

We Get Questions!

Q1: Where can I find a manual for a K&E 4102 slide rule?

A1: We don't know, but we will ask our members and get back to you. *[If anyone can supply a K&E 4102 manual or copy, please contact us at oughtredsociety@comcast.net]*

Q2: I have inherited my grandfather's K and E slide rule, a Thacher's Calculating Instrument 1740. I am interested in what you experts might say or think about it in regards to its value, history, etc. My Grandfather was a bridge builder and for one thing, he used this calculator to build the bridge that spans the St. Lawrence River at Montreal.

A2: Thank you for your inquiry. Your Thacher is indeed a fine and collectible instrument. Although it is not common, it is not exactly rare either. For example, 12 Thachers have sold on eBay auction in the past 12 months. Prices ranged from \$400 to \$5600. The highest price was for a quite rare Thacher model 4013 with attached magnifier, in excellent condition. Your model 1740 is the typical early model, known as Type 1, made from 1882 to 1899. The number 925 tells us that it was made in 1898 or 1899. Model numbers changed in 1900, to 4012 and 4013, and continued to be made until 1950. Edwin Thacher (Thatcher with an extra "t" imprinted on the instrument is a typographical misspelling of his name; this was corrected on later models) invented his calculator in New York in 1881. Production was soon thereafter taken over by the Keuffel & Esser Company of New York, who is famous for its fine instruments and slide rules. Your description sounds as if your Thacher is in very good but not excellent or like new condition. I would expect that, on eBay, which is the primary marketplace for such items, it might bring between \$1500 and \$2500, possibly more if you were lucky and attracted 2 or more very interested bidders with deep pockets.

We agree with you. Because of the history of this instrument in your family and the design of the bridge at Montreal, we would not consider selling it. If your heirs do sell it some day, it should bring a nice sum. We hope this information is helpful to you.

Q3: I am an editor at Phaidon Press, an art book publishing house in New York. Currently, I am researching images for a book on the history of building engineering. I would be extremely grateful if you can provide any information regarding how I may obtain high resolution images for inclusion. Where can I get photos of a nineteenth century French wooden slide rule with cursor--the type devised by Amadee Mannheim, and a Soho Scale manufactured by Boulton and Watt.

A3: Bob Otnes supplied the photos.

Q4: I would be very pleased indeed to receive any information that you may have about statistical slide rules, especially the one listed in the Patents section of your web site.

A4: Clark McCoy is planning to refer this question to our new "Answer Panel" he is organizing to answer such questions.
[If you are knowledgeable about any particular brand of slide rule, type of slide rule, etc., please let us know at oughredsociety@comcast.net]

Q5: I am intrigued by an entry in one of your website's indexes to past issues of your magazine: Vol.8 No.1 Spring 1999 The Whythe Complex Slide Rule in Fuller Style. Do you have a back copy of this issue, or at least of this article, which you could make available to me? I am one of two sons of David Whythe, the inventor of this rule, and I am gathering all the information I can find about it. I have inherited his original prototype, which was produced by the BBC Research Dept prior to approaching Stanley to manufacture it, and I'm keen to find out what happened after that.

A5: We explained that the Journal is available only to members of the Society, but we sent him a copy of the article, as we do in certain cases. After subsequent communications, we "introduced" him to other Society members in the United Kingdom, one of whom will be meeting with him to show him a Whythe Complex Fuller manufactured by Stanley, and example of which he has not seen. This contact will probably result in a very interesting article in the Journal by this inquirer.

Q6: I have an old slide rule: K&E model 4080-3 (with case). It was my uncle's when he was working on the Manhattan Project (he was a post-doc at MIT when they grabbed him for the Project). If it's valuable, I'd like to sell it. If it's not valuable, I'd like to give it to someone who would treasure it even more than I. Any suggestions?

A6: The K&E 4080-3 slide rule is not very scarce nor very valuable. eBay internet auction is where most slide rule collectors shop. A quick check of eBay sales records shows that, in the past 4 months, 22 of model 4080-3 sold at an average price of \$16.68. The high price was \$38.50 and the low price was \$3.99, which was undoubtedly a damaged rule. The reason for the relatively low value of 4080-3 is that K&E sold many thousands of them and they are quite plentiful and available today. Like any older item, value is determined primarily by scarcity. If you have the written provenance for your Uncle's slide rule regarding the Manhattan Project, it might bring a bit more than usual from some interested collector, but I would not expect that it would bring more than \$25 or thereabout. We suggested that he donate it to the Slide Rules for Students program of the International Slide Rule Group, which is managed by Oughtred Society member Dr. Gary Flom, which he did.

Q7: I have just posted this antique measuring device on eBay, item 6259772211. It was left in the basement rafters by the previous owner and engineer. Do you know what it would be called?

A7: Tom Wyman answered this one, telling the inquirer that it was a carpenter's rule for calculating board feet of lumber in a log, among other things.

Q8: I have found a Boucher's calculator by Manlove, Alliott & Co Limited (London) in my father's stuff. Where could I get a manual explaining how it works and to use it?

A8: You may remember this one; it was the question which we sent to all Society members to test the possibility of obtaining answers from all of our members. Colin Barnes of the United

Kingdom Slide Rule Circle reported that his group has more than 200 reprints for sale of various manuals, etc., in which the Boucher manual is included. We referred the inquirer to Colin to purchase the manual he sought.

Q9: I have my fathers old Keuffel & Esser slide rule. I was wondering, what it might be worth. It has some damage, but it does have the original case. I am not sure what it is made of. Maybe you might know? I don't know if there is a certain material the slide rules are made of. I believe he used in in the 30's and 40's. Thank you for your time.

