



Images Of War: Stalag Luft III by Charles Messenger is available now from Greenhill Books

THE GREAT ESCAPE IN RARE PHOTOS

A new book reveals what everyday life was like in the now infamous Stalag Luft III, and provides insight into how inmates brilliantly executed their escape plans

Seventy five years ago, 76 Allied airmen broke out of a German POW camp in Saga, Silesia (which today is in Poland), by tunnelling underneath the perimeter fence to freedom. In February 2019, just weeks from the milestone of what has since become known as 'The Great Escape', its last living escapee sadly passed away aged 99. Former Squadron Leader Richard 'Dick' Churchill was among the 73 prisoners who were recaptured in 1944 – of whom 50 were murdered by the Gestapo.

Despite this last living connection gone, the real 1944 escape from Stalag Luft III remains a fascination for many. With rare photos that reveal the daily lives of prisoners, as well as the meticulous escape operations that fooled the German guards, *Images Of War Stalag Luft III* provides a view from within the camp wire. Spanning beyond the escape itself, the book also takes you through the final years of the camp's existence, as Soviet forces closed in and the inmates were forced into a gruelling march west. For more information on *Images Of War Stalag Luft III*, visit: www.pen-and-sword.co.uk.



Image: Australian War Memorial

General view of the North Compound. Note the low warning fence beyond which the prisoners were forbidden to go. Walking the perimeter was a standard form of exercise and was one way of enabling confidential conversations, especially on escape matters



Image: Australian War Memorial

A compound cookhouse, showing the boilers in which most of the German ration food was cooked. The boilers were also the main source of hot water



Image: USAFA, SMS 329

The senior British officer meets Red Cross representatives at the main gate of his compound



Forming up for morning Appell in the south compound

Urlaubsschein

Der Lynnotwik Lantman
 aus Alkmaar (Holland)
 geb. am 22. 12. 1917 beschäftigt als Tafelwart
 ist vom 24. März 1944 bis 9. April 1944 nach
Alkmaar (Holland) beurlaubt
 Grund des Urlaubs: Lohnurlaub
(Familienheimfahrt, Krankheitsurlaub, Heimaturlaub, besondere Anlässe usw)

Der Urlauber hat Arbeiterückfahrkarte bis _____ erhalten.
 Der Urlauber ist über die für die Mitnahme von Geldmitteln in deutscher bzw. der betriebs- oder ausländischen Währung geltenden Bestimmungen unterrichtet worden.
 Der Urlauber ist verpflichtet nach Beendigung des Urlaubs die Arbeit in unserem Betrieb wieder aufzunehmen.


 den 23. März 1944
(Firmenstempel Unterschrift)

Bescheinigung des Arbeitsamts

Breslau

Der Erteilung des Sichtvermerks zur einmaligen Aus- und Wieder- einreise wird zugestimmt.
Breslau / Schl., den 23. März 1944 1944
 I. A.: Vanderstok
(Unterschrift)
 Vordr. Aust. 5760 U
 DIN A5

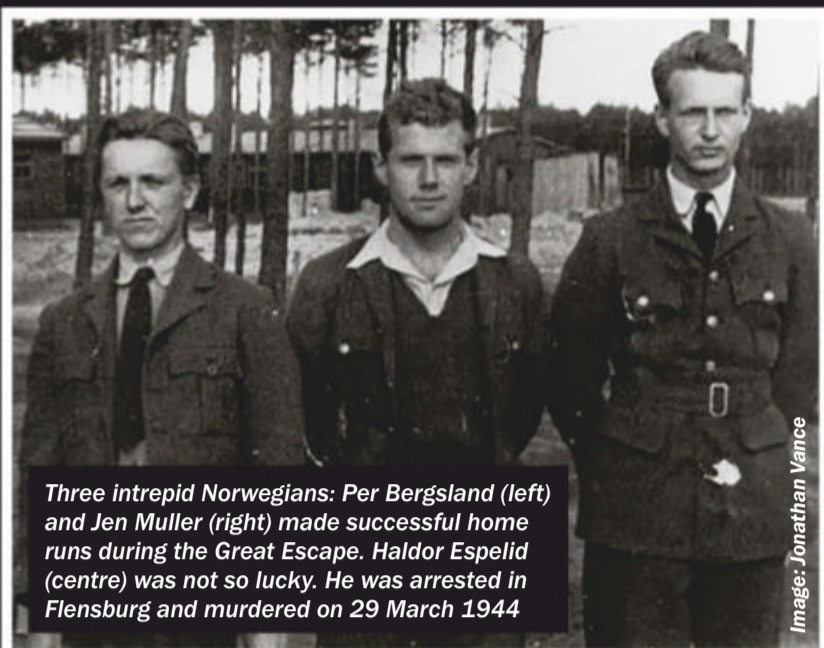
Image: Vanderstok

Below: Colonel Friedrich von Lindeiner, Commandant of Stalag Luft III, May 1942 to March 1944. He was always correct in his dealing with the POWs and they generally respected him

Above: The camp forgers became masters of their trade. A fine example of their work is this travel permit for Bram Vanderstok to travel to Alkmaar in his native Holland. It certainly passed muster and helped him to make a successful 'home run'



Image: USAFA, SMS 329



Three intrepid Norwegians: Per Bergsland (left) and Jen Muller (right) made successful home runs during the Great Escape. Haldor Espelid (centre) was not so lucky. He was arrested in Flensburg and murdered on 29 March 1944

Image: Jonathan Vance



Harry's air pump. It was made from a kitbag, with the springs being converted from chest expanders

Image: USAFA, SMS 329

To all Prisoners of War!

The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!

Germany has always kept to the Hague Convention and only punished recaptured prisoners of war with minor disciplinary punishment.

Germany will still maintain these principles of international law.

But England has besides fighting at the front in an honest manner instituted an illegal warfare in non combat zones in the form of gangster commandos, terror bandits and sabotage troops even up to the frontiers of Germany.

They say in a captured secret and confidential English military pamphlet,

THE HANDBOOK OF MODERN IRREGULAR WARFARE:

“. . . the days when we could practise the rules of sportsmanship are over. For the time being, every soldier must be a potential gangster and must be prepared to adopt their methods whenever necessary.”

“The sphere of operations should always include the enemy's own country, any occupied territory, and in certain circumstances, such neutral countries as he is using as a source of supply.”

England has with these instructions opened up a non military form of gangster war!

Germany is determined to safeguard her homeland, and especially her war industry and provisional centres for the fighting fronts. Therefore it has become necessary to create strictly forbidden zones, called death zones, in which all unauthorised trespassers will be immediately shot on sight.

Escaping prisoners of war, entering such death zones, will certainly lose their lives. They are therefore in constant danger of being mistaken for enemy agents or sabotage groups.

Urgent warning is given against making future escapes!

In plain English: Stay in the camp where you will be safe! Breaking out of it is now a damned dangerous act.

The chances of preserving your life are almost nil!

All police and military guards have been given the most strict orders to shoot on sight all suspected persons.

Escaping from prison camps has ceased to be a sport!



In 1944, after the Great Escape, the Germans issued several posters like this

Image: USAFA, SMS 25



A 'ferret' on the exit ladder

Image: USAFA, SMS 329



A foiled through-the-wire escape attempt. Two RAF officers disguised themselves as German guards, with adapted greatcoats and wooden rifles. The giveaway was that their greatcoats were too short, as can be seen when they were put alongside the genuine article

Image: USAFA, SMS 329