**At the End of History: Audio Description Transcript**

# **Stop 1A: Welcome and how to get to the At the End of History exhibition via the stairs**

Hello and welcome to this audio description guide to At the End of History, an exhibition and Virtual Reality experience at Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery. This guide has been produced by Ruth Garde from the Accentuate team at Screen South, in collaboration with Harshadha Balasubramanian.

There are 10 stops in this guide, ranging from around 3 to 5 minutes long. This stop will help you navigate to the entrance of the exhibition from the Visitor Information Desk, using the stairs to get to the second floor. Stop 1B will navigate to the exhibition entrance using the lift - which has no tactile buttons or voice announcement system. To skip to information about the exhibition itself, go to stop 2, which is just inside the glass entrance doors to the At the End of History exhibition.

In stops 3 - 10 I will talk about some of the key objects in the exhibition, combined with visual descriptions of those objects.

We begin in the museum reception, where the flooring is a light-ish wood-effect laminate. To the left of the Visitor Information Desk there is a set of glass double doors, which are permanently open. Go through these doors to enter a roughly square-shaped room, facing a large square display of model elephants and human figures that are standing or on horseback, behind a transparent perspex screen on a white base. Follow this display round to the right, keeping the model display on your left. After a few steps, turn to the right, with the model display at your back. Go straight ahead into the wide, corridor-like space which has displays on each side. This corridor ends in open wooden double doors. At these doors, the floor changes to a light grey, smooth carpet.

Go through the doors and turn left. In front of you is a short corridor-like space, which you pass through via two light grey doors that are permanently open. After the second doorway the carpet becomes darker grey and ribbed. Continue heading straight towards a set of glass doors at the end of the corridor. On your right hand side you will soon pass a set of stairs heading up to the first floor.

To take the stairs, follow the round fixed metal handrail on the right side of the staircase. The handrail is continuous. Follow it up two flights of sixteen stairs to the second floor, then go straight ahead through the set of double grey doors which are permanently open. In this space there is another set of stairs ahead of you leading down, which you should not follow. To the right of those stairs is a very tall display case with a taxidermied polar bear standing on its hind legs. Turn to your left, where you will now be facing a set of permanently open double wooden doors.

Pass through these wooden double doors and immediately turn right, through a pair of sliding glass double doors that open automatically. Here the temperature is cooler and the light level reduces significantly.

In front of you is a wall of display cases. Turn left into the room, keeping the wall of display cases on your right. Ahead of you, at more or less the same point that the display cases end, there is a square, brown information panel, about 80 cm wide and mounted on a stand about a metre from the ground. Bear left at this panel, while following the line of the carpet on your right-hand side, where it meets a rough textured flooring. After a few short steps there is a fixed metal handrail about a metre off the ground. This handrail marks the beginning of a gentle ramp down that takes you to the exhibition entrance. With that handrail on your right-hand side, take a few side steps to the left, which will bring you to an identical handrail on the left side of the ramp.

Beside this railing there is a small video screen with a number of dark blue chairs placed in front of it. Pause here for the short exhibition onboarding video, which will be playing in a loop. Please note that there is also a slender, silver-grey pillar nearby, between the top of the ramp and the chairs.

Once you are ready, return to the handrail to follow the ramp down to the exhibition entrance, which will be on your right-hand side at the end of the ramp. A set of glass doors will open automatically towards you.

This is the end of Stop 1A. Listen to stop 2 just inside the exhibition entrance.

# **Stop 1B: Welcome and how to get to the At the End of History exhibition via the lift**

Hello and welcome to this audio description guide to At the End of History, an exhibition and Virtual Reality experience at Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery. This guide has been produced by Ruth Garde from the Accentuate team at Screen South, in collaboration with Harshadha Balasubramanian.

There are 10 stops in this guide, ranging from around 3 to 5 minutes long. This stop, 1B, will help you navigate to the exhibition entrance on the second floor using the lift - which has no tactile buttons or voice announcement system. To skip to information about the exhibition itself, go to stop 2, which is just inside the glass entrance doors to the At the End of History exhibition.

In stops 3 - 10 I will talk about some of the key objects in the exhibition, combined with visual descriptions of those objects.

