

# PRISON ESCAPES 6



## **Alfred George Hinds**

**Alfred George "Alfie" Hinds** (1917, Newington Butts, London – January 5, 1991) was a British criminal who, while serving a 12-year prison sentence for robbery, successfully broke out of three high security prisons. Despite the dismissal of thirteen of his appeals to higher courts, he was eventually able to gain a pardon using his knowledge of the British legal system.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## **Biography**

Hinds grew up in a children's home following the death of his father, a thief who died while receiving ten lashes (from a cat 'o 6) as a form of corporal punishment for armed robbery, before running away at the age of seven. Eventually arrested for petty theft, he would later escape a Borstal institution for teenage delinquents.

Although drafted into the British Army during the Second World War, Hinds deserted from the armed forces and continued his criminal career before his eventual arrest for a jewellery robbery in 1953 (\$90,000 of which was never recovered by authorities)<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>. Although pleading not guilty, he was convicted and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

However, Hinds later escaped from Nottingham Prison after sneaking through the locked doors and over a 20-foot prison wall for which he became known in the press as "Houdini" Hinds. He worked as a builder-decorator in Ireland and throughout Europe until his arrest by detectives of Scotland Yard in 1956 after 248 days as a fugitive.<sup>[1]</sup>

After his arrest, Hinds brought a lawsuit against authorities charging the prison commissioners with illegal arrest and successfully used the incident as a means to plan his next escape by having a padlock smuggled in to him while at the Law Courts. Two guards escorted him to the

toilet, but when they removed his handcuffs Alfie bundled the men into the cubicle and snapped the padlock onto screw eyes that his accomplices had earlier fixed to the door. He escaped into the crowd on Fleet Street but was captured at an airport five hours later.

Hinds would make his third escape from Chelmsford Prison less than a year later. He then returned to Ireland where he lived for two years as a used car dealer under the name William Herbert Bishop before his arrest after being stopped in an unregistered car.

While eluding Scotland Yard, Hinds continued to plead his innocence sending memorandums to British MPs and granting interviews and taped recordings to the press. He later sold his life story to the *News of the World* for a reported \$40,000.<sup>[2]</sup>

He would continue to appeal his arrest and, following a technicality in which prison escapes are not listed as misdemeanors within British law, his final appeal before the House of Lords in 1960 was denied after a three hour argument by Hinds before his return to serve 6 years in Parkhurst Prison.

In 1964, Hinds won a £798.98 (about \$1,000 USD) settlement in a libel suit against the arresting officer Herbert Sparks,<sup>[3]</sup> a former chief superintendent of Scotland Yard's 'Flying Squad', after Sparks had written a series of articles in the London *Sunday Pictorial* criticizing Hinds's claims of innocence. After failing to prove to a London jury the accuracy of his statements regarding Hinds's original conviction, Sparks was ordered to pay Hinds damages.

## **Celebrity status**

In 1966, Hinds published a personal account of his escapes and his clashes with the English legal system, titled *Contempt of Court*. His notorious jail breaks from three high security prisons and his successful libel case earned Hinds celebrity status. He soon became a sought after speaker criticizing the English legal system. When invited to take part in a debate before The Polytechnic (now University of Westminster) Students' Union by President Owen Spencer-Thomas in 1967, he was confronted by another attempt to deprive him of his liberty. During a drink in a nearby pub after the debate, he was kidnapped by six students for a rag week stunt and frogmarched along a couple of streets to a basement room in the college. Hinds yet again foiled his captors after securing a bunch of keys and turning the lock on them.<sup>[4]</sup>

Hinds later became a member of Mensa, becoming secretary of the Channel Islands' Mensa Society.<sup>[5]</sup>

## **References**

1. <sup>^</sup> *The Daily Herald*, 3 August 1956, page 3
2. <sup>^</sup> "Alfie the Elusive". *TIME Magazine*. Time Inc. 1962-03-16. Retrieved 2009-03-07.
3. <sup>^</sup> Massingberd,H. *The Very Best of the Daily Telegraph Books of Obituaries (Pan 2001)* p.118
4. <sup>^</sup> Alfred Hinds foils his young captors. The Times, 3 March 1967, p3.
5. <sup>^</sup> *Daily Telegraph 30 July 2001* Obituary: Percy Rolf

## 'Houdini' lag Hinds finally hauled back behind bars

CHELMSFORD prison's most famous escapee, Alfred 'Alfie' Hinds, stole the headlines when he was finally recaptured after slipping away through its bath house.

Hinds, 44, made the Essex Chronicle's front page nearly 50 years ago on December 9, 1960, when he was taken back to Springfield Road's heartbreak hotel in handcuffs.



1.

HOUDINI HINDS: Great escaper Alfred Hinds

The East End burglar and safecracker went on to gain folk-hero status and was dubbed 'Houdini Hinds' by the press.

Hinds appeared briefly before Chelmsford Magistrates Court on a charge of having escaped from the county jail in June, 1958.

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He was given six months loss of remission on his original sentence and went on to serve the remaining eight years of a 12-year sentence for being concerned in what the paper called a "big robbery" in 1953.

Hinds was originally locked up for his part in the jewellery heist – of which he declared his innocence – escaping from Nottingham Prison by copying a key to the workshop after memorising its shape.

He scaled a 20ft prison wall before being captured in Ireland eight months later.

Hinds then brought a lawsuit against authorities charging the prison commissioners with illegal arrest, using it as a ploy for his next escape at the Law Courts.

Two guards escorted him to the toilet, but when they removed his handcuffs Hinds bundled the men into the cubicle and snapped a padlock that his accomplices had smuggled in and earlier fixed to the door.

He escaped into the crowd on Fleet Street, but was captured at an airport five hours later.

Hinds made his third escape from Chelmsford Prison less than a year later, scuttling back to Ireland where he lived for two years as a used car dealer under the name William Herbert Bishop before his arrest after being stopped in an unregistered car.

While eluding Scotland Yard, Hinds continued to plead his innocence sending memorandums to British MPs and granting interviews and taped recordings to the press.

Back at Chelmsford Prison he was given a period of one month non-association, meaning he was confined to his cell for 28 days, but he was allowed normal prison food and visits from his wife Lila.

The Prison Board told Hinds they were not vindictive and that the sentence was such that if and when his innocence of the robbery charge was ultimately proved, then the whole matter could be put into the hands of the Home Secretary.

He still strongly protested his innocence.

Despite the dismissal of thirteen of his appeals to higher courts, he was eventually able to gain a pardon using his knowledge of the British legal system.

After his release in 1964 he gave lectures arguing for more intelligent police officers and won a libel action against the arresting officer Herbert Sparks, a former chief superintendent of Scotland Yard's 'Flying Squad'.

Sparks had written a series of articles in the London Sunday Pictorial criticising Hinds's claims of innocence.

After failing to prove to a London jury the accuracy of his statements regarding Hinds' original conviction, Sparks was ordered to pay Hinds damages.

In 1966, Hinds published a personal account of his escapes and his clashes with the English legal system, titled Contempt of Court.

His notorious breaks and successful libel case earned him celebrity status, becoming a sought after speaker criticising the English legal system.

After taking part in a Students' Union debate in London in 1967 Hinds was kidnapped for a rag week stunt and taken to a basement room at the college.

He foiled his captors after securing a bunch of keys and turning the lock on them.

### **The last days of the prison breakout**

Convicted killer John Massey's recent escape from jail was big news. Not surprising. The time when one inmate a week could jump the walls is now long gone



Roger Daltrey plays John McVicar in the film version of his story. Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Last month the nation was alerted to the news that a 64-year-old man had slipped over the wall of one of London's oldest prisons and was on the run. The authorities warned that the man might be dangerous. A photo issued by the police was accompanied by the rider that "the hair is greyer than the image available".

That was hardly surprising. John Massey, who was recaptured 48 hours later, has been behind bars more or less continuously since he was arrested in 1975, making him one of Britain's longest-serving prisoners, along with Harry Roberts, who killed three police officers in 1966, and the Moors murderer, Ian Brady. So who was this unlikely breakout artist and why did he become one of the very few people to make it out of jail these days?

Massey was a carpenter from a close-knit family in Camden, north London, before his arrest. In 1975, he and a friend had been drinking in the Cricketers pub in Clapton, east London, and became involved in an argument with the bouncer, Charlie Higgins. There had been animosity between the men before and, according to Massey's sister Jane, Higgins was believed to be responsible for gouging out another man's eyes in a fight. Massey and another man were thrown out of the pub; they returned with a sawn-off shotgun. Then, in what he described later as "a moment of drunken madness", Massey shot and killed Higgins. He also shot in the air as the police tried to block his escape route. At the Old Bailey, the following year, he was sentenced to life with the recommendation that he serve at least 20 years.

Just before he had completed his minimum tariff in 1994, Massey failed to return from a home visit and fled to Spain where he remained on the Costa del Sol until the following year when he was recaptured and returned to jail. There he would spend a further 13 years before, in 2007, he was released on parole, on the condition that he stayed at a bail hostel in Streatham, south London.

At the time, his father was dying and Massey asked if he could be moved to a bail hostel in north London to be near him but his request was turned down. He went to north London nonetheless and stayed there until his father had died. He was duly returned to jail. Two years later, he absconded from Ford open prison in West Sussex to visit his sister Carol, who was by then also terminally ill in hospital. She died shortly afterwards but he did not return to prison and spent the next 10 months effectively on the run and living in Barnet, north London, with his mother.

It was to see his mother, now 86 and suffering from the early stages of dementia, that he went over the wall this time. "She had been saying, 'When can I go and see John?'" says Jane Massey. "That was the only reason he did it. Three days after he was recaptured she had a stroke and now she's in hospital in Hastings."

Jane says that her brother was not a threat to the public. "He had a parole hearing in March and got turned down as a risk to life and limb, which he's not. At the worst, he's disobedient. I think they took very, very drastic measures when he broke his bail conditions [in 2007], just to make a point. We would have understood if he had committed an offence while he was out but all he was doing was building a summerhouse for our mother. They have been very, very harsh on him."

He is now being held in Belmarsh maximum security prison.

Scaling the wall of Pentonville is no easy feat. "It's an old Victorian nick and they don't put people who are real security risks there because they know it's possible to get out," says one former inmate. "It's difficult, though. People have often broken their legs or their ankles because there are big blocks sticking out at the bottom of the wall. When John escaped, they were searching local houses because they probably thought that he might have broken a leg and not have been able to go far."

Massey's escape was striking for being a rare event. In 2010-11, there were only five breakouts from prisons in England and Wales, accounting for 0.01% of the prison population. In less security-conscious times, escapes were common. In 1995/6 they were pretty much a weekly occurrence, with a total of 52. Things have changed dramatically. Last year there were five escapes, up on two and one in the previous two.

Getting over the wall used to be almost a matter of honour for prisoners. One of the famous postwar practitioners was Walter "Angel Face" Probyn, who notched up 16 escapes from different penal institutions, winning himself the rather tortuous nickname of "the Hoxton Houdini".

"You don't need a lot of patience to plan an escape, because you've got nothing else," he told me when I interviewed him several years ago. "It's a labour of love, something you really enjoy doing, so you take your time doing it. It's like a hobby." In Durham prison, he met up with the robber John McVicar, and in 1968 the two of them took part in one of the most spectacular escapes, celebrated in the film *McVicar*. He offered escape routes to other prisoners over the

years and was always surprised when they turned him down: "I don't know if they had become totally institutionalised."

Some prisoners have always decided that an escape is not worth the bother. Paul Buck, in his book *The E-list: Notorious Prison Escapes*, quotes Alfie Hinds, who escaped from three high-security prisons in the 1950s: "The vast majority of prisoners are resigned, if not content, to do their bird. Some will escape if the chance is handed to them on a plate but all they want is a brief taste of freedom; for instance, the chance to spend a few days with their wife or girlfriend." Some do it for the sheer hell of it. The late safe-cracker Ruby Sparks, when he escaped from *Strangeways*, even left a poem in his cell for the prison officers: "The cage is empty/ The bird has flown/ I've gone to a place/ Where I'm better known."

George Blake, serving 42 years for spying for the Soviet Union, famously escaped from *Wormwood Scrubs* in 1966 and, with the help of two peace activists whom he had met inside, made it all the way to Moscow.

While the rope over the wall may be the traditional route, there has been at least one aerial escape: in 1987, John Kendall and Sydney Draper got out of *Gartree* prison in a hijacked helicopter. Kendall was caught 10 days later but Draper was not recaptured for more than a year.

Why do so few people escape now? Partly because security is much tighter than it was, partly because the escapee's family and friends immediately come under scrutiny and remain so until the prisoner is recaptured. "Things are not quite so tough in prison nowadays," says Peter Scott, the "king of the cat burglars", who was famous for his ability to get in and out of buildings. "I think that's one of the reasons."

Another cause for the drop in actual prison escapes is that it is now seen as simpler to escape from the private security vans taking prisoners to and from court or between prisons. Feigning an illness to get into hospital with a better chance of an escape has also become popular. But there are new obstacles, including greater international co-operation and the sharing of information on the internet. The days when train robber Ronnie Biggs could pop over the wall, as he did at *Wandsworth* in 1965, get some plastic surgery in Paris and start a new life with his wife and sons in Australia are long gone. For Massey, who has now clocked up more than 35 years behind bars for his "moment of madness", the chances of getting out again must seem slimmer still.



