



Jemima Puddleduck encounters a 'gentleman'

Take a favourite childrens authoress and painter, some of England's most beautiful scenery and an award-winning lighting designer, and the resulting combination is nothing short of magical.

Richard Humphries reports

A Journey With Nursery Friends

Deep inside the mind of every adult there is a secret place where childhood lives for ever. In one special part, for countless thousands of grown-ups, hide long-neglected nursery characters such as Peter Rabbit and Squirrel Nutkin.

If they are destined to live again, it is usually through the eyes and ears of your own children and grandchildren, as they discover for themselves the delightful world created by author and artist Beatrix Potter. But if you were to think hard – really hard – about your own bedtime-story wanderings through England's Lake District, where Beatrix set her stories, just what images would you conjure up?

That was the starting point for the design team in setting the mood for the recently-opened World of Beatrix Potter exhibition. Housed in a former stone-built boat building workshop at Crag Brow, in the centre of Bowness-on-Windermere, it is just across the lake from Sawrey, where the childrens authoress lived, wrote and painted.

This is a majestic landscape of ancient, craggy mountains, bottomless dark lakes, and shafts of pale light streaming between low-scudding clouds. More than anywhere, it is watercolour country, which is why Beatrix Potter was so able to evoke her homeland in her art. It is also the undoubted 'feel' which comes across in the lighting design of the exhibition, where low-voltage lighting and Strand's Premiere® controls combine to recreate the magical landscape of the books.

The exhibition tour begins with a split-screen cinema briefing to put Beatrix Potter in her historical context – why, where and when she wrote the stories which were to capture the imagination of children around the world.

A door opens, and visitors young and old are cast back to an ageless scenic landscape, following a woodland trail introduced by Peter Rabbit and meeting along the way all the Beatrix Potter favourites. The effect created by the lighting is magical – just the way the better moments of childhood used to be.

Simon Needle, of installation contractors Electrolite explained, 'The idea is that the exhibition is split into a