We begin in the museum reception, where the flooring is a light-ish wood-effect laminate. To the left of the Visitor Information Desk there is a set of glass double doors, which are permanently open. Pass through these doors to enter a roughly square-shaped room, facing a large square display of model elephants and human figures that are standing or on horseback, behind a transparent perspex screen on a white base. Follow this display round to the right, keeping the display on your left. Turn to the right, with the model display at your back. Go straight ahead into the wide, corridor-like space which has displays on each side. This corridor ends in open wooden double doors. At these doors, the floor changes to a light grey, smooth carpet.

Go through the doors and turn left. In front of you is a short corridor-like space, which you pass through via two light grey doors that are permanently open. After the second doorway the carpet becomes darker grey and ribbed. Continue straight towards a set of glass doors at the end of the corridor.

On your right hand side you will pass a set of stairs heading up to the first floor. Pause at the bottom of this staircase and turn to your right. You are now facing the lift.

To call the lift, press the square button (approximately 3cm square), which is on the right side of the lift on its smooth metal frame, about 1.5 m from the floor. Once inside the lift, immediately on your left and above a round, fixed metal handrail, there is a panel with two columns of four buttons. Press the top button on the first column. Exit the lift through the same side you entered.

Outside the lift, on your left-hand side, there is soft leafy foliage in a planter a bit more than a metre off the ground. Turn left past the plant and go straight down the pale grey carpeted corridor, which has a white brick wall with information panels on your right, and a fixed grey handrail around a metre from the ground on your left. Pass through the open double grey doors ahead of you.

In this space, in front of you there is another set of stairs leading down, which you should not follow. To the right of those stairs is a very tall display case with a taxidermied polar bear standing on its hind legs. Turn left where you will now be facing a set of wooden double doors that are permanently open.

Pass through these wooden double doors and immediately turn right, through a pair of sliding glass double doors that open automatically. As you pass through these, the temperature cools and the light level reduces significantly.

In front of you is a wall of display cases. Turn left into the room, keeping the wall of display cases on your right. Ahead of you, at more or less the same point that the display cases end, there is a square, brown information panel, about 80 cm wide and mounted on a stand about a metre from the ground. Bear left of this panel, following the line of the carpet on your right-hand side, where it meets a rough textured flooring. Just ahead there is a fixed metal handrail about a metre off the ground. This handrail marks the beginning of a gentle ramp that will take you down to the exhibition entrance. With that handrail on your right-hand side, move to your left, which will bring you to an identical handrail on the left side of the ramp. Beside this railing there is a small video screen with a number of dark blue chairs placed in front of it. Pause here for the short exhibition onboarding video, which will be playing in a loop. Please note that there is also a slender, silvery-grey pillar nearby, between the top of the ramp and the chairs.

Once you are ready, return to the handrail to follow the gentle ramp down to the exhibition entrance. It will be on your right-hand side at the end of the ramp, where a set of glass doors will open automatically away from you.

This is the end of Stop 1 B. Listen to stop 2 just inside the exhibition entrance.

# **Stop 2: Introduction to At the End of History**

At the End of History is an exhibition and an interactive Virtual Reality experience exploring how we engage with our history and objects. Who owns them? How do we use them? And what stories and objects do we value?

You are now in an irregular square-shaped space with three, individual floor to ceiling display cases: one large rectangular case stands to your right, which will be described in stops 3 and 4, another large rectangular case is straight ahead of you at the back of the space, which will be described in stops 5 and 6; and a smaller irregularly shaped case to your left, which will be described in stop 7. Large print guides and Easy Read guides are available in clear plastic holders mounted on the wall to the left side of this irregularly shaped case.

The lighting is low, the white ceiling is about 2.5 m high, and the carpet is dark blue.

Apart from the three display cases in this room, the exhibition also includes a collage, which will be described in stop 8, and a painting that will be described in stop 9. Stop 10 introduces the virtual reality experience, where there are chairs available to sit down. The collage, painting and Virtual Reality elements are reached via a corridor-type space that opens between the display case on your right and the display case ahead of you.

Entering this exhibition you have stepped through a portal to the near future where museum objects have become the ammunition in a conflict. Our museums are a battleground, and our history has been defaced or destroyed, or else stolen and taken into private collections to be owned or censored.

What is left behind is that which is least valued by society - objects and stories of disability.

Currently, disabled people’s lives and stories are underrepresented in museums. But in a world where disability objects are the last surviving artefacts; to connect the public to their past, does this increase their value? Does it even make them priceless? And does seeing the world only through the lens of disability change our view as a whole?

