National Space Centre Tech Trip Report

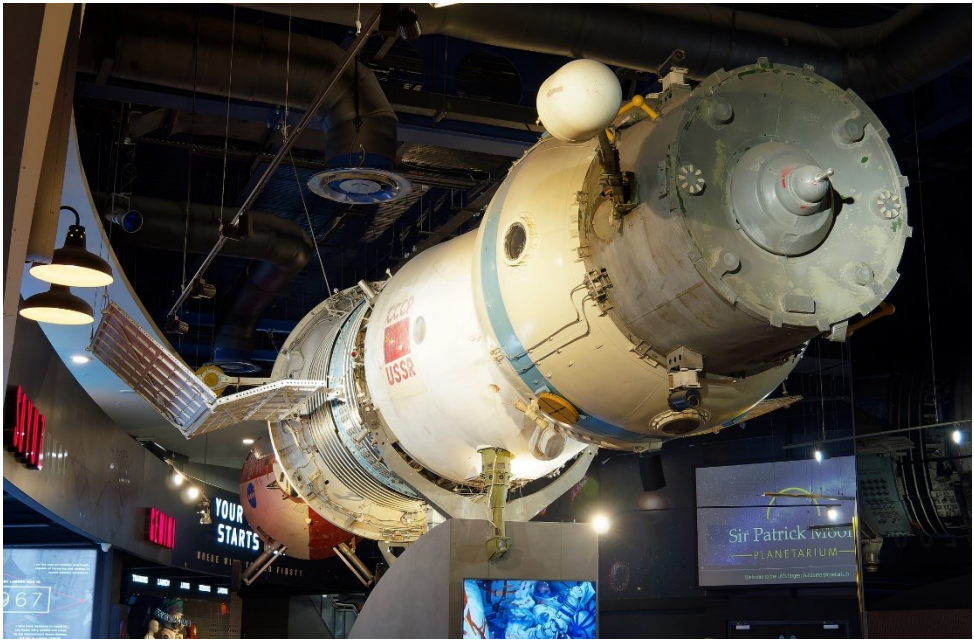


The SCSC's recent TechTrip was to the National Space Centre[2], Leicester on 24th June 2023. The trip, which was open to everyone, included a fabulous show in the UK's largest planetarium. Mike Parsons provides a report.

The space centre is about a mile from Leicester city centre, and can be accessed via a walk through a pleasant park. It is quite visible with an unusual inflated structure housing the rockets and is visible from a long way off.

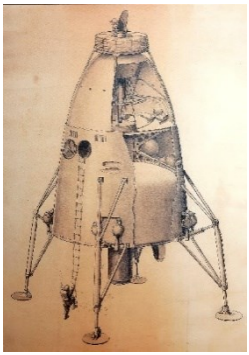
[2] https://www.spacecentre.co.uk/

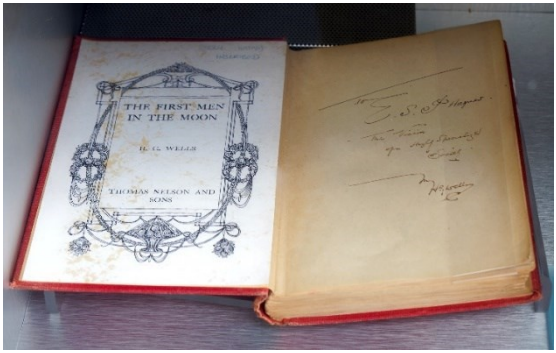
On entry we were greeted by an ancient Soyuz capsule.



We met up with the rest of the group, had a bite to eat, then proceeded to go up the tower that houses the two main rocket sections. At each level on the way up there were interesting exhibits, with lots from the early days of British rocket development. It was explained how we managed to launch a satellite from a cancelled programme and then feed the technology into European launcher developments. The satellite is still in orbit!

As well as the space hardware, there were early illustrations from the British Interplanetary Society





and an author-signed copy of H.G. Wells book 'The First Men in The Moon'

I thought the exhibits were well placed into their historic time context with the use of extensive timelines. These really helped to jog memories:



There was even a late sixties / early seventies living room on the top floor showing the sort of surroundings in which we all viewed the moon landings (I remember these colours well!)



On the ground floor were more exhibits including a mock-up of the Columbus module from the International Space Station:



We had an hour to spare before our booked show at the planetarium, so nipped out of the Space Centre and into the Abbey Pumping Station museum which is next door. The main attraction here is the pump room itself with massive Victorian beam engines. The columns, pistons and pumps were beautifully decorated, and it is interesting to compare and contrast with the Space technology next door:



We had a quick tour round the (closed) upper floors of the pump room by a very helpful member of the museum staff, before returning to the space centre for our planetarium show.

On entering the planetarium, we were bowled over by its size. The whole experience was amazing and our narrator for the show was very professional. The opening projection is very clever and makes you think you are entering an old observatory:



But this was soon replaced by a fantastic set of planet, stars and constellations:



It was an interesting visit and one recommended to space enthusiasts, especially those into early British space history. The pumping station next door is definitely worth adding to the trip, especially as it is free entry!

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