After our initial reply, she said : OK, the model number is 4080-3. The damage is on the indicator. The one side of the indicator is almost gone and the other side is cracked. I have all the bits and pieces in the original container...I don't think container is the right word!! Well, whatever it is called, (I can't seem to think right now)...it has the words Log Log Duplex Trig on it. Thank you for helping me. I find this very interesting. I'm not sure I would "sell" the rule, especially without my Mother's permission. My father passed some time ago. Any more information would be fun.

A9: Your slide rule has what is known among collectors as KERCS ... K&E Rotting Cursor Syndrome. (Cursor is another common word for indicator ... probably the most common. K&E called it "indicator" in their literature.)

This problem is quite common with some K&E slide rule models. It seems that, for a few years, they used a certain kind of plastic for the cursor bars, to match the color of the celluloid surface of the rule. After a few years, they learned that the bars were crumbling and switched to a stronger plastic which is very white and does not match the color of surface of the rule. Unfortunately, there are no replacement cursor bars available. If someone had a supply of these bars, he could sell hundreds of them to collectors who have K&E slide rules which have KERCS.

Paul Ross at The Slide Rule Trading Co.

(<http://home.att.net/~ross1/SRTC/SRTC.htm>) has complete used replacement cursors available for 4080-3 for \$35. However, this is more than the rule is worth. A quick check of eBay sales records shows that, in the past 4 months, 22 of model 4080-3 sold at an average price of \$16.68. The high price was \$38.50 and the low price was \$3.99, which was undoubtedly a rule with KERCS. The reason for the relatively low value of 4080-3 is that K&E sold many thousands of them and they are quite plentiful and available today. Like any older item, value is determined primarily by

scarcity. Your rule might bring \$5 to \$10, at the most, on eBay, which is the world's market for slide rules and is where most collectors buy their rules. It appears that you have several options : You could buy a replacement cursor from Paul Ross and restore your father's rule to like new condition. Or you could keep it the way it is. Or you could sell it the way it is ... which would hardly be worth the effort.

If you are interested in learning more about slide rules, I recommend The Oughtred Society Slide Rule Reference Manual, which is a new book for beginners and contains 104 pages of general and specific information about slide rules, plus 100 color photographs of all kinds of slide rules. You can order it on the Oughtred Society's website www.oughtred.org for \$38.85, including shipping. We hope this information is helpful to you.

Q10: Would mind taking look at this slide rule for me please? I've been unable to find anything like it on any of the sites I've visited, although it does look rather like a Hemmi No. 6 at http://www.lise.jp/sliderules/hemmi/g_6.html If you could provide me with a date and/or model number, I'd be much obliged.

A10: We referred this question to Society member and Hemmi guru Paul Ross, who answered, "How thick is your slide rule, Frances? If it is about 9 mm thick it is, indeed, a Hemmi Model 6 slide rule as you suspected. If about 1/4 inch (6-7 mm) thick, it is a model 48. (Thin) model 48 replaced (thick) model 6 about 1932 and the Hemmi catalogs list Model 6 as "obsolete" after 1932. However, Hemmi continued to make model 6 for customers who wanted them until 1937 or 1938 and there are quite a lot of model 6 rules around from that time period."
"Your slide rule is essentially identical to Bill Lise's model 6 except that yours is in better condition but your plastic table which was glued to the aluminum backing plate is missing. Your rule was likely made between 1935 and 1938 but a date as early as 1928 is not impossible. There is a picture of a much older (before 1920) Model 6 on my website <http://home.att.net/~ross3/HemmiCat.htm>."

Q11: I posted a K&E unusual Braille Slide rule for sale on the Yahoo group. I received 2 offers from collectors. Someone mentioned that Bob Otnes commented how rare a rule it is. I was

thinking that if there is some library or museum that has a collection I should donate it - rather than selling it. Your thoughts?

A11: We answered, “The existence of the K&E Braille slide rule has been known for quite some time, from the exhibition of one at an Oughtred Society meeting several years ago by a former K&E executive. But that rule's location is unknown and no other example has been known until now.”

” In 2005 the MIT Museum acquired the K&E Company slide rule collection, which was donated to the Museum by a successor company of K&E. This collection has been known by slide rule collectors and historians for years, but nobody knew what happened to it after the demise of K&E, until recently. The collection is housed in a very large and beautiful oak cabinet with many drawers. Careful inventory and cataloguing of its contents is in progress by the Museum, drawer by drawer. There is not a Braille rule in its contents.”

”Dr. Deborah Douglas is the Curator of Science and Technology at the Museum. She is responsible for the K&E Collection. Her Email address is ddouglas@mit.edu. I am sure that she would be delighted to hear from you. Please stay in touch with us regarding this most interesting saga!”

The inquirer wrote, “Thanks for the quick response. It is indeed a genuine K&E Braille KE4081-3 Slide rule. I worked for the American Foundation for the Blind as an Engineer for some years and acquired it then. I've had it for 20+ years. It is from 1952-1955. I'm excited and will contact the Museum as it seems that would be the best place for it. Its hard to believe I have something worthy of a museum collection!”

This saga ended with Dr. Deborah Douglas' talking with this inquirer, who donated the Braille rule to the MIT Museum. The Society is very pleased to have been a part of effecting the preservation of this very rare K&E slide rule.

Q12: I have a collection of about 50 slide rules . I would like to sell the entire collection as a whole, for \$2000. Can you advise any procedure for me to follow.

A12: At our request, the inquirer sent us a list of the slide rules in his collection. We offered an approximate opinion of its value, which was about 25% of his desired amount. We suggested that he join the Society and place his collection for sale in our Swap Sheet Online; or contact a dealer; or try eBay; or try the International Slide Rule Group. He was very grateful and said he would follow our suggestions.