You are not involved in the fight, though. Instead, you are charged with transporting those objects and deciding what to do with the stories that you will be taking care of.

This is the end of Stop 2. To begin stop 3, with your back to the entrance doors, head towards the display case against the wall to your right.

# **Stop 3: Hard Work and Skill part one**

This floor to ceiling display case features stories of two swimmers, Bill Stein and Gertrude Ederle, who successfully swam the English Channel. This case contains objects on plinths, a black flat television screen mounted on the back of the case on the right-hand side, and several portrait-shaped panels mounted on the white back wall of the case, to the left of the TV screen. The larger middle panel has printed text and images connected to channel swimming - but these are obscured by the words ‘without us’ scrawled across it in purple and pink spray paint, all in capital letters.

We begin facing the right-hand side of the case, where the flat screen TV - about 50 cm wide and 40 cm high - is showing a 35 second looped film of sepia toned archive footage. It features Gertrude ‘Trudy’ Ederle, a successful swimmer born in the USA to German immigrant parents. At the 1924 Paris Olympics she took home three medals; A gold medal for the 4 x 100m freestyle relay, and two bronze medals for the 100m and the 400m Freestyle.

Most notably, though, she is recorded as the first woman to successfully swim the channel solo on August 6th, 1926. She crossed from France to England, landing at Kingsdown near Dover, after 14 hours and 34 minutes - a record time.

Gertrude was deaf from childhood and following the end of her swimming career she went on to teach deaf children to swim.

The film footage is low-resolution, with faint horizontal lines suggesting analogue video distortion. In the footage Gertrude, a white woman in her twenties with short, wavy hair, is filmed laughing, smiling and talking, sometimes looking straight at the camera with a cheerful expression. In the initial clips she is outdoors in her swimsuit, while in the later clips she is dressed formally in a suit jacket, shirt and tie, with her short bobbed hair smartly smoothed. Her infectious smile radiates warm energy.

Underneath the tv screen is a glass topped table with a collection of objects celebrating Gertrude’s achievements. At the back left corner of the table is a black and white photo of Gertrude swimming outdoors, while at the back right corner is a black and white photo of her sitting at a table in her swimsuit. Between the photos there is a copy of the magazine “Health and Strength” from August 21st, 1926, which shows a photo of Gertrude next to Ishak Helmy, the first Egyptian person to swim the Channel.

At the front of the table lie two round commemorative medallions from the Channel Swimming Association. The one on the left is copper coloured and about the size of a milk bottle lid. The one on the right is silver and about the size of a two-pound coin. Between them, mounted upright on a white square, is a bronze coloured, shield-shaped medal hanging from a red, white and blue striped ribbon from The Mayors Committee of the City of New York. Right at the front of the case, leaning against the glass table, are enlarged printed reproductions of Gertrude’s medals.

This is the end of stop 3. To listen to stop 4, move to face the far-left side of the case.

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# **Stop 4: Hard Work and Skill, part 2**

Moving to face the far-left side of the case, you are now in front of Bill Stein’s trophies and swimming trunks. William ‘Bill’ Stein was a disabled Scottish endurance swimmer. He attempted to swim the channel in 1978, but was prevented by the challenging conditions. He struggled so hard against currents and weather he was awarded the Channel Swimming Association’s “Greatest Feat of Endurance” Trophy. The regal looking trophy on a plinth to the left of the swimming trunks stands 24cm high, a curvaceous silver cup on a round, black base. The cup has two ornate handles, one on each side, shaped like stylized animal heads - reminiscent of panthers - that are bearing their teeth. The heads form the top part of the handles, curving down elegantly to attach to the body of the cup, which is polished, but is tarnished in places. The cup is engraved with text commemorating Stein’s achievement.

In 1979, Stein successfully completed a solo channel swim in 16 hours and 9 minutes. This led to him being the first recipient of the Channel Swimming Association’s “Special Award to an Impaired Swimmer” trophy, then called the “Audenaerde Handicap Trophy.” This silver trophy, on the lower plinth to the right of the swimming trunks, stands 36cm high - half as tall again as the Endurance trophy. Its two long handles, one on each side, curl outward in elegant spirals at the top before sweeping down to join the body of the cup. It is slender and graceful, with a long stem between the cup and the round, black base.

