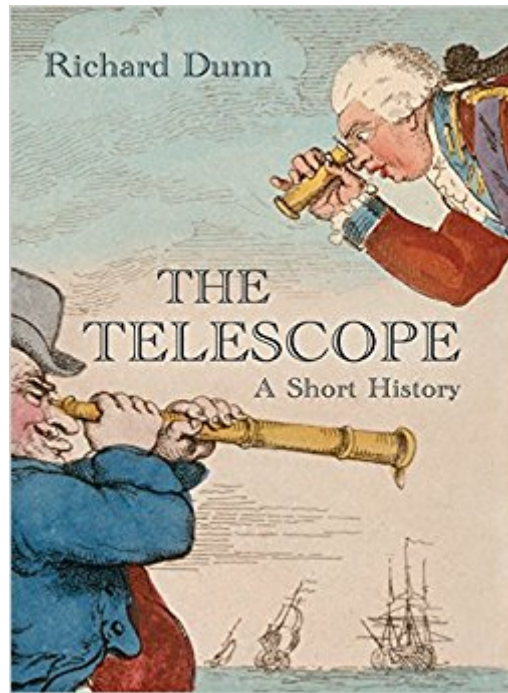




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The Telescope: A Short History



Synopsis

The first telescopes were made in Holland in 1608. A year later, Galileo built his own, and modern astronomy was born! In the blink of an eye (so to speak) telescopes went to sea and started exploring planet Earth. The whole spellbinding story is here, from the early instruments through the many developments over the centuries: reflectors, achromatic lenses, silver-coated mirrors—and then radio, infrared, x-ray, and space-based telescopes. Profusely illustrated with exquisite prints, drawings, and photographs, *The Telescope* will appeal to all who love the mind-blowing adventure called science.

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Customer Reviews

Dollond is a name you probably associate more with a pair of bifocals than the cutting edge of science. Yet as Richard Dunn reveals in *The Telescope: A Short History*, John Dollond of Spitalfields, east London, made a pioneering contribution to the instrument's design. In 1758, he corrected an optical flaw in the type of telescope popularised by Galileo 150 years earlier. His clever arrangement of lenses thereby ensured that telescopes could be, and indeed were, manufactured in a variety of shapes and sizes. They included sights for navigational aids, opera glasses and instruments for the military. The Royal Navy even used 'Dollond' as a slang expression for telescope. Dunn, a curator at the National Maritime Museum, has ambitiously attempted to tell the instrument's entire history in under 166 pages. The book's slightly longer, because it includes a glossary of scientific terms and illustrations of telescopes at the back. But it's a somewhat staccato

read because nothing is left out. Interesting characters appear and disappear in the space of a single paragraph to keep the story moving, from antiquity right up to the proposed successor to the Hubble space telescope, which is currently in orbit around Earth. The more fascinating parts, though, reveal how the telescope permeated the arts, by chronicling its appearance in paintings, plays and books. Galileo's discoveries are writ large in Adam Elsheimer's 1609 painting *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, which is reproduced in the book. And even John Milton tips a hat to the freshly revealed universe in his 1667 poem *Paradise Lost*. The Telescope is fascinating, but it would have benefited from a little more culture. -- Graham Southorn BBC History Magazine

Richard Dunn is currently Curator of the History of Navigation at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Trained as a historian of science, he has published widely on subjects including astrology, navigation, scientific instruments and museums.

This is actually a history book describing the increasing complexity of the telescope and the effect it had on society. In this respect it was excellent. I was looking for a little more technical information, which isn't there. But if you want a quick history of the telescope, this is your book.

Easy to read and loaded with facts and a great resource book on Telescopes.

There aren't many books available that cover the complete history of telescopes. This small book is well written, well researched and provides lots of interesting facts about the history of telescopes and telescope optics. It is a fun and easy read and contains nice photos and images throughout. I bought a copy for myself and a friend who I spend time with gazing at the heavens. Highly recommended.

This attractive little book, first published by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich in 2009, has now been re-released in the US as well as the UK. After a brief discussion of astronomy before the telescope, Dunn moves us briskly from the invention of the telescope to the huge instruments of today, then briefly touches on other types of astronomy, such as radio astronomy, and what the future might hold. As befits a book for the general reader, Dunn intersperses sections on both the non-astronomical adoption of telescopes--think, in particular, sailors--and on public reaction to astronomical discoveries. There are amusing as well as serious illustrations. The level of technical detail doesn't go much beyond the difference between a convex and a concave lens and the basic

configurations of different telescopes. While my ideal book on telescopes would be far more technical, this book wasn't written for someone like me. This is the best book on the telescope for a general audience I've encountered. I would like to add a little information on the invention of the telescope. Dunn notes that the idea of the telescope predates its putative inventor, Hans Lipperhey (Lippershey in some references). He suggests Lipperhey deserves credit for being the first to realize the "device's possibilities". I consider that unlikely. People wanted to make a telescope work because they knew it would be useful. Rolf Willach has written a monograph arguing that Lipperhey's real breakthrough was the invention of the aperture mask: *The Long Route to the Invention of the Telescope*. Galileo is known to have used aperture masks, and some earlier sources suggested that it was his invention. (Dunn mentions aperture masks on page 37, but is vague on when they first appeared.) Another aside: One of the major figures in the book is William Herschel, who was a musician and composer before becoming an astronomer. You might enjoy listening to his music while you read this book: *Herschel: Symphonies*.

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