

Deliveries of Ferranti Mark I and Mark I Star computers.**Terminology: a note on the uses of the nomenclature *Mark I*, *Star*, and *Mark II*.**

The series of prototype computers developed at the University of Manchester by the team led by Professor F C Williams, and first working between June 1948 and the end of 1949, were all loosely called the *Manchester Mark I*. The Ferranti Mark I was the re-engineered production version of the last of these University machines. Confusingly, the Ferranti Mark I delivered to the University in 1951 was, for a time, known locally as the *Mark II* and also as the *Production Mark I* or simply as the *Mark I*. Also, confusingly, Ferranti referred to this machine as the *Manchester Electronic Computer* or the *Manchester University Computer* in early sales publications. The Mark I Star, written as 'Mark I*', was an improved version of the Ferranti Mark I. To complete the story, Professor Williams' team had, by 1951, begun working on the design of a new computer, known as *Meg* or *Manchester Mark II*. The production version of *Meg* was later to be marketed as the Ferranti Mercury. (See references 2 & 4 in section F1X5).

In this section we are only concerned with computers manufactured and sold by Ferranti Ltd. For a history of this company, see reference 3 in section F1X5.

Deliveries.

Information on deliveries is 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.

Mark I.

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| 1. Manchester University | 1951 | Science & engineering research. (see note 1). |
| 2. Toronto University, Canada | 1952 | Science & engineering research. (see note 2). |

Mark I*.

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| 3. Ministry of Supply (GCHQ, Cheltenham) | 1953 | Classified work. |
| 4. Royal Dutch/Shell Labs., Amsterdam | 1954 | Oil refining studies. |
| 5. National Institute for Application of Mathematics, Rome. | 1955 | Research work. (see note 3). |
| 6. Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston. | 1954 | Research work. |
| 7. Ministry of Supply, Armament Research Establishment, Fort Halstead, Kent. | 1955 | Research work. |
| 8. A V Roe & Co. Ltd., Manchester | 1954 | Aircraft design calculations. |
| 9. Armstrong Siddley Motors Ltd., Coventry. | 1957 | Research work. |

Notes on delivered computers.

1. The first production Ferranti Mark I was working on the factory floor by the end of 1950 and was moved to Manchester University in February 1951 – thereby claiming to be the first commercially-available computer to have been delivered. The reliability during the first few months was somewhat questionable, though it was giving reasonable service by the Inaugural Conference (July 9th – 12th 1951) – (see reference 2).

2. The Toronto computer was given the local name FERUT – Ferranti University of Toronto. Quoting from the Ferranti Journal (see reference 15): “In a test on December 22nd [1955], FERUT, the high-speed Electronic Digital Computer supplied to the University of Toronto in Canada in 1952, gave the answer to a question presented to it by the University of Saskatchewan, 1,700 miles away. The problem, normally a 100 man-hour job, was punched directly on to tape at Saskatchewan, fed through a transmitter over telegraph lines to Toronto, with the co-operation of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific telegraph companies, and the answer provided in thirty minutes. As a result of the experience gained, it is hoped that all Canadian Universities will eventually be connected to FERUT”.

3. This computer was officially inaugurated by President Gronchi, Head of the Republic of Italy, on 14th December 1955. See reference 16. The computer had passed its acceptance tests on the factory floor at Moston, Manchester on 15th October 1954, had arrived by sea at Naples on 6th January 1955 and, after waiting for modifications to its building in Rome to be finished, had been installed and had passed its acceptance tests by 25th June 1955.