

# Once Upon A Time 25 Years Ago

*The IM2019 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting but how did it all start?*



## The idea

In the beginning most collectors think: *"there cannot be more than a handful of us worldwide."* Most family members agree and just shake their heads in bewilderment. I started collecting slide rules this way but soon found out there was a national collectors club and even an American one with members from all over the world. I joined the Dutch circle of collectors, the KRING, in its inauguration year: 1992. From the start the KRING had two champion collectors and internationally minded slide rule ambassadors: **IJzebrand Schuitema** (1929-2013) and **Herman van Herwijnen** (1929-2004). Exactly how the idea of an "international meeting" was born is lost in the annals of time. But the catalyst was undoubtedly discussions IJzebrand and Herman had with a director of the American *Oughtred Society* (OS), **Bob Otnes** (1932-2019), in 1994. The moral and financial support promised by the OS was the tipping point for organising a meeting in The Netherlands that would try to get like-minded collectors to attend from different parts of the world.

**IJzebrand & Herman**

## In the beginning ...

2019 is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of the annual **International Meeting** (IM). Over the years, from humble slide rule beginnings, the scope of the meetings has been broadened to cover all historical calculating instruments. But by a lucky coincidence the anniversary meeting is back in the country that hosted the very first IM back in 1995 – The Netherlands.



**IM1995 poster**

Hosting the meeting now rotates between several European countries and the USA. Collectors from all over world regularly attend.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Location (country)</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>Utrecht (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>Cambridge (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>Stein (Germany)</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>Hutwill (Switzerland)</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>Cambridge (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>Ede (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>München (Germany)</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>Leamington Spa (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>Amsterdam/Breukelen (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>Bad Driburg (Germany)</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>Cambridge (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>Greifswald (Germany)</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>Lelystad/Enkhuizen (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>Leamington Spa (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>Greifswald (Germany)</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>Leiden (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>Cambridge MA/Boston (USA)</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Bletchley Park (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>Berlin (Germany)</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>Delft (The Netherlands)</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>San Francisco Bay Area (USA)</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Trento (Italy)</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>Bonn (Germany)</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>Stratford-upon-Avon (United Kingdom)</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>The Hague/Scheveningen (The Netherlands)</b>

### **Timeline of IMs and where they were held**

As the table shows, over the years the meeting has more than lived up to its "international" accolade. It has grown into a multiday event with an equally important Partner programme for the travelling companions of those attending. On its "silver" anniversary it is timely to reflect on what that very first international meeting was like.

### **The preparations**

25 years later and any IM still demands lots of hard work from the organising committee of the host country. But back in 1995 there was no precedent and no experience of holding such a meeting. It posed some serious headaches and unique challenges. It seems absurd now but in 1995 no one had any idea if collectors from other countries would be interested in an international meeting and if they were how many would be prepared to travel to The Netherlands? A classic "chicken or the egg" causality dilemma as the organiser of any meeting knows, having a

reliable number of likely attendees is crucial for planning, booking a suitable venue, setting the meeting registration fee, etc. In the end the organising committee of the IM1995 personally carried the financial risk of the meeting ending up a flop. So to mitigate against any loss it was important to reach as many potential attendees as possible. Luckily IJzebrand knew of some European collectors and the OS were happy to provide details of their non-US members. But this raised the issue of "meeting language". Clearly the international aspiration of the meeting dictated the use of English. But given this was the first such meeting, the organisers opted for a multi-language personalised mailshot to over 100 known European collectors in English, German or Dutch. The OS agreed to publish a "meeting notice" in the *JOS* for the US-based collectors. Other "adverts" for the meeting were placed in relevant European collector magazines.

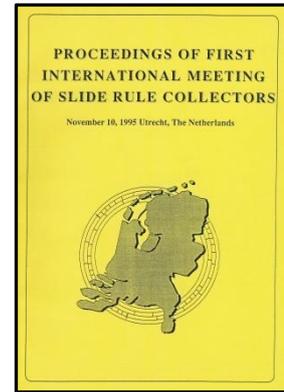
IJzebrand was also the catalyst for the meeting venue. He was a long-standing member of the Freemasons and its lodge in Utrecht was prepared to host the meeting.



