



More High Jinx at West Park Lunatic Asylum....

It just had to be done.

After our knock back with Pyestock NGTE, we found ourselves shlapping around without an explore for the day and we had to drive literally past the front door on the way home, so we thought "Why not?"

We had heard plentiful horror stories about massively uprated security patrols and that the place was now totally locked down and nigh on impenetrable, but after a quick mosey around the perimeter, noone appeared to be paying us much attention and we didn't see anyone that looked like any kind of security personnel. So we went for a lurk around to see what we could find.

A lot of the place was entirely boarded up and there were a lot of places that we didn't stand a chance of getting into. We started at one extreme corner of the site and wondered if we would be able to get into any of the smaller ancillary buildings in this area, but they were all remarkably well boarded up. We were obviously going to have to get a bit more creative....



ABOVE: We started at one extreme corner of the site, a bit further around from our usual entry point and wondered if we would be able to get into any of the smaller ancillary buildings in this area (as seen here), but they were all remarkably well boarded up. We were obviously going to have to get a bit more creative....

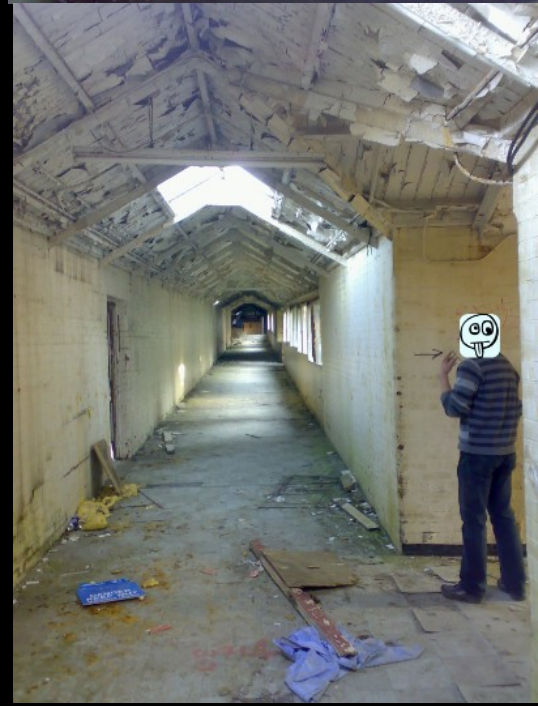


ABOVE: In the course of looking around the ancillary buildings in this area for possible ways in, we found this interesting little edifice. Part vent, part access way, it presented a tantalising prospect of subterranean adventure. Alas, the trapdoor in the top had metal bars bolted onto it, which would have taken some nifty work with WD40 and a hefty spanner to free off. The brickwork on this one was well intact and the bars in the sides were all very integral indeed.

It was then that we began to stop messing around and start to actually look at the thing. The raised concrete plinth that it sat on ran between 2 buildings. Curious. We wondered at first if it was some kind of shelter. We followed its path back to 2 or 3 other buildings and 3 more of these little surface access vents. One had brickwork that wasn't quite so robust and we had a quick look to see if we could get into it. After trying all 3, we admitted defeat and found something else to look at. Little did we know that we would be seeing more of this little structure very soon.



ABOVE: I'm glad this photo came out okay - yes, it is a panorama, but I love the way that the corridors intersect at weird angles due to the layout of the place. There are some fantastically long corridors here and also some lovely scenes where the exercise courts and areas hemmed in by the corridors have started to return to nature (BELOW).



ABOVE: Corridors - doncha just love them? We got in using our usual method and once inside, had a quick rekke for personnel. The place was totally deserted, thankfully, but MC Hammer and friends had been hard at work boarding things up and nailing and screwing things shut. There is now virtually no direct access to any of the wards from the corridors, but it soon became apparent that there had been a lot of objection to restricted access of this kind. A lot more windows on the corridors were smashed than we had seen before. We abhor damage of any kind, but it did work out to our advantage ultimately: Whilst looking at the wards from the corridors, we became increasingly aware of the state of some of the windows on the wards. Some of them didn't look entirely closed, so we began to look for openable windows off the corridors.

