

HTW Group Visit to the BMW MINI FACTORY 27 June 2023

Late June, and is the two hour drive to Cowley, Oxford to tour the BMW Mini Car Plant going to be worthwhile for our How Things Work Group.

Greeted by our guide, a recently retired 38 year veteran at the plant, the first stop was at the 'white' body shop - a fairly recent £300 million+ redevelopment.

Hardly a shop, more like several aircraft hangers equipped floor to ceiling with coordinated robot assembly machines, conveyors and lifts which bring together all the trained-in Swindon facility pressed steel, galvanised body parts to form the complete body shell. Just 64 operators make sure that the line doesn't stop. Years ago that would have been 2000+. Next stop for the body shell is the paint shop for several chemical bath dips and paint spraying, to emerge in its road colour into 'Assembly'.

In 'Assembly' each MINI passes in line through a series of key fitting stages where the car parts are built onto the body - wiring harness, dashboard, wheels, engine, seats, glass, doors, etc. Each stage is typically managed by a small group of operators aided by more microprocessor controlled equipment.

The completed MINI rolls off the line less than 24 hours after the start of its journey at the rate of one every minute of the shift.

After more quality checks, roller and indoor road testing, the MINI is ready for shipping to its worldwide market.

Impressive to have seen, and well worth the journey.

