

REMS visit to Jordan's Flour Mill And the Shuttleworth Collection

On Thursday 5 June REMS went to Biggleswade for this visit.

There has been a mill on the river Ivel since Doomsday. The present mill is Victorian (mills tend to burn down) built of wood which, today, prevents the flour being used for human consumption. The power comes from a horizontal water turbine where the water enters around the edge and leaves downwards from the centre. The whole mill works on gravity with wooden buckets on vertical belts lifting the milled grain to the 4th floor. Sacks of grain are taken to the top with an external crane, and tipped into containers, the sacks being repaired and washed ready for the flour. The grains are mixed under gravity according to what type of flour is being milled. This mill has 8 horizontal steel rollers, the first two being ribbed and the last one highly polished with a very small gap. An Archimedean screw spreads the grain along the roller. After the first roller the results are lifted to the 4th floor where it enters a stack of vibrating sieves. The bran goes off to its own sack. Grain fine enough goes to the next roller and the coarser stuff to the first roller again. This process is repeated until the flour is fine enough.

We had a very good guide and were able to walk around the working machinery and feel some of the rollers (stationary) especially the first and last ones. The reception hall and café were very good and the food looked interesting. There is a good garden there in the old fruit orchard.

However we went to the Old Warden Airfield for lunch. The Shuttleworth family bought a large area of land and in 1932 it passed to Richard Shuttleworth who was a keen mechanic interested in car racing and flying. It is a private airfield with grass runways but it never was a war-time airfield. Our guide, David Singler, was very knowledgeable. Most of the aircraft fly and are either original or rebuilds. He took us through 7 hangers talking about the structure of the aircraft and engines. There are some display panels but most of the information came from him. Today, the aircraft covering of canvas has been replaced by polyester fabric but there is still a lot of hessian. There is an original Bleriot and some earlier aircraft. The last Hanger contains small private planes. In hanger 1, the workshop, they are rebuilding a Spitfire to the original specification but it will be several years before it is flying.

While we were there, aircraft were taking off all the time and a film crew was working on a programme about WW1. Again, another excellent visit. Entry on flying days is £50.

Many thanks to Derek Walker for helping to organise this day. Next year we hope to go to Duxford.