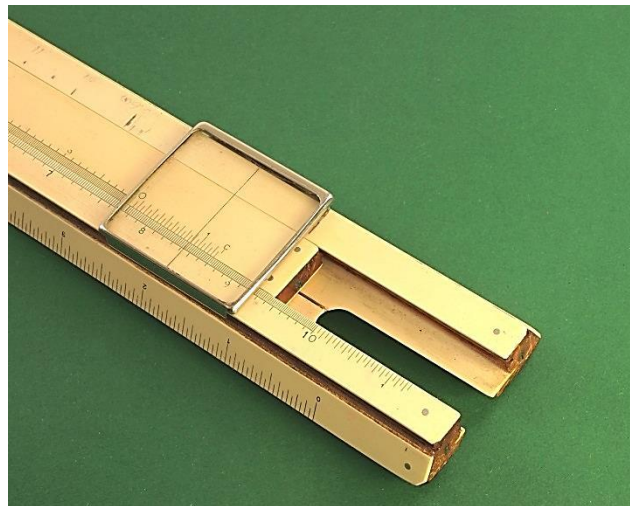
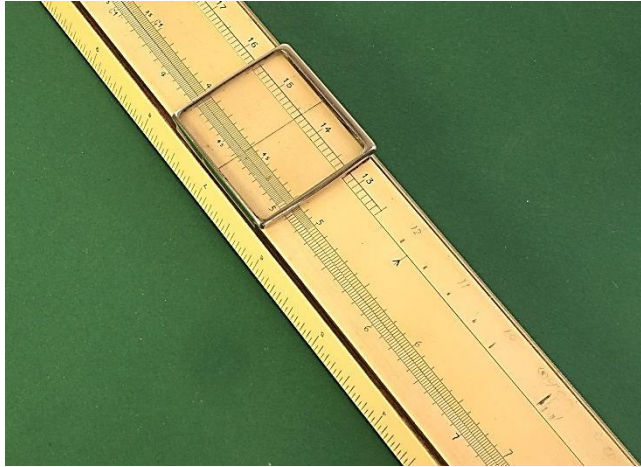


## Nr. xx. Mystery Desktop No. 1

Owner: David Rance

Pictures<sup>1</sup>:



### Purpose of the slide rule:

The purpose of this desktop 20 inch/50 cm model is a mystery. There seems to be no good reason for either the scale layout or for it being the size it is!

### Dimensions:


- **Overall (LxWxD):** 56.8 cm x 4.7 cm x 1.4 cm.
- **Slide (L):** 57.8 cm
- **Length of scales:** 23 cm (upper) and 50 cm (lower two without their scale extensions)

### Material:

- **Base & slide:** mahogany base with pinned celluloid facings and stamped scales coloured black & red
- **Cursor:** chrome and glass with a single black hairline
- **Case:** dark mottled green stiff cardboard box with horizontal/flat diamond box identification marks

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of the Otto van Poelje "photo lab".

**Layout and scales:**

- **Closed frame with: cm \ ? / C / D \ Inch**
  - the top bevelled edge has a 50 cm length scale
  - the mysterious “A” scale (centred) is an inverted (30 to 13.5) shifted logarithmic scale  
**n.b.:** it is difficult to see on the pictures but the right-hand end of the scale has been extended by hand in pencil down to 9.0
  - in the place of a B scale is there a single upward pointing arrow  
  
**n.b.:** the upward pointing arrow lines up against +/- 5.48 on the C & D scales
  - the C and D scales are standard 30 cm versions but the scale extensions are a bit unusual – the left-hand extension runs down to 0.89 whereas the right-hand extension runs out to 11.25
  - handwritten in the well of the stock is: “R.8005”
  - the back of the stock, at either end, is cut away in the manner normally used for cursor windows for reading off results from the back of the slide
  - the bottom bevelled edge 20 inch length scale is “upside down”

**Designer & Manufacturer:**

Although unmarked the nature of the construction, the bevelled upside-down 20 inch scale and the horizontal/flat diamond box identification marks are convincing pointers that the design and manufacture can be attributed to UK maker **A.G. Thornton Ltd** before the company became British Thornton in 1967. This provenance is partially confirmed by the style of the cursor. Sadly there is no blind “year” stamp in the back but Thornton were using such chrome and glass cursors in the late 1950s/early 1960s. However, for a desktop model the cursor would normally have been “double-width”.

**Speculation:**

So far the most fitting explanation is that it is an unfinished factory prototype – other Thornton prototype/experimental rules with pencilled markings are known to have existed<sup>2</sup>. Its desktop size maybe just coincidental – having no relationship to the design other than it was a readily to hand blank.

**Outstanding questions:**

The list is long:

- if it is an unfinished prototype, what type of use or function could be served by the mysterious inverted 30-13.5 (or even 9.0) scale?
- the upward pointing arrow more or less lines up on the C & D scales coincidentally at the value for  $\sqrt{30}$  but is this just a “red herring”?
- what, if any, is the significance/meaning of the handwritten reference “R.8005” in the well of the stock?
- is the cursor original?
- if it is a prototype, why incorporate such a small footprint design onto a large and “expensive” desktop blank?

**Can anyone help solve any part of the mystery?**

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Thornton “expert” and collector friend Colin Barnes of the UKSRC.