

The following points as noted by an escapee from France in civilian clothes illustrate the importance of conforming to the habits of the country from which a prisoner is attempting to break out:-

1. Do not march in a military fashion, but adopt a relaxed stride
2. Try to 'collect' a bicycle. They proved invaluable to several escapees
3. Do not wear a wrist watch. Carry it in your pocket
4. Sling your handbag: French peasants commonly carry one in this way, but wear one as a pack on their backs.
5. Do not use a cane or walking stick: it is a British custom
6. Get rid of flying boots and adopt a pair of rope-soled shoes as worn by peasants, if possible.
7. French peasants are generally clean-shaven, though a slight growth of beard is not uncommon
8. A beard is a very effective disguise
9. Village priests are likely to be helpful. Care should be exercised in approaching them and one should avoid being seen talking to them.

MS 96 sawed a floor of the Great Central Hotel, Muscleham station. An equivalent account for two years later by Amy Neave is too good to leave unquoted.

Before the war the C.C. Hotel held a strong attraction for me. Not that there was any romantic experience to record - a drink or two, a historical ball

- At four o'clock in the morning, before taking a night train from  
Mangalore in white tie tails.

I was drawn to the magnificent dullness & solidity of the  
hotel. I liked the brass bedsteads, the marble figures on the  
stairs & the music afternoon tea. Outside this refuge my  
young world was shattered by Hitler. Inside, I could pretend  
I belonged to a safer age.

We were directed to the reception desk where two years  
before a splendid blonde in black had been on guard. Now  
there was a sergeant at the desk.

'What is this place, sergeant?'

'The London Transit Camp, Sir.' He studied me politely.

'Where are you from, Sir?'

'Germany.'

He did not bat an eyelid.

Quite so, Sir. Then it will be M.I. 9 you want. They are  
on the second floor.

I climbed the wide stairs, with my clasp suitcase,  
still feeling I was a prisoner arriving at a new camp.

The corridors were stripped & bleak. Everywhere I could  
hear the sound of typewriters & the bustle of knops in transit.

I entered what had been a large double-bedroom, which  
now served as an office for the interrogation of returned  
escapers by M.I. 9. 2 pieces of the brass beds were  
kettle tables and wire baskets. For half an hour, I  
gloomily watched the rain falling in Mangalore Road, and the  
mist rising the distant barrage balloons.

Other escapes & evasions found almost uniformly every sort of readiness to help them among the poorer sorts of people every sort of reserve among most of the rich.

My hero (Sir) Basil Embury, who later rose to be a Major had a splendid record: captured often a paratrooper down side Humber, he escaped, was twice recaptured, and twice escaped again - leaving the old dead soldier behind him - never hit the water Paris, and turned up in England a few weeks later, wearing clothes - a kit bag included - he had eyed off a scarecrow in a Belgian field. This was a personality so forceful that people listened to him & remembered what he said, - His example & his energy did much to fix evasion firmly in the heads of the RAF's staff & of the Air Ministry.

Quite possibly there was a light dusting of German agents in the evader's mixture.

Evade, like other forms of resistance, was one of the spheres of action in which women proved themselves again & again to be at least as effective as men, & earned the equality that the other sex has at least begun to re-acknowledge.

Inculcate Foster escape-mindedness. It is an officer's duty to escape because practical. But no differentiation between ranks at all.

Silk maps, King brass compasses 12" across could be hidden in a pipe or - fountain pen, or in the back of a service button or cap badge. Over three or large found ~~for~~ <sup>boxes</sup> for Esher stores - scrape paint off with fingernail. As many as 2,358,353 compasses of various designs including 1,301,937 half-inch brass ones - 91,591 studs. Fine of instrument

makes - Brent's in the Old Kent Road, run by two elderly brothers with imagination, enterprise and highly skilled staff.

Unsuspecting objects - sliding metal clips - point in one pencil. Razor blades - north end of the magnet at the same end as the start of the maker's name printed on the blade.

Saw -  $4\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$ " dropped down trousers leg on a bit of knived or string

Escape <sup>key</sup> lock - could be converted into a shoe.

Anybody reappearing in an RAF mess after a brief recent spell in occupied territory was bound to be deluged with questions: what was it like, where did he go, what did he do, whom did he meet; above all, how did he get away? Few of these were questions that could be answered with any safety to the helper & successful evaders & escapees were universally ordered to clean up ~~any~~ <sup>say</sup> nothing.

The risks were not light. Anybody found helping would  
could help for a concentration camp at best, both for him or herself  
if anyone else living in the same house, irrespective of sex  
or age; while all the workers had to do was to produce their  
service identity discs, then ensuring their own transfer to a POW camp.

A captured worker became a prisoner of war, but those who helped were tortured & shot, and often along with their whole family. The greatest danger was the informer. The Cestifos loved using elderly, mild mannered men to do the shadowing, rather than sinister-looking youths, rightly assessing grey-haired non-descript characters were less likely to arouse suspicion.

Escapers usually walked shoeless in houses to cut noise, especially when the man of the house was at work. Now were they permitted to peer from windows or move curtains.

Now as they waited in this public place for their unknown agent, they repaired to the station buffet, preferring to pass the time of anxious anticipation somewhere where they could at least be seen to be occupied with a cup of ersatz coffee, and not just hanging about suspiciously for no good reason.

Their cell was damp & evil-smelling and we lived for many weeks on near-starvation diet.

During the last months of the occupation, the Germans again became perfectly maddening . . . . They acted quite unpredictably, without adhering to any general rules . . . .

1112. Nov 1942 Hitler hit back as a

- rejoinder for the American landings in  
North Africa, Operation Torch, and Matfeney's  
successes in the desert battle against  
Rommel, and Gena Kropps crossed the  
demarcation line.

... The swastika <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ flour over the  
white of France. . . . Everywhere,  
the French were captured by the  
Gestapo, and the German military  
presence was an obscenity to many.