

# Creativity

Resourcefulness | Innovation | Imagination | Originality | Curiosity



The mass escape of 76 Allied airman from a Nazi prisoner of war camp in March 1944 remains one of history's most famous prison breaks. The Stalag Luft III camp was designed to be escape proof for the British, American, Canadian and other Allied pilots that were sent there. They were housed in huts raised off the ground to prevent escape by digging tunnels, and microphones were buried underground along the perimeter fencing to alert the German Luftwaffe to anyone trying to escape.

However, for nearly a year the prisoners secretly dug three tunnels code-named Tom, Dick and Harry. The tunnels were buried 30 feet underground, out of the range of the microphones, and stretched beyond the perimeter fence towards a nearby forest. The prisoners used 4000 wooden slats from their beds to support the tunnel structure and then had to get rid of the dirt that they excavated. They hid the dirt in concealed socks in their trousers and discreetly sprinkled the sand into small vegetable patches outside their huts. The prisoners had created these vegetable patches so that they could subtly rake in the sand excavated from the tunnelling! They stuffed 1700 blankets against the tunnel walls to muffle the sounds of them digging and converted 1400 powdered milk tin cans into digging tools and lamps.

The original plan was for 200 prisoners to escape, but the escape process along the tunnel was slow and at 5am a German soldier on patrol found the escape hatch. On discovering 76 prisoners had escaped, the Nazis mobilised a massive manhunt and, in violation of the Geneva convention, executed 50 of the escapees. Only 3 men successfully fled to safety.

The creativity and resourcefulness of the men is immortalised in the film *The Great Escape*.

Source Christopher Klein

'The Great Escape': The Audacious Real Story [Google 'The Great Escape': The Audacious Real Story of the WWII Prison Break | HISTORY of the WWII Prison Break](#)