Over the past six months I have skimmed through over a dozen Wiki-pages on British criminals. I don't know if there's something in the air across the pond, but somehow their criminals seem

often to come packaged with cinematic plotlines and quirky twists. I've even written about a few of them.

Today Ms. Wiki has led into my subject-matter lineup a criminal from 20<sup>th</sup> century England. Around the time that American crime stories were packed full of names like Gambino, Lucchese, Corleone, and a young Biff Tannen, this British celebrity crook was a mafia of one. Actually, it's entirely possible that he wasn't a criminal at all, that he was innocent. If so, Alfred George Hinds was innocent with style.

Hinds' childhood was such an obvious road to criminality, it's almost cliché. His father had been arrested for armed robbery when Hinds was tiny, and his punishment was ten lashes from one of these:



The whipmaster must have doubled his intake of crumpets that morning, because he lashed the life right out of the elder Mr. Hinds. Alfred was sent to an orphanage, from which he bolted at age seven.

A seven-year-old kid in the big city has to make a living, so naturally Alfred turned to crime. As a teen he was arrested for petty theft and sent to a borstal, a kind of young-offenders' prison. The borstal system, which was meant to be 'educational', was really just Prison Jr., and the program wound up discontinued in England after 1982. But for Alfred Hinds, it was only a temporary layover. He escaped.

Hinds' next interaction with the government came when he received their invitation for a complimentary vacation to the continent to kill some Nazis. Hinds accepted, but deserted shortly after arrival. Fleeing was becoming his trademark.





This cost him his chance at being immortalized in action figure form.

In 1953 Hinds allegedly staged a massive jewelry robbery that netted him a small fortune, \$90,000 of which was never recovered. I say 'allegedly' because Hinds spent the next several years protesting his innocence. Like I said, with style.

He pled not guilty, but was convicted and sentenced to twelve years in prison. Hinds had escaped an orphanage, escaped kids-prison and escaped the British Army – he wasn't about to rot away ten prime years of his adulthood for a crime he claimed to have never committed.

Hinds was locked up in Nottingham Prison. Somehow, he found a way to slip through the locked door of his cage, then bolted over the twenty-foot wall to freedom. The authorities at Nottingham Prison were perplexed.

Having been dubbed 'Houdini Hinds' for his escape, Alfred fled north to Ireland. He worked on and off as a builder/decorator, but Scotland Yard caught up with him in 1956 and once again Hinds was incarcerated.

Alfred Hinds took a cool look at his situation and realized (probably quite correctly) that when he got locked up again, they'd make sure he was locked up to stay. So he calculated a means for escape that would put him at an advantage. He sued the cops.

Whether or not he had a case wasn't important. He sued for illegal arrest, and Hinds was legally entitled to the trial. For this plan, he'd need a few friends.

First he needed someone to smuggle a padlock to him while he was at the Law Courts. I'm not certain how often Hinds was frisked, but I'd think the timing had to be pretty slick for this. Then he needed someone to affix a pair of screw eyes onto the outside of a toilet stall near the courtroom.



“Screw eyes” in a bathroom stall doesn’t mean *that*. Get your mind out of the gutter.

Padlock in hand (or in waistband or in rectum... the article isn’t clear where he hid the thing), Hinds requested to use the loo. Two guards accompanied him, and when they removed his cuffs Hinds pulled out his John McClane fighting moves and crammed the two guards into the stall. He then slapped the padlock on the door and sauntered out into Fleet Street, blending in with the crowd.

A brilliant, flawless escape. But it only lasted about five hours. Hinds’ record of swift thinking and outsmarting the authorities took a sputtering hit when he showed up at an airport later that same day and found himself back in handcuffs. Just a handy tip – when you successfully evade police custody in the largest city in your particular nation, find a place to be anonymous for a little while. Don’t go to an airport. Wow.

Hinds’ next big escape came from Chelmsford Prison, and the details have been tragically shuffled loose from any and all pertinent sites on the web. He was apparently the only person “in living memory” to have escaped from Chelmsford at all, so perhaps his method was covered up and concealed in an effort to deter copycats. Here’s how I imagine it went down.

Working in the prison laundry, Hinds methodically removed the elastic waistbands from all prison underwear, fashioning them into a large slingshot which he used to propel himself over the wall. Good enough story? Alright, let’s move on.



They should never have planted this tree in the prison yard.

It was less than a year and Hinds was on the run again. He changed his name and started a new life as a used car salesman in Ireland. He routinely sent memorandums to members of the

British Parliament, claiming his innocence. He spoke with the press and sent them taped recordings, even sold his life story to the *News of the World* for a \$40,000 paycheck. Hinds remained under cover of mystery for two years until he was stopped with an unregistered car and hauled in.

Hinds was sent to Parkhurst Prison where he actually served the remainder of his term. While locked up he executed one more walloping jab at the authorities, filing a libel suit against Scotland Yard's Herbert Sparks, the guy who had arrested him. While Hinds was on the run and broadcasting his innocence through the press, Sparks had written a number of articles criticizing Hinds' claims. Because Sparks' specific criticisms couldn't be backed up, the court sided with Hinds. Sparks was forced to pay about £800 in damages.

Hinds was a free man, just in time to see the publication of *Contempt of Court*, his autobiography. He was a national celebrity, became a member of Mensa, and was often called to speak publicly about his criticisms of law enforcement and the legal system. That would be Hinds' ultimate fuck-you to the powers that be.



The last of many.

One last great Hinds story. In 1967 he was invited to debate at the Polytechnic (now known as the University of Westminster), and found himself kidnapped by six students in what must be one of the most bizarrely inappropriate pranks in college history. Hinds was locked in a basement, but quickly found a way out, locking up his captors in the process.

Hinds was simply never meant to be caged.

Okay here goes. Alfie Hinds made his own key and unlocked his prison-cell door.

In those days prisons never had toilets in any of the prison cells. Cons simply used an aluminium pot (chamber-pot).

Alfie Hinds was the first to take advantage of the 'soft metal' handle which he removed from his pot. He fashioned the handle into a key. During the night there were very few screws on duty 2 per 1000 cons. Alfie unlocked his cell door and walked out. Likewise the other doors in the prison had the same locks fitted so he had a free-rout of escape.

The manner of getting over the prison wall was even easier. He simply used a number of very weak threads. He attached a chair leg to all the threads and rotated them until they formed into a rope. At the end of the now cord-like strands, he fastened individual bricks and threw each one (separately) over the wall. When he had thrown sufficient weight in bricks over the wall he completed rotating the fibres; causing all the individual strands to become 1 thicker rope.. So it was he scaled the wall and took all the evidence of escape with him.

I came by this info from Alfie personally.

Kind regards

Ed

**rebecca dingvean** wrote:

There are incorrect facts in this story.....he was my great uncle

Hi Rebecca,

I am notoriously dependent on Wikipedia as source material for this experiment, and I do occasionally run into errors. Please let me know what is inaccurate. Thanks!

### ***5 Insane Prison Escapes You Won't Believe Actually Worked***



#### **#2. A Famous Jewel Thief Locks Two Guards in a Bathroom**



Getty

Alfie Hinds was a professional British jewel thief who gained celebrity in the mid-20th century for his repeated prison escapes -- he broke out of three different high-security prisons, maintaining the whole time that he was totally innocent. It turns out that using your impressive jewel thief skills to break out of prison is a bad way to prove that you're not some kind of jewel thief.

The first time he escaped, Hinds managed to simply unlock the prison doors after memorizing the shape of the key and making himself a copy. He was caught again eight months later, and this time they decided it was best not to show him what the key looked like.



Photos.com

"Just let him go, man. He deserves it."

Hinds' second escape came after he filed a lawsuit against his arresting officers for what he claimed was an illegal arrest. But this was an absurd ploy. When he was taken to the courthouse, he asked to use the restroom, but he had already arranged for accomplices to leave a padlock next to the bathroom door. When Hinds' guards removed his handcuffs so he could drain the

lizard, he promptly grabbed both guards, threw them into the bathroom stall, and slammed the door shut, padlocking it behind them. Then he ran away like Daffy Duck.

After years of bouncing in and out of the big house, Hinds finally "escaped" prison for good, this time legally. Apparently, he was also some kind of law prodigy, and was able to manipulate a legal loophole to get out of more prison time, even though he was obviously guilty. After this whole mess, the law was changed to prevent this kind of thing from happening again, and Hinds was rewarded with fame and fortune for being little more than a lucky jerk with some law books.



Getty

He actually sued the guy who arrested him. No joke.

### **#1. Richard Lee McNair Just Can't Stay in Prison**



Getty

In 1987, Richard Lee McNair killed a man and wounded another while attempting to rob a grain elevator in North Dakota (because what else are you going to rob in North Dakota?). The state gave McNair two life sentences and then proceeded to utterly fail in keeping him there. Over the next couple of decades, McNair escaped from two prisons and one county jail, and showed up on *America's Most Wanted* so often that they may as well have made him co-host.

The first escape was from a police station jail in 1988. Sitting in a room *with three detectives*, McNair used lip balm to grease his hands up enough to escape from his cuffs, and then got out somehow and made the cops chase him around town in a scene we can only assume was accompanied by "Yackety Sax."



AMW via Castanet.net

Now *that* is the wacky face that comedy is made of.

Four years later, McNair escaped from a state penitentiary by crawling out through the ventilation ducts, something we thought was only possible in movies. After that, he evaded police for 10 months before they caught up with him and locked him back up, this time in a maximum security federal prison. Unfortunately, McNair just saw this as a challenge.

In 2006, McNair got himself a job in prison repairing mail bags, and he took the opportunity to climb inside one and *mail himself out of prison*. After being forklifted to a nearby warehouse, McNair dusted his hands off and simply walked away.



Photos.com

"Um, sir, this one ... *farted*."

To make things even worse, McNair was spotted hiking along a railway line, questioned, and *let go* by a police officer later on the day of his escape, an event that was caught on video. How did he get away this time? Despite the fact that he gives two different names during the course of the conversation, has no identification, and *matches the description* of the escaped convict that the cop is looking for, the officer simply gives him some pointers on railroad safety and sends him on his way. So, apparently, he used a Jedi mind trick.

McNair was eventually caught again and is currently back in prison. At least that was the situation at the time this was written. It might have changed by now.

### **Prisons (Escapes)**

#### §Lieut.-Colonel Bromley-Davenport

Is my right hon. and gallant Friend aware that once escaping prisoners cross their first half-mile from Strangeways, they are practically impossible to catch, because there are so many places where they can hide? Would it not be a good thing to institute some automatic alarm signal so that the public could assist and act as valuable spotters? Is it not also a mistake to keep hardened criminals for a long time in local prisons like Strange-ways, and would it not be a good thing to move them to penal settlements like Dartmoor, where, instead of getting on the nerves of the good people of Manchester, they could try their luck with the Dartmoor ponies?

#### §Major Lloyd-George

I can assure my hon. and gallant Friend that the suggestion made in the first part of his Question will be looked into. In regard to the second part, there is another Question later on the Order Paper dealing with that point.

#### §22.Mr. E. Johnson



asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from Strangeways Prison, Manchester, in each year since 1945 up to the present date; and what proportion of them were serving sentences of over three years imprisonment.

§Major Lloyd-George

As the answer contains a number of figures I will, with permission, circulate it in the OFFICIAL REPORT.

§Following is the answer:

§ The figures of escapes from within the prison are as follows:

1945 ... .. nil

1946 ... .. 2

1947 ... .. 7

1948 ... .. nil

1949 ... .. nil

1950 ... .. 1

1951 ... .. 3

1952 ... .. 5

1953 ... .. 11

1954 ... .. 7

In addition, there were 14 escapes from working parties outside the prison. 25 of these escapes were by prisoners serving sentences of over 3 years.

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§27.Mr. L. M. Lever

asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will hold an inquiry into the recent escapes from Her Majesty's prisons and take steps to prevent a recurrence by introducing necessary reforms.

§Major Lloyd-George

Methods of escape vary so widely that I do not think any general inquiry into escapes would be useful. The Prison Commissioners hold an inquiry into any particular escape that appears from the prison governor's preliminary report to call for special investigation; effect would normally be given to any recommendations made by the officer holding the inquiry with a view to preventing a recurrence.

§Mr. Lever

Is the right hon. and gallant Gentleman aware that it is just because the methods of escape differ so widely that there is public anxiety about recent occurrences and their widespread character? Cannot something more be done and a full inquiry be made to see whether the escapes are symptomatic of something which is not in order? The Minister ought to deal with the matter by a full inquiry. Will he undertake it?

§Major Lloyd-George

An inquiry is held on each occasion after an escape of this character. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that escapes cannot be prevented in penal establishments except by conditions which would be intolerable to public opinion in this country?

§Mr. E. Johnson

Is my right hon. and gallant Friend aware that the public as a whole have no idea of what prison uniform or overalls look like, and would it not be a good thing to make information on the subject more widely known, or to introduce a more distinctive uniform?

§Major Lloyd-George

I can only say that I will look into the matter.

§39.Mr. George Craddock

asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances a prisoner recently escaped from Dartmoor; his record of previous escapes; and what steps he is prepared to take to prevent a similar occurrence in future.

