

Sydney Lodge and the Aviation Industry

25th September 2001 - Sydney Lodge

No history of Hamble would be complete without some mention of the aviation industry. On this September evening we found out more about one part of it, and also had the chance to look around Sydney Lodge. Our hosts were Aerostructures, who presented an illustrated talk on the history of the site and the aviation industry since 1913. We saw early flying boats, a Spitfire with floats, Midges, Gnats and the Folland GERM - a prototype hovercraft or Ground Effect Research Machine. Then into the 1990's when they were building nose doors for huge cargo planes, and the irony in the fact that they were shipping them out via a slipway built for seaplanes nearly 60 years before. 'What goes around, comes around!'

Then a break for refreshments, and a look around the building. Designed by Sir John Soane, an architect famous for his work on the Bank of England in London, the house was built between 1789 and 1798. It is described as a neo-classical style, relying on the subtleties of light and shade. We wandered up the curving staircase, admiring the sheer elegance of proportion, the tasteful colours and the sense of serenity. As one member remarked, "You wouldn't get ulcers working in here!"

Many thanks to Aerostructures for an informative and enjoyable evening.