

One tonne 'Baby' goes mobile

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(PhysOrg.com) -- It took a one-tonne computer the size of a room to run a simple mathematics program in 1948 - but now computer scientists have made it available on your mobile.

The famous 'Baby', designed and built at The University of Manchester, was the first computer able to store information in its memory, changing the face of computing and society for ever.

In June 1948 the machine, which was built using bits from Spitfire radios and old Post Office racks, made history by successfully running a simple routine to determine the highest factor of a number.

It took 3.5kW to power the massive 'Baby' or Small Scale Experimental Machine (SSEM) - the equivalent of three and half electric bar fires

going at full pelt.

But now, to mark Manchester Science Festival 2009, Dr Andrew Robinson from The School of Computer Science at The University of Manchester has written an application for today's phones that does exactly the same thing.

Mobile users can now download the free application from www.d60.org.uk - complete with authentic green screen - and see how many times faster the tiny computer in their pocket performs than the big old Baby.

Dr Robinson said: "Since mobiles run off batteries the computers inside them must be extremely energy efficient - much more so than the original Baby used in 1948.

"To handle the needs of the latest phones with mobile Internet, music players and cameras, they need much more [computing power](#) too.

"Although the list of devices containing computers is almost endless, fundamentally they all operate on the same principle, which can be traced back over 60 years to The Baby.

"This application demonstrates how computers were embedded into our everyday lives and how computational performance has increased whilst their size and energy have decreased."

The application has been going down a storm with schoolchildren at Manchester Science Festival, who have been competing to see who can run the program the fastest.

The application can be downloaded from www.d60.org.uk and should run on any phone that supports Java.

Manchester Science Festival 2009 runs from 24 October to 1 November. The programme includes over 150 exciting science, engineering, technology, engineering and maths events for families and adults in venues across Greater Manchester.

Provided by University of Manchester ([news](#) : [web](#))

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