



"How Round is Your Circle?"

John Bryant and Chris Sangwin
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Being subtitled "*Where Engineering and Mathematics meet*" reflects the contrasting backgrounds of the two authors and is what makes the complex subject matter eminently readable. John Bryant is a retired chemical engineer and UKSRC member Chris Sangwin is a lecturer in mathematics at the University of Birmingham.

The book not only does its bit to dispel irritating modern management speak like "*squaring the circle*" (*Sic*: one of the three famous impossibility proofs) but takes the reader on a revealing journey of what we often take too much for granted. For example, could you draw a straight line without a ruler, can you explain how a steering wheel steers or why a Pantograph works?

Alongside references to Gunter rules and sectors, the 306-page book includes a full chapter on the slide rule. Apart from possibly the sections on non-logarithmic slide rules and nomograms, this chapter has little new for the avid collector. However, like John Kvint's presentation at the IM2003¹, the rest of the book gives a great insight into many related aspects – such as how to design and engineer an accurate scale. Also for those of a more "Eigen Huis & Tuin" practical nature, the book could well get you taking over the kitchen table and trying to reconstruct (instructions provided) some of the many fascinating models featured in the book. For example, can you beat the authors' record of 30 overlapping tiles that seem to defy gravity? For those with two left-hands or of a more mathematical persuasion, the book recommends some excellent free software for virtual model makers.

The book is probably not a "cover-to-cover" read. But by bridging the worlds of engineering and mathematics it will open your eyes to the wonders of many everyday items and make you more inquisitive about how the world around you works.

¹ John Kvint: "*Proceedings of the 9th International Meeting of Slide Rule Collectors*", The Netherlands, 2003, pg 29, 15.00 euro (KRING Jubileum DVD only)