Fewer than 2,000 people have successfully crossed the English Channel by swimming it solo. This is one of the world’s great challenges, like climbing Mount Everest. Many disabled swimmers count their names among those to have achieved this.

Bill Stein’s cotton swimming trunks from the 1970s are displayed on a mannequin’s torso on a taller plinth between his trophies. He wore these on all his channel swims. The fabric is patterned with a bold, repeating geometric design: small dark navy-blue shapes arranged in a cross-like or star-like pattern, set against a light, cream-coloured background.

The trunks are short - they would end at the top of the thighs. The drawstring waist is cream-coloured with knotted ends, hanging loosely on the waistband. The material is showing some wear and tear - which is unsurprising, given the trunks are likely nearly 50 years old!

Disabled athletes can often be presented as ‘superhuman’ and held up as inspirational. There is usually a focus on how they ‘overcame’ their perceived deficits, rather than highlighting and celebrating their achievements in their own right.

Disabled athletes can also be used to shame other disabled people, by suggesting that if one individual can achieve it, so can anyone.

This is the end of stop 4. To listen to stop 5, turn to your left and head to the large rectangular floor to ceiling case at the back of the room.

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# **Stop 5: Necessity and Opportunity part 1**

No two life experiences of disabled people will ever be the same. Factors like socio-economic class, race, or levels of support from family, friends, doctors and society as a whole, can play a huge role in their lives and successes.

In this display case we present two stories of disability from Dover’s collection.

Facing the right side of the case, there is an ornate wooden desk which has several objects and two A4 purple portrait-shaped text panels displayed on it. In front of the desk is an even more ornate wooden high-backed chair with an upholstered seat in dark velvety fabric.

Behind the desk and chair, mounted on the back wall of the case, is a large, landscape-shaped panel with faint reproductions of printed text and images, overlaid with the word ‘nothing’ scrawled across it in purple and pink spray paint, all in capital letters.

In the back right-hand corner of the writing desk is an open book, propped up by a second smaller closed book that is lying horizontally, its spine showing the title, *Things of the Sea Coast*. These two works were published by Anne Pratt, a botanical illustrator and author from Strood in Kent. Anne was described as a ‘sickly child’, with her symptoms of joint pain and immobility likely showing either rheumatic fever or complications of rheumatoid arthritis. Her parents and family were incredibly supportive, paying for schooling at a time when it was non-compulsory, where she was encouraged with her drawing and botany. Her siblings would often gather specimens for her to draw when she couldn’t get out.

The open book, measuring about 21 cm in height x 29 cm wide while open, is titled *Wild Flowers of the Year.* The page on the left shows a botanical illustration of two plants with their leaves, fruits, flowers, and seeds drawn in detail. On the bottom half of the page is a sprig of holly, whose leaves are dark green, glossy, and with sharp, spiny edges. Bright red berries are shown below the branch. Smaller drawings on the right side of the holly branch highlight the flower, seeds, and cross-sections of the fruit.

On the top half of the same page is an illustration of leaves of the Ash tree, which are long and slender, with several pointed leaflets growing in pairs along a central stem. Clusters of brown, winged seeds hang down, shaped like narrow ovals. Additional small drawings show twigs, buds, flowers, and seed pods.

In front of the books, displayed on a white fabric rectangle, is a small, pretty selection of dried pressed flowers and ferns.

Anne’s work shows tremendous attention to detail, combining scientific understanding and folk knowledge. She discussed the use of the flowers in art and poetry to demonstrate the beauty and importance of flowers beyond purely scientific description. Her work was very popular and she became one of the most successful botanical authors and illustrators of the mid-19th century. At the time, botany was seen as an acceptable thing for women to do; however, with increasing oversight from the mostly male scientific community, Anne’s popularity was crowded out.

To the left of Anne’s books on the desk is a Victorian writing set. It is a rectangular wooden box in a compact size - about 30 cm long, 20 cm wide and 20 cm deep. The wood is deep brown and glossy and is fitted with a sturdy black handle on the top. There are three wooden-handled pens with metal nibs lying on the lid in front of the handle, and a metal compass lying behind it. There is also a wooden ruler lying on the lid’s right hand side .

The box is open to reveal a sliding drawer at the front, which is lined with white padded fabric. Inside this drawer is an assortment of writing and drawing instruments in different materials like metal or wood, nestled in individual slots.

