Drakelow Tunnels - Underground Military Complex - Near Kidderminster

The Pamela May canal boat volunteers organised a visit to these interesting tunnels recently. They were dug 150ft into the Bunter sandstone hill at Drakelow near Wolverley in 1941 by the Ministry for Aircraft Production as part of the war effort. There are 5.0 miles of tunnels and the four largest are about 15 feet wide and 20 to 30 feet high and the longest two are about 1/6th of a mile long. Hugely impressive, it took just over a year to complete this task. They dug into the hill using explosives and hydraulic drills.

The motivation was the expectation that key factories in Birmingham and Coventry could be bombed so this was to be a shadow factory. The Rover Car Company was manufacturing engines for the Bristol Aeroplane Company and they were moved into the tunnels in the latter part of 1942, to continue manufacturing parts for airplanes more safely. There were between 500 & 700 men and women working in the tunnels and canteens, offices and some sleeping areas were provided. They normally worked an 8 hour shift and lived nearby in caravans. Security was very high.

The depot/factory was slowly wound down until 1958 when in the mid 1950's the tunnels became a Regional Seat of Government during the first Cold War era. It contained a BBC studio, a GPO Telephones communications facility etc. It was all "top secret" and new blast doors were fitted to replace the old factory wooden doors. It was known as Regional Seat of Government R.S.G.9.2. Approximately 350 people were catered for, 70% male & 30% female.

By the early part of the 1980s the depot had been upgraded again in the anticipation that another cold war era was imminent and was now known as R.G.H.Q.9.2. The complex could now cater for 140 people.

Security restrictions were lifted in early 1993 when the complex was put up for sale and the tunnels are now in private hands. The tour took 1.5 hours and it was a bit cold, dark in places and a little damp, but it was all on the level and very worthwhile.

Submitted by a Pamela May volunteer