

South Hill Park is a building steeped in history and as always happens with old buildings, many intriguing stories have been formed around the place as the years have gone by.

The old stories have inevitably been added to as many different members of staff, visitors and even paranormal investigators have explored South Hill Park and added to the tales attached to the place. This is a collection of the most mysterious and inexplicable of the tales.

The image was created from a photograph of *Ghost*, an installation piece which can be seen in the Tall Hall at South Hill Park. *Ghost* can be viewed from the ground floor or the first floor gallery leading to the Studio Theatre.

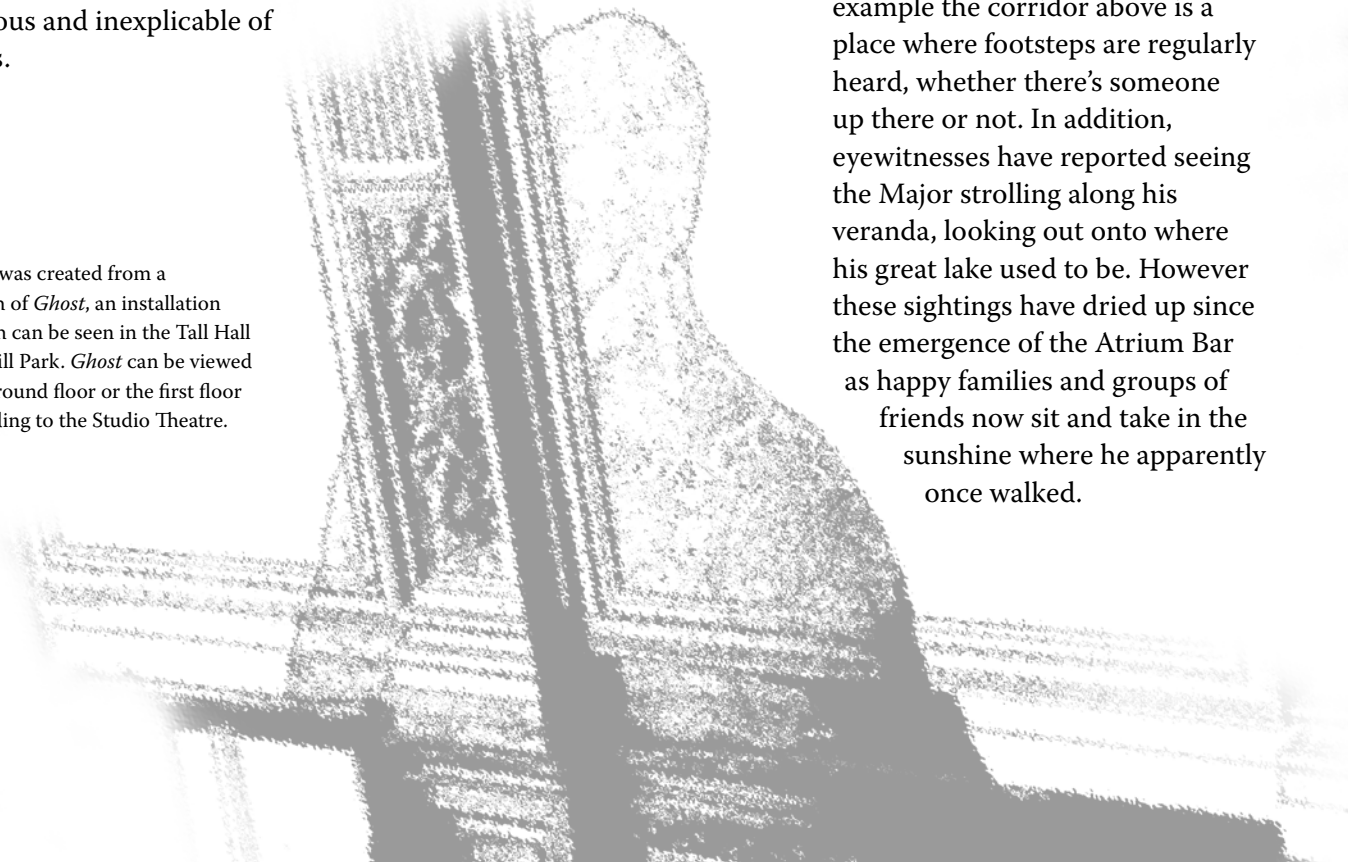
IN OLDEN DAYS...

In its role as an Arts Centre South Hill Park welcomes many different visitors everyday.

However this wasn't always the case and the house has had many different owners in its time. Sadly though the last time South Hill Park was ever privately owned, was also a time it saw depression and tragedy and this was at the hands of Major Rickman.

The Major received South Hill Park when his auntie, Lady Haversham, passed away, her husband having suffered a similar fate a few years previously. However the Major inherited not only a grand estate, but also crippling debts, of which he had no chance of paying off. Soon after receiving the estate, the pressure became too much and Major Rickman took his own life. The grizzly death took place in the gunroom, and despite the area being destroyed by recent refurbishments, the area has been a hive of activity ever since. For example the corridor above is a place where footsteps are regularly heard, whether there's someone up there or not. In addition, eyewitnesses have reported seeing the Major strolling along his veranda, looking out onto where his great lake used to be. However these sightings have dried up since the emergence of the Atrium Bar as happy families and groups of friends now sit and take in the sunshine where he apparently once walked.

The Ghosts of SOUTH HILL PARK



MODERN DAY ENCOUNTERS

The ghosts of South Hill Park have been discussed and speculated about for longer than anyone remembers.

However that doesn't mean they're not active in modern day times. One person who can attest to this is Auriole Wells who had a very strange experience when working as a Box Office Assistant, not so long ago.

A member of the Box Office staff will generally get to know everyone in the building quite well, but one night proved to be the exception. Late one Sunday evening after running the end of day reports, she found herself alone at reception. As she climbed the main staircase to drop off the reports in the admin office (now the art room, Studio 2) she glanced to her right along the corridor leading to the Studio Theatre. This is when she did a double take as she saw a male figure dressed in a Victorian style top hat and tails, walking towards her quite nonchalantly. He was there as plain as day and yet by the time her head had swivelled for the second look he had vanished.

This spooky meeting occurred just outside the Studio Theatre, which is arguably one of the most active parts of South Hill Park. Staff members have reported doors opening by themselves, even when restrained with stage weights and spooky apparitions of women have been seen within the Theatre's depths. However the Studio Theatre is not the only place to experience strange goings on and as if not wanting to be out-done by its smaller counter-part, the Wilde Theatre is also a hotbed of unexplained activity.

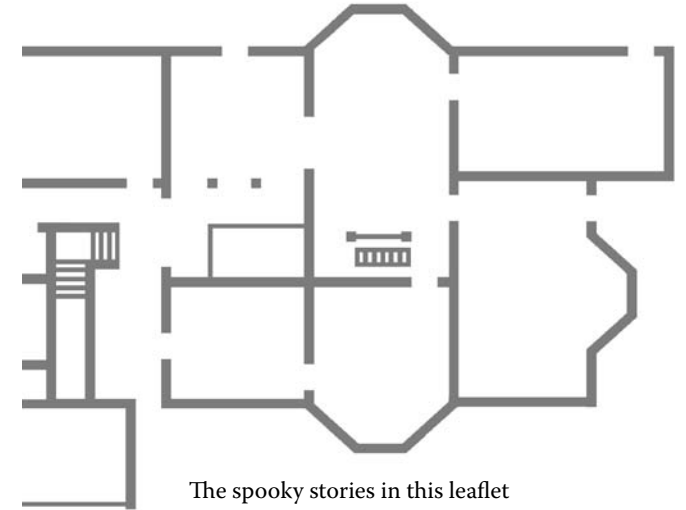
THE WILDE THEATRE

Haunting sounds, gushing winds, phantom footsteps, all have been reported in this relatively modern theatre.

House Managers have reported the theatre doors, on all three levels, slamming shut from the inside simultaneously. And more than one mysterious noise has been heard backstage. One victim of explainable occurrences was Stage Technician Lydia James, who also found herself working late one night. She was passing by the cinema when she happened to look up the stairs to the landing that

overlooks the grounds. It was there she very clearly saw a lady standing, looking back at her. At this point Lydia did a double take as the lady was wearing a very striking 1940s red dress, with a black belt around the waist. This not being a typical outfit, of South Hill Park patrons anyone would have looked again but when Lydia did so, the woman had already vanished. This was not the last sighting of the Lady in Red however as she has been seen since, although it is said she is most likely to appear Saturday nights, than any other time of the week.

It was again late at night when our next story took place. This tale involves two technicians working alone, preparing for an upcoming show. As they worked they slipped up and in the middle of their tireless toiling, accidentally left the stage microphone on. For those of us not in the theatre business, this is the microphone that is used to pipe sounds from the stage to the green room and to the actors awaiting their cues. However at this moment, when all should have been quiet, the technicians were heard footsteps on stage. Upon hearing the noises they rushed from the green room to the theatre, only to find themselves standing alone, looking into an empty auditorium.



The spooky stories in this leaflet would not have come about without the following people who are owed a great deal of thanks!

Lydia James, Auriole Wells, Simon Ticehurst and all members of SHP staff who showed an interest and shared a tale. Thanks to all of you!

THE GHOSTS OF SOUTH HILL PARK

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