This is the end of stop 5. To listen to stop 6, move to face the left-hand side of this case.

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# **Stop 6: Necessity and Opportunity part 2**

In the 19th century, at a time when the cost of living was high, pay was low, and working people were struggling, many turned to criminal activities, such as smuggling. One such smuggler was James Bushell, a member of the Aldington Gang, who ran smuggling operations on the Southeast Coast from Deal to Hastings.

On one ill-fated occasion in July 1826, the Aldington Gang attempted to bring in smuggled alcohol at Dover beach. A member of the gang killed Richard Morgan, a midshipman of the Navy’s anti-smuggling force. This murder increased pressure on the gang. Later in 1826 another firefight took place between Customs and the gang, which resulted in James Bushell having his leg amputated after a gunshot wound.

As you are facing the left hand side of this case there is a gun displayed, lying balanced horizontally, with the muzzle facing right, across two large, full white sacks, with two wooden barrels stacked behind the gun and a third barrel in front of it. This is a Brown Bess musket, which belonged to a local Customs house - possibly in Deal, near the area where James Bushell’s gang operated. The Brown Bess had been standard military issue from the early 18th to the mid-19th century. Almost a metre and a half long, the gun is made of a smooth, rich red brown wood, with a lightly polished sheen.

At the left end of the case, the rear end of the musket - called the stock - is broad and flat with a brass plate on the end, designed to be braced against the shoulder when fired. Moving rightwards from the stock, there is a firing mechanism made up of interlocking, curved steel parts called the flintlock. The brass trigger is on the underside of the gun beneath the flintlock.

The gun’s long barrel - which is partially obscured by a purple text panel - has a metal ramrod secured beneath it, used for loading gunpowder and shot into the brass muzzle.

Lying horizontally across the gun’s muzzle and the white sack, and partly supported on an upturned wooden box, is a Customs issue sword stick. At first glance its outer shaft looks like a slender, pale wooden walking cane. But on the right of this wooden shaft is a thin metal blade, which would fit neatly into the hollow body of the cane when sheathed. It’s narrow and pointed, designed for thrusting into barrels and sacks to check for smuggled goods.

This is the end of stop 6. To listen to stop 7, turn around, and with the Brown Bess gun behind you, make your way to the third display case, which will be in front of you on your right. You will pass a grey door on your right-hand side, which is for museum staff only.

# **Stop 7: Journey’s End**

As you are facing this display case, there is a large purple text panel mounted on an easel on the right-hand side. Mounted on the white back wall of the case is a large portrait-shaped panel, which has faint reproductions of printed text and images, overlaid with the words ‘there is’ scrawled across it in purple and pink spray paint, all in capital letters.

A pilgrimage is a journey of spiritual or religious significance, and a person who goes on a pilgrimage is called a pilgrim. In the medieval period Dover was a travel hub for Christian pilgrims. Some were travelling from the continent to make their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Others were making their way across to the continent to take pilgrimages to Spain, France and Italy, or even as far as Jerusalem.

Standing on a white rectangular plinth at the front of the case there is a medieval lead-pewter Pilgrim’s badge, which was found in Stonar, near Sandwich. It is typical of the mass-produced badges that were sold on pilgrimage routes and destinations. They are the medieval Christian equivalent of the keyrings in the gift shop, like at our museum!

The badge is flat, made of dark, aged metal, and measures 9.5cm by 6cm - small enough to be very portable for a travelling pilgrim.

The badge is shaped like a crucifix, with a central human figure extending its arms horizontally, representing Christ on the cross. Surrounding the upper part of the figure is a large circular halo or arch, forming an open ring behind the arms and head.

At the very top of the halo, there's a square-shaped loop, which may have been used to attach the badge to clothing or a pilgrim’s hat. Near the base of the central figure are two smaller human figures, one on each side. Beneath, the figure to our left is kneeling, as if in worship; to our right, the figure is standing with a bent leg, as if approaching Christ. The figures are rough and simplified rather than lifelike, which is typical of art of the medieval period. There is an enlarged print reproduction of the badge on the front of the plinth, next to a purple text panel of the same size.

There were so many designs of the pilgrim's badge, often reflecting the churches, shrines and saints visited. How did these reflect the individuality of the pilgrim? Would disabled people have had favourite saints or shrines? Did these collections reflect something of the personality of the pilgrim?

