

M comes after P

With over 5000 models UK maker *Blundell Rules* (BRL) and later *Blundell Harling* (BH) was the undisputed champion producer of specially commissioned slide rules. This success story started in the 1950s when they switched production from their ill-fated use of Bakelite [JOS Vol. 19 No. 1, 2010 – Rance] to Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC). But being commissioned models not all customers wanted or agreed to any obvious BRL/BH branding. So this can make identifying some Blundell specials tricky.

Help came two decades ago when the UKSRC established the *Blundell Archive*. Retired BH Technical Director, Peter Soole, donated many items. Although only limited company records were ever kept for the special commissions it was possible to compile a list of “**P Numbers**”. With or without Blundell branding, most specially commissioned designs were given a 4-digit serial number in the range P1000 to P6112. Cross-referencing such numbers against the P list it is possible to confirm the client and the model’s intended use [Skid Stick No. 4, 2000 – Barnes]. Later, after some clever detective work using the copyright dates of certain models, a correlation of P numbers against probable production years was published [Gazette Issue 3, 2002 - Knott & Hopp]. However, with Peter Soole’s help I stumbled on a second numbering system for special commissions that Blundell used in parallel for a limited time.

Before moving entirely to P numbers, some Blundell-made special commissions with a standardised overprinting design for customer advertising were given a 3 or 4-digit serial “**M Number**” – e.g. M899, M958, M1769 or M3364. So if you are struggling to work out the provenance of a suspicious Blundell looking PVC slide rule or slide chart, remember to check for a telling P **or** M number.

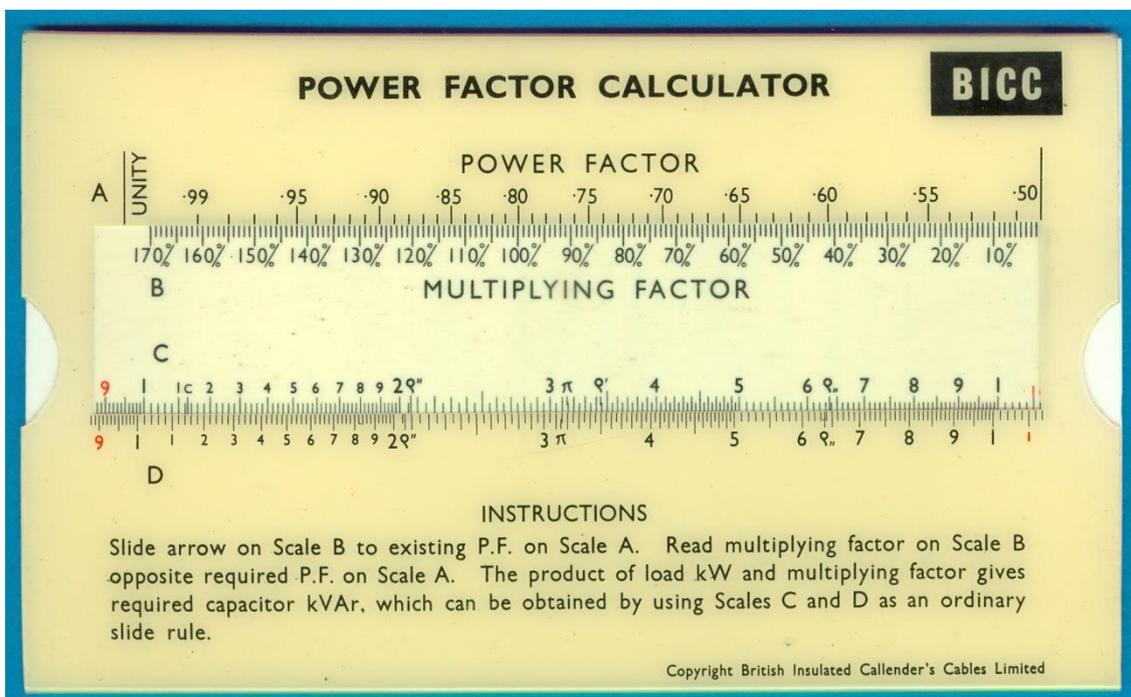


Fig. 1: **Unbranded Slide Chart made by Blundell Harling for BICC[®] with a telltale M899 number overprinted on the back**

Sadly no comparable list of M numbers exists. But a digital copy of the *P Number List* from the *Blundell Archive* is available from the author or the editor.