Peter Hopp is the well-known author of one of the first modern books on Slides Rules: "Their History, Models and Makers", in 1999. Now, ten years later, he has added to our collective knowledge by publishing a new and more specialised book on "joint slide rules". The scope of this subject might be roughly summarised as "slide rules with at least one hinge".

Everyone knows the centuries-old "folding rule" for measuring lengths. This book shows that in the sixteenth century already special folding rules were used for calculations, such as timber rules and sectors. Later the more specialised rules (such as Coggeshall's timber rule and Routledge's engineer's rule) were developed, always keeping the combined function of measuring and calculating. While reading further, it becomes apparent that in some in-stances more than one hinge was used, and the number of slides could range from 0 to even 3.

Separate chapters explain the detailed workings of, for example, timber and board tables for timber size calculations, "Per Load" tables for price calculations, Girt lines for timber content calculations by quarter girt measurements, "E and M" lines for mast-makers and Scamozzi lines for architects. But the major part of the book is dedicated to a large number of actual specimens of joint rules, with many details on hinge construction, slide and scale design, makers and specific applications. More than 60 colour pictures give the extra information that text alone can not convey.

A separate list of "joint slide rule" makers shows some 200 names, many of which are not known as general instrument makers listed for example in Clifton's Directory.

It is remarkable that the vast majority of the makers are British or American.

The book is aesthetically pleasing with a delightful cover, quality paper, clear illustrations and a well-designed layout. The only minor remark I have, is that the design structure cre-ates so many blank pages (some 10 %) that in first instance I feared to have received a misprint; wrongly, as it turned out.

This book is an excellent contribution to the growing range of books on slide rules.

It is highly recommended, perhaps even indispensable, for anyone with a broad interest in special versions and particular applications of slide rules.

Peter Hopp's new book can be ordered for £ 22,50 (plus shipping to Europe £ 6,19) from: www.JeremyMillsPublishing.co.uk