To the left of the badge, on a lower white rectangular plinth, is a clay drinking flask that would have been used by a pilgrim. From its round base the body of the flask widens to a bulbous middle before tapering to a tall neck with a small round opening at the top. At the shoulders and body of the flask are two small, lumpy protrusions on either side, which would have been used by pilgrims to loop straps through to carry the flask on their belts. Its glaze is mid-brown, decorated with creamy marbling patterns.

Ideas of disability in medieval Britain were complicated.

Some may have seen it as their Christian duty to care for those with different impairments, leading to the establishment of many religious hospitals - especially to care for pilgrims. Dover’s Maison Dieu was initially built for this purpose.

Others believed ‘suffering’ was holy and that the perceived struggles of disabled people in this life would lead to greater reward in the next. There are also accounts of disabled people undertaking lengthy pilgrimages in search of a ‘cure’ for their conditions or impairments.

These pilgrimages reflect something positive that is still true today. Disabled people can take themselves on remarkable journeys.

This is the end of stop 7. To listen to stop 8, turn around and make your way towards the corridor-like space between the two other display cases in this room.

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# **Stop 8: About Us**

With the display cases behind you, you are now facing the corridor space. Mounted on the grey-painted brick wall immediately on your left-hand side is a large, lively collage, around 1.5 meters square. This collage, called **‘**About us’, celebrates the contributions of the co-producers who helped make “At the End of History”.

Co-production is the process of collaborating as a group of peers and equals to make decisions, produce pieces of work, and build services. For this exhibition we worked with a whole community of disabled people from Dover District and Folkestone to ensure their voices were represented, and they had a part in decision making.

This collage represents the effort and energy of our co-producers by exploring their words and communication. Please feel free to touch it.

The collage is a vivid patchwork of magazine and newspaper cuttings, photographs, and illustrations, all layered on top of each other. The surface is noisy with headlines, slogans, and fragments of text.

Across the entire piece, in big, rough strokes of pink spray paint, the words “ABOUT US” have been scrawled. These letters dominate the board, but the text and image clippings underneath still peek through. Five bright round buttons in blue, light pink, dark pink, yellow, and green are dotted across the middle and lower half of the collage. These buttons are connected by a tactile raised ‘bump’ under the collage’s surface. This raised bump has tactile material running along its length: in some places there are passages of braille, and in others there are roughly woven strips of hessian. Each of the buttons can be pressed, which triggers audio clips that relate to texts on the collage and around the gallery.

Toward the top left, are the words “GADGETS and EQUIPMENT = INDEPENDENCE” alongside cut-out pictures of various assistive objects, such as a wheelchair controller unit and a sock aid. In the centre of the top edge is a headline that reads, “This is not a sob story,” credited to co-producer Adella Peyton.

In the middle of the collage, colourful ransom-note style letters spell out the words “ASSISTANCE” and “EMOTIONAL” with a cut out image of a dog between them. Just below the centre, the phrase “FORGET ME NOT” is angled across the surface, next to a cut out image of a man sitting in a wheelchair.

Over to the top right is a partially obscured poem on artificially aged paper in a font that mimics handwriting of an age gone by, entitled “The Good Ol’ Disabled Days of Dover, by Mark Cridland, 2025.” Near it is a cut out of a barbie-type doll in a striped swimsuit, and a striking green, mask-like face with the word “SMUGGLING” printed underneath it.

Moving down to the bottom, the left corner declares “MUSEUMS CHANGE LIVES” and “TELL THE STORY” in bold type, surrounded by scraps of text including the phrase, “We will not be left behind”. In the bottom centre, a magazine clipping reads “MUSEUM appoints challenging disabled working-class Director,” with an image of a unicorn alongside it. Just below it, an image of a white, blonde haired woman with glasses carries the slogan, “Because we’re worth it.”

This is the end of stop 8. To listen to stop 9, turn around to face the painting on the wall directly opposite the collage. The wall is between two doorways, both of which take you into the final room of the exhibition - which will be described in stop 10.

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# **Stop 9: Bartholomew Fair**

With your back to the collage, you are now facing a vivid landscape-oriented painting called Bartholomew Fair by Benjamin Robert Haydon, measuring 85cm x 112cm. It depicts the celebration on St Bartholomew’s Day (August 24th) in London. It is known as a Charter Fair, as it was started by Royal instructions – a Charter – by King Henry I in 1133, to fund The Priory of St Bartholomew.