§Major Lloyd-George

This prisoner was employed, with others, in repairing the courtyard outside the prison gate, and made off in mist and failing light. He 552 had previously escaped in 1945 and 1946, from Rochester and Portland Borstal Institutions respectively, and earlier from an approved school. It is not possible to ensure that prisoners employed outside the prison wall will never escape, but the rarity of escapes from this prison suggests that the standard of supervision is adequate.

§Mr. Craddock

Having regard to the record which the right hon. and gallant Gentleman has given, does he not think that something further ought to be done? Surely, those who work outside of prison walls should, in particular, be more strongly guarded and have greater protection?

§Major Lloyd-George

I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that this is largely a matter of judgment. The Prison Commissioners will discuss the question with the governor.

§40.Mr. Yates

asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in view of the increased tendency of prisoners to escape and the number of disturbances which have occurred in a number of Her Majesty's prisons during the past year, if he will undertake to visit a representative selection of prisons, so that adequate steps can be taken to improve the present position.

§Major Lloyd-George

I do not accept the implication of the first part of the Question. During 1953 and 1954 there have not been more than four incidents which could properly be described as disturbances. Although the number of escapes was high in 1953, the number in 1954 does not so far exceed the numbers in 1951 and 1952. I propose to visit prisons as opportunity may permit, and I shall bear in mind the need for continuous review of all measures necessary to preserve good discipline and control.

§Mr. Yates

While I appreciate the answer given by the right hon. and gallant Gentleman, may I ask him to bear in mind that many who are associated with prisons feel that the time has come when the Minister responsible ought really to go to the prisons in order to find out exactly what is happening? May I urge the importance of that upon the right hon. and gallant Gentleman? I trust that he will visit a representative selection of prisons.

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§Major Lloyd-George

As I have said, I am proposing to visit prisons as often as opportunity permits. I have not had a great deal of time up to date, but one of the first things I did on assuming my present office was to make arrangements to visit a prison very shortly.

**6 Insane Prison Escapes That Actually Happened**

By: Luis Prada January 11, 2009

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What do you get when you take thousands of guys, give them tons of free time, creativity and a healthy portion of desperation? Some freaking awesome prison escapes.

Some of these were badass enough to have had movies made about them, but all of them made Andy from *The Shawshank Redemption* look like a lazy pile of shit.

#6.

Stalag Luft III Escape (aka The Great Escape)



Even with the Geneva Conventions basically turning Salag Luft III into the World War 2 prison equivalent of the Ritz-Carlton, British inmate Roger Bushell felt he had some escaping to do. He and 49 other prisoners devised a plan to dig three tunnels -- codenamed Tom, Dick and Harry -- out of a prison that was specifically designed to piss off tunnelers with its loose yellow subsoil and, in a huge dick move, seismograph microphones buried along the fences. If a shovel made even the slightest vibration the plan was shot, leaving the prisoners to fall back on their untested "It was Sandworms" alibi.

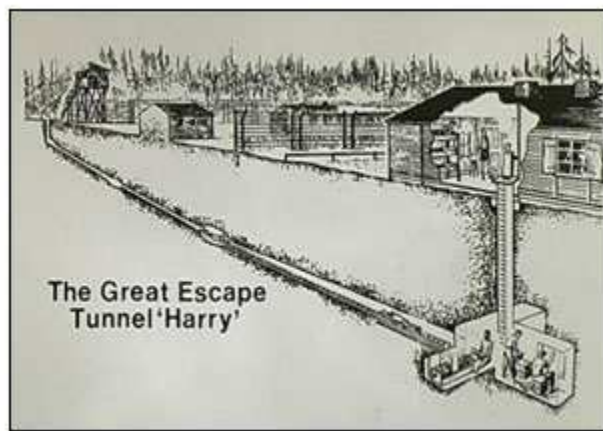


Not as uncommon an alibi as you'd think.

The team found brilliant ways to nullify every problem that popped up:

- \*The team dug 30 foot deep holes to evade the microphones;
- \*For faster tunnel traveling, they created a railway system;
- \*They built what were, essentially, Christmas tree lights that plugged into the camp's grid;
- \*The crafty escapees even constructed a tunnel ventilation system composed of nearly every piece of junk lying in your garage: bed parts, hockey sticks, ping-pong paddles, knapsacks and flattened tin cans of powdered milk with the ends removed.

When rumors swirled that some of the prisoners may be moved to another prison, they picked up the pace which, finally, caught the attention of the guards who soon discovered the "Tom" tunnel. Just before the completion of Harry, some of the diggers were, indeed, sent off to a newer, Nazier prison and never got the chance to escape.



But the rest started crawling through the tunnels on a moonless March night in 1944. They got 76 men through before, finally, when the 77th inmate gophered his way out someone realized an escape was going down.

The Nazi guards later took count of all of the missing supplies that were used in the escape: 4,000 bed boards, the complete disappearance of 90 beds, 52 tables, 34 chairs, 10 single tables, 76 benches, 1,219 knives, 478 spoons, 582 forks, 69 lamps, 246 water cans, 30 shovels, 1,000 feet of electric wire, 600 feet of rope, 3,424 towels, 1,700 blankets and more than 1,400 milk cans.



"Do you guys ever think it's weird that we've only got, like, three beds in this whole prison?"

Keep in mind they were able to get all of this stuff while in a Nazi prison camp. Think about that the next time you find yourself bartering like a nomadic goat herder just to get a couple of ballpoints from your office supply manager. Virtually all of the escapees were caught and either killed or re-imprisoned, but we still like to think this was the point the Nazis realized they could not win a war against an army full of MacGyvers.

#5.

The Pascal Payet Escapes (aka "Get to the Choppa!")



After killing an armored truck driver, Pascal Payet was arrested and sentenced to a 30-year stint in France's Luynes prison. But Luynes prison had one major flaw in its design that Payet knew how to exploit: it had a sky over it.

By 2001, Payet was probably up to his cheeks in prison rape so he decided to leave... via helicopter that some buddies of his hijacked. Sadly, the details of this glorious break out are scant but we're assuming it involved him leaping in slow motion and grabbing onto the skids of the helicopter in midair.



"And, now, could you point me in the direction he took the helicopter, officer?"

After roaming free for a couple of years, Payet must have figured that if dropping a helicopter into a prison worked once, why wouldn't it work again? In 2003, he hopped in a helicopter, flew back to Luynes prison and busted out three inmates. These men were friends of his, but we're pretty sure he was just having one of those moments where you do something so cool you have to do it again just to make sure.

After breaking out his buddies, Payet was captured and given an additional seven years on his sentence. This time he wasn't placed in just one big-house, but was moved to a different prison every three months or so in a sad attempt to make the process helicopter proof. It remained that way until July of 2007, when a helicopter carrying four masked men landed on the roof of Grasse prison in Southeast France during the start of the night shift.



"Holy shit I can't believe how easy this is."

The men broke Payet out of his isolation ward and flew off him off into the sunset. And just to prove that he knows a thing or two about symbolism, this break-out occurred on Bastille Day, a French holiday that commemorates the storming of a prison. Payet, you glorious son of a bitch...

#4.

The Mother of All Break-Outs



What is more powerful than the love of a mother? And it's even more powerful when a mother uses a big rig truck to mow down your chest cavity and ram their love directly into your heart.

Jay Junior Sigler, an inmate in his eighth year of a 20-year sentence for armed robbery at Everglades Correctional Institution, started out his day just like any other:

11:28 AM: Walk off threat of aggressive anal penetration.

2:03 PM: Artfully dodge a shanking.

2:58 PM: Receive aggressive anal penetration.



3:00 PM: A visit from Mom and some friends.

But unlike most Plexiglas and wired phone visits from loved ones, this one went a bit differently. In broad daylight an 18-wheel truck driven by Sigler's friend, John Beaston (who was accompanied by Christopher Michelson and Kelly Mitchell), rammed through not just one, but four prison fences, immediately followed by a Cutlass Supreme driven by none other than mommy dearest herself, Sandra Sigler.



"The parking lot was full"

When Jay, who was in the courtyard, reached the car, Beaston tossed him a shotgun and together they fired at the oncoming guards. Jay and everyone from the truck jumped into Mrs. Sigler's Cutlass like kids after Karate practice and hightailed it out of there.

They then made a pit stop at local mall and swapped vehicles; Jay and Michelson in one car, Mama Sigler, Beaston and Mitchell in another. Jay and Michelson had made it all the way to Pompano Beach, some 40 miles away from the prison, when they realized they were being followed. In a desperate attempt to flee, they sped into an alley and burst out the other side just in time to blow by a stop sign and slam into an oncoming vehicle, killing the 55-year-old driver.

Michelson, who had recently been released from prison himself, was brought in on charges of first-degree murder along with Sigler. As for Mother Sigler, she and her car mates were arrested at a gas station a few miles from the prison shortly after the car swap. Just goes to show that, holiday or not, a visiting parent will inevitably fuck up your day.



"By all accounts the mother masterminded everything," said Miami-Dade detective Rudy Espinosa. This didn't turn out to be entirely correct as Jay Sigler had actually conceived of the plan some four months earlier. Mama Sigler just handled the small, intricate details of the escape like, for instance, ramming a huge fucking truck through four prison gates.

#3.

The Texas Seven



On December 13, 2000, seven inmates at the John Connally Unit -- a prison in Karnes County, Texas -- escaped via an amalgam of brute force and the kind of plan an elementary school child would concoct.

The escape began when inmate Rivas convinced Maintenance Supervisor Patrick Moczygamba to allow him and some fellow inmates to forego lunch in order to wax the floors of the maintenance room. They lured Moczygamba into the warehouse and once there, Rivas duped him by essentially shouting, "Hey! Look over there!" Moczygamba acquiesced and was greeted with an ax handle to the head.



Threatening him with a homemade knife, they undressed Moczygamba, bound him and tossed him into an electrical room, beginning a chain reaction of events more akin to a comedy of errors than a jail break. As new people entered the maintenance room, they were each given a variation of the "Hey! Look over there!" technique, along with a punch in the face and the threat

of a stabbing from a new and totally random sharp object. In all, they captured nine supervisors, four correctional officers and three uninvolved inmates using simple vaudevillian misdirection.

By impersonating various supervisors over the course of three phone calls, the inmates not only made good with one of the 12 daily head counts, but gained access to a gatehouse under the guise of monitor installers. No guards questioned them because a little company is welcomed after hours of trying to decide whether or not masturbating at work is a fireable offense (answer: No).

After entering the gatehouse, some more phone trickery allowed the inmates to headlock the guard into submission and gain entry to the radio tower. In the tower, inmate Halprin snatched a revolver off of a desk and, in a moment that proves that a gun can get you anything you want in life as long as you point it at a human, the guard opened the gate and even told the inmates about the weapons cache at the bottom of the tower.



"Hey, how come Garcia and Harper get to smile like dipshits?"

The Texas Seven drove their way out of the back gate, effectively launching one of the largest manhunts in U.S. history. They were eventually hauled in after appearing on the TV show *America's Most Wanted*. Some of them actually demanded a television appearance before they would agree to surrender, presumably planning to point at the camera, say "Look behind you!" and then escape once more while all of America had its back turned.

#2.

Antonio Ferrara Goes Commando



Antonio Ferrara was the personification of the classic movie gangster: He was a part of a group of veteran bank robbers -- nicknamed the "Dream Team" - that was labeled the "most dangerous gang in Europe" by Interpol. He was also famous in the French underworld for his remarkable ability to create the perfect explosive concoction that could blow open a safe and leave the cash within unharmed. At the age of 29 he was sentenced to serve an eight-year prison term for two armed robberies and had been suspected of at least 15 more.



And to top it all off, he looks like a total douche.

Five years into his prison career, he decides to call it quits and escape the only way an explosives expert knows how (hint: explosives). At 4:30 AM on March 12, 2003, six men drove up to the front gate of Fresnes Prison in fake police cars, clothed in police uniforms and ski masks. Some fired AK-47s at the two adjacent guard towers, while the other group blew open the front gates with rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Yes, someone came up with a plan even less subtle than the truck-driving mom up there.

With all of this going down, Ferrara was presumably awoken by the sound of gun fire and explosions outside. He must have figured that he needed to take the initiative and check it out himself, so he blew open his cell door with a stick of dynamite that is believed to have been given

to him by a guard (either the guard was a co-conspirator or Ferrara is one hell of a smooth talker).



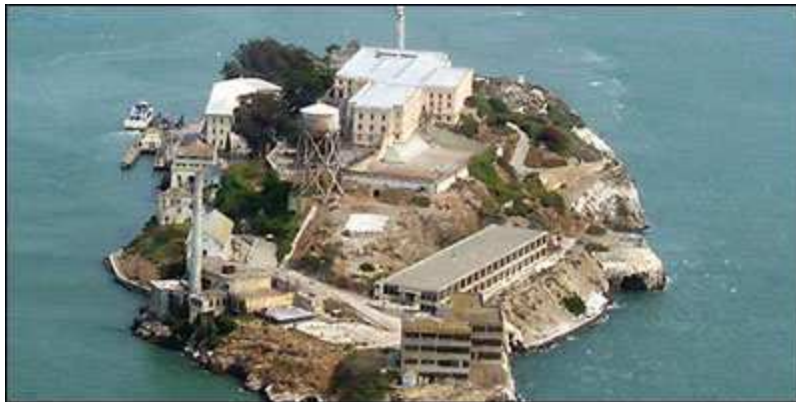
"Come on, just let me borrow it, don't be a dick."

