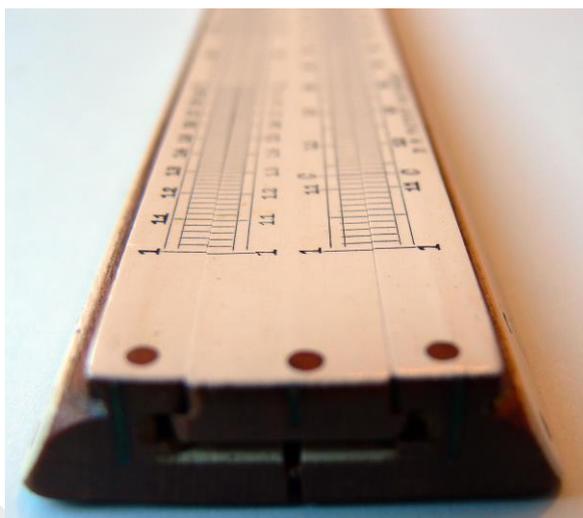


Mind the Edge

David Rance

Often a slide rule stays on my desk for weeks. Mostly it just serves as a reminder to do something but on occasions it is because something about it is ... well "odd". Annoyingly I usually cannot put my finger on what is odd – it could be a scale out of place or just something that does not look quite right.

After a recent tidy-up, a 28cm pearwood Faber-Castell 361 ended up on my desk. From the blind back-stamp of "1" and the paper table of conversion factors, it dated from 1921 (in the 1920's F-C used a single digit for the date year). Like all 361's it is basically a simple Mannheim rule but it looked "wrong". Eventually it dawned on me what was out of place: it had both a top (cm) and a bottom (inch) bevelled side edge. A quick check confirmed my hunch – rules from the F-C 300 series usually have a single bevelled top edge. To find out more I turned to the ever-helpful Dieter von Jezierski (1927-2013). It seems early on in the 300 series the 361, the 366 (System Schumacher) and the famous 368 all had both a top and a bottom bevelled edge. Besides being the first electro rule¹, the 368 uniquely also had a "hooked" cursor extension for



1921 "double-edged" F-C 361

reading off the LL3 and LL2 scales that Faber/F-C initially put on the top bevelled edge before switching to the bottom bevelled edge. However, from 1924 F-C stopped making the 361 with two bevelled edges and not too long after the 368 was replaced by the wider bodied (making room for the LL scales on the stock) 378. So from the 1930's all the models in the F-C 300 series had the characteristic single top (cm or inch) bevelled edge and a flat bottom edge.

Although, except for the 366, they are not super rare pre-1930 double bevelled-edged Faber/F-C rules from the 300 series or the earlier unnumbered series (the forerunner to the 300 series) are uncommon. So look out for them – they can add an edge to any collection!

¹ Bob Adams: "*Proceedings of the 13th International Meeting of Historical Calculating Instruments*", The Netherlands, 2007, pg 156, Euro 20.00 (CD only)