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containing such a shrine. [ME f. OF *fiertre* f. L *feretrum* f. Gk *phētron* f. *phērō* bear]

ferial /'fiəriəl, 'fer-/ *adj.* Eccl. **1** (of a day) ordinary; not appointed for a festival or fast. **2** (of a service etc.) for use on a ferial day. [ME f. OF *ferial* or med.L *ferialis* f. L *feriae*: see FAIR²]

Ferm. *abbr.* Fermanagh.

Fermanagh /'fə:mənə/ one of the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, formerly an administrative area; chief town, Enniskillen.

Fermat /'fə:mɑ:/, Pierre de (1601–65), French lawyer and mathematician. His study of the problems of finding tangents to curves, finding areas under curves, and maxima and minima, led directly to the general methods of calculus introduced by Newton and Leibniz. Fermat made many discoveries about integers, for which he is seen as the founder of the theory of numbers.

fermata /'fə:mɑ:tə/ *n.* (pl. **fermatas**) *Mus.* **1** an unspecified prolongation of a note or rest. **2** a sign indicating this. [It.]

Fermat's last theorem *n.* (also **Fermat's theorem**) the conjecture by Fermat that if *n* is greater than 2 then there is no integer whose *n*th power can be expressed as the sum of two smaller *n*th powers. The conjecture (of which Fermat noted that he had 'a truly wonderful proof') has been demonstrated by calculation to be true for very many possible values of *n*, and in 1995 a general proof was announced by the Princeton-based British mathematician Andrew Wiles.

ferment *n.* & *v.* ● *n.* /'fə:ment/ **1** agitation, excitement, tumult. **2** a fermenting, fermentation. **b** a fermenting-agent or leaven. ● *v.* /'fə:ment/ **1** *intr.* & *tr.* undergo or subject to fermentation. **2** *intr.* & *tr.* effervesce or cause to effervesce. **3** *tr.* excite; stir up; foment. □ **fermentable** /'fə:mentəb(ə)/ *adj.* **fermenter** *n.* [ME f. OF *ferment* or L *fermentum* f. L *fervere* boil]

fermentation /'fə:men'teɪʃ(ə)n/ *n.* **1** the breakdown of a substance by micro-organisms, such as yeasts and bacteria, usu. in the absence of oxygen, esp. of sugar to ethyl alcohol in making beers, wines, and spirits. **2** agitation, excitement. □ **fermentative** /'fə:mentətɪv/ *adj.* [ME f. LL *fermentatio* (as *FERMENT*)]

Fermi /'fə:mi/, Enrico (1901–54), Italian-born American atomic physicist. Working at first in Italy, he invented (with Paul Dirac) Fermi-Dirac statistics, a mathematical tool of great value in atomic, nuclear, and solid-state physics. He predicted the existence of the neutrino, and produced radioactive isotopes by bombarding atomic nuclei with neutrons. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1938. Moving to the US, Fermi directed the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942, and joined the Manhattan Project to work on the atom bomb. The artificial element fermium and a class of subatomic particles, the fermions, are named after him.

fermi /'fə:mi/ *n.* (pl. **fermis**) a unit of length equal to 10^{-15} metre, formerly used in nuclear physics. [FERMI]

fermion /'fə:mi,ɒn/ *n.* *Physics* a subatomic particle, such as a nucleon, which has half-integral spin and follows the statistical description given by Fermi and Dirac (cf. *BOSON*). [FERMI]

fermium /'fə:miəm/ *n.* an artificial radioactive metallic chemical element (atomic number 100; symbol **Fm**). A member of the actinide series, fermium was discovered in 1953 in the debris of the first hydrogen bomb explosion. [FERMI]

fern /'fɜ:n/ *n.* (pl. same or **ferns**) a flowerless pteridophyte plant of the order Filicopsida, reproducing by spores and usu. having feathery fronds. □ **fernery** *n.* (pl. **-ies**). **ferny** *adj.* [OE *fearn* f. WG]

Fernando Póo /'fɜ:nændəu 'pəu/ the former name (until 1973) for BIOKO.

ferocious /'fɜ:rəʃəs/ *adj.* **1** fierce, savage; wildly cruel. **2** esp. US colloq. (as an intensifier) very great, extreme. □ **ferociously** *adv.* **ferociousness** *n.* [L *ferox* -ocis]

ferocity /'fɜ:rəʊsɪti/ *n.* (pl. **-ies**) a ferocious nature or act. [F *férocité* or L *ferocitas* (as *FEROCIOUS*)]

-ferous /'fɜ:rəs/ *comb. form* (usu. **-iferous** /'ɪfərəs/) forming adjectives with the sense 'bearing', 'having' (*auriferous*; *odoriferous*). □ **-ferously** *suffix* forming adverbs. **-ferousness** *suffix* forming nouns. [f. or after F *-fere* or L *-fer* producing f. *ferre* bear]

Ferranti /'fɜ:rənti/, Sebastian Ziani de (1864–1930), English electrical engineer. He was one of the pioneers of electricity generation and distribution in Britain, his chief contribution being the use of high voltages for economical transmission over a distance.

Ferrara /'fɜ:rə:rə/ a city in northern Italy, capital of a province of the

same name; pop. (1990) 140,600. Ferrara grew to prominence in the 13th century under the rule of the powerful Este family.