Once out of his cell, he joined up with his clan of fellow Michael Bay enthusiasts and fled. It all took 10 minutes.

After being on the loose for four months (and being declared France's most wanted man by President Nicolas Sarkozy) Ferrara was recaptured in a Paris bar during a massive undercover operation. When Ferrara came face to face with the arresting officer, he was quoted as saying only one thing: "You again?"

#1.

Alcatraz



No surprise here. When most people think "prison escape," they think Alcatraz.

Frank Morris's long history of jail breaks prompted the move to a more inescapable place. So how about the San Francisco prison with tough iron bars, twelve cell checks per day and, oh yeah, is surrounded by the frigid waters of the Pacific.

Frank and his fellow inmates Allen West and Clarence and John Anglin realized there just so happened to be an unguarded utility corridor just behind their cells. The corridor housed a ventilation shaft, which led to the roof. In need of digging tools, West placed stolen drill bits and a vacuum cleaner motor under a napkin, waved his hand and poof, out came a drill somehow.



Made of a toothbrush, drill bits and *magic!*

The drill (the sound of which was masked by an equally ear-grating accordion) loosened the air vents at the back of their cells by making closely spaced holes around the cover so the entire section of the wall could be removed.

After they gained access to the corridor everything else just fell in line: The Anglin brothers fabricated crude paper mache replicas of their own heads, with real human hair from the prison barber shop. Over fifty prison-issued rain coats were either donated by or stolen from fellow inmates and were meticulously glued together to form a six-by-fourteen foot inflatable raft. Morris even modified one of the ear-grating accordions into an air pump for inflation.



Un-fucking-canny.

On June 11, 1962, after two years of planning, Morris decided that it was time to make with the breaking out. Allen West, who was so bogged down with making life preservers and rowing paddles, had yet to finish the holes in his cell's air vent. Morris didn't give a shit and went ahead

with the plans. They placed their dummy heads in their beds and set off through the air vent holes. They were going to break out West, but they opted to flip him off, laugh and high-five instead. They scaled 30-feet of plumbing to the roof and shimmied down 50-feet of piping to the freedom fortified dirt below.

In an interview, West later said that the rest of the plan would have involved paddling to nearby Angel Island, resting and then riding the tides to shore where they would go their separate ways. No one knows if Morris and the Anglin's completed that portion of the plan, but many experts pretty much agree that they did. Why?

Because before they came along every escapee that had made it to the waters of around Alcatraz was later found with a bad case of the deads. The bodies of Morris and the Anglin's, however, were never found. Also because the story becomes kind of pointless if they just sank like rocks after all that effort.

### **In praise of .....ALFIE HINDS AND JOHN HANNAN**

When I was a kid there would be regular reports of ALFIE HINDS escaping from prison.....usually in some totally innovative way and then would write long letters to the press about the injustices he suffered. Hinds father had died during a prison flogging so no wonder he wanted to put one over on the prison system. He escaped from the dock of the old Bailey by having a padlock passed to him in a handshake, getting two guards to take him to the toilet where his accomplice had fixed a 'screw eyes' device to attach the padlock, bundling the guards into the toilet, closing the padlock and leaping from the window. Hinds was like a magic circle member in his brilliantly planned escapes and ended up as a member on Mensa.

However I can report that John Hannan has outdone him in that Hannan is now the world's longest escaped prisoner. In December 1955 he escaped from the Verne prison in Dorset after serving just one month of his sentence for assaulting two police officers. He has now been free for 57 years. I understand Dorset police are not now actively looking for him but best check the coalhouse eh?

**just as u said!prison break shows the easiest stuff!and there are few ways given for prison breaking in if tmrrw comes by sidney sheldon and the count of monte cristo..jimmy valentine!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**these were the books that showed scenes of prison break!as far as i have read! There have been many famous escapes throughout history.**

**\* In 1756 Italian writer Giacomo Casanova famously managed to escape from one of the most secure prisons of his time: the Doge's Palace.**

**\* The Great Escape, 76 Allied POWs (primarily Commonwealth airmen) escaped from Stalag Luft III during World War Two. 50 of the escaped POWs were rounded up and shot by the Gestapo, while only 3 succeeded in reaching neutral territories.**

**\* The Libby Prison Escape occurred on 10 February 1864, when 109 Union officers escaped from Libby Prison, a Confederate POW camp in Richmond, Virginia during the U.S. Civil War. Of the 109, 59 succeeded in making it back through Federal lines.**

**\* Frank Morris, John Anglin and Clarence Anglin escaped from 'inescapable' Alcatraz Island; although the fate of the escapees is unclear.**

**\* John Dillinger served time at the Indiana state penitentiary at Michigan City, until 1933, when he was paroled. Within four months, he was back in jail in Lima, Ohio, but the gang sprang him, killing the jailer Sheriff Jessie Sarber. Most of the gang was captured again by the end of the year in Tucson, Arizona due to a fire at the Historic Hotel Congress. Dillinger alone was sent to the Lake County jail in Crown Point, Indiana. He was to face trial for the suspected killing of Officer William O'Malley during a bank shootout in East Chicago, Indiana, some time after his escape from jail. During this time on trial, the famous photograph was taken of Dillinger putting his arm on prosecutor Robert Estill's shoulder when suggested to him by reporters.**

**\* On March 3, 1934, Dillinger escaped from the "escape-proof" (as it was dubbed by local authorities at the time) Crown Point, Indiana county jail which was guarded by many police and national guardsmen. Newspapers reported that Dillinger had escaped using a fake gun made from wood blackened with shoe polish.**

**\* In December 1979 political prisoners Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris escaped from South Africa's maximum-security Pretoria Prison. After 18 months of plotting, testing, preparing, and learning how to pick locks and forge keys, the trio escaped the prison the same way they came in: through 10 locked doors.**

**\* Soviet spy George Blake escaped from Wormwood Scrubs on 22 October 1966, assisted by Pat Pottle, Michael Randle and Sean Bourke. Both Blake and Bourke reached the safety of the Soviet Union.**

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**\* Colditz Castle was used as an 'escape-proof' prisoner of war camp during World War II; over the course of 300 escape attempts 130 prisoners escaped[citation needed], of which 30 eventually managed to reach friendly territory. Escapees tunneled, disguised themselves as guards, workmen or women, sneaked away**



through sewer drains, and even planned to use a glider to get over the wall. (Further research has proven that the glider attempt would almost certainly have been successful, but the War ended before it was to be put into action. By this time the glider had been fully assembled.[citation needed])

\* **André Devigny, a French Resistance Fighter during World War 2, escaped Montluc Military Prison in Lyon with his cellmate in April 1943.**

\* **A Japanese murderer Yoshie Shiratori had broken prisons four times between 1930s and 1940s. A novel and TV-drama Hagoku was based on his true story.**

\* **Accused safe cracker Alfie Hinds tried to proclaim his innocence by repeatedly walking out of prison. He became famous for escaping from Nottingham Prison after sneaking through the locked doors and over a 20-foot prison wall for which he became known as "Houdini" Hinds. He later escaped from the Law Courts at the Old Bailey. Escorted by two guards, he went to the lavatory where they removed his handcuffs outside. Once inside, Hinds bundled the handcuffs and snapped the padlock onto screw eyes inserted on the door by his unknown accomplices and escaped into the crowd on Fleet Street. Hinds sealed his notoriety by making a third escape from Chelmsford Prison.**

\* **Jack Sheppard escaped from prison several times, using elaborate planning, and careful noting of the time that guards patrolled certain areas.**

\* **The escape of Lucien Rivard in Canada in 1965. Rivard was consequently named the Canadian Newsmaker of the Year by the Canadian Press.**

\* **Before being sentenced to 12 years in the Federal Corrections Institution at Petersburg, Virginia in April 1971, Frank W. Abagnale is said to have escaped from both a British VC-10 airliner, and the Federal Detention Center in Atlanta, Georgia. His autobiography was later adapted to the screen for the 2002 release of Catch Me If You Can, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.**

\* **Serial killer Ted Bundy escaped twice in 1977.**

\* **In the Maze Prison escape on 25 September 1983, 38 Provisional Irish Republican Army members escaped from HMP Maze in Northern Ireland, the biggest prison escape in British history.**

\* **In 1984, six death row inmates escaped Mecklenburg Correctional Center, making it the largest mass death row escape in American history. All were recaptured within 18 days, and all six men would eventually be executed. The final execution took place in 1996.**

\* **Claude Dallas escaped from a penitentiary in Idaho in 1986 and spent a year on the run.**

\* **Danny Ray Horning escaped from the Arizona State Prison in Florence, Arizona on May 12, 1992, and a 55-day manhunt ensued as Horning fled the authorities. The pursuit ended on July 5, 1992, near Sedona, Arizona. Horning led authorities hundreds of miles through the Arizona wilderness, and committed numerous kidnappings during the manhunt.**

\* **1996, August. Englishman David McMillan escapes from Thailand's Klong Prem prison – sometimes called the Bangkok Hilton – while awaiting trial on drug charges. McMillan cut the bars of his shared cell, scaled four walls before dropping over the electrified outer wall using a bamboo ladder, and then skirted the moat**

while hiding his face under an umbrella from the prison factory. The break-out described in ESCAPE (published 2007).

**\* Prisoners used guns to escape Whitemoor (HM Prison)**

**\* In 1998, the Belgian child molester Marc Dutroux notoriously managed to escape for a few hours due to an embarrassing series of events. He was caught the same afternoon, but the incident forced two politicians to resign and deepened the loss of faith in the Belgian judicial system.**

**\* Martin Gurule escapes from Texas Death Row in 1998. Found dead a few days later.**

**\* In March 1999, Lucy Dudko hijacked a helicopter during a joy-flight over Sydney and ordered the pilot to land inside Silverwater Jail where her lover, John Killick, was serving 28 years for armed robberies. The helicopter plucked Killick from the prison's exercise yard and avoided a shower of bullets fired by prison guards. The couple then went on the run, eluding police around the country until their luck ran out in a Sydney caravan park six weeks later.**

**\* The Texas 7 escaped on December 13, 2000, 6 were captured after over a month and a half on the run, the 7th killed himself before being captured.**

**\* In New York, two convicted murderers escape from Elmira State Penitentiary in July 2003, both recaptured in 2 days.**

**\* Brian Nichols escaped from the Fulton County courthouse in Atlanta, by overpowering a guard. He then murdered a judge, a court reporter, a police officer and US Customs Agent. He then held a woman named Ashley Smith hostage for a night in her own home, before he allowed her to leave to visit her daughter. Once she was released, she called the police, and he surrendered peacefully to SWAT officers who arrived on the scene.**

**\* On November 4, 2005, Texas Death Row Inmate Charles Victor Thompson escaped from the Harris County Jail by acquiring a set of street clothes and pretending to be a representative from the State Attorney General's office to fool the corrections officers. He was recaptured two days later in Shreveport, Louisiana, 200 miles from where he escaped.**

**\* Richard Lee McNair has escaped from custody three times, including from a federal maximum-security prison in April 2006. He has been recaptured by the RCMP on October 25, 2007 in Campbellton, New Brunswick, when he was stopped while driving a stolen vehicle.**

**\* Kelly Allen Frank (who had plotted to kidnap the infant son of talk-show host David Letterman) and William John Willcutt escape from a Montana prison on June 8, 2007. Both were recaptured on June 13, 2007.**

**\* On December 15, 2007 inmates Jose Espinosa and Otis Blunt escaped from the high security level of the Union County jail in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Espinosa was awaiting sentencing on an aggravated manslaughter charge, while Blunt was being held in lieu of bond on robbery and weapons charges. They escaped by scraping away the mortar around the cinder blocks making up the cell walls. They then smashed the block, hid the pieces in a footlocker and covered the holes with pin-up pictures. To delay knowledge of the escape, they made dummies out of sheets and pillowcases and left them in their beds. Espinosa and Blunt remain at large.**

**\* Ralph "Bucky" Phillips escaped from prison on April 2, 2006, in New York, by cutting through the ceiling in the kitchen with a can opener. On June 10th he was suspected of a shooting which ended with two troopers dead. Bucky was later caught in Warren County, Pennsylvania, on September 8, 2006, his escape led police on the largest manhunt in New York history**

### **Most Famous historical escapes**

**There have been many famous escapes throughout history.**

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# Four guns pointed...

By DOUGLAS THOMPSON

FOUR Flying Squad marksmen pointed revolvers at John McVicar in the corridor of a London flat yesterday. He slowly raised his hands and said: 'Stop. There are two women with me.' Then he surrendered without a struggle.

It was the end of a 744-day hunt for McVicar since his escape from Durham Prison's top - security E Wing.

Armed detectives were posted on the roof of a building in Stratheden Parade, Blackheath, London, S.E., where McVicar set up home in a two-bedroom, £40-a-month flat above a dress shop more than a year ago.

Early morning shoppers were in the parade as more than 50 police took part in yesterday's operation.

Four Flying Squad officers and a dog-handler were ordered to go in and 'take' McVicar.

