

My Amazing Spaces Experience' With or without George Clarke Written by Phil Russell June 2015

(This is my own account and views)

You may be familiar with channel 4's T.V program George Clarke's Amazing Spaces which has millions of viewers, mainly for the weird and wacky or just the bizarre and quirky places that others have self-built. Well, I must confess I am one of those viewers too who actually went the extra country mile and thought we have something very special here, which we have built in our field. The concept of Len's Hut is to offer our guests something quite unique and special, so here is my condensed written journey and account of our experience.

January 2015 arrived, we filled in various forms and submitted relevant pictures of Len's Hut to "George Clarke's Amazing Spaces Shed of the year" 2015, along with 2519 other entrants to be precise. After what seemed like an eternity, one day out of the blue we received a phone call from Kirsten the assistant producer at Plum Pictures in London. After a good 20 minute Q&A session, they decided we had something special here and to our amazement we were informed that the hut was now in the final 84 units. Wow! I was asked if we would be free to attend the presentation awards in Maidstone, Kent, later that year if we were successful, well the answer was simply YES!

So in early March 2015 Steph, a production assistant from Plum Productions arrived on site with camera to carry out a "recce" as they call it in the industry, filming myself and Mandy. Well I must say this went on for around 4 hours plus you just don't realise the amount of time these film crews need to get that right shot of the shepherd's hut. Steph would ask myself and Mandy a question which would not be shown on the edited version for the show, and we would have to answer the question with the original question from Steph and then answer it in a seamless sentence whilst being filmed. That was not easy, but a few fluffed lines later it was a "wrap".

We had to sign a non-disclosure act which means that we could not tell anyone what was happening at the time, so that would not spoil the show. The filming rights of the hut were signed on our kitchen table to the production company. Then we just waited and waited for an update, I sent an e mail in for an update and the response was a standard no decision back yet from Channel 4 commission department.

It seemed like forever until we received the anticipated call from Kirsten at Plum productions informing us we have made it in to the non-televised 'semi-final' which is only 40 properties. Sean the cameraman arrived within days for more filming for the trailer of the TV show. Filming of the hut only, I was made aware that there is slim chance we may not make the Judges final 24 finalists for the TV screening and public vote in June 2015.

So we waited a couple of long weeks for the judge's final decision of the confirmed 7 alternative category finalists of which there would be only 4 properties in each category, our section was cabin-summerhouse.

You have probably guessed the ending by now; Len's hut was unsuccessful in reaching the overall final 24 entrants. The judges chose not to put us forward to the public vote, George Clarke didn't visit Len's Hut and bask in the glorious Somerset Spring sunshine and view the breath-taking views from the Hut. We had just missed out on our 5 minutes of fame on the TV, with this in mind and being it was a Friday night I sought sanctuary in a bottle of wine to drown my sorrows.

So there you have it in a hut shell (sorry about the pun) almost a day's filming and we just missed out on the biggie. It would not have mattered if we did not win the public vote, just the accolade that we had reached the starting line and we would be seen on TV. Len's Hut was shown briefly on the first episode on Channel 4 21/06/2015. If we had just made it on to the TV this story would have a different ending, no wine on that Friday but champagne and probably a two page story called how Len's Hut actually met, George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. To be continued, maybe, maybe not, who knows, I may be planning something already for next Time.

If you want to know any more information about our T.V journey just ask myself or Mandy.

