to navigate the vast majority of the site relatively unhindered, we were finally able to figure out which areas were interconnected and how. Quite frequently we had seen these places from the tunnels in the past but now, being able to see them from above ground, we were able to say "Oh yes, that makes sense".



BELOW: Lovely curtains! Another area previously unseen.





ABOVE & LEFT: Oops! We walked straight into an asbestos removal and decontamination area. Suffice it to say, we left quite quickly.

BELOW: I get the impression that the developers didn't think much of our sculpture.

BELOW: It's all very well spotting a lovely wide open door to a bit we haven't seen before, but as has been mentioned before, a lot of the courtyard areas had by now become impenetrable thickets of brambles. yes it was hard work and yes it was quite painful, even with 2 pairs of thick jeans on.



RIGHT: In uncovering new places we had previously not seen, we also stumbled upon the most untouched of all the wards we had found to date. Although it showed obvious signs that the builders had been in looking for pipes and cables, there were still beds lined up against the walls in their original positions, still lights and sockets and call buttons in place, but ONLY AT ONE END. It was almost as if they'd got half way through and realised that they'd run out of time, thank God.





**ABOVE:** The view out of the window from the ward we had found confirms that the builders hadn't got as far as this part of the site - there are still (at present at least) some parts that still have the fantastic West Park "time capsule" atmosphere.

**BELOW:** The next ward, whilst relatively empty in terms of beds and personal belongings, was still intact and still had lamps and some cubicle dividers still in place, the sockets intact and the windows left exactly as the last time they were used. Despite the ingress of damp, the walls were in reasonable condition and even in this unedited photo below, it is easy to see the pink and blue the walls would have been.





ABOVE: The air of neglect was fantastic in this corridor - the peeling paint was incredible atmospheric.

LEFT: A huge, empty ward that, for some bizarre reason, had a rather swanky duffel coat hanging up in it...

BELOW: The water ingress in this ward was quite spectacular: at this point, the water was around an inch deep in places. Sadly, as this ward is so badly damaged by water, it's almost certainly for the chop.



RIGHT: We weren't quite sure about this room - it was clearly a bathroom or wet room of some kind, but what got us was the strange rack of electrical stuff in the middle of it. There was some switch gear, a pump at the bottom and for some strange reason, a lot of ballast type gear at the top which is usually found in electric strip lighting. We couldn't figure out how they'd be used together. The moss on the floor was quite epic and the sun streaming through the window was quite nice - I'm glad it came out okay in the photo...

BELOW: Suicide bear. Obviously staged and probably had no bearing (ahaha) on eachother, but looked quite macabre. Poor Ted.



ABOVE: "Tango Spotted!!" we were always wary that there may be the chance of builders or security walking around, so we tried to stay just as careful as we were euphoric.

**BELOW:** The one thing that really struck us about this type of bath was how tall they were. I should think an able bodied person would struggle getting into and out of one of these, let alone someone who doesn't want a bath, has reduced mental faculties or is convinced that you are trying to drown them. Whilst there was evidence of handrails and things around it, there was not enough room in this space for a hoist and we did wonder how it would have been used.



**ABOVE:** It's always nice to find some personal artefacts in these places.

**RIGHT:** We are usually very careful about moving things around unless it's necessary or allows safe passage, but I think for this shot, we just had to take advantage of the proximity of the fire extinguisher to the moss. It's just so incongruous, it's amazing.

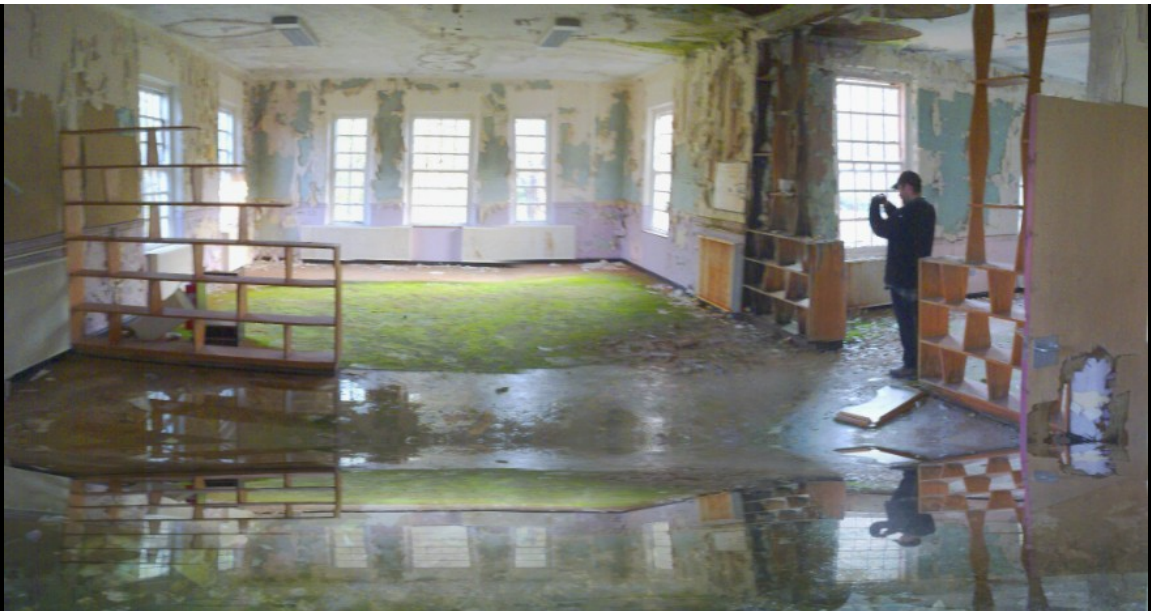
**BELOW LEFT & RIGHT:** There was no through way from this ward, so we retraced our steps carefully.





**ABOVE & BELOW:** More lovely moss and incongruity! The same photo in both pictures, but edited in the bottom one with some nifty mirage effects.





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