#### **Venue for the IM1995: the Masonic Hall at Maliebaan 70a in Utrecht**

Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the imposing building is now a national monument. Spread over 3 floors it offered several meeting rooms and facilities for tea/coffee breaks, buffet lunch and closing reception. But choosing the meeting date was tricky – what would work "best" for the target group? With a few exceptions subsequent IM's would opt for a mid to late September meeting date. But 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November was chosen for the first IM so it coincided with the weekend of the renowned Collectors Fair (possibly the largest in Europe) held annually in Utrecht. It was felt more collectors would attend if they could combine their trip with hunting down bargains at a big fair. Finally there was the quandary of what to do in the meeting. It was pre PayPal and SEPA IBAN payments. So time for registration would be needed to collect meeting fees, do the admin, etc. After much discussion it was felt a combination of presentations of interesting subjects/topics, a swap fair, staged displays

and a quiz would make an attractive sounding event. But such an ambitious meeting programme deserved some form of hard copy *Proceedings* documenting all the information shared in the meeting that attendees could take home. Back in 1995 private desktop publishing was uncommon but luckily Herman was a pioneer when it came to using a Personal Computer. So a professional looking 58-page, albeit just in black & white, inaugural *IM Proceedings*<sup>1</sup> with its trendsetting yellow front and back cover was privately published at home by Herman. At the time no one knew Herman's pioneering work would spurn a bookshelf of valuable reference volumes of *IM Proceedings*.



Front Cover

### On the day

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting day, Saturday, was left free so attendees could visit the Collectors Fair. So the "main event" all happened on **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November**.

The morning mostly involved getting the registration done and letting attendees discover the contents of their impressive information packs. Besides the



Bob Otnes registering

*Proceedings* the pack included a detailed programme/attendee list, a pocket memorial circular slide rule especially produced for the IM1995 by Blundell Harling, the quiz sheet, an entrance pass for the Collectors Fair and a set of ARISTO's slide rules provided by Hans Dennert (1926-2000). The next stop for many collectors was the room set aside for the swap fair – for many it was like entering Aladdin's cave. The morning also gave attendees the chance to get to know one another. A social side to the meeting that would be a strong feature of all future IM's.

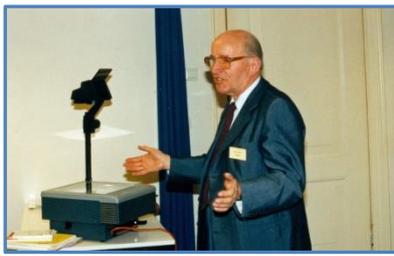
After an early buffet lunch IJzebrand formally opened the afternoon programme and introduced the first of the 5 presentations:

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<sup>1</sup> Still available as part of the "KRING: 1992-2017" 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary DVD, April 2018.



**Nanco Bordewijk:**  
*"Analog and Digital  
Calculations"*



**Hans Dennert:**  
*"Dating Dennert &  
Pape, Aristo"*



**Günter Kugel:**  
*"Dating Faber-Castell"*



**Guus Craenen:**  
*"Dating Nestler"*



**Otto van Poelje:**  
*"Identification, Blue  
Book & Computers"*

The meeting room was packed to the gunnels. Judging by the interaction with the audience and the many questions the presenters were asked, the **41** attendees (NL=18, BE=1, CH=3, DE =12, DK=1, FR=1, GB=4 and US=1) clearly appreciated all the presentations.



**Packed international audience of IM1995 attendees**

These sessions, with suitable breaks, took up all the afternoon. Afterwards the winner of the quiz was announced: **Jaap Dekker** (1935-2017) with **Inge Rudowski** as the runner up. Then there was a final chance to visit the swap fair before IJzebrand closed the meeting at 18:15 and invited everyone to a closing reception.

However, the day was not over for those who had signed up for the first IM diner. The chosen venue, *The Ostrich*, was one of the famous old wharf cellars



**Tenor Theo**

converted into restaurants along the sides of the canal running through the centre of Utrecht. But the organisers had one more surprise for the dinners. Dutch collector and

KRING member **Theo Adriaans** (1938-1997) was a semi-professional opera singer. So after the meal Theo's impressive tenor voice took full advantage of the cellar's

excellent acoustics and with a rendition of the aria "*E lucevan le stelle*" from the opera *Tosca* by Puccini he ensured a groundbreaking memorable day finished on an unforgettable note!

### **Fairy tale postscript**

Sadly neither IJzebrand nor Herman can be part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting. But the two other members from the organising committee of the very first IM will be there: **David Rance** and **Otto van Poelje**.



**Diner venue**