John “Longitude” Harrison

(24 March 1693 – 24 March 1776)
22 October 1707: Shipwreck!

Scilly Islands Disaster
Board of Longitude

• Scilly naval disaster 22 October 1707
• Sinking of a British naval fleet off the Isles of Scilly
• Four large ships (Association, Eagle, Romney and Firebrand) and 1,400 sailors lost
• One of the greatest maritime disasters in the history of the British Navy
• Cause of the disaster was the navigators' inability to accurately calculate their positions (longitude and compasses)
• Led to the First Longitude Act passed in July 1714 during the reign of Queen Anne
• Created the Board of Longitude and offered a 20K Pounds for anyone who could find a simple and practical method for the precise determination of a ship's longitude while at sea
Most promising method: Lunar Distances

- Solve lunar semi-diameter
- Correction for parallax and refraction
- Solve for time and longitude
John Harrison
The Ultimate: H4 1759 (5)
St. John-at-Hampstead
Memorials

John Harrison
1693-1776
Inventor of the marine chronometer
Lived and died in a house on this site

John 'Longitude'
Harrison
Clockmaker
1693
1776