

Visit to MINI Plant, Oxford
on Thursday 4th June 2015

This visit has been organised by John Temple

The Oxford Plant:



The BMW Group introduced the MINI in 2001 as a premium brand when it brought the MINI One and MINI Cooper onto the European market. In 2002, the sporty MINI Cooper S joined the family, as did the MINI One D with diesel engine in 2003.

The MINI's exclusive birthplace is the Oxford plant in Great Britain. It is completely integrated into the BMW Group's production network.

Today, some 3,000 employees make circa 216,300 customised MINI automobiles per year at one of the most modern BMW Group production sites. All production processes and automobiles must meet the high quality standards of BMW Group production, which must be upheld at all plants in the network.

A FEW HOUSE RULES FOR VISITORS

- Fifteen-foot flying sparks mean you'll need protective gear. We'll provide the coat and goggles; it's your job to wear them.
- No filming equipment, including cameras, videos, mobile phones and spy cameras are allowed in any part of the production areas.
- The plant tour is not for the faint of heart. No pace-makers allowed on site.
- We regret that children under 14 are not permitted on site for safety reasons.
- Visitors should wear comfortable shoes for the tour. NO OPEN-TOE SHOES or sandals are permitted.



For more information visit: <http://www.mini-production-triangle.com/home.aspx>

Where and when to meet

At the Longwall Beefeater, Garsington Road, Oxford **OX4 2JZ** at 11.30 for 12.00 lunch.

The location is indicated by the arrow pointing to the 'w' of 'Cowley' (A4142: Ring Road/Eastern Bypass).



Getting there

M40 Exit 8A (A40) or

A34 Exit "Ring Road"

Follow signs to Cowley, A4142 (Eastern Bypass Ring Road).

At **Cowley Interchange**

Follow "City Centre".

The Longwall (Premier Inn) is immediately on the right after the roundabout.

(Caution: multi traffic lights on roundabout).



On foot

From railway station forecourt take Bus No 5 to The Longwall (bus pass applies).
Allow half an hour for the bus ride.

Lunch arrangements

At the Longwall Beefeater (Premier Inn), there is a bar and a restaurant. I have arranged for us to have a two course lunch (at £9.99 per person) in the restaurant. Just ask for the REMS table. See the last page of this flyer for the menu. Please indicate on the return form whether you want lunch and if so your choice for main and dessert.

Timetable

11.30	Meet for lunch at The Longwall	OX4 2JZ
12.00	Lunch	
12.45	Depart in cars for The MINI Plant	(if you don't have a car please ask for a lift)
12.55	Arrive at the Plant	(OX4 6NL)
13.00	Start of Tour	
15.30	End of Tour	
15.45	Return to The Longwall for tea	(at cost)
16.30	Disperse	



Cost: £20 without lunch, £30 with lunch. The Longwall have agreed to lay on a 2-course lunch for £9.99 per person. Last time some people had starters, which held things up; and everybody had a different bill, which held things up even further and we were late at the Mini plant. I hope this arrangement will be smoother and quicker.

Contact: John Temple: 01865 86 1934 (my land line)

Late arrivals: On the day: John Temple – 0777 944 5251 (my mobile, not available at home);
Tony Colclough – 07930 171 307
John Belling (REMS Secretary) – 07986 379 935

If you are not having lunch, or are too late to meet at The Longwall, please go straight to the plant:

Exit from the Eastern Bypass A4142 onto Horspath Road (north of Cowley Interchange)

Enter the works at Gate 7, on the right. Park in the huge car park.

Meet under the sign "Plant Oxford – Heart of Mini" on the left hand side.

On foot: Take a No 10 bus from the city centre and ask to be put down at the Horspath Road shops. The bus does a U turn at this point. Cross the ring road by the pedestrian crossing and continue down Horspath Road. Enter the works at Gate Number Seven. The entrance to the Plant is 50 yards on, on the left under the sign "Plant Oxford – Heart of Mini".

Don't forget to contact Tony Colclough or John Belling or me to report your late arrival.

John Temple



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Temple".

Attached to this flyer you will find my report on the last visit in 2011 and a photograph of the group..

Lunch Menu at the Longwall



Main Course

Sausage and Mash with garden peas and gravy

Hand-battered Fish and Chips served with Ultimate chips, garden peas and tartare sauce

Chilli Con Carne served with basmati rice and tortilla chips

6oz Gammon steak served with Ultimate chips, garden peas and either a fried egg or pineapple

Chargrilled vegetable linguine served with garlic bread

Cheese, tomato & spring onion quiche served with buttered new potatoes and salad.

