

The three chaps would then quietly move out from the ranks and join the civilians marching just off the road. These garments we had prepared and so I said to Ged "Put on one suit" When he had done so I said "Now pull out the four wires" He did so and the others were surprised to see that the whole movement was just one-two-three and Bobs you uncle!

If the ItI officer on return from the walk reports three officers missing he is told to have a roll call. He will find that the correct number are present as the three have been missing for days and had been struck off the roll.

All was set for the break but we suddenly found that we had to act fast as Geddes had been advised that he was to be transferred to another camp the next morning.

To bid him farewell I asked the Camp Commandant if he would sanction a few of us getting an extra ration of Marsala to bid Ged on his way. We were normally rationed with one tot, but we could get more from a few chaps who did not drink.

To this he agreed and we had a very pleasant evening getting Bob Catteral to give us a few songs, accompanying himself on his Guitar.

At the end of the evening the three chaps - Geddes and his two pals - gathered the few items they would require during their hibernation and we bid them goodnight. We would of course see a little of them now and again when they came up for air. All this part had been very well organised and planned and there was not the slightest chance of the Ites finding them.

The next morning there was the usual roll call and as Page was not there Colonel Shuttelworth - a New Zealander and the next senior - took the parade and advised the Commandant that Page had left the camp. Oh boy, was he mad! This was the way we treated him after he had allowed us to have a party to bid Page farewell. This man was due to be transferred on that day and he would have to answer to his higher command. Shuttelworth did not argue, he simply said "That is your worry not ours". That made him rave, to the amusement of the rest of our chaps. I wish those three could have seen how they had upset the Commandant.

We were kept out for about three hours while the Ites made an unseccesful search of the camp. They had no luck. They were going to try some other method of tracing Geddes who they knew must have made a break with the other two, for shortly after I returned to my room a couple of Ites with the Interpreter arrived and asked if they could have a look round the room to get clues. They had with them two Alsations that were supposed, I think, to take the scent from some of Geddes clothing. They were fooled in this as we had thought of it earlier and my room and that of Papondoris and Howard had been well sprinkled with pepper. They were mad when the dogs began to sneeze and refused to play ball.

A fortnight later they duly fell in for a walk with the rest, well-disguised with beards and Australian slouch hats. Everything went as planned and the three got away without a hitch. As a matter of fact, as we neared the camp, Bob Howard strolled past the gate, probably to see what happened on the count being made. Only 89 of the 92 that set out returned to the camp and whether the Italian Officer in charge of the walk was scared to mention the shortage or decided he had miscounted I don't know. Unfortunately Geddes and Howard were caught on Modena station that evening waiting for a train, having been given away by some ItI lads who heard them talking English. Papondoris made good his escape, as he was a good linguist.

This scheme was again worked some time later with better success.

Page told the Ites when questioned that they had been in hiding in the town knowing that they would not be looked for so close to the camp during the last two weeks.