

A Real Virtual World



Ever since I moved to the new house, life had been a little boring. Don't get me wrong, the house itself was cool – brand new, only just built and way bigger than our last place. It's just that we were miles away from any of my friends now. I used to play out on the street with Lucas and Cody all the time but now they hung out together, while I was stuck in the middle of nowhere.

'Come on Jamie,' my mum kept saying. 'Go and explore. See what you can find, maybe you'll meet some new friends.' Huh! Not much chance of that. Our house is one of the first to be finished on this new estate. Looking out of my bedroom window, I can see diggers and a few big metal containers but apart from that just empty, muddy fields.

It's not all bad though because I have been able to spend loads more time building new worlds on my tablet computer. Before we moved, I wasn't that good at it. Now I'm practising all the time, I can create some really original stuff. I'm starting a new world today, beginning with the best house I've ever designed.

Something really weird has happened this morning. Last night, I made a start on that new world. I was determined to make a great job of it, to show Lucas and Cody when I next saw them, so I began carefully with all the foundations I needed. After flattening some land, I dug trenches for where all the walls needed to be built on this amazing new house I had planned. It had taken me ages to find the right spot, exploring in the virtual world – the battery almost died on the tablet and I had to plug it in to charge it up.

Anyway, the strange thing is when I looked out of my window today across our back garden, the trenches were there. I mean – outside, for real! I wasn't sure at first, I thought I was being ridiculous and imagining it. However, I dashed to get the

tablet and loaded up my world. Holding it up to compare side by side, I was sure those trenches that had appeared outside beyond our garden fence looked exactly like those I'd designed myself.

I figured there was only one thing for it – I needed to keep building and see what happened.

It has happened again! This time, I know it's true! I built the first rows of bricks for the house on my tablet and deliberately chose some really obscure colours. Just to make absolutely certain, I changed my design too and dug out the space for a swimming pool in the space at the side. You know what? There it was this morning! Outside my window, behind the far edge of our garden: same bricks with the same swirling pattern of orange and blue, in the same shape as my virtual house on the tablet. To the right, a great hole big enough for a swimming pool! It's amazing – my virtual world is becoming real.

Maybe when it's finished, I can use it as my own personal hide-out. Like the biggest, best den ever. Imagine what Lucas and Cody will say when they come over to visit. I can't wait to keep building...

Early this morning, there was a knock on the door. This was before I'd even had chance to check on the progress of my real virtual house behind the garden. Hoping to see the beginning of my newest features, sad and disappointed I went to open the door.

Tall, with round glasses and wearing a yellow builder's hat and fluorescent yellow jacket, a serious-looking man stood at our doorstep as Mum and I arrived to answer the door together. There was some kind of Internet connection problem, he was explaining to my mum, looking occasionally down at me. Nothing to worry about and no-one to blame. Urgently needing to be fixed though he said; the Wi-Fi signal had been crossed and a device traced to our house had been accidentally saving files to their computer server, over-writing existing plans. I blushed.

Apparently, the builders hadn't thought anything of it when they first dug new trenches. They had been a bit bewildered when putting in the brightly coloured bricks and digging out the swimming pool, but suspicion had only really been aroused today when they viewed the plans for a shark-infested moat around the house, a drawbridge and watchtower!

Steve Johnson; 2015

