

Undaunted and Still As Rare As A Pouch Clip*

David G Rance

Despite a new European discovery, pouch clips remain rare and mostly American.

Why yet another update?

One of Andy Warhol's (1928-1987) more famous quotes is: "... everyone will be famous for 15 minutes." It seems my 15 minutes of fame may come from pouch clips!

When first published in 2006, the original pouch clip article potentially had all the ingredients to give many an avid collector an adrenaline rush: "could a rarity have been overlooked for all these years?" Of my published articles it is the one that generated the most reactions and apparently remains a lasting memory with many collectors. The first update came in 2007 and now, three years on, another new find means yet another update. Fortunately the new find is complementary rather than contradictory to information published earlier but it also clears up an anomaly from the original article.

Front-page billing

Apart from the special export versions for the American market, the main reason pouches with clips are rare is that they had to be specially ordered – in the same way collapsible magnifying cursors were optional extras. However, many customers were not prepared to pay the extra cost or were reluctant to wait for a special order. A clear indication of just how few were ordered became apparent when, nearing the end of their production run (1960's), ARISTO® started issuing their popular Rietz model 89 pocket slide rule with a pouch clip as standard. Clearly the boxes for the model 89 (and other models) had never been designed to accommodate the extra thickness that came with the pouch clip. On any such new-in-box late ARISTO® 89 slide rules, the metal clip always leaves an unintended but discernible raised impression in the cardboard of the box.

In the catalogues of most manufacturers pouches with clips are often buried in the "Optional Extras" pages right at the end. However, I was recently given an ARISTO® catalogue from 1957 where a model C pouch clip has front-page billing. The 4-page A5 English language folder was specifically aimed at the business market. Companies ordering from the folder could have their company name or logo added "free-of-charge" to their orders. Interestingly and certainly unknown to a certain multinational, the front and inside pages clearly show a promotional slide rule emblazoned with the Shell pecten logo and the name: *Marine Oils*. From my 25 years service with Shell, I know the company hardly ever gave permission for their name or logo to be used by 3rd parties for product endorsements or for any kind of advertising. Further, on the few occasions permission was granted, Shell always insisted on a full accreditation. There is no such accreditation anywhere in the folder. So perhaps this endorsement slipped through unnoticed by Shell's buying department?



Fig. 1: ARISTO® 1957 catalogue

* Derived from the saying: "As scarce as hens' teeth"

New European example

Recently I was shown an example of a pouch clip I had never seen before. It was from the 20th century German manufacturer: **Eichmüller & Co.-Bayerische Reißzeugfabrik AG - ECOBRA**. This time not only is the pouch rare but the slide rule is also exceptional. ECOBRA was one of only a few manufacturers to make metal slide rules.

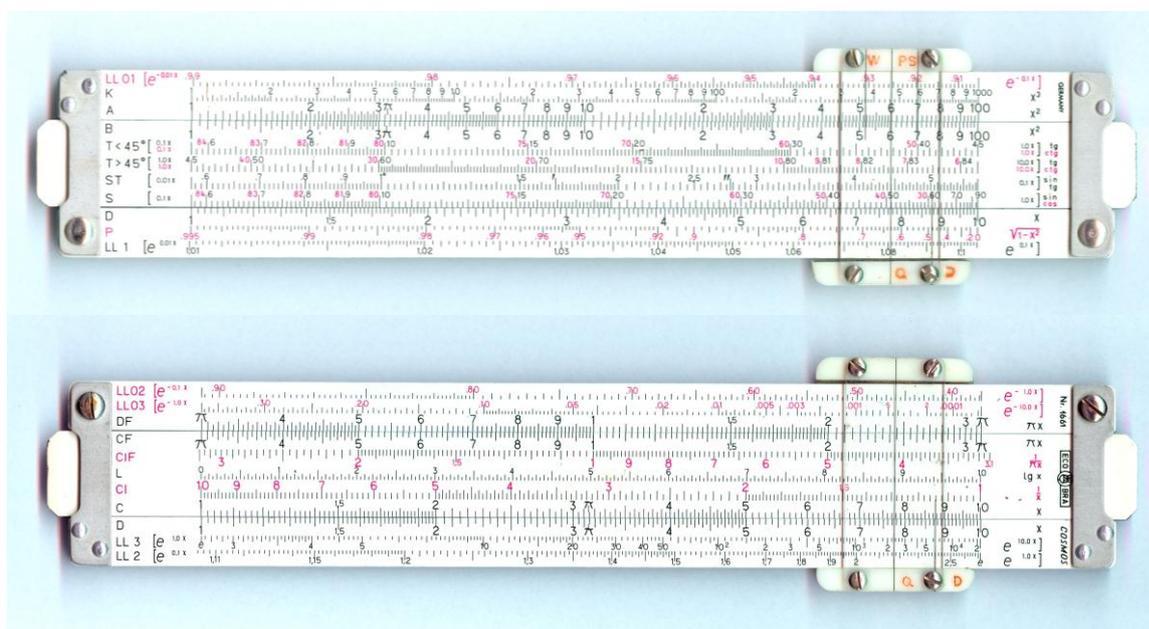


Fig. 2: Front and back of ECOBRA 12.5cm model 1661 *COSMOS* pocket metal slide rule

