

# PROJECT PROFILE



## Vindolanda & Roman Army Museum

### AV Techniques used to Show Archaeologists Live at Work

The Vindolanda Trust's two tourist attractions, 'The Roman Army Museum' and 'The Roman Vindolanda Fort and Museum', deployed audio-visual technology to dramatically demonstrate Roman life on the edge of the empire 2000 years ago. Electrosonic was the AV Systems Integrator for the exhibition displays, under contract of Edinburgh-based exhibition designer Studio MB. Electrosonic continues to support the Trust, providing a service contract, which includes preventative maintenance, repairs and 24/7 technical support across both sites.

The two museums make excellent use of the Trust's archaeological discoveries near Hadrian's Wall to bring Roman times to life. AV techniques are used sparingly,



An Image from the "World of Experience" Display

but to great effect, showing archaeologists live at work, uncovering Roman artefacts, and re-telling the story of daily life in Roman times.

The re-development of the project was an initiative of the Vindolanda Trust. Fiona Watson, Vindolanda's Finance and Information Officer, who was heavily involved with the project, said "We are very impressed with the quality and standard of the work throughout. Electrosonic worked effectively and efficiently as part of the Studio MB team and we are happy with the service they provided and the work they completed."

The Roman Army Museum uses a range of audio-visual technology, including a large Pepper's Ghost display and



a 3D film theatre, to help visitors step into the shoes of a Roman soldier and experience life on the front line of Emperor Hadrian's formidable British frontier.

Upon entering the Roman Army Museum, visitors are met by a Roman soldier surveying a "map table", which uses a Casio XJA240 compact ceiling mounted projector to graphically demonstrate how the Roman Empire expanded and then contracted over a period of hundreds of years. The projector's compact form means that it is unobtrusive to visitors.

The 'Recruitment Exhibit' uses a large Pepper's Ghost display to effectively bring to life the harsh reality of being in the Roman army. A rather terrifying 'Recruiting Centurion' comes to life, standing in his field tent, sizing visitors up to see if they are fit for service. Various factors such as the confined space and the changing air pressure in the space made having the Pepper's Ghost display interact with the physical set a challenge. The product, AV hardware and setwork were perfectly coordinated and aligned and a custom silvered mirror was used to achieve image stability and a realistic effect in the space.

The 'Wall Exhibit', dedicated to Hadrian himself, includes a massive mural of truly monumental proportions. Leading on from the side exhibit, which highlights the Roman's successful invasion and occupation of Britain, is the 3D film theatre. The film gives an aerial view of the 'Wall' as it is today, and then transports you back nearly 2000 years to Roman times for a truly memorable time travel experience.

The Vindolanda museum uses the latest interpretation techniques and displays to tell a very old and very interesting Roman story. Visitors have the opportunity to explore the archaeological site of Hadrian's Wall and see live archaeology taking place.

One exhibit explains the excavation process, which is supported by a film where participants explain what they are doing. Another, the 'Professional Soldiers' exhibit, uses a 46-inch LCD screen to help interpret the museum's archaeological collections.

On loan from the British Museum, the 'Writing Tablets' are Britain's oldest surviving handwritten documents and are considered to be one of the most important Roman finds in Britain. Visitors can watch a short introductory film which explains how the tablets were found.

In order to conserve the 'Tablets', they are stored in a specially designed, double-sided, sealed display case. A very low 'conservation' light is installed in the display case to help protect the tablets from decay.

Both sides of the display case have an accompanying commentary which is played through directional ceiling loudspeakers to avoid sound spill. Directly above each set of tablets is a 'floating' image which presents larger images and translations. The floating effect is achieved by Pepper's Ghost technique, with the actual images being displayed on small LCD panels.