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Ferranti Mercury X1

Index

B3 Sales of Ferranti Mercury computers.

Information mostly taken from: *The Ferranti Computer Department – an informal history. B B Swann, 1975. Typescript for private circulation only*. See the National Archive for the History of Computing, catalogue number NAHC/FER/C30.

No.	*customer*	*date del'd*	*scientific applic's.*	*Commercial applic's*
1	Norwegian Defence Research Est., Kjeller.	Aug. '57	Atomic energy work	-
2	Manchester University Transferred to University of Sheffield 1963	Oct. '57	Research & service work	-
3	French Atomic Energy Authority, Saclay.	Nov. '57	Atomic energy work	-
4	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Harwell.	Feb. '58	Atomic energy work	-
5	RAF Meteorological Office, Dunstable.	Sept. '58	Weather forecasting	-
6	Council for European Nuclear Research, Geneva.	Jun. '58	Atomic energy work	-
7	London University.	Oct. '58	Research & service work	-
8	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Risley.	Oct. '58	Atomic energy work	
9	Oxford University. Replaced by KDF9	Nov. '58	Research & service work Forestry (large Dbs)	-
10	Shell International Petroleum Co. Ltd., London.	Jan. '59	Linear programming.	Sales analysis
11	Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough.	Mar. '59	Aircraft calculations	-
12	ICI Ltd., Central Instruments Division, Reading.	Jun. '59	Chemical process analysis	-
13	Swedish Atomic Energy Authority, Stockholm.	Jul. '59	Atomic energy work	-
14	Belgian Atomic Energy Authority, Mol.	Sept. '59	Atomic energy work	-
15	The General Electric Co. Ltd., Erith.	Dec. '59	Atomic energy work and machine design.	-
16	Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co. Ltd., (AEI), Manchester.	Oct. '60	Transformer design	-

17	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Winfrith Heath	Jun. ’60	Atomic energy work	-
18	Buenos Aires University	Sept. ’60	Atomic energy work	-
19	British Petroleum Co. Ltd.	May ’61	Linear programming.	Sales analysis.

(In 1970, four of the nineteen Mercury computers (numbers 3, 6, 14 & 18) were still working, according to Bernard Swann)

D1 Design History and Designers.

The original design work was done in the University of Manchester by a team led by Tom Kilburn in the Engineering Department. This team had earlier been responsible for the Mark I machine. Work started on the prototype Mercury which was called MEG (MEGacycle, ie the clock speed) soon after the Manchester conference on the MK1, which was in 1951. The machine had been moved from its original home in the ‘Baby’ room to the new Electrical Engineering building in Dover Street in 1953 and was fully operational in 1954. It took Ferranti a further 3 years to produce the commercial version. A view was current that this was partly ‘to preserve the viability of Pegasus since Mercury was so much better’[1]. Meg was used by a number of people but was replaced by a commercial Mercury in October 1957 prior to the discontinuance of the Mark I service to effect a smooth changeover[2].

The Manchester Mercury was replaced by Atlas at the start of 1963. The machine was then moved to the University of Sheffield.

MEG had a cathode ray tube computational (main) store which was replaced by the newly available cores in Mercury. This also led to an alteration in the timing system since the CRT refresh periods were no longer needed.

The hardware team at the University included Tom Kilburn, David (Dai) Edwards and GE Thomas and at Ferranti, Keith Lonsdale and ET (Ianto) Warburton. Software at the University was under the direction of Tony Brooker and included B Richards and Frank Sumner, and later Derek Morris. Joan Travis wrote the Engineering Test Programs at West Gorton. BV Bowden, later Lord Bowden, and principal of UMIST was also involved on the Ferranti side. Other names appearing on papers include JA Fotheringham, M de V Roberts, E Berg, RH Kerr and possibly messrs Cartmell and Gribble.
This list is garnered from paper authors mainly. There is a need for further exploration. Anyone able to give further names and their place in the teams please contact John.Gosling1@Tesco.net.

References

[1] Personal communication with DBG Edwards.
[2] Lavington, SH; History of Manchester Computers, NCC Publications, 1975.