

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Tour:

Wednesday, March 18, 10:30 am
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New Exhibition—Ships, Clocks & Stars: The Quest for Longitude

The solution to one of the greatest technical challenges
of the eighteenth century

Produced by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London
Proudly sponsored by United Technologies Corporation

On exhibit March 19 – August 23, 2015

Washington, DC— For centuries, longitude (east-west position) was a matter of life and death at sea. Ships that went off course had no way to re-discover their longitude. With no known location, they might smash into underwater obstacles or be forever lost at sea.

The award-winning exhibition, *Ships, Clocks & Stars: The Quest for Longitude*, produced by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, celebrates the 300th anniversary of the British Longitude Act of 1714, which offered huge rewards for any practical way to determine longitude at sea. The longitude problem was so difficult that—despite that incentive—it took five decades to solve it.

Through extraordinary, historic materials—many from the collection of the National Maritime Museum—the exhibition tells the story of the clockmakers, astronomers, naval officers, and others who pursued the long "quest for longitude" to ultimate success.

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John Harrison's work in developing extremely advanced marine timekeepers, which was vital to finally solving the problem of longitude, took place against a backdrop of almost unprecedented collaboration and investment. Featured in this complex and fascinating history are the names of Galileo, Isaac Newton, Captain James Cook, and William Bligh of HMS *Bounty*.

For a maritime nation such as Britain, investment in long distance trade, outposts and settlements overseas made the ability to determine a ship's longitude accurately increasingly important.

The Royal Observatory in Greenwich was founded in 1675 to carry out observations "to find out the so much desired longitude of places for the perfecting of the art of navigation." Under the 1714 Longitude Act, successive Astronomers Royal became leading voices on the Board of Longitude, judging proposals and encouraging promising developments.

It was Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskelyne's observations at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich and his work on the *Nautical Almanac*, and the Board of Longitude that demonstrated the complementary nature of astronomical and timekeeper methods, ultimately leading to the successful determination of longitude at sea.

As solutions came forth, the Royal Observatory became a testing site for marine timekeepers and the place at which the astronomical observations needed for navigational tables were made. The significance of this work eventually led in 1884 to Greenwich becoming the home of the world's Prime Meridian—the line that marks 0° longitude.

Exhibition Highlights

- Clockmaker John Harrison's H4 marine timekeeper, considered his greatest masterpiece
- Rare 1685 "waggoner" picturing features of the Central and South American coasts
- Astronomical tables developed by Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal
- Paintings from Captain Cook's Pacific voyages
- Rare items from William Bligh's journey after he was put off the *Bounty*
- Detailed models of Cook's and Bligh's ships
- Early sextants, octants, and other instruments

Digital displays throughout the exhibition bring key longitude concepts and materials to light.

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About the National Maritime Museum and United Technologies

The **National Maritime Museum** holds the world's largest maritime collection, housed in historic buildings forming part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. The National Maritime Museum is part of Royal Museums Greenwich which also incorporates the Royal Observatory Greenwich, the 17th-century Queen's House and *Cutty Sark*. Royal Museums Greenwich works to illustrate for everyone the importance of the sea, ships, time and the stars and their relationship with people. This unique collection of attractions welcomes over 2 million British and international visitors a year and is also a major centre of education and research. For more information visit www.rmg.co.uk

A global leader in the aerospace and commercial building industries, **United Technologies** provides products that set the standard for performance, reliability and energy efficiency. Its aerospace businesses include Pratt & Whitney aircraft engines, UTC Aerospace Systems products and services, and Sikorsky helicopters. UTC is the world's largest provider of building technologies. Its commercial businesses include Otis elevators and escalators; Carrier heating, air-conditioning and refrigeration systems; and fire and security solutions from brands such as Kidde and Chubb. The company also operates a central research organization that pursues technologies for improving the performance, energy efficiency and cost of UTC products and processes. To learn more, visit www.utc.com.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Visit www.folger.edu/longitude for more details on *Ships, Clocks & Stars*.

RELATED PUBLICATION

Ships, Clocks, and Stars: The Quest for Longitude

By Richard Dunn and Rebekah Higgitt

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.

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Available in the Folger Gift Shop, (202) 675-0308 or www.folger.edu/shop.

RELATED FOLGER PROGRAMS

Folger Consort

Ships, Clocks, and Stars: Music of Telemann and Other Baroque Masters

Friday, Apr 10, 8pm; Saturday, Apr 11, 5pm and 8pm; Sunday, Apr 12, 2pm. \$37

The scientific and satirical are explored in a variety of late Baroque music, including virtuoso cantatas, the brilliant and scientific harmonies of Jean-Phillippe Rameau, Georg Philipp Telemann's amusing suite based on *Gulliver's Travels*, and other treasures from an outward looking age. With violins, traverse, viola da gamba, theorbo, harpsichord, and soprano Yulia Van Doren.

Early Music Seminar

Wednesday, Apr 8, 6pm. \$15

Pre-concert discussion

Friday, Apr 10, 7pm. Free

Folger Family Programs

Recommended for ages 6–12

Gave Healthful Welcome to their Shipwreck'd Guests

Saturday, Jun 6, 10-11am. Free. Registration required.

Explore the excitement and possible danger of ships in Shakespeare's plays.

O Time, Thou Must Untangle This, Not I

Saturday, Jul 4, 10-11am. Free. Registration required.

Consider the way Shakespeare uses time in his plays and find timekeepers in the language and examine the role of clocks in the Folger exhibition, *Ships, Clocks & Stars: The Quest for Longitude*.

Let All the Number of Stars Give Light

Saturday, Aug 1, 10-11am. Free. Registration required.

Stars are everywhere in Shakespeare's plays and poetry. Consider the ways they give light and show the way in Shakespeare's world and see how that helps navigate the world.

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VISITOR SERVICES

Families

A guide to the exhibition for younger visitors, including an exhibition scavenger hunt, is available.

Tours

Monday – Friday at 11am & 3pm, Saturday at 11am & 1pm, and Sunday at 1pm

Folger Docents offer guided tours of the exhibition, as well as the Folger’s national landmark building, free of charge. No advance reservations required.

Group Tours

Docent-led tours of the exhibition, as well as the Folger national landmark building, are offered for groups of 10 or more. To arrange, please call (202) 675-0395.

ABOUT THE FOLGER

Folger Shakespeare Library is a world-class center for scholarship, learning, culture, and the arts. It is home to the world’s largest Shakespeare collection and a primary repository for rare materials from the early modern period (1500–1750). The Folger is an internationally recognized research library offering advanced scholarly programs in the humanities; an innovator in the preservation of rare materials; a national leader in how Shakespeare is taught in grades K–12; and an award-winning producer of cultural and arts programs – theater, music, poetry, exhibitions, lectures, and family programs. By promoting understanding of Shakespeare and his world, the Folger reminds us of the enduring influence of his works, the formative effects of the Renaissance on our own time, and the power of the written and spoken word. A gift to the American people from industrialist Henry Clay Folger, the Folger – located one block east of the U.S. Capitol – opened in 1932. Learn more at www.folger.edu

Folger Shakespeare Library

201 East Capitol Street, SE (one block from the U.S. Capitol)

Washington, DC 20003

(202) 544-7077 • www.folger.edu

METRO: Union Station (red line) or Capitol South (orange / blue line)

Exhibitions open Monday through Saturday, 10am – 5pm; Sunday noon – 5pm. Admission is free.

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