First they got a key to the flat from the man who rented it to McVicar—Mr Ronald Roback, 41, owner of the Andre dress shop.

They climbed the stairs past Mr Roback's own flat immediately above the shop and quietly opened the door of the McVicar flat on the second floor.

Facing them was a corridor. They shouted: 'Is anybody there?'

From a doorway walked

Turn to Page 3, col. 1

## Three Yard men accused

Summonses were served on three Scotland Yard detectives yesterday following a 12-month investigation of charges made against them.

The summonses, returnable at Bow Street magistrates' court on December 21, are against Det. Inspector Bernard Jack Robson, Metropolitan and provincial crime squad. He is 44 and joined the police force in 1952; Det. Sergeant Gordon Harris, regional crime squad. He is 41 and joined in 1949; Det. Sergeant John Symonds, M Division. He is 35 and has been in the police for ten years.

## Hijacker jailed

ROME: Raffaele Minichiello, 21, the American Marine who hijacked a U.S. Boeing 707 airliner half-way round the world last year, was jailed yesterday for seven and a half years.

## McVicar - Four Guns Pointed

*Daily Mail November 12th 1970*

FOUR Flying Squad marksmen pointed revolvers, at John McVicar in the corridor of a London flat yesterday. He slowly raised his hands and said: 'Stop. There are two women with me.' Then he surrendered without a struggle.

It was the end of a 744-day hunt for McVicar since his escape from Durham Prisons top - security E Wing.

Armed detectives were posted on the roof of a building in Stratheden Parade, Blackheath, London, S.E., where McVicar set up home in a two-bedroom, £40-a-month flat above a dress shop more than a year ago.

Early morning shoppers were in the parade as more than 50 police took part in yesterday's operation.

Four Flying Squad officers and a dog-handler were ordered to go in and 'take' McVicar.

First they got a key to the flat from the man who rented it to McVicar—Mr Ronald Roback, 41, owner of the Andre dress shop.

They climbed the stairs past Mr Roback's own flat immediately above the shop and quietly opened the door of the McVicar flat on the second floor. Facing them was a corridor. They shouted: 'Is anybody there?' From a doorway walked McVicar, wearing jeans and a sweater. He had just got out of bed and was slow to realise what was happening. Then he saw the four revolvers pointing at him and told the detectives to be careful as he was with



Click To Enlarge

two women.

Two Flying Squad men grabbed him by the shoulders and one held a revolver to his head. McVicar was handcuffed.

Detectives then burst into a bedroom where they saw two women, dressed in bras and panties, lying in two single beds pushed together.

A Flying Squad detective, who confronted McVicar said last night: 'Had he had a shotgun in that corridor it could have been very messy.

'He had every chance to do something—but he didn't. He was overcome. He seemed reconciled to it. McVicar, who had found loopholes in countless police nets, was taken to Forest Gate police station. The first thing he asked for in a cell—a pencil to do a crossword puzzle.

From the flat police took a suitcase and a hold-all crammed with, among other things, knives, a two-way radio, a postman's uniform and a balaclava helmet.

McVicar was charged with Unlawful possession of a sawn-off shotgun and 17 cartridges, without a firearms certificate, on or before July 19 last year at Hampton Road, Forest Gate, E.

He was also charged with having the weapon during the same period while a prohibited person—a man sentenced to more than three years in jail. He will appear in Newham magistrates' court today.

### **WOMEN held in the police raid**

The women with McVicar at the flat were charged with harbouring him and will appear in court today.

They are Shirley McVicar, 32, described as his wife, of Rom-ford Road, Manor Park, London, E., and Kathleen Shaw, 23, a hostess, of Usher Road, Bow. E.

Miss Shaw, a hostess at the Crazy

Horse Club, in Marylebone, came to London from Yorkshire last June.

Her 25-year-old boy friend said last night : 'Her parents are very respectable people. They run a sub-post office and general store in a little town outside Leeds.

'Kathy is a lively girl who likes music and drinks and is always out for fun. Mad Kathy we call her because of the way she's always running around.

'The last time I saw her was at mine o'clock on Tuesday morning when I brought back her puppy Blackie which had strayed.'

Miss Shaw's mother decided to take an overnight train to London.

### **JOKE on pursuers in suburbia**

John 'Muscles' McVicar played a joke on his pursuers when he settled in suburbia,  
He called himself Allan Squires—after the first detective who arrested him on a criminal charge.

And he worked hard at his new role as a respectable character.  
He wore horn-rimmed spectacles and his slimmed-down figure with a slight stoop gave no hint of the fitness fanatic he is.

He bought Moet Chandon champagne at £2 a bottle at the next-door off-licence, placed bets with local bookies, drank in a pub across the road and drove two cars—a chocolate-coloured Cortina and a Lotus Elan sports car.

Police methodically searched McVicar's flat yesterday. One thing they did not find was cash. A detective said : 'There wasn't a penny.'

Mr Stanley Sinnix, 44, who runs the off-licence, said last night: 'Mr Squires



was like a clerk—always neat and quiet. Sunday was the day I always saw him. He was like anybody having a day off, relaxing and walking the dog.

'The woman I knew as Mrs Squires came in once a week and bought two bottles of champagne. In all their time here that was all they bought apart from a few bottles of brandy.'

Landlord Mr Roback said: 'The whole thing seems incredible. Mr Squires seemed the ideal tenant, always paying me on time in cash—'mostly in fivers.

He said McVicar's two children visited the flat 'but only at bank holidays and weekends.'

Mr Roback's wife Barbara, who manages their dress shop, said : 'His wife came into the shop once or twice to, buy dresses. She always paid in cash.'

A police panda car parked each weekend outside McVicar's front door^in a side alley— watching for trouble from teenagers who gathered outside a. cafe and the pub.

### **ESCAPE throng It the shower room**

McVicar was jailed for offences including armed robbery, robbery with violence and using firearms.

He escaped from Durham with two other men -- Walter 'Angel Face' Probyn and Joseph Martin, serving life for murder—by removing brickwork in a shower-room to get through a duct to an exercise yard.

The other two were quickly caught. But McVicar was free. One man relieved that Mc-Vicar has now been caught is his 'double'—supermarket manager Derek Brinson, 33, father of

four, of Bayharn Road, Morden, Surrey. He has been arrested four times in mistake for McVicar.

### **SQUAD set up for special search**

Every working morning for more than two years McVicar's dog-eared file was opened by Detective Chief Inspector Tom Morrison at Scotland Yard.

Shortly after the Durham escape Mr Morrison was ordered: 'Find McVicar.' Since then, with a hand-picked group of Special Branch colleagues, that was his sole object.

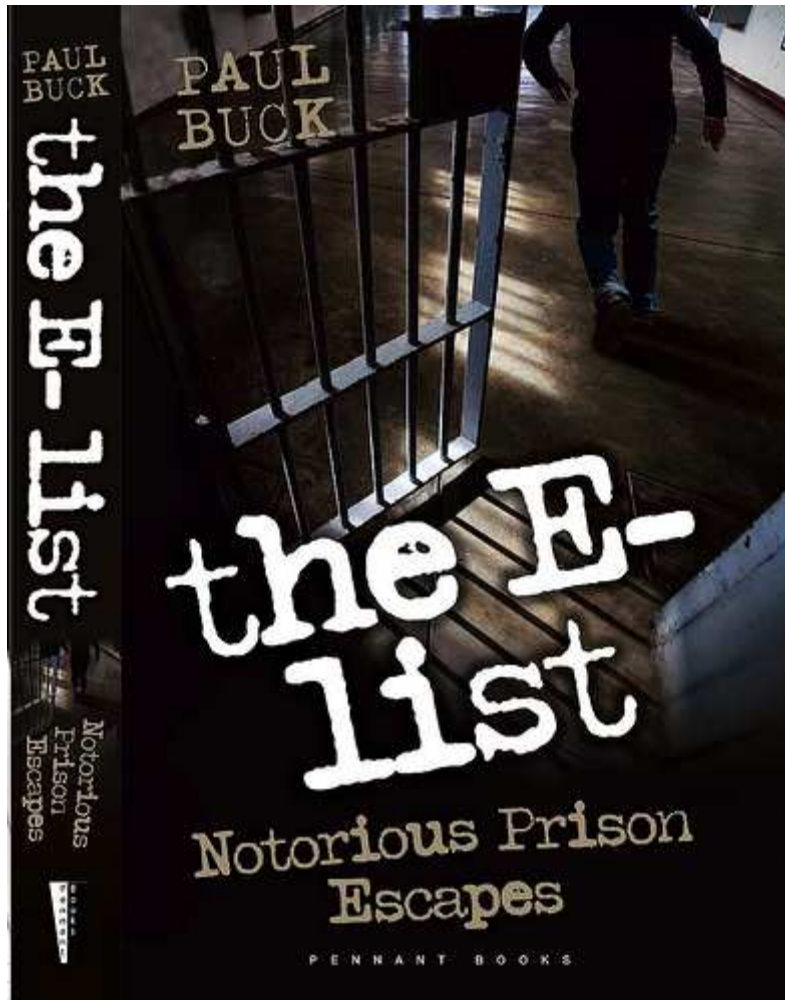
Detectives probed McVicar's background and family. His associates were questioned, his haunts watched.

As soon as information looked promising Mr Morrison ordered raids to be carried out on likely addresses. Always he and his men were armed. At last came success.

### **Exit Theory: An Interview with Paul Buck**

Interview by Steve Finbow.

*Men jump from windows, from trains, starve themselves to slip through prison bars, they scale walls using ladders made from sheets, dive into helicopters, excavate tunnels with nail files & teaspoons – one even wore his teeth down to nothing chewing through wooden bars. Paul Buck's The E-List is a thoughtful & entertaining history of the art of escape. From the 18th century exploits of Jack Sheppard to latter-day escapees such as the laxative-using Robert Cole, from Devil's Island to Dartmoor, Buck charts the means & methods of escape, the meticulous planners & the sheer opportunists, the captured & the still at large, the heroes & the sociopaths.*



*Paul Buck worked at Better Books in the 1960s, his memories of this period can be found in Iain Sinclair's anthology London: City of Disappearances. His work derives from text, from language, & through various performance approaches often resulting in other textual realizations. He has written somewhere in the region of 50 books, including the novel The Honeymoon Killers. In the 1970s he edited the literary/arts magazine Curtains, which published writing by Georges Bataille, Jacques Derrida, Iain Sinclair, Allen Fisher, Eric Mottram, & Paul Auster. He has performed at the ICA as part of an Artaud/Genet weekend along with artists including Peter Sellars, Patti Smith, & Pierre Guyotat. He has translated works by Bernard Noël, Pierre Klossowski, Maurice Blanchot, Catherine Breillat, & Raul Ruiz. He has worked with Marc Almond, Melinda Miel, & 48 Cameras. Spread Wide (2004) is a work generated from correspondence with Kathy Acker. His current projects include works on Paris & the cinema & a new novel.*

**3:AM:** Foucault wrote that "(t)he carceral texture of society assumes both the real capture of the body & its perpetual observation; it is, by its very nature, the apparatus of punishment that conforms most completely to the new economy of power & the instrument for the formation of knowledge that this very economy needs." How were you drawn to these stories? Is it because you see a connection between the 'outsider' status of the prisoner/escapee & the writer/artist?

**PB:** Notions of the outsider go way back for me, not only because I read Colin Wilson's book (*The Outsider*) at a tender age (Wilson has probably been more influential than many imagine) & followed up his references, but because my mother was Italian & I was reared as a Catholic & had to jump ship as soon as I could, mentally & physically. Not exactly the black sheep, more the wolf in sheep's clothing. One could extend that.

Early on I fell into the right hands – by instrumentally taking those steps. Connecting to Indica, UFO, Better Books... & going from there. London of the mid-to-late '60s. & yet as I plunged in there, I also gravitated to the criminal mind (courtesy of Wilson again), setting off to explore murderers initially. *The Honeymoon Killers* is not about detection & capture, but about their exploits & falling apart. & so it went for all the criminals & murderers I studied & wrote about. & the novelists I pursued, preferring the '50s & '60s pulp novelists who didn't involve detection of public or private nature. Thus, Goodis & Thompson... but more particularly Day Keene, Harry Whittington, Horace McCoy... That said I'm writing a novel at the moment that talks against solving by detection whilst at the same time going about the business of seeking to solve something. It's always about standing astride the crevice with me.

*The E-List is not compiled chronologically but rather gathers together escapes of similar ethos & method: by tunnelling, by scaling walls, while in transportation, by disguise & impersonation. The E-List is not an A-Z of men & women absconding from incarceration but a thesaurus of people responding to the catharsis of freedom; the book is a classification of liberation, & an important part of our human-behavioural domain knowledge.*

**3:AM:** Under the current financial situation, I would argue that an appropriate addition to the carceral society – school, hospital, & prison – would be the banking system; mostly, the characters (with notable exceptions) in your book are not escaping for any reason other than to be free – money doesn't seem to play much of a part (besides planning). Do you think freedom, in whatever form, is one of the overriding instincts of humanity?

**PB:** That would seem so, whether it turns out to be true or not. Specifically with escapees from prison, they all say, or are quoted as saying, that freedom is their object. But of course for some the cell is replaced with an equally restricting incarceration. James Moody spent much of his freedom holed up in a small room in South London. Frank 'the Mad Axeman' Mitchell was 'rescued' from Dartmoor (where he spent his days roaming the Moors, riding ponies, drinking in pubs, even having an affair with a local woman) only to be incarcerated by the Krays in a backroom in East London for a limited number of days before he was killed in cold blood.

