

PROJECT PROFILE



Secret War Time Tunnels, Dover



An image from the main show.
The silhouette projection is particularly effective.

Operation Dynamo: Rescue from Dunkirk

On 10 June 2011, English Heritage opened the doors to their new attraction "Operation Dynamo: Rescue from Dunkirk". The network of Secret Wartime Tunnels stretches 60m in length, twenty-six metres deep underground, behind the White Cliffs of Dover. Audio-visual technology is used throughout the eight zones to re-create the drama of the Dunkirk evacuation.

The highlight of the attraction is in "Rescue from Dunkirk, Casemate Z", where state of the art special effects have been used to dramatically present the events of 26 May to 4 June 1940. Twenty-three projectors create giant images that run the entire length of the space augmented by spectacular lighting effects. German fighter planes appear to zoom down the entire length of the tunnel immersing visitors in the action on the Dunkirk beaches.

The designer and producer of the new experience was Kvorning Design and Communication of Denmark. Electrosonic was the AV systems integrator on this project, working with Kvorning from the initial design

stage, to help validate design ideas, until completion. Groups of up to 30 people are taken through eight zones containing original news-reels and recordings, two years of painstaking research, testimonies from veterans of both the beaches and the tunnels, and state-of-the-art special effects to deliver a vivid account of what Sir Winston Churchill called a "miracle of deliverance".

Zones one to five use a pulsed visitor flow system, allowing each group to experience each show in succession. At the end of each presentation "traffic lights" indicate that it is time to move on to the next section of the attraction. Throughout the attraction caption panels are in English, French and German, and where voice commentary is used, induction loops are fitted for the hard of hearing.

The show starts at the 'War Begins' waiting area, where every nine minutes a Sergeant Majorly voice instructs the group to move onto the "War Begins Cinema".



This space is themed as an underground briefing room complete with mock 16mm projector and blackboard. Of course the film is actually shown electronically, and describes the events leading to war.

Visitors leave the cinema and pass through “corridor” tunnels to a space where a live presenter gives orientation information and draws attention to the graffiti on the tunnel walls.

The “Battle of France” presentation follows in a large space themed as an underground war room. It describes the battles in France that led up to the need for evacuation. Two walls of the space show archive footage from the battle, and animated graphics are projected onto a low table in the centre of the room. These reinforce the commentary by illustrating, for example, the balance of forces and the troop movements.

The Battle of France table is in the form of a low truncated pyramid, images are predominantly projected onto the table surface, however, at the end of the presentation as crisis mounts and reaches its peak, images “spill over” the table to fill the pyramid sides.

The highlight of the visit is in “Rescue from Dunkirk Casemate Z” (zone 5) where the events of 26 May to 4 June 1940 are presented in dramatic fashion. The story of the evacuation is narrated by Kenneth Cranham,

accompanied by the voices of veterans of the time. Twenty three projectors project one long giant image along the entire length of the space, augmented by spectacular lighting effects.

Some of the projected sequences are particularly effective. Against a huge background of ships and small boats, fighter planes seem to zoom down the entire length of the tunnel and in another sequence silhouette photography gives an eerie feeling that the people who were planning the evacuation from within the tunnels are still present.

Visitors leave the main show for free circulation areas that show how the tunnels were used from the summer of 1940 onwards, especially in respect of the Battle of Britain.



Images spilling off the table in the Battle of France presentation space.