

If one suffered from claustrophobia you were no good. Well, we got on very well and had passed under the outside wall and all ready to break out but as it had snowed very heavily it was decided to postpone the break out. Well, we were out of luck. No, the lites did not find the tunnel but a couple of donkeys trod on the thin bit of earth left and that was that. They were a bit scared for a while in trying to trace the entrance until one brave chap volunteered and was very surprised when he came out under one of the beds.

The Italians used to take us out on walks each day in batches of up to 100. Many of the chaps did not worry about these walks and so it was always possible to get out on one of these two-hour tours. With us went about fifty or sixty guards herding this column marching in fours or fives occupying the whole road and making the local people turn off the road.

Geddes Page and I shared a room and one evening I said to Geddes that the easiest and safest way of escaping would be on a walk and suggested we try it. He, however, said it would prejudice our walks. Even though I pointed out that we were not out on parole but under heavy guard. However, he said "No" and as he was S.B.O. that was that. And so I did not pursue the matter of escaping on a walk.

I had been sharing a room with two other Colonels but as they could not put up with my snoring - and oh boy it is good - Geddes Page suggested I shared his room as nothing kept him awake.

Some time later Geddes and I were discussing some escape schemes which had been put to the Escape Committee for their approval or rejection, for they had to be satisfied that you had at least a sixty percent chance of getting away and if they approved they helped with maps etc. He told me that he had teamed up with a Greek and a British Officer, Bob Howard in an escape scheme - the Greek was Papondoris.

Their clothing was being made by our tailors and their papers prepared by our engravers. These chaps could turn out perfect stamps of all descriptions - that is revenue and rubber stamps.

"Well Ged and how do you intend getting out of the camp?" He said "We are working on a plan to cut a hole in the wire or over the wall during an air raid or some other distraction".

"Well Ged I still maintain that the easiest means of escape is on a walk". "Well Geoff, and how do you propose stopping them finding out on our return, or rather your return, to camp that there are three officers missing when they count to check that all are present?" "Well, that I have worked out and if you get the other two along I will explain fully".

Well, the four of us got together with the chairman of the escape committee and I explained that to fake the roll call the three of them would have to go into hiding for a week or so one evening. In such a large camp this was going to be child's play. The next morning on roll call there would be a real 'gedoente' and a flap in camp to find that three officers including the S.B.O. were missing.

I then went on to detail the rest of the scheme. When the time was right the three of them, having grown beards, even if not thick, and with slouch hats pulled well over their faces, they would fall in with the rest for a walk. Under their bush shirts and slacks they would be wearing the civilian suits. The shirts will have the sleeves slit and the trouser seams the same. Now these articles of clothing will be held together with piano wire which we had in the kitchen for cutting the cheeses. When on the walk a suitable time is signalled and all you have to do is pull out the wire and the bush shirt and pants fall to the ground to be picked up and hidden under their bush shirts by the very tall chaps who will be walking with you. These chaps would also obscure these movements from the tiny lites who would be marching on each flank.