Desserts

Chocolate Fudge Brownie

Caramel Apple Crumble served with custard

Profiteroles served with ice cream

Ice Cream Sundae served with either strawberry, chocolate or toffee sauce.

When you indicate your menu choice it will suffice to use just the first word for both the main and the dessert.

eg. Sausage and chocolate

John Temple



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Temple". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line underneath.

Oxford Mini Plant – Report on the 2011 visit

REMS visited the Oxford Mini Plant on Thursday 3rd November 2011. No, it's not a small sample from the botanical gardens. It's where they build the BMW Mini. The visit was so oversubscribed, that an overflow tour had to be arranged a fortnight later on 17th.

Production at the plant is at a rate of about one car every eight minutes. That's a little over seven an hour. A day's production in two shifts of 9¼ hours (but they *can* go up to 10) is about 140. So in a six day week they build more than 800 cars. They are not far from reaching the two millionth since the new mini was launched in 2001.

But what is truly amazing is that they are all different. Each customer plans his or her car on line (or an agent does it) and the choice is enormous. There are three models, Hatchback, Convertible and Clubman, each with variations. Two more models are to be added soon (Coupé and Roadster). There's a couple of dozen different colours and you can choose another colour and/or pattern for the roof, one of 27 different wheel trims, a diesel or petrol engine (choice from three sizes), right or left hand drive and a host of optional toys (like satnav, blue tooth etc). There will be a world-wide launch of the two new models in February 2012 followed by a UK launch in March. (Apparently UK and the rest of the world were the other way round at the last launch.) The basic price is about £12,000 but you can easily double that if you want everything.

You can try this for yourself at www.mini.co.uk but don't press the final buy button if you don't actually want to buy one. You will need to select the quick link "Design your Mini". The one I designed (at home, afterwards) cost £22,000.

Our guides, John and Terry, (both humorists) took us first to see the main assembly line. It was a surprise to see such a variety of cars streaming along it, every one a different colour or shape. Beginning with the basic shell, the bits are added one by one in sequence in a production line nearly a mile long. It turns back on itself a dozen times, goes up and down and even round and round.

At one point the bodies are gripped in a cradle that rotates so as to present itself to the workforce in an ergonomically optimal way. Nobody has to crawl underneath because the body is rotated through 90 degrees so that the bottom is on the side. Nobody has to stretch because the cradle is raised or lowered within reach. And so on.

Each body and each part are bar-coded so that the right component arrives at the right point at the right time, in accordance with the customer's specification. Even the engine is bar coded. It comes to Oxford as a complete unit, made elsewhere. Robots check that everything is in the right position – gear lever, handbrake, coil springs – before other robots lift it from below into position and then bolt it into place. Most importantly, robots check that it is the right engine for this individual car.

The correct fuel is put into the tank, coolant is measured in, and at the end of the line, the car is driven away. It undergoes rigorous tests before being loaded onto a train or transporter lorry and taken to its already known destination in the UK or world-wide. (It sells in 80 countries.) No cars are kept waiting on site.

After showing us the main assembly line our guides drove us in buses to the bodyshop. In an earlier process in Swindon, sheet steel is cut and pressed into several hundred differently shaped pieces. In the Oxford bodyshop these are spot welded together by robots. It was a surreal experience watching these monsters pick up a shape and, with great sweeping movements rotate it about three axes, and place it in position. Another robot would pick up another piece and with similar gestures hold it against the first. Electrodes closed in and, sometimes accompanied by huge sparks, made half a dozen or more welds, joining the pieces together. The joined up piece was then passed on to the next robot in the line.

One of the guides, Terry, without a flicker of expression said he was glad there were not very many ladies in the group. Occasionally one of the robots would reach outside the cage, pick one up and carry her inside. None had ever been seen again. None of the ladies laughed.

Somebody asked what current was involved in the welding. "Ten volts" was not well received. "Less than a volt" was better, but nobody was satisfied until "over two thousand amps" was elicited. Each weld took about a quarter of a second. Somebody muttered "Two hundred and fifty joules". Everyone was happy. Well, we *are* physicists.

I asked the other guide, John, whether the robots had a union. “Oh yes,” was the dead pan response. “Unite!” After the welding and before the assembly the body shells are painted. They wouldn’t let us into the paint shop. It has to be scrupulously clean in there. They just had to take one look at us...

They wouldn’t allow us to take any photos inside the other buildings. But they did allow a group photo in the reception area. One has the group standing between a small robot and a recently built mini, wearing the black protective coats they provided for the tour. The other was beside one of the first cars assembled on the site (in about 1912), a bull nosed Morris.

I have already been asked if I will arrange another visit next year. So if you’d like to come, watch out on John Belling’s website.