This 12.5cm pocket rule is a late post 1950 model made from an aluminium alloy stock and sprayed with white enamel before the scales and a top coating of lacquer were added. Such heavier metal slide rules were favourites in America but never as popular in Europe. The double-sided plastic cursor has a central hairline and two extra (KW PS) peripheral horsepower conversion hairlines on the front and a single extra (Q D) peripheral area of a circle conversion hairline on both the front and the back. With a rich eclectic mix of 22 scales this impressive duplex pocket slide rule was innovatively marketed by ECOBRA as an “all-in-one” System Reitz, System Darmstadt and Electro rule! It has an aluminium twin “big brother”: the duplex 25cm ECOBRA model 1711 *COSMOS* rule.



Fig. 3: ECOBRA pouch and all-metal clip

The stitched leather light-brown pouch with an all-metal clip has the ECOBRA brand name and the company “windmill” logo stamped in gold coloured lettering on the back (not shown). This confirms the pouch and the rule undoubtedly belong to each other. On the front, in the same style “gold” lettering, is stamped “Producción Alemana”. The Spanish probably best translates as “Made in Germany”. Unless intended for the South American market, it is unknown why ECOBRA added the text in Spanish.

Link to DIETZGEN

After Joseph Dietzgen acquired the ECOBRA factory in 1909 following the death of its founder, Eichmüller, it is no surprise that his partner, the long established American slide rule manufacturer and supplier Eugene Dietzgen & Co., imported and sold many ECOBRA made rules.

Because of its all-metal clip, in my original 2006 article the pouch of a 5-inch DIETZGEN Union 1776 pocket slide rule was an exception as all the other American manufacturers had opted for a leather covered clip. Because of DIETZGEN's known co-operation with German manufacturer Faber- Castell I, unwittingly at the time, speculated that because of its all-metal "European design", the DIETZGEN pouch with clip might have been supplied by Faber-Castell.

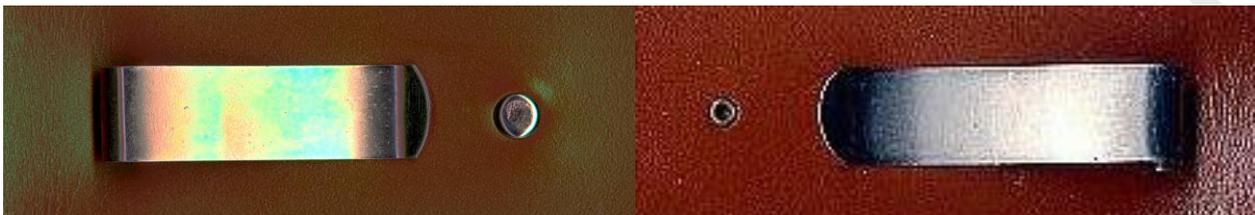


Fig. 4: Pouch clips of the ECOBRA 1661 and the DIETZGEN 1776 the pocket slide rules

Now having had the opportunity to compare the newly found pouch clip of the ECOBRA (left-hand image) with the DIETZGEN (right-hand image), even after allowing for understandable small colour differences, clearly the large flat metal clip and pop-rivet method used to attach the clip to the DIETZGEN pouch is almost identical with the ECOBRA example. It is now clear that if coming from Europe, ECOBRA rather than Faber-Castell supplied DIETZGEN with their pouches with all-metal clips.

Pouch Clips – the sequel?

Despite this latest find pouch clips, especially from any European manufacturer, remain rare and are worth looking out for.

So, am I now done with pouch clips? Probably but many people thought they had seen enough of Sylvester Stallone after the first "Rocky" film. So do not be too surprised if one day I feel the need to publish a "Pouch Clips IV" sequel!

Acknowledgement and References

This latest update was only possible because a fellow collector and friend, Dr. Klaus Kühn, remembered my unusual interest in pouch clips. Klaus kindly donated the 1957 ARISTO® catalogue to my collection and let me borrow his superb ECOBRA 12.5cm model 1661 *COSMOS* pocket metal slide rule and rare pouch clip.

1. Jezierski, Dieter von: *"Slide Rules A Journey Through Three Centuries"*, Astragal Press, ISBN 1-879335-94-8, USD 19.00, 2000, Pg. 52.
2. Rance, David G: *"Rare As A Pouch Clip!"*, UKSRC Slide Rule Gazette ISSN 1472-0000, Issue 7, Euro 16.00, Autumn 2006, Pg. 77.
3. Rance, David G: *"Still as Rare As A Pouch Clip!"*, UKSRC Slide Rule Gazette ISSN 1472-0000, Issue 8, Euro 16.00, Autumn 2007, Pg. 55.
4. Venetsianos, Panagiotis: *"Pocketbook of the Gauge Marks"*, private publication, © The Oughtred Society, 2006, Pg. 67.