

Visit to Moog Rocket Research

February 2017

Two separate dates became necessary to accommodate all the ACU3A members who wanted to visit Wescott Venture Park (25th February and 3rd March), such was the interest in finding out more about the rocket propulsion work of Moog U.K. Wescott Ltd.

We were welcomed by Adam Watts, Business Development and Project Manager who began by mapping out the history of Wescott Venture Park (a former airfield) and highlighted the enterprises hosted there since the 1940s when the Ministry of Defence first began developing and testing rocket engines on the site. Adam then explained the current commercial interests of Moog (shortly to be taken over by a Norwegian company) and showed us a number of models of the engine thrusters manufactured and tested by the company for powering spacecraft into orbit and controlling their performance thereafter. The considerable number of spacecraft currently in orbit includes both polar-orbiting satellites for maritime and land-based search and rescue purposes and also geostationary satellites for carrying GPS communication payloads. Moog engine thrusters are also used on the rockets that deliver equipment to the International Space Station. Adam mentioned that plans are currently being developed to capture and destroy the vast amount of debris that has accumulated in space over the years.

After a fascinating talk and a number of short videos of recent rocket launches, we were taken to one or two of the rocket test-bed facilities around the site. Walking around outside, I found it impossible not to make the comparison between the pristine, beautifully engineered high-precision models of products manufactured by Moog that we had just handled and the character of the site in which they and other companies are based - a car breaker's yard would not be too colourful a description. There were rotting and rusting buildings left over from the WW2 and even a building had been left standing in which Blue Steak had been tested (and then cancelled by the Government) all those years ago. Apparently, it cannot be demolished because it now has 'Heritage' status!

On the other hand, what came over loud and clear from Adam's presentation was the enormous enthusiasm and excitement felt by the engineers and technicians to be involved in the development of leading-edge rocket propulsion technology. All in all, it was a most fascinating afternoon.

Thank you Colin for organising not one, but two, visits so that everyone who wanted to visit Moog UK Ltd. could be accommodated.

Janet Cato

March 2017