Ferrari /'fɜ:rəri/, Enzo (1898–1988), Italian car designer and manufacturer. He became a racing driver for Alfa Romeo in 1920 and proceeded to work as one of their designers. In 1929 he founded the company named after him, launching the famous Ferrari marque in 1947 and producing a range of high-quality sports and racing cars. Since the early 1950s Ferraris have won the greatest number of world championship Grands Prix of any car.

ferrate /'feret/ *n.* *Chem.* a salt of (the hypothetical) ferric acid. [L *ferrum* iron]

ferrel *var.* of FERRULE.

ferret /'ferit/ *n.* & *v.* ● *n.* **1** a small half-tamed domesticated polecat, *Mustela furo*, used in catching rabbits, rats, etc. (See note below.) **2** a person who searches assiduously. ● *v.* (**ferreted**, **ferreting**) **1** *intr.* hunt with ferrets. **2** *intr.* rummage; search about. **3** *tr.* (often foll. by *about*, *away*, *out*, etc.) a clear out (holes or an area of ground) with ferrets. **b** take or drive away (rabbits etc.) with ferrets. **4** *tr.* (foll. by *out*) search out (secrets, criminals, etc.). □ **ferreter** *n.* **ferrety** *adj.* [ME f. OF *fu(t)ret* alt. f. *fu(t)ron* f. LL *furo* -onis f. L *fur* thief]

■ The domestic ferret is derived mainly from the European polecat, *Mustela putorius*, though it does have some characteristics that may be derived from the steppe polecat, *M. eversmanni*. The usual form is albino, though a brown form (the 'polecat ferret') occurs, and feral animals usually revert to this more natural colouring.

ferri- /'feri/ *comb. form* *Chem.* containing iron, esp. in ferric compounds. [L *ferrum* iron]

ferryage /'ferɪdʒ/ *n.* **1** conveyance by ferry. **2** a charge for using a ferry.

ferric /'ferik/ *adj.* **1** of iron. **2** *Chem.* containing iron in a trivalent form (cf. *FERROUS*).

Ferrier /'feriə(r)/, Kathleen (1912–53), English contralto. She made her operatic début as Lucretia in the first performance of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), and is particularly famous for her performance in 1947 of Mahler's song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde*.

ferrimagnetism /'ferɪ'mæɡni,tɪz(ə)m/ *n.* *Physics* a form of ferromagnetism with antiparallel alignment of neighbouring atoms or ions. □ **ferrimagnetic** /-mæɡ'netik/ *adj.* [F *ferrimagnétisme* (as *FERRI-*, *MAGNETISM*)]

Ferris wheel /'ferɪs/ *n.* a fairground ride consisting of a giant revolving vertical wheel with passenger cars suspended on its outer edge. [G. W. G. Ferris, Amer. engineer (1859–96)]

ferrite /'ferat/ *n.* *Chem.* **1** a salt of (the hypothetical) ferrous acid $H_2Fe_2O_4$, often with magnetic properties. **2** an allotrope of pure iron occurring in low-carbon steel. □ **ferritic** /'fe'ritɪk/ *adj.* [L *ferrum* iron]

ferro- /'fɜ:rəu/ *comb. form* *Chem.* **1** iron, esp. in ferrous compounds (*ferrocyanide*). **2** (of alloys) containing iron (*ferromanganese*). [L *ferrum* iron]

ferroconcrete /'fɜ:rəu'kɒŋkri:t/ *n.* & *adj.* ● *n.* concrete reinforced with steel. ● *adj.* made of reinforced concrete.

ferroelectric /'fɜ:rəu'lektrɪk/ *adj.* & *n.* *Physics* ● *adj.* exhibiting permanent electric polarization which varies in strength with the applied electric field. ● *n.* a ferroelectric substance. □ **ferroelectricity** /-ɪlek'trɪsɪti, -elek-/ *n.* [ELECTRIC after *ferromagnetic*]

ferromagnetism /'fɜ:rəu'mæɡni,tɪz(ə)m/ *n.* *Physics* a phenomenon in which a material has a high susceptibility to magnetization, the strength of which varies with the applied magnetizing field, and which may persist after removal of the applied field. □ **ferromagnetic** /-mæɡ'netik/ *adj.*

ferrous /'fɜ:rəs/ *adj.* **1** containing iron (*ferrous* and *non-ferrous* metals). **2** *Chem.* containing iron in a divalent form (cf. *FERRIC*). [L *ferrum* iron]

ferruginous /'fɜ:rɪdʒɪnəs/ *adj.* **1** of or containing iron-rust, or iron as a chemical constituent. **2** rust-coloured; reddish-brown. □ **ferruginous duck** a European diving duck, *Aythya nyroca*, with mainly red-brown plumage. [L *ferrugo* -ginis rust f. *ferrum* iron]

ferrule /'feru:l/ *n.* (also **ferrel** /'ferəl/) **1** a ring or cap strengthening the end of a stick or tube. **2** a band strengthening or forming a joint. [earlier *verrel* etc. f. OF *virelle*, *virol(e)*, f. L *viriola* dimin. of *viriae* bracelet: assim. to L *ferrum* iron]

ferry /'feri/ *n.* & *v.* ● *n.* (pl. **-ies**) **1** a boat or aircraft etc. for conveying passengers and goods, esp. across water and as a regular service. **2** the service itself or the place where it operates. ● *v.* (**-ies**, **-ied**) **1** *tr.* & *intr.*