

At the back of February a group of H&S members took up the option of a tour of the GIO factory in Derbyshire, thank you Richard for sorting what was a very interesting and informative morning

First impressions, well if you are expecting a glamorous high tech looking factory you will be disappointed, in fact first impressions may leave you feeling a little uninspired, but don't be put off by the trimmings this factory is all about the finished product



Its obvious that the factory has a little air of make do and mend regarding the equipment, no continuity in the seating or décor, but then you start to see past that and then the magic starts

GIO had arranged some drinks, tea, coffee bubbly and some mid-morning nibbles, very nice and a good chance for us all to catch up prior to the tour

The finished product was on display from the start and available to us at a heavily discounted price, yep, we will have some of that and soon our party was laden with bags of GIO stockings and happy husbands knowing they had saved a few quid on the day

In two groups we were then shown into the main production area, this area is kept at a constant 28 degrees to protect the integrity of the needles, phew it was a bit warm and noisy. The machines knitting the stockings is a work of art, old noisy and not exactly high tech the machine banged away and clattered as slowly a stocking took shape, I personally was looking for some ten year old urchin to be under a machine risking life and limb to thread some more yarn on to the machine, it looked like from that type of era

What a piece of kit the knitting machine, yes its old, yes it cant be described in any way high tech, but it produces a quality product that is just not available on a modern machine. There is an obvious love and passion for these machines and rightly so, it's the heart beat of GIO and is treated with the respect this grand old man deserves and watching a stocking slowly taking shape is very therapeutic I can assure

Once the flat stocking comes off the machine its hand stitched, yes stitched by ladies sat at sewing machines creating that seam we all love, that has to be seen to be believed



I have stressed up to this point how none tech this process is, from this point it becomes a science with regards to the dyeing process, if you think these stockings are just dipped in some colour and hung to dry forget it, the science involved in getting the colour right and consistent along a production run is incredible, the possibilities of this going wrong at this stage is so tight, we were all impressed by the young man who talked us through this process, he like all the staff have a passion for what they do and because of that you forget the slightly antiquated building and its lack of airs and graces.

Bottom line is these guys take a great deal of care and apply a lot of passion to producing something unique, nobody with any business sense would take up this business model to make their next million, but these guy did and it works but it works because its unique and fuelled by a love of the product

I used to think the price we pay for stockings was expensive, having seen the GIO product produced from start to finish I think we are getting a bargain, they should be twice the price, rest assured nobody is getting rich or ordering there next Ferrari off the back of sales of stockings

More power to your elbow GIO, keep up the good work and thanks for allowing an insight to what goes on behind the scenes and the journey that thin strand of nylon goes through to get to that point where you ladies are opening a fresh new pack of nylons, great work GIO and please keep it up