What I discovered in the research (& with more time I might have gone further) was that once free the escapee often has little idea on what to do, or how to maintain freedom. Directly, or within a short span of time, they return to family, friends, familiar neighbourhoods... always watching their back for betrayal & recapture. Also they need to acquire money, which often means committing further crimes... or if money is stashed (& still there) then they need to get abroad & preserve their freedom at extreme costs. Many are captured no sooner they are clear of the walls. It's as if the challenge is the meticulous detail & planning of the escape, the outwitting of the system by another method, having failed in the judicial cat & mouse process. (Note my lack of faith in the judicial system being an honest affair.)

Much like the writer who dreams not to be incarcerated in a room writing, & yet who spends his days there willingly in order to attempt to create exceptional work.

Whenever one looks at different facets of society, we seem to come up regularly against our inability to handle freedom. We actually like measures of constriction, whether we perceive those restrictions, or acknowledge them. Bondage in one form or another seems to be here to stay! It probably can be seen by anyone who has children. Parents & adults try to give children as much freedom as possible, only to see it misfire when the child cannot handle it...& fails, disappoints or goes off the rails in one way or another. The child wants to know the boundaries, the conditions, either so they can stay within them, challenge them or transgress them. It seems to be a perennial problem in parenting that we are conscious of today. There are shelves of books offering solutions; TV entertains us with a string of these programmes.

*Reading The E-List is a cathartic exercise, one finds oneself rooting for the escapee, be they guilty or not of the crime for which they were incarcerated. The moment of release being orgasmic in its impact, while the reality of freedom is anticlimactic. Alain Badiou argues that "(f)reedom is a category of intellectual novelty, not within, but beyond ordinary life." True freedom is conceptual, a construct of democracy, an evolution of consciousness in the disciplinarian society.*

**3:AM:** Through your involvement in the radical movements of the '60s, do you think that that period was a failed experiment in social/sexual freedom? & how has that era influenced your views on freedom, crime, & art?

**PB:** I do not dispute that I had the escapee's viewpoint in mind when I wrote the book, because I realized it was aspects of the escape itself that were worthy of attention. The downside of course is that some like Billy Hughes, John Straffen, Brian McCulloch, Robert Mone, Brian Nichols & others killed in their escape bids or after their escapes. Nothing is straightforward, nothing can be unanimously condoned, or condemned. & I guess I feel much the same about the 60s, or any other of the periods I'm lived & worked through. My projects have always made me an active & hands-on participant in various movements... & I've accepted that good things come from it, as bad, & all these are not always apparent at the time. What I do stand for though is the necessity for change & transformation, never to maintain the status quo, even if it means personally running one's life as a never-ending string of risks. I've always lived on my toes, though in a different sense than the subjects of *The E-List*.

I guess you could say that I don't see life as an 'experiment' or anything as a series of 'experiments' but rather life as a continual 'research'. & that doesn't just mean an artistic life, but life on the everyday level of experiences.

& thus since the 60s I have never had a full-time job, or anything that resembles a career. All my activities whether art ones or financial ones (which often come together) are all further steps that are pulled through to generate the next step. One way or another everything conspires to weave & drive me forward. Any notion of 'rest' does not exist... indeed is anathema to me.

*The E-List embodies David Henry Thoreau's famous quote "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" & seems to confirm the not-so-well-known appendage that "what is called resignation is confirmed desperation." Writers such as Giacomo Casanova & the Marquis de Sade escaped their physical confinements & in their life & writing the sexual & social constrictions of their age. The E-List makes little moral distinction between the desire for liberty of an artist & the urge to freedom of a criminal.*

**3:AM:** If I change the Thoreau quote to read, "The mass of artists lead lives of quiet rebellion. What is called creativity is confirmed rebellion." – does that approach the way you have lived

your life & is it analogous to the lives of people within the carceral system? Or, to again quote Thoreau, is it humankind's lot to be "a parcel of vain strivings tied"?

**PB:** I purposely avoided bogging down the book with numerous distinctions, plotting instead the 'escapes' themselves, sometimes giving a bit of background, or consequences where necessary. It really was the mode of escape that I felt needed notating. It would have been easy to leave aside Casanova, de Sade, Baader... & indeed the IRA... but they all added breadth for us to ponder.

I wonder if it's as easy as that to align the mass of artists, by which ones means many, the majority, with acts of rebellion. I don't necessarily feel that many do rebel in any way, well, not that is noticeable to the rest of us. They might seek other interests within their creative pursuits. We like to think of artists as rebels, outsiders, outcasts, etc, but perhaps few are in any real terms. What I notice, & it cropped up again the other day, is that a person like myself who has lived on the edge throughout his adult life, with almost no money, no pension, no fall back... tend to take in my stride the daily questions & decisions of risk as naturally as breathing (& indeed subject my family to that position too, for good or bad) & thus tend to be bolder in my actions, whether in life or art, than others might be. As I said, in the last few days, I've encountered those who are generally regarded as risk-takers, but, in fact, at the crunch, were hesitating, desperate to make sure the risk factors were considerably reduced before they committed themselves to what was being proposed.

That analogy might be found among prisoners. Many will not escape, or try to escape. They might just talk about it, not really wish to do it. I think I quoted Harry Roberts as an example. According to Walter Probyn, the only way Roberts survived incarceration was by thinking of escaping, never really taking his fantasies through to fruition.

So what you are suggesting is that I align myself to a degree with the escapees... or that is what intrigues me about the subject of this book. You are probably heading me in the right direction. Perhaps though, unlike many an escapee, I've been on the lam for too many years now, & that despite what the system has done to trap or force me into submitting to their whims & caprices. I've managed to be strong enough in myself to maintain my 'freedom' or at least a sense of purpose or direction that appeals to me. If I was asked to chose between Alfie Hinds & his great escapes, or Wally Probyn's, then I would chose Wally's exploits... though I don't think I'd pursue discussing or seeking to unearth his life since prison. Nothing shapes up neatly for comparison, does it?

One could note that I've done this interview in much the same way. Not that the reader is to know. But I responded directly. Fast & decisive. It's the only way I know. I've learnt to live that way. If I make mistakes, or what others perceive as faults, it's not a big deal. I adapt, I transform, & continue. Different things evolve that way than from the approach of slow consideration. Though again one can't assume that I don't meditate or ruminate at other times in the day. I was a jazz aficionado way before my teens, & improvisation is at the heart of my existence... & improvisation is based on preparation & self-discipline.

The most famous escape is probably the one from Alcatraz, in 1962, in which Frank Morris, and John and Clarence Anglin escaped into San Fransisco Bay in a homemade raft. They are officially listed as "presumed dead," as no trace was ever found of any of them, and it's likely they were swept out to sea. However, if I'd managed an escape from Alcatraz, they'd never find a trace of me, either. :)

Some of the most famous include:

James Earl Ray, who escaped from state prison in 1967, while serving a sentence for armed robbery and forgery in a Missouri. Ray remained a fugitive until he was captured in 1968, after the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He escaped again, in 1977, while serving a life sentence for King's assassination. He and six others used a ladder made of pipe to escape over a wall at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee. Ray was captured three days later, five miles from the prison. Yeah, he wasn't the brightest bulb in the light fixture, that's for sure. :)

In 1984, six death row inmates escaped Mecklenburg Correctional Center in Virginia. The largest mass death row escape in American history. All six were eventually executed.

In 1999, a woman named Lucy Dudko hijacked a helicopter in order to break out her boyfriend, John Killick, who was serving 28 years for armed robberies. She ordered the pilot to land inside Silverwater Jail, in Sydney, Australia, where the helicopter plucked Killick from the prison's exercise yard. They managed to elude police around the country for six weeks.

“Alfie” Hinds was a British jewel thief, who, in 1955 and '56, while serving a twelve-year sentence for robbery, successfully escaped three times, for which he became known in the press as “Houdini” Hinds. Hinds escaped from Nottingham prison by sneaking through the locked doors and over a twenty foot prison wall. He escaped from custody again while in court on a lawsuit he filed in that case for illegal arrest. He made his third escape from Chelmsford Prison less than a year later. He lived for two years as a used car dealer before his arrest after being stopped in an unregistered car. A stupid mistake for a guy who was a member of Mensa. He served out the remainder of his sentences, and died in 1991.

#### Alcatraz escape attempts

During its 29 years of operation, the penitentiary claimed no prisoners as having ever successfully escaped. 36 prisoners were involved in 14 attempts, two men trying twice; seven were shot and killed, and two drowned. The most violent occurred on 2 May 1946 when a failed escape attempt by six prisoners led to the so-called "Battle of Alcatraz". On June 11, 1962 Frank Morris, John Anglin and Clarence Anglin successfully carried out one of the most intricate escapes ever devised.

Behind the prisoners' cells in Cell Block B (where the escapees were interned) was an unguarded 3-foot (0.91 m) wide utility corridor. The prisoners chiseled away the moisture-damaged concrete from around an air vent leading to this corridor, using tools such as a metal spoon soldered with silver from a dime and an electric drill improvised from a stolen vacuum cleaner motor. The noise was disguised by accordions played during music hour, and their progress was concealed by false walls which, in the dark recesses of the cells, fooled the guards.

The interior of a regular cell in the row known as Broadway. The escape route then led up through a fan vent; the fan and motor had been removed and replaced with a steel grille, leaving a shaft large enough for a prisoner to climb through. Stealing a carborundum cord from the prison workshop, the prisoners had removed the rivets from the grille and substituted dummy rivets made of soap. The escapees also stole several raincoats to use as a raft for the trip to the mainland. Leaving papier-mâché dummies in their cells with paint brush bristles as hair, they escaped. The prisoners are estimated to have entered San Francisco Bay at 10 p.m.

The official investigation by the FBI was aided by another prisoner, Allen West, who also was part of the escapees' group but was left behind (West's false wall kept slipping so he held it into place with cement, which set; when the Anglin brothers (John & Clarence) accelerated the schedule, West desperately chipped away at the wall but by the time he did his companions were gone). Articles belonging to the prisoners (including plywood paddles and parts of the raincoat raft) were located on nearby Angel Island, and the official report on the escape says the prisoners drowned while trying to reach the mainland in the cold waters of the bay.

Dead Run" The untold story of Dennis Stockton and America's only mass escape

## Facts about Most Famous Prison Escapes



- Italian author, adventurer and famous womanizer Giacomo Casanova managed to escape from prison in 1757, which was situated on the top of the Doge's Palace in Venice.
- Napoleon Bonaparte managed to escape from his imprisonment on the island of Elba, and returned to Europe where he tried to regain his power.
- In the famous Libby Prison Escape in 1864, 109 union soldiers managed to escape via underground tunnel from the prison camp in the American Civil War. Only 59 of them managed to reach Union lines, while the rest either drowned or was recaptured.
- American outlaw and gunman Billy the Kid managed to escape from prison near Las Vegas, only to be recaptured and killed few months later.
- Famous American depression-era bank robber John Dillinger managed to escape from prison that was considered to be "escape-proof". Exploits of Dillinger and his criminal compatriots such as Baby Face Nelson, Pretty Boy Floyd, and Bonnie and Clyde brought the rise of the modern day law enforcement agency FBI.
- Over 130 American POW's managed to escape from supposedly "escape-proof" camp during World War II. However, the most innovative prison attempt was never executed because allied forces freed the camp. This plan included highly dangerous mission of flying wooden glider to fly over the wall, and fly down from the mountain on which camp was located.
- 76 Allied POW's managed to escape from German Stalag Luft III camp, in event what will later be remembered as "The Great Escape". Out of that number, only three of them managed to reach allied territory.
- On 9 April 1941, Polish soldier Sławomir Rawicz and his six prison friends managed to escape from the distant Siberian prison camp. During their two year journey, they walked over 4,000 miles toward south, over desert Gobi and Himalayas until they



reached safety in India. Story of his life was adapted in book and movie "The Long Walk".

- After escaping infamous holocaust camp Aushwic, Slovak Jew Alfréd Wetzler provided to the allied forces detail plans of the camp. His information was later used to prevent railroad access to the camp which saved the lives of over 120 thousand people.
- French author Henri Charrière managed to escape from the notorious prison colony in French Guiana called Devil's Island. Story of his life was later adapted into popular book and movie "Papillon".
- Alfie Hinds fascinated the public of England when he managed to escape from three heavily guarded prisons in an attempt to prove his innocence.
- In July of 1962, Frank Morris, John Anglin and Clarence Anglin supposedly managed to escape from most heavily guarded supermax prison in United States of America - the famed Alcatraz. The unknown fate that surrounded these three escapees created much controversy in the years following their escape.
- Famous American criminal Frank W. Abagnale managed to escape from several prisons during his lifetime. His exploits were recently adapted into movie "Catch Me If You Can", starring Leonardo DiCaprio.
- Political prisoners Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris managed to escape from maximum security South African "Pretoria" prison by lock picking the same 10 doors in which they were brought in.
- The biggest prison escape in British history happened in 1983, when 38 Provisional Irish Republican Army members escaped from a very secure "HM Prison Maze" in Northern Ireland.
- In 1984, six death row prisoners managed to escape from Mecklenburg Correctional Center in Virginia. All of them were successfully captured in the following weeks and eventually executed.
- Pascal Payet managed to escape from two French prisons using helicopter! He later on helped with escape of other prisoners, also with helicopter.

