Virtually Rebuilding Worcestershire's Lost Buildings with £6,700 National Lottery grant

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Residents can help rebuild Worcestershire's lost past, brick by brick, through the virtual world of computer gaming, thanks to a new project being led by the University of Worcester’s Infirmary exhibition and funded by National Lottery players.

The Infirmary, supported by The Hive, is giving people the chance to use virtual computer game Minecraft, or LEGO®, to rebuild some of the County's lost iconic buildings. Virtually Rebuilding Worcestershire’s Lost Buildings has been given a National Lottery grant of £6,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with a further £2,000 of funding from The Hive.

Using plans, images and records available from Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service, anyone can try their hand at the game, which allows players to generate a virtual replica of a building. Using records and photographs for the buildings, residents can choose any lost structures to have a go at rebuilding, such as the former Worcester Gaol. They can also create iconic buildings still standing in Worcester, like The Hive. Once created, players can take a walk through the virtual buildings. A group of young people have been assigned to work on the former Powick Hospital, or Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum as it was known, which was originally opened in 1852.

The weekly drop-in sessions, hosted by The Hive, are free and run every Tuesday 4.30pm to 6.30pm, from May 16 to July 4. Expert Minecraft players, who study Computer Games Design and Development at the University of Worcester, will be on hand to help players and answer questions from parents or guardians about the game. Visitors also have the option to create the same buildings using LEGO® bricks.

Mark Macleod, Head of The Infirmary, said: “We have long wished to recreate Worcester’s Victorian Gaol because it was very influential to the former Worcester Infirmary, and now, thanks to National Lottery players, we can! Built on the north side of the Worcester Infirmary, this means patients would have seen the walls from their beds and potentially those on the top floor may have been able to see over the wall. We also suspect that a tunnel between the two buildings would act as an entry or exit point for doctors to deliver treatment and possibly for hung prisoners' bodies to be brought over to Worcester Infirmary for dissection to further the medical staff’s knowledge. The only access to such bodies by hospitals was condemned prisoners until 1832. “I like the idea that recreating lost buildings in Minecraft will help people visualise how they once looked.”

Laura Worsfold, Hive Business Development Manager said: “We are delighted to be able to support this project at The Hive. Minecraft is great for developing creativity, being innovative and teaching real-life skills and the focus on bringing Worcestershire’s heritage to life in a very modern medium will be very exciting to see. The game is popular with young people and we have already been asked for plans so our own building can be represented. I am sure this will attract lots of interest from all sorts of interested parties and we look forward to seeing the creations.”

Under 18s must be accompanied by an adult. You can book your place by visiting www.bit.ly/TheInfirmaryTickets.

Aerial view of Powick Hospital, Copyright Charles Hastings Education Centre