

## DevaMog at The Secret Bunker (Nothing to do with Golf!!)



Many years ago, more than we really like to think about, both my wife Linda and I were members of the Civil Defence Corps, Headquarters Staff (Intelligence), based in Smethwick in the West Midlands. Although most of our training took place at the Council House, we knew that in the event of the Cold War escalating and there being a breakdown in political relations with Russia we would be redeployed to a Regional seat of Government housed in a “Secret Bunker” somewhere in the West Midlands. We never saw the bunker or were even told of its whereabouts because such information was classified and thankfully we never had to be redeployed. Memories of those days have long faded so we were delighted to hear that DevaMog was to visit a similar facility near Nantwich in Cheshire. Sunday 9 October dawned bright and dry if a little chilly and 15 Morgans (hoods down!) together with 1 tin top and 28 members in total arrived at the Hack Green site at the allotted time of 10.30 hours.



Immediately inside the entrance was a collection of equipment representing the Bunker’s long and varied history, the next room was of even more interest as it housed the Canteen and there was the usual call for “Coffee!”. The Bunker has served a variety of purposes since its construction in 1941, the site previously used as a bombing decoy site for the main railway centre at nearby Crewe was chosen to become RAF Hack Green, to protect the land between Birmingham and Liverpool from hostile attack.

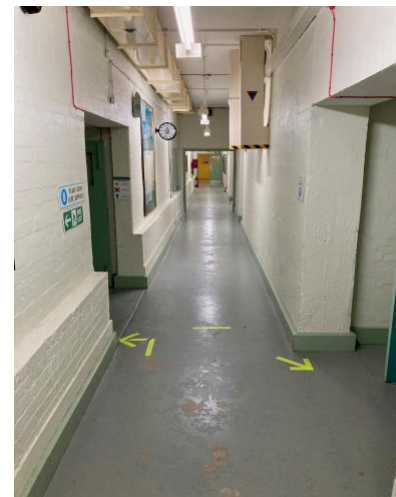
Hack Green became one of 21 fixed radar stations in the country and one of only 12 fully equipped with searchlights and fighter aircraft control. Following World War II, a major examination of radar capability showed that our existing radar defence would be unable to cope with the threat posed by fast jet aircraft, let alone nuclear missiles. Any operational station needed to be protected against the new threat posed by nuclear weapons. 'Rotor' was the code name given to the Top Secret plan to replace the Chain Home and Ground Controlled Intercept radar network. The plan involved placing 1620 radar screens into massively constructed bunkers covering the UK. Hack Green was a semi-sunk bunker known as a type R6. RAF Hack Green joined 12 Group protecting Britain against the perceived

Soviet threat of both conventional and nuclear war. With new long range radar, Hack Green could give vital warning of the approach of hostile Russian bombers and enable the RAF to intercept with fighter aircraft or Bloodhound ground to air missiles.

1958 brought yet another change in Hack Green's role when it became part of The United Kingdom Air Traffic Control System, one of 4 joint civil/military Air Traffic Control Units. Civil flying had by then totalled more than 133,000 hours per year and military flying 70,000 hours. The increasing use of airways and the advent of the Boeing 707 entering UK airspace at 35,000 ft. started to create a problem for the RAF. The solution was to establish joint air corridor radar control centres. It was in this role providing a safe radar assisted crossing service for both military and civil aircraft, that Hack Green was to see its final service as an RAF station. The station was closed in 1966, it's role having been transferred to RAF Lindholme in south Yorkshire.



In 1976 the abandoned site at Hack Green was purchased from the MOD by the Home Office Emergency Planning Division to be converted into a protected seat of government for Home Defence Region 10:2. It was cloaked in considerable secrecy over a five-year period. At a cost reputed to be some £32 million, the original Rotor radar bunker was converted into a vast underground complex containing its own generating plant, air conditioning and life support, nuclear fallout filter rooms, communications, emergency water supply and all the support services that would be required to enable the 135 civil servants and military personnel housed there to survive a sustained nuclear attack.



The Bunker is vast and accommodation and offices are spread over two floors containing exhibits reflecting the various stages of its life, from its days as a Rotor station there is the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Operations Centre and from its period as a Cold War Regional Seat of Government there is even a BBC Studio. Although only two floors are open to the public the building is reputed to consist of six floors extending to a total of fifty feet underground.



After spending a couple of hour exploring the many fascinating exhibits including a vast array of equipment, uniforms and weapons both British and Soviet , we emerged back into the sunlight relieved that things had never got so bad that we needed to visit our Bunker.

Once all the members were gathered together we travelled in convoy to the Combermere Arms at Burleydam for lunch where we not only had reserved tables but also a section of car park reserved for Morgans only. As ever at Sunday lunchtime the pub was packed but the service was efficient and an excellent lunch was enjoyed by all.



This event was organised by members Tony and Margaret Green to whom we were grateful, unfortunately they were not able to attend due to being on holiday in the sunshine on Crete!

Words - **John Smith**

Photographs – **Joe Cleary**