

Flights of Fantasy



Press Release

13th August 2009.

EMBARGOED until 10.00pm 26th August 2009.

Thrown to the Dragons!



Russell Bowlby, the founder of Kings Lynn children's playhouse company Flights of Fantasy is to appear on the **BBC's 'Dragons' Den'** television programme on Wednesday, 26th August.

Russell, who couldn't resist the opportunity to pitch his award-winning business to the Dragons – Peter Jones, Deborah Meaden, Duncan Bannatyne and Theo – filmed the programme in May, whilst preparing to exhibit at The RHS Chelsea Flower Show and says,

"We decided to take along our 'Tudor House', playhouse, which we thought would make good sense as not only is it one of our most popular houses, but also because it was destined to be the centrepiece of Flights of Fantasy's 2009 Chelsea Flower Show stand, which was scheduled to be unveiled a couple of days later."

All good in theory, but as is often the case, not in practice. Upon arriving at the Dragons' Den filming location, Russell and his team discovered the Tudor House wouldn't fit into the studio.

Russell explains,

"Regular viewers of Dragons' Den will know that ever-hopeful entrepreneurs manage to get all manner of products into the studio. However, our Tudor House was too high, so on the eve of filming, I spent the evening hacking the house's roof off with a hammer and screwdriver. I was 'escorted' off site at midnight, but sneaked back in on my own to finish the job! I just about had time to get back to my hotel, change and then return to the film set before the cameras started rolling..."

For now, Russell is keeping the outcome of his pitch a secret, but an unforeseen bonus was selling the Tudor House to Dragon and father of four, Peter Jones.

Russell says,

"One dragon, Duncan, very rude about the design of the Tudor House and Deborah Meaden identified three key problem areas – the price, the range and charmingly, me, but Peter Jones said he'd like to make an offer for the house and so we struck a very good deal. Although he did omit to tell us that getting it to his private lake was going to be like something out of the Dakar Rally!"

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Russell's Dragons' Den Diary

- 10th May, 2009
We arrived at the location – an old warehouse – at 6.00pm in the evening. Disaster struck when we discovered the Tudor House, our showpiece playhouse wouldn't fit into the building.
- 7pm-Midnight
5 hours spent hacking off Tudor House's roof with a hammer and a screwdriver. Aarrgh. The damage, the destruction...this house would normally sell for upwards of £20,000!
- Midnight hours – 5.00am
Asked to leave by the crew, but managed to sneak back in and finish the job.
- 11th May, 2009
Filming started at 9.30am in the morning. I missed the standing spot by miles, so had to start over again.
- Interrogated by the Dragons. Much rudeness from Duncan Bannatyne. Deborah Meaden cut straight to the core and said I was one of the three main problems with the proposal – well, there's nothing like telling it as it is!
- Did a one-off deal with Peter Jones – although he failed to tell us that to get the playhouse into location, we'd need to drag it across a swamp amongst other obstacles...
- Packed ourselves and the house – now in lots of pieces – up and travelled onto the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, where I had to enlist the help of two joiners to repair the hackings of a bad man.

Continued...

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More about Flights of Fantasy

'We do not stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.' Wise words indeed and it should come as no surprise that their author is none less than Benjamin Franklin. Indulging a child's imagination and creating the ultimate playground is perhaps one of the most precious gifts we can give our children.

Founded just 10 years ago by Russell Bowlby, Flights of Fantasy is a Norfolk-based company that brings the wildest, most imaginative and inventive aspects of child's play to life. Originally inspired by a quaint Tudor cottage that Russell designed and made for his son, Jamie, some 21 years ago, the Flights of Fantasy portfolio now includes cottages, castles and galleons. In addition, the company will create completely bespoke playhouses and also makes interior furniture with similarly fantastical themes.

Only the most superior quality and safest materials are used to create Flights of Fantasy playhouses. These include tough, weather-resistant marine ply, redwood, cedar and other hardwoods, which are, naturally, obtained from sustainable sources. All houses are built to EN1176-1:1998 Playground Equipment General Safety Regulations and are constructed to last – indeed, the company believes their houses are miniature heirlooms. A full maintenance, repair and renovation service can be supplied as can relocation of houses to new properties.

A worldwide client-list has included the RSPB's Newport reserve in South Wales, European royalty and numerous private commissions, which have come from as far afield as Latvia and Saudi Arabia. Flights of Fantasy's bespoke playhouses start at around £3500.00 for a small pirate galleon, increasing to between £8995.00-£27995.00 for Tudor houses, castles, cottages and large pirate ships. Retailers include Harrods in London and customers are welcome to visit the Flights of Fantasy design team and workshop in Norfolk by appointment.

- Dragons' Den will be screened at 9.00pm on 26th August on BBC2.

For all further media information, image and interview requests, please contact –

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