It has to be said at this point that whilst the boarding up of the place is remarkably prolific and very efficient, whoever has done it doesn't fully understand the concept of screws. When we eventually found a window that looked like it could be useable, closer inspection revealed that a series of screws had been partially driven into the wooden window frame, then had their ends bent over in an attempt to negate any play in the window handle. Thankfully, they hadn't really taken the condition of the woodwork into account and we were able to adjust the screws and get the window handle open. The areas inside the matrix of corridors are now given over to some remarkably unfriendly bramble patches and we had some quite painful war wounds thanks to our endeavours....

Our hunch about the windows was a good one, but sadly, a lot of the rooms beyond posed dead ends. So... back out the window and a bit more observation led us to a flight of stairs down to our old friend.... tunnels!



ABOVE: After a bit of delving about in the tunnel we found, there was suddenly this hole in the ceiling (or the floor above, if you prefer!) so with the help of some judiciously arranged tables and chairs, we uncovered somewhere we hadn't seen previously.

The Art Therapy Centre



ABOVE: This part of the site was one that we hadn't found on previous trips and was relatively difficult to get to. As a result, it was unspolled by the usual ingress of chavs and skallies who seem to delight in smashing such things up. It was delightful to see so many little personal objects in this place - it gave quite a touching insight into the people who lived here.



ABOVE: Believe it or not, but this is a primitive photocopier, alongside an even more primitive fax machine! It's great to see how things have moved on.



ABOVE: We were quite impressed by this music centre. I haven't seen such a thing for a long time, but they were all the rage when I was a lad....



ABOVE & BELOW: There were some very freaky paintings on the walls around this area - I'm not sure I'd like to meet the "Sea Monster" (BOTTOM) on a dark night, he looks like trouble.



ABOVE: I had to get a photo of these squeeze paint bottles against the light from the window: it was nice to see little patches of colour standing out so vividly against the decay.



ABOVE: We found this little hand painted clay face in a box stuffed with plaster of paris and various pottery glazes. Some of the glazes were possibly quite dangerous, so I would advocate extreme care if you find it - the symbols on the sticker on the jar equated roughly to Lead Oxide, which is not the sort of thing you want to be touching or breathing in any great quantities. We took the little face with us and placed it somewhere we knew it would freak out future generations of explorers and chavs.



ABOVE: There were some pretty fireplaces in this area, all boarded up and forgotten about. I personally really enjoy a nice open fire, but I can see the disadvantages of having them in a building full of lunatics...





ABOVE: Another shot of the old Music Centre, with a remarkably intact weaving loom next to it. Someone has, at some stage of the proceedings, taken an exception to the pillows doubtlessly made in textiles classes and has filled the entire area with foam stuffing, seen also BELOW.



ABOVE: After a good look around the Occupational Therapy Department, we returned to the ground floor in order to move on. The hole in the floor we used to gain access is on the right, just out of shot.

More external Views



ABOVE: Just as we started to climb back through the precarious hole in the floor, we saw that someone had very kindly left a door open for us, so we went out and had a quick gander.

BELOW: Okay, so this probably doesn't exactly help in the great order of things, but this view shows the exercise courts hemmed in by the corridors again, this time from one of the upstairs windows of the Art Therapy Centre. Don't be fooled by the seemingly inoffensive area around the tree, it is not scrub as it first appears! It is in fact extremely nasty and aggressive brambles.



More from the Hall



LEFT: Hahargh!!! Take that, door! Actually, it wasn't me, we found it like this when we got here. I can see why someone wanted it out of the way, though: there's an excellent view. This would have been a balcony area at the rear of the Hall, before it got burnt down. I'm not great with heights, so didn't stand on the edge too long!



ABOVE: What we would consider to be a challenging plumbing job. Obviously, there would have been another floor overhead and despite no evidence of burnt roof members in this area on the floor, the joist holes in the walls and changes in rendering support this hypothesis.

BELOW: We couldn't leave without making sure that our creative handywork was still intact. Surprisingly, it was. I think we must have done a good job.





ABOVE & BELOW: We couldn't leave the place without a quick blast in the service tunnels. Sadly, whilst we had brought a torch with us, Agent Skyframe had left it in the car, so we spent most of our time in the tunnels navigating by the light of 2 mobile phone screens, which was intense to say the least. As a result, we didn't really get any amazing photos from in the tunnels, but we did end up under the little hatch that we had found on the way in! It was very weird seeing it from the opposite way round and took us a little while to get our bearings.