A word from LSEMS

Although retired, I keep in touch with what is happening in the UK milling industry by way of the London & South East Milling Society (LSEMS) of which I am Secretary. This society has been going for 69 years and is a wonderful way for milling people to network in a social atmosphere over some food, a glass of wine, while also enjoying interesting talks and visits.

I started in the Milling Industry in September, 1975 as a graduate trainee with Spillers, the training lasting two years in both feed and flour milling. I was also privileged to spend ten months in St. Gallen at the Swiss Milling School, which was a wonderful experience.

Over a career of 35 years, working for Spillers, Rank Hovis and ADM, I enjoyed various operational management positions at several different sites before deciding on a quieter life by taking early retirement in May 2010. Highlights have been a 12 year spell in Newcastle where we built a completely new milling plant and 9 years at Cambridge where, I learned all about speciality flours, namely, cake, steam treated, dried, agglomerated and micro-clean, all on home designed plants.

Over this time I consider I have been privileged to see many major changes within the Industry. Obviously, there is de-branning, but I have had no direct experience of that. For me the major changes have been in automation/manning, safety and food hygiene. Regarding the former, I can remember in 1982 hearing about Allied Mills opening their brand new plant in Corby that was manless at night; the first in the world. Little did I know then that I would actually have the honour of running that site from 2004 to 2010 for ADM.

Twenty four years later and with some major changes to the electrics and control system, it is still a fabulous plant, a testament to the equipment, design and all involved. In my early years, many sites could have 100+ people working on them whereas now, depending on the type of operation, we're often talking of 30 to 40 (excluding distribution) and normally with a much increased output.

While automation is a major factor, working practises have also changed and operatives are now able to undertake many more duties than in the past. Multi-skilled personnel are now the norm. Whilst I can remember the much heralded Health & Safety at Work Act coming in to force, at that time it was not uncommon in the maintenance departments to find engineers with fingers or parts of fingers missing. Now fortunately, such a thing is a rarity and if it does happen, then a major inquiry is likely to be conducted and even, possibly a prosecution by the Factory Inspectorate.

When I started, there was redressing directly after the mill, but incredibly to us now, none prior to packing or bulk outloading and certainly no metal detectors. Design of buildings to minimise infestation was non-existent and fumigation with methyl bromide an annual necessity. Now, with methyl bromide a thing of the past, cleaning regimes are such that fumigation is no longer a general requirement.

Away from the daily operational management, I had another role for thirteen years (2000 – 2013) and that was Examiner for Module 3, Mill Processes and Performance of the nabim Correspondence Course. I always had a keen interest in training budding millers and to have this chance of helping people learn about a process I held dear was a real privilege. Mind you, some of the students who sat my papers might have had other thoughts!

Joking apart, when you receive papers from such diverse places as, Australasia, the Middle East, Africa and Canada, it makes you feel very humble to be playing just a very small part in the milling education of so many people and I have to say that the Correspondence Course is as relevant today in training tomorrows millers as it was when incepted 70+ years ago.

In summary, I have thoroughly enjoyed my milling life and continue to do so through the LSEMS. I encourage you to do the same and make the most of our wonderful industry, it has much to offer.

Graham Bruce

Meet the Milling and Grain team

The team are travelling across the globe to industry events.

Milling and Grain est. 1881

ISSN No: 2058-5101

Annual Subscription Rates
Inside UK: UK£100
Outside: US$150/€133

More Information
www.millingandgrain.com
http://gfmt.blogspot.co.uk