

Timeline of Logarithms

- 1550: John Napier¹ was born in Edinburgh Scotland.
- 1552: Jobst Bürgi was born in Switzerland.
- 1588: Bürgi began working on his logarithms² independent of Napier (I was unable to find the base to which Bürgi created his logarithms).
- ~1594: John Napier started work on his tables and spent the next twenty years completing. The tables were for trigonometric applications and gave the logarithms for the sine of angles 30° to 90°. Although Napier did not actually use in his logarithms it could be said his base was roughly $1/e$.
- 1614: Napier published “Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio” in which he discusses his logarithms.
- 10 March 1615: Henry Briggs wrote a letter roughly translating questions Napier’s use of his base ($1/e$) and why he did not use base 10 and $\log 1 = 0$. Napier replied that he too had the idea but could not create the tables due to an illness.
- Summer 1615: Henry Briggs visited John Napier and they spent a month working on the tables for the logarithms to base 10.
- 1616: Henry Briggs visited John Napier a second time.
- 4 April 1617: John Napier passed away.
- 1617: Briggs published his “Logarithmorum Chilias Prima” which contained his tables for logarithms to base 10.
- 1619: “Mirifici logarithmorum canonis constructio” is published in which the method Napier used for constructing his logarithms is discussed.
- 1620: Bürgis’ were published in his “Arithmetische und Geometrische Progress-Tabulen.” Bürgi’s work went unnoticed due to the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War.
- 1622: William Oughtred invented the slide rule, which offered an even quicker way of calculating logarithms.
- 1632: Jobst Bürgi passed away.
- 1675: Newton discovers the fact that the $d/dx \ln x = 1/x$.
- 1685: John Wallis realized that logarithms could be defined as exponents.
- 1694: Johann Bernoulli also realized that logarithms could be defined as exponents.
- 1694 to present: Logarithms had reached their full potential and most of what was done after 1694 was calculating logarithms to different bases.

¹ Napier is also written as Neper and numerous other forms

² Logarithm means “reckoning number”