### **The 1984 escape from death row**

Six inmates facing the Virginia electric chair made a daring escape from the facility on May 31, 1984. The inmates who escaped, two of the notorious Briley Brothers (James and Linwood), Lem Tuggle, Earl Clanton, Derick Peterson, and Willie Jones, had observed how correctional officers were complacent in following procedures. While returning to the building from evening recreation time, the hulking Clanton hid in a CO station restroom, then charged out on cue from another inmate when the CO station door was open.

Clanton overpowered the CO and released all of the locks in the housing unit. Inmates took over the unit and stole the uniforms of COs who subsequently entered on rounds. They bluffed their way out of the unit by putting on riot helmets to conceal their faces as they carried a purported bomb, which was in actuality a cellhouse TV covered with a blanket. They carried the TV out of the unit on a stretcher spraying it with fire extinguishers and put it into a waiting van, which they then drove out of the prison.

Once the six men were free of the prison, they escaped across the nearby North Carolina border. The men soon split up, unsure of what to do now they were back in free society.

Earl Clanton and Derick Peterson were caught the following day when a patrol car driving past a laundromat spotted two men inside, one of them wearing what appeared to be a CO's jacket with

the badges torn off. The two had stopped to eat some cheese and drink cheap convenience store wine.

Tuggle, Jones and the Briley Brothers stole a pickup truck with the vanity tag 'PEI-1' from the driveway of its owner. The Brileys were dropped off in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they went to work as mechanics for a friend of a local uncle. Tuggle and Jones got as far north as Vermont, where Tuggle was apprehended at gunpoint by Vermont state troopers after robbing a souvenir shop for \$80.

Jones gave himself up the following day, just five miles south of the Canadian border. He was cold, hungry, and bitten by flies, so he called his mother who persuaded him to turn himself in. The Brileys were caught after the FBI traced a phone call they made to a contact in New York to the garage where they were working. All six men were returned to Virginia under heavy security. Upon their arrival, they were held on \$10 million dollar bond each.

Much of what has been revealed about the escape came from fellow inmate, Dennis Stockton. Dennis Stockton was also on death row for murder and originally planned to escape with them; but backed out because he anticipated his case would be overturned on appeal. During the escape, he wrote down everything that happened minute by minute in his diaries, which were later published in a Norfolk, Virginia newspaper, the Virginian Pilot.

### **The helicopter escape from HMP Gartree in 1987**

The Harborough Mail comes over all nostalgic at the news that plans for a helicopter escape from HMP Gartree have recently been foiled:

News of the audacious helicopter escape plot emerged - bizarrely - almost 25 years to the day after HMP Gartree was the location for one of the most dramatic – and daring – prison escapes of all time.

At 3.16pm on Thursday, December 10, 1987, a helicopter landed on the prison's sportsfield and picked up John Kendall and Sydney Draper.

Kendall, an East London gangland boss, was serving eight years for burglary while Draper had been jailed for life for murder and theft.

The escape began when Andrew Russell booked a Bell Long Ranger helicopter for a trip from Stansted to Leicester Airport.

As it approached Leicester he pulled a gun on the pilot and forced him to land in the prison exercise yard.

The Mail does not repeat a story that was widely circulated locally at the time. It held that the prison authorities, conscious of the number of high-profile criminals they were holding, had arranged a code word with a local RAF station. The idea was that if an airborne escape took place the air force could be tipped off and give chase among the clouds.

But, says the story, on 10 December 1987 the conversation went something like this:

GARTREE: Black Eagle.

RAF: I beg your pardon?

GARTREE: Black Eagle.

RAF: Could you say that again, please?

GARTREE: Black Eagle! Black Eagle!

RAF: Sorry, old man, we don't understand your banter.

## The world's most infamous escapes

By Hugh Wilson

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- 10 strangest things people collect

**Hollywood may have glamorised the wrongfully imprisoned convict but some of the real-life break-outs actually feature more high jinx than Hollywood.**

One of the most famous film scenes of the last century: Captain Hilt aka The Cooler King aka Steve McQueen jumping the fence to make his getaway riding a motorbike. A film icon, an unforgettable scene and a cracker of a film (and a bit long, if you ask me, which will probably irritate a few film buffs) - but did you know it was based on the real story of an escape from Stalag Luft III? There was actually an equally brazen escape a year earlier. Three British POW's built a plywood gymnastic horse, a Trojan-ish horse, in which they hid men, mud and tools. Over several months the trio ferried men back and forth to the same spot in the exercise yard, digging a tunnel that eventually ran to a length of 100 feet. All the POWs escaped and headed safely back to Blighty.

Fortune favours the bold goes the adage, a worthy motto to live, die and escape by. In 1996, David McMillan staged a rather cunning breakout. He managed to get hold of hacksaw blades stashed in a package and used these to saw through the bars of his cell. Having done this, he used a makeshift rope to abseil to the ground and proceeded to climb over the prison's seven walls using a ladder made entirely of bamboo and duct tape. Then, the masterstroke: having made his escape, he opened a broly, imagining, correctly the guards would never suspect a man under an umbrella - and simply strolled off.

The British seem to be a fairly resourceful bunch; "Alfie" Hinds was a serial escape artist and criminal who managed to escape from three high-security prisons while serving a 12-year sentence for robbery. He earned the nickname "Houdini" Hinds when he escaped from Nottingham Prison through locked doors and over a 20-foot-high wall. He was re-captured after six months and then brought a lawsuit against the prison commissioners as a cover for his next getaway - getting a padlock smuggled into him. A padlock might not seem the handiest tool, but Hinds had two guards escort him to the bathrooms at the court house where he managed to shove the two guards into a cubicle and lock them in with screw eyes his accomplices had previously fixed to the door. He was caught five hours later attempting to leave the country. He managed another escape from Chelmsford Prison less than a year later.

Slawomir Rawicz might not be a household name, but the story of his escape from a Russian gulag rose to prominence with the 2010 film *The Way Back*, which was based on his own account of events. He was a Polish soldier arrested by Soviet troops after the invasion of Poland. He was taken to Moscow, tortured and sentenced to 25 years' hard labour in a Siberian prison camp for lying. He, along with thousands of others like him, was transported to Camp 303, about 400 miles south of the Arctic circle to build the camp from scratch. Rawicz escaped with six comrades in a blizzard in April 1941. They headed south, avoiding towns and villages but little pursuit was made. As in the film, the escapees met another fugitive, Polish Krystyna (and you thought that was just Hollywood doing a Hollywood). The group soldiered on and crossed the Lena Riva nine days later, walked around Lake Baikal and crossed the border into Mongolia. While they crossed the Gobi desert two of the group died. The rest survived on a diet of snakes. In October the group reached Tibet and were met by friendly locals. They travelled on, across the Himalayas, where another two died. The survivors reached India in March of 1942.

John Dillinger, another crook made good by the movies (he was played as a loveable rogue by Johnny Depp in *Public Enemies*), was a famous depression-era robber with a penchant for

break-outs. When he was caught in 1934 he was shipped to a supposedly escape-proof prison. Dillinger took one guard hostage with a pistol and then locked up the rest of the prison staff (all 33 of them) before proudly telling them he'd tricked them all with a wooden pistol. He promptly grabbed some real guns and escaped in the sheriff's car.

Pascal Payet is about as audacious as they come. He's escaped from high security prisons in France. Both times via hijacked helicopter. Accomplices hijacked a chopper from Cannes-Mandelieu airport and flew to Grasse prison where they rescued him. They flew nearly 30 miles to Brignoles, fleeing the scene and leaving the pilot unharmed. Payet then underwent plastic surgery to change his appearance before heading to Spain, where he was later apprehended in Matara - police recognised him despite his best efforts to disguise himself.

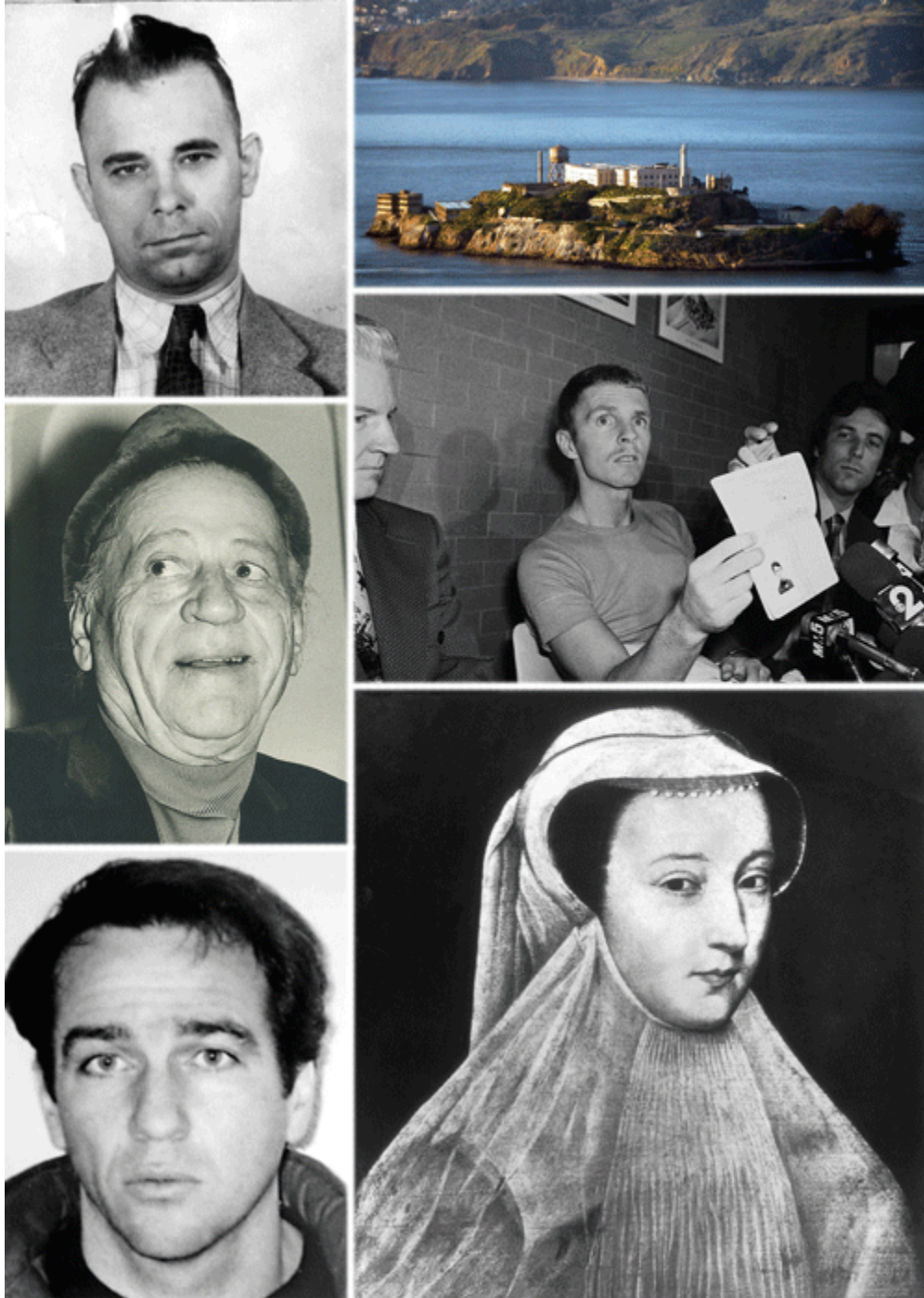
Colditz was the notorious German POW camp for officers during the second world war. Plenty of escapes were attempted from Colditz, but the most interesting is the idea created by two British pilots. Jack Best and Bill Goldfinch decided to build a glider for two men part by part. The team who joined the effort built a false wall in the attic of the chapel at the camp and proceeded to construct the wooden plane bit by bit. Their plan was to fly 200 feet across the river Mulde. The glider never flew as the allies reached the camp before it was finished but in 2000, a replica was built and flown at RAF Odiham - attended by Best and Finch themselves.

If you've watched Rescue Dawn, you'll have heard of Dieter Dengler. Starring Christian Bale, the film tells the story of the German-American navy pilot whose plane was shot down over Laos in 1966. He was sent to a prison camp run by the Pathet Lao, who were North Vietnamese sympathisers. Dengler already had a reputation for escaping from mock camps during training and, together with six other prisoners, managed to escape from his hand and foot restraints and get a guard's weapon. He and his fellow escapees shot three more guards and fled into the jungle where they spent the next 23 days in hellish conditions before being rescued by a US helicopter. The other escapees all died or disappeared in the jungle save a Thai contractor. Dengler remains the only American soldier to have successfully escaped a prison camp in the Vietnam war.

There have been plenty of other remarkable escapes but the jewel in the crown must be The Great Escape. The escape took a year to prepare for and involved 600 prisoners. Three tunnels were dug thirty feet underground, out past the prison fences and broke cover in the midst of a nearby forest. The elaborate plan was incredibly well executed, from using wooden blocks to support the tunnel to a pump to make sure those digging the tunnel had a fresh supply of air. The plan was flawed, however - the men had underestimated how far they needed to dig and popped up in clear view of the guards. Seventy-six men escaped and a 77th was spotted - the tunnel was immediately shut down. The Nazis gave chase and caught all but three of the prisoners but the escape was immortalised in film.

## **15 of the Greatest Prison Escapes**

by [admin](#) on November 9, 2010



In an ideal world, prisoners would be held in prisons which would be impossible to escape from and an innocent person would never end up there. Fortunately, our world is much more awesome and people escape from even the most labyrinthine prisons on Earth with relative frequency and often stunning brilliance. Throughout history the only sure thing when it came to prisons was that as soon as you said it was “inescapable” some inmate (who was usually a total badass) would stroll comfortably out the front door.

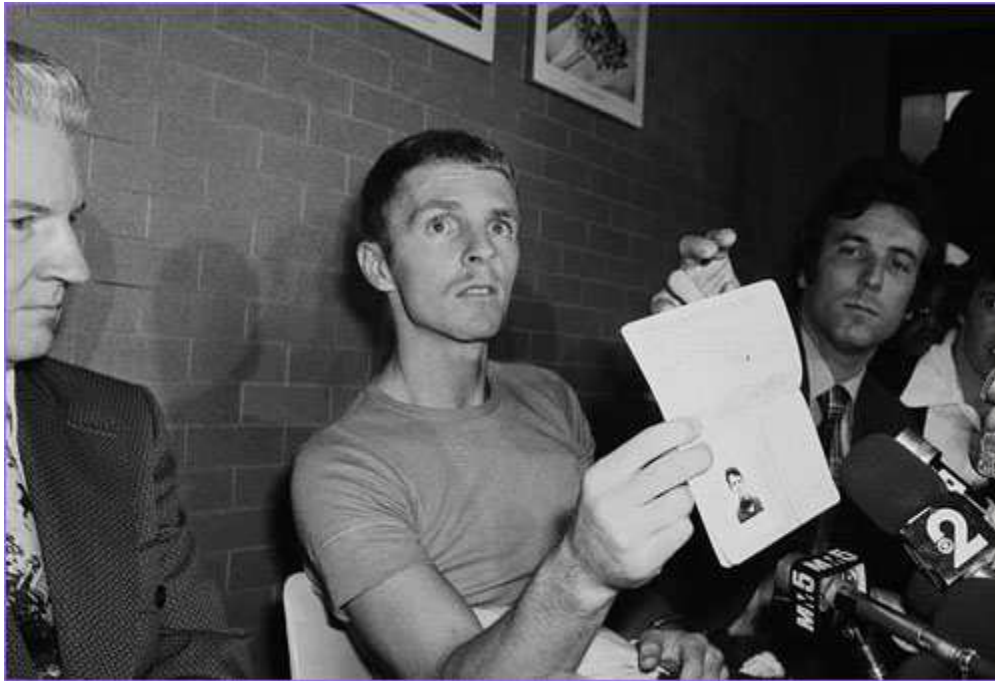
## Alfred Wetzler



Often when you hear the story of a Jew in Europe during the 40s, it either ends in a concentration camp or with them narrowly surviving until the end of the war. Alfred Wetzler decided that sort of noise was for surrender-monkey French Jews and got together with his fellow Auschwitz inmates and hatched a plot to escape. The already weak, tired and starving Wetzler hid in a wood pile with friend Rudolf Vrba for 4 days, after which they made a mad dash for freedom... by donning smuggled suits and calmly walking out of the camp and to the Polish border.

Now after escaping from one of the most hellacious locations to ever curse the surface of the planet, most people would call it a day and thank God they're alive. But Wetzler and Vrba were obviously not content to simply escape the Nazis. They pulled an Inglorious Basterds and drafted a detailed report of Auschwitz and the surrounding terrain that ended up being instrumental to subsequent Allied bombing runs.

## Billy Hayes



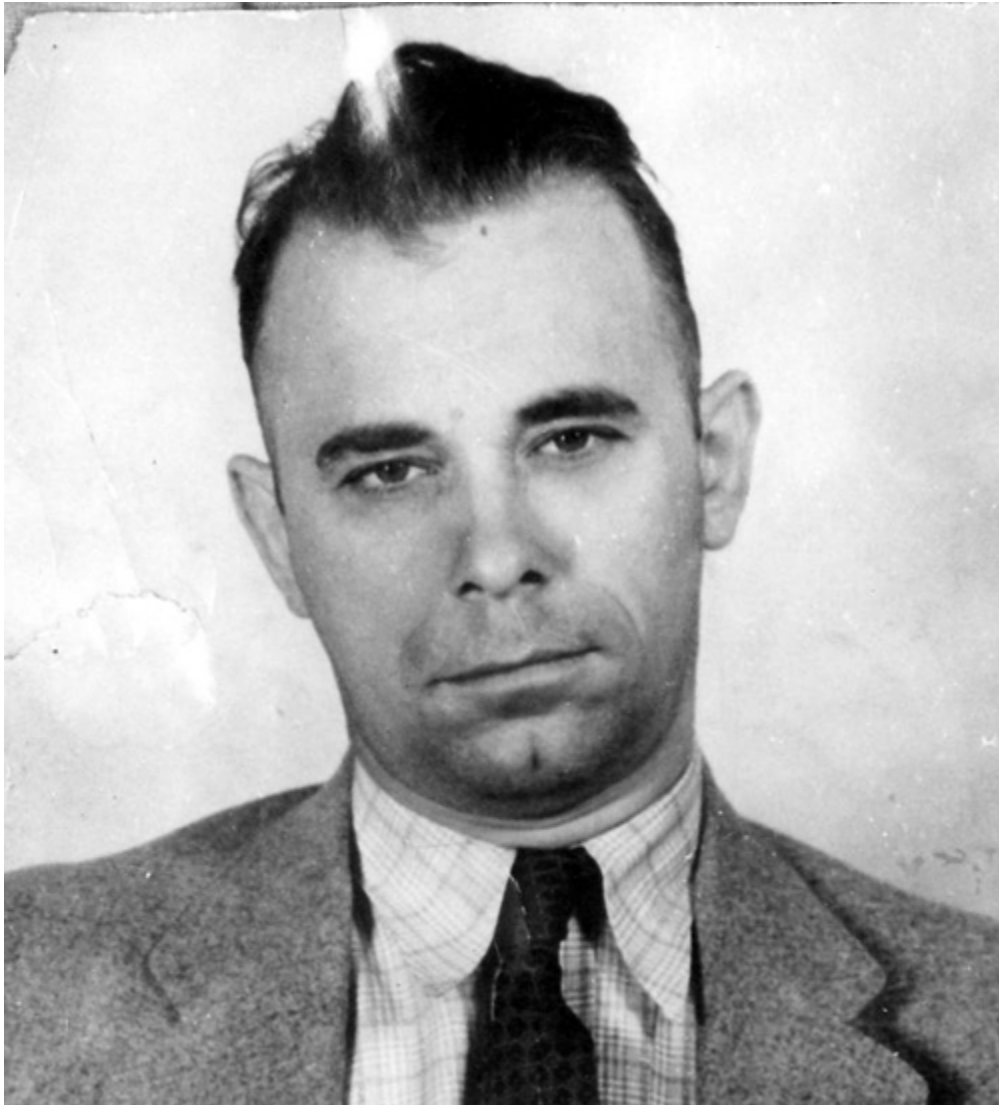
Careless world travelers often forget that while in America marijuana is practically legal and socially acceptable, in many countries it is considered the leaf of Satan and will land you in jail for a couple of decades. That is if they don't outright kill you.

In 1970, Billy Hayes was caught trying to smuggle some Mary Jane out of Turkey. While the amount Hayes was trying to smuggle is probably less than most people reading this are hiding in their desk drawer, in a country where even alcohol and cigarettes are of dubious legality, Turkish officials didn't exactly take a shine to such behavior. They expressed this mild disappointment by sentencing him to a life imprisonment performing hard labor.

Hayes, demonstrating an “Eff The Po-Leece” attitude far ahead of his time, orchestrated a daring escape. He stole a small dinghy, navigated it through the treacherous Aegean Sea, then stayed incognito for several days because he wasn't quite sure he had made it out of Turkey. He was eventually recaptured, but this time by Greek Police — who, fortunately for Hayes, were possibly the only people on the planet who hated Turks more than he did. He eventually made it back to America where he turned his drug use into fame and fortune by authoring the book Midnight Express, which was eventually made into an Oliver Stone movie.



## John Dillinger



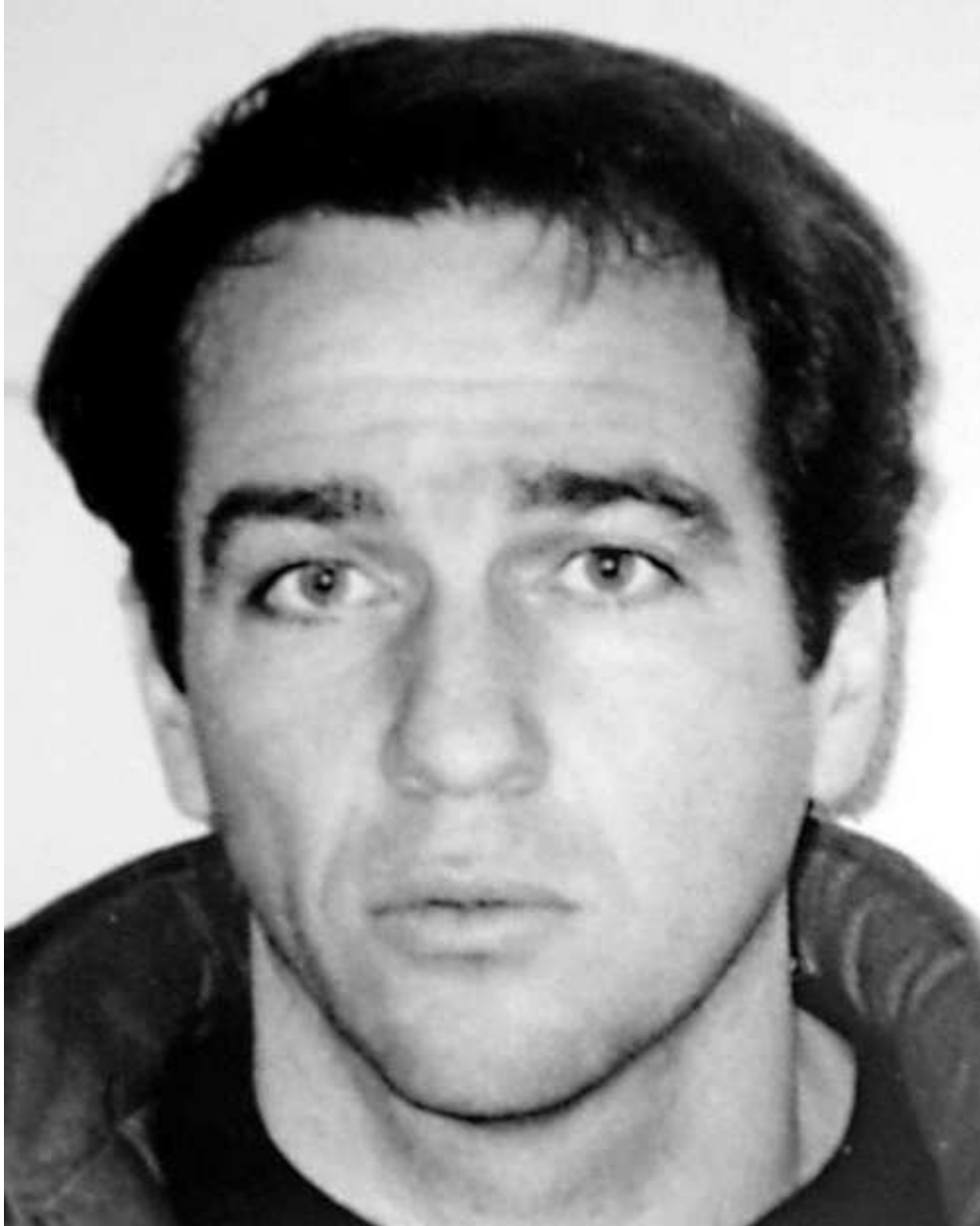
John Dillinger was well known in the late 20s and 30s as one of the most famous criminals in America. His gang was infamous throughout Chicago and northern Indiana for its apparent invincibility and knack for escape from every prison ever built.

Indiana was then, as now, somewhat well known for housing some of the most dangerous criminals in the country, and they had gotten quite good at it. But then John Dillinger came along and, through a combination of cleverness, bravado and a little thing called dynamite, proceed to waltz right out of the Hoosier state and right into the nearest bank. Which he promptly robbed.

Deciding it was time to get serious, federal officials locked Dillinger in the Crown Point maximum-security prison, known at the time as completely inescapable. This time, Dillinger

managed to break out not through violence or charm, but by crafting a wooden “gun” and coloring it black with shoe polish. He took some guards “hostage” then laughed all the way to the bank. Which he promptly robbed.

### **Pascal Payet**



Pascal Payet is a French criminal with a rap sheet that includes murder and a definite flair for the cinematic. He was captured and tried for the murder of