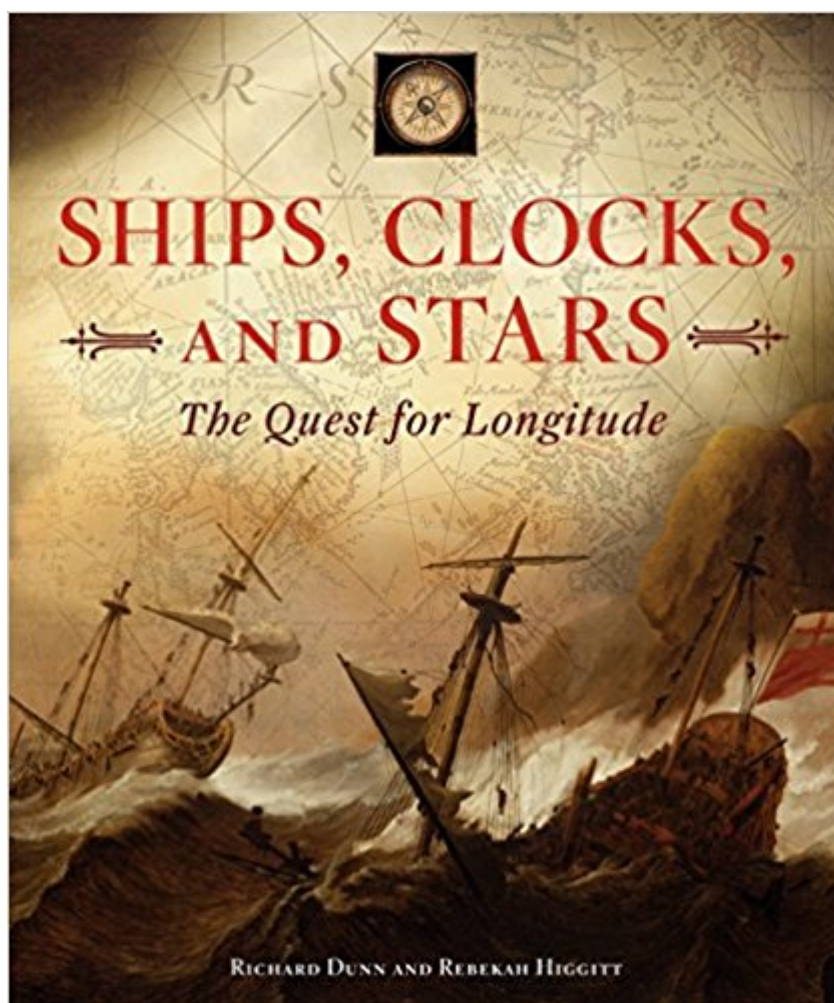


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# Ships, Clocks, And Stars: The Quest For Longitude



## Synopsis

A tale of eighteenth-century invention and competition, commerce and conflict, this is a lively, illustrated, and accurate chronicle of the search to solve “the longitude problem,” the question of how to determine a ship’s position at sea—and one that changed the history of mankind. *Ships, Clocks, and Stars* brings into focus one of our greatest scientific stories: the search to accurately measure a ship’s position at sea. The incredible, illustrated volume reveals why longitude mattered to seafaring nations, illuminates the various solutions that were proposed and tested, and explores the invention that revolutionized human history and the man behind it, John Harrison. Here, too, are the voyages of Captain Cook that put these revolutionary navigational methods to the test. Filled with astronomers, inventors, politicians, seamen, and satirists, *Ships, Clocks, and Stars* explores the scientific, political, and commercial battles of the age, as well as the sailors, ships, and voyages that made it legend—from Matthew Flinders and George Vancouver to the voyages of the *Bounty* and the *Beagle*. Featuring more than 150 photographs specially commissioned from Britain’s National Maritime Museum, this evocative, detailed, and thoroughly fascinating history brings this age of exploration and enlightenment vividly to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A history of one of the greatest nautical discoveries of all time Three hundred years ago, amidst growing frustration from the naval community and pressure linked with the increasing importance of international trade, the British government passed the 1714 Longitude Act. It was an attempt to

solve one of the most pressing problems of the age: how to determine a ship's longitude (east-west position) at sea. With life-changing rewards on offer, the challenge captured the imaginations and talents of astronomers, scientists, skilled craftsmen, politicians, seamen, and satirists. *Ships, Clocks, and Stars* is an illustrated, lively chronicle of the heated competition to find a solution to the longitude problem. Featuring more than 150 photographs specially commissioned from Britain's National Maritime Museum, it is a tale of eighteenth-century invention and competition, commerce and conflict. It illuminates the various solutions that were proposed and tested, explores the invention that revolutionized human history, and brings this age of excitement and enlightenment to life.

Richard Dunn is the Senior Curator and Head of Science and Technology at Royal Museums Greenwich. Rebekah Higgitt is a Lecturer in History of Science at the University of Kent, and former Curator of History of Science and Technology at Royal Museums Greenwich. Both authors are part of a major research project on the history of the British Board of Longitude. This groundbreaking research is done in collaboration with the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge, and funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. Richard Dunn is the Senior Curator and Head of Science and Technology at Royal Museums Greenwich. Rebekah Higgitt is a Lecturer in History of Science at the University of Kent, and former Curator of History of Science and Technology at Royal Museums Greenwich. Both authors are part of a major research project on the history of the British Board of Longitude. This groundbreaking research is done in collaboration with the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge, and funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

I enjoyed this book. It is a comprehensive look at how we discovered how to determine longitude. Authors Richard Dunn and Rebekah Higgitt offer clear explanations of the methods and tools used. They write in a conversational tone and provide many illustrations and photos. I enjoyed the book a little more than I enjoyed Dava Sobel's *Longitude* as it covered more ground and was more objective. Sobel's book focused on the inventor of the marine chronometer, John Harrison. Although the Sobel and the Dunn/Higgitt books are both very good, if you are only going to read one of them, then I recommend Dunn's. Dunn's book is also a good complement to *You Are Here: From the Compass to GPS, the History and Future of How We Find Ourselves* by Hiawatha Bray and *Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens* by Andrea Wulf.

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