

9.E3 William Lilly on the meeting of Napier and Briggs

I will acquaint you with one memorable Story related unto me by Mr John Marr, an excellent Mathematician and Geometrician, whom I conceive you remember; he was Servant to King James and Charles the First.

At first, when the Lord Napier, or Marchiston, made public his Logarithms, Mr Briggs, then Reader of the Astronomy lecture at Gresham College in London, was so surprised with Admiration of them, that he could have no Quietness in himself, until he had seen that noble Person the Lord Marchiston, whose only Invention they were; he acquaints John Marr herewith, who went into Scotland before Mr Briggs, purposely to be here when these Two so learned Persons should meet: Mr Briggs appoints a certain Day when to meet at Edinborough, but failing thereof; the Lord Napier were speaking of Mr Briggs: 'Ah, John (saith Marchiston), Mr Briggs will not now come'; at the very one knocks at the gate; John Marr hastened down, and it proved Mr Briggs, to his great Contentment; he brings Mr Briggs up into My Lord's chamber, where almost one quarter of an hour was sent, each beholding other almost with Admiration before one word was spoke, at last Mr Briggs began.

'My Lord, I have undertaken this long Journey purposely to see your Person, and to know by what Engine of Wit or Ingenuity you came first to think of this most excellent Help unto Astronomy, viz., the *Logarithms*; but, my Lord, being by you found out, I wonder nobody else found it out before, when now known it is so easy,' He was nobly entertained by the Lord Napier, and every Summer after that, during the Lord's being alive, this venerable Man, Mr Briggs, went purposely into Scotland to visit him.