It shows a lively and chaotic street scene from the 18th or early 19th century. On the left of the painting, crowds gather outside a pub building with children playing and performers entertaining. In the centre, soldiers parade with banners while townsfolk press around them. On the right, vendors sell goods, drinkers spill from taverns, and small groups gamble or carouse. The whole scene is lively, noisy, and chaotic, capturing the energy of a festival.

The majority of the people in the crowds are white.

From the pub on the left a smiling woman leans out of an upper window, pouring beer from her tankard onto the people gathered below - a crowd of adults watching two gurning performers.

At the centre, a group of soldiers in bright red uniforms marches proudly, surrounded by townspeople of all kinds—men, women, and children—some celebrating, others watching with curiosity. Street sellers, a beggar, musicians, and performers fill the crowd with noise and excitement. In the background, a church spire rises above the rooftops, while a tight rope walker balances on a rope in the middle distance.

On the right side there is another pub with an open window at floor level showing a crowd of people enjoying themselves - men playing cards, a man and a woman embracing, another woman apparently in the act of clubbing a man on the head with a jug, and a vomiting drunkard almost spilling out of the window. Signs on the pub wall advertise various circus-style attractions.

Front and centre there is a bald man holding out his hat as if begging. He has a prosthetic leg on a crutch and another crutch under his armpit. Next to him on your right is a well-dressed black person of short stature. While this may be a child, the proportions and facial features suggest an adult person with achondroplasia, a condition commonly known as dwarfism.

This is the end of stop 9. To enter the last room of the exhibition, head down the corridor with the painting on your right-hand side. The doorway into the last room is a few steps ahead of you to your right.

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# **Stop 10 : At the End of History Virtual Reality Experience**

Who are you? Why are you where you are? Where do you go from here?

You have now entered the final room of the exhibition, where the Virtual Reality experience takes place. This is a darkened room, roughly square shaped, with carpet tiles in various shades of grey and brown. The walls are painted light grey.

There are five grey moulded chairs in the centre of the room facing the back wall of the room, on which is mounted a large white, square projection screen where a ‘play through’ of the Virtual Reality experience is playing on a loop. Against the wall on the right-hand side of the room there is a green and black wooden chest on the floor. On the left-hand side of the room is a 3-metre landscape photograph of the White Cliffs of Dover, spanning the entire length of the wall.

On the wall behind you - opposite the projection screen - are two prints in wooden frames of 19th century newspaper illustrations about smuggling. The left hand print is about 40 by 30 cm, the right hand print - which has a more satirical style - is about 50 by 40 cm.

If you have booked a ticket for the Virtual Reality experience, an invigilator will be there to support you. In this Virtual Reality experience you find yourself on a boat, with mysterious boxes and keys. Interacting with them will unveil stories of people from Dover’s past, their journeys, travels, lives and jobs and how they navigated the world. Can this help you discover who you are and what to do?

This Virtual Reality experience has been developed by Curating Visibility Fellow Karl Mercer and his co-producers, and BRiGHTBLACK, internationally renowned experts in crafting interactive, immersive experiences.

This is the end of stop 10. To leave the exhibition, with your back to the projection screen, there is a doorway on both the left and the right side of the wall you are facing that take you back into the corridor space. Exiting by the right-hand doorway, you will find yourself in front of a dark blue ‘selfie wall’, 3 metres wide by 1 metre high, on which are mounted black silhouettes of the characters in our stories on laminated white paper, as well as photographic reproductions of the objects in the exhibition. Note that if you stand in front of this selfie wall, the flooring changes from dark grey carpet to white concrete tiles. The tiled floor leads towards a fire exit.

To make your way back out of the exhibition, face the selfie wall and turn to your left. First you will pass an evaluation station on a large square white panel mounted on the wall to your right. There is a large QR code here which will take you to the evaluation survey where we would greatly appreciate your feedback.

After the evaluation station you will pass the collage again on your right-hand side. Here, at the end of the corridor space, follow the display case round on your left, which takes you back into the first room of the exhibition. The doors out of the exhibition are ahead of you. They will open automatically towards you.

You are of course welcome to stay and explore.

Thanks to Dover Museum’s Curating Visibility Fellow Karl Anthony Mercer, who has spent 15 months researching the collection and working with local disabled people to create this intervention.

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