

## Over Peover WI Ladies enjoy a tour of Amazon

As Amazon came under the spot light in a dispatches Ch4 programme, a group of Over Peover WI ladies and friends were able to see the operation for themselves when they recently visited the Amazon Fulfilment Centre near Manchester Airport, which is 1 of 17 such centres in the UK.



*A quick safety briefing before the start of the tour.*

The Fulfilment Centre is 270,000 square feet over 4 floors – the size of 3.5 football pitches. It receives, stores and dispatches products around the UK. A combination of staff and robotics using artificial intelligence ensure the process is slick and fast.

Each product when it arrives (in plastic open crates) has a barcode which is scanned into the computer. The computer tells the employee where to store the product on a set of shelves in front of them which contain “slots” of varied sizes. This Centre handles small items only and as such the shelving units are cubic (around 2 feet in width and 12 feet in height) and there are 2,500 of them. Robotic “drives” move the units around and there are over 12 miles of conveyor belts in the centre. When preparing a product for dispatch, a member of staff places the product in the appropriate packaging (as determined by the computer system). The product is then placed on a conveyor belt where the address label is secured on the package by robotics before being moved to the appropriate delivery van. Unsold products are either returned to their Owner or if agreed with the Owner are distributed to charities.

There are 400 staff on-site at any one time and this is a 24/7 operation, stopping only for essential maintenance work. This is impressive at all levels and Amazon explained how, to retain staff, they offer IT, engineering and management apprenticeships as well as help fund and support non job related vocational courses, such as nursing or accountancy qualifications.

The trip was fascinating, informative and a real eye opener if you haven’t seen robotics in action! The next time we order a parcel from Amazon, we will remember the work that goes into making it happen.

*Interested in joining us?* Check out the village notice boards for more details or contact June Leach

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