

## Back to Normal

Written by Susan Hollingshead  
Friday, 11 July 2008 06:13

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Well, it has been an interesting couple of weeks. The weather continues to be spectacular since July 1st and we are really enjoying it. The daytime temperatures hover in the low to mid 20's, there is no humidity and the sun is relentless.... I just love summer in BC!

On Wednesday while I was at a Nerd call and Rick was at the shop, he could smell smoke in the air. He looked out in the direction of our condo and could see smoke billowing from the area. He raced home to find that the old dilapidated former Woodlands Hospital School, which is beside our condo, was engulfed in flames. The site has been vacant for years, slowly rotting while the city of New Westminster tried to decide its fate. Onni, the developer of our project, purchased the site a few years ago with the understanding that they would try to restore the building (mainly because of do-gooder historians wanting to retain the "Heritage Buildings".)

Sadly, the Woodlands has a sordid history of child abuse and torture (among others) and in my opinion the best thing for it would be to have the whole thing demolished. I am all for preserving Heritage Buildings that have a good history but when something with such a shameful past is left standing it remains a painful reminder to the survivors and the families of the victims. There is a beautiful Memorial Garden, which does justice to them and honours their memory on the property. Had the structure been removed years ago, this fire wouldn't have happened. We were evacuated at 2:30 PM due to the closeness of the fire (we are roughly 150 feet apart) and the possibility of smoke issues. Fortunately the wind was blowing in the right direction and we sustained no heat or smoke damage. We (Sam, the cat included) spent a restless night in a local hotel and were allowed to return in the morning.

Currently much of the building is still standing, however there is a demolition crew on site so hopefully what is left will be removed and perhaps something new and fresh will be resurrected

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there in the near future.

My website seems to be working once again thanks to Steve of Loogadis who has put lots of time and effort into the reinstallation of everything so it looks like I will continue to update when the time is available to me. Here is one of the many pictures we took of the fire, which can be seen in their entirety on my Flickr site (shortcut on the left).