

= Tunnels (novel) =

Tunnels is a subterranean fiction novel by British authors Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams . It was initially self @-@ published as The Highfield Mole in 2005 , and re @-@ released as Tunnels by Chicken House in 2007 . The story follows Will Burrows , a 14 @-@ year @-@ old ' archaeologist ' , who stumbles upon an underground civilization called The Colony . Will and friend Chester flee The Colony and set out to find Will 's father , in the Deeps , a place even deeper in the Earth than The Colony .

Tunnels was critically well received , although some complaints about its lengthy , slow start were recorded . The book placed on The New York Times Children 's Chapter Books Bestseller List in February and March 2008 . It is the first book in the Tunnels series , and was followed by Deeper (2008) , Freefall (2009) , Closer (2010) , Spiral (2011) and Terminal (2013) . BBC Audiobooks and Recorded Books have released audio editions . On February 28 , 2013 , Relativity Media announced Mikael Håfström would direct a film adaptation of the novel .

= = Plot = =

The main influence in fourteen @-@ year @-@ old Will Burrow 's life is his father , Dr. Burrows , and together they share an interest in archaeology and a fascination for the buried past . When Dr. Burrows begins to notice strange ' pallid men ' where they live in Highfield , and then promptly goes missing , Will and his friend Chester go and search of him . They discover a blocked passageway behind bookshelves in the cellar of the Burrows home and re @-@ excavate it , finding the passage leads to a door set into the rock , and beyond the door is an old lift that takes them down to another set of doors . A cobblestone street lies beyond , lit by a row of orb @-@ like street lamps ; houses that appear to be carved out of the walls themselves flank the street .

They are soon captured by the police of the underground community , known as the Colony . In prison , Will is visited by Mr. Jerome , and his son Cal . They reveal Will was actually born in the Colony , and that they are his real family ; Mr. Jerome his father and Cal his younger brother . Will is eventually released from the prison and taken to the Jerome 's home , where Will and Cal 's Uncle Tam is delighted to see him and informs Will that his adoptive father , Dr. Burrows , was recently there , and had willingly traveled down into the Deeps ? a place even deeper in the Earth than The Colony . Will learns that the Styx , the religious rulers of the Colony , are either going to enslave Chester or banish him to the Deeps to fend for himself . Will refuses to abandon his friend , and Uncle Tam formulates a plan for him to rescue Chester and to take him back to the surface .

Will and Cal attempt to rescue Chester before he is sent to the deeps on the ' Miner 's Train ' , but the Styx arrive and they are forced to leave Chester behind . During the botched escape attempt , it is revealed that Rebecca , Will 's adoptive sister , is actually a Styx implanted in his family to monitor him . The boys head through a series of tunnels to the Eternal City , and old stone city , estimated by Will to be from Roman times , where the air is filled with deadly bio @-@ toxins . They avoid the Styx soldiers , who patrol the city with their vicious stalker attack dogs , and eventually emerge on the bank of the Thames . Will makes for his home in Highfield , but there Will 's health deteriorates , so Cal helps him to his Auntie Jean 's flat where he recovers . Soon they return underground to find Will 's adoptive father , and attempt to rescue Chester once again . They encounter another Styx patrol , and Uncle Tam kills a member of the Styx , whom he calls Crawfly , but is mortally wounded in the fight , and the strong willed Uncle Tam chooses to stay behind to give the boys time to escape . With the help of Imago Freebone , a member of Uncle Tam 's gang , Will and Cal escape to a small hiding place half way between the Colony and the Eternal City . There , they rest and mourn for Uncle Tam ; and are told by Imago that Chester 's train to the deeps will pass directly under their hiding spot shortly . They jump down into the train through a hole in the floor of the hiding spot , and find Chester . Together they ride down to the Deeps . In the book 's epilogue , Rebecca kills Imago , who was hiding on the surface , by poison .

= = Publication history = =

The novel was initially self @-@ published under the title *The Highfield Mole : The Circle in the Spiral* on 17 March 2005 , with a limited run of 500 hardback and 2 @,@ 000 softback copies , financed by the sale of Roderick Gordon 's house . The book received some trade press attention before launch and the entire hardback run sold within a day . On 19 November 2005 , Barry Cunningham , of Chicken House , announced that he had agreed to publish *The Highfield Mole* and a second book in the series . Cunningham , while working for Bloomsbury in London , famously signed up J. K. Rowling , and this connection led to the book being branded " the next Harry Potter "

The authors and Barry Cunningham also decided to retitle the book *Tunnels* , to reflect that it had been changed by some limited editing . With the announcement of the publication date , and press coverage in the UK , the price of the original self @-@ published books jumped dramatically , with one copy selling for £ 950 . *Tunnels* was released in the UK as a softcover on 2 July 2007 , and in the United States as a hardcover on 10 December 2007 , and as a paperback on 1 February 2009 . In Canada , the book was released as a paperback on 7 July 2007 , as a hardcover on 1 January 2008 , and a mass market paperback on 1 February 2009 . In the United States , *Tunnels* had an initial printing of 100 @,@ 000 copies . In February and March 2008 it appeared on The New York Times Children 's Chapter Books Best Seller List .

The sequel , *Deeper* , was released in the UK on 5 May 2008 (in the United States on 3 February 2009) , and a third book , *Freefall* , was published in the UK on 18 May 2009 (in the United States on 1 February 2010) . The fourth book , called *Closer* , was published in the UK in May 2010 , and the fifth , *Spiral* , was released on 1 September 2011 , the authors released the final novel , *Terminal* , in 2014 , concluding the series as a hexalogy .

= = Critical reception = =

Many reviewers criticised the first third of *Tunnels* for its slow pace , but praised the remainder of the book for its fast @-@ paced excitement , suspense , and adventure . In Britain , children 's author Philip Ardagh , reviewing for *The Guardian* , thought the long wait for Will to discover the underground city could dull the reader 's anticipation , noting that the event did not occur until page 170 . He did observe , however , that when the city is reached , " fantastic fun " begins and that from then on its well paced , exciting and ? in places ? frightening and bloody . " He thought the characters " splendidly named and drawn " . In *The Sunday Times* of 7 July 2007 , Nicolette Jones described the book as " a good adventure yarn ... [b] ut after 460 suspenseful pages it is frustratingly inconclusive . " She noted the book became a best @-@ seller the month of its release based simply on " stories about its discovery by [publisher] Barry Cunningham , who " found " Harry Potter . "

Publishers Weekly thought the book " full of holes , as if its raison d 'etre were to set up the action for future books " . Like *The Guardian* , PW commented on the slow start but noted the pace picked up once the Colony was reached . *School Library Journal* wrote that after a slow start , " the pace picks up " , and praised the plot twists and the setting . *Kirkus Review* wrote " [d] ense but exciting " and *Booklist* thought " [the novel] appears to be a very promising series kickoff " . The *Horn Book Review* felt readers " may lose patience with the slow beginning " , but observed that adventure lovers would still like the plot .

= = Other formats = =

BBC Audiobooks Ltd. released an unabridged version of *Tunnels* on CD in the UK and Canada on 5 November 2007 , and in the United States on 8 November 2007 . Reader Jack Davenport garnered critical praise for his " haunting tone " and his ability to depict the people of *The Colony* with an Irish @-@ sounding accent and their rulers with an " intimidating aristocratic hiss . " In the United States , Recorded Books released an unabridged recording on 31 October 2008 read by Stephen Crossley .

In February 2013 , Relativity Media announced it had assigned Mikael Håfström to direct a film adaptation of the novel .

The Polish publishers ' website features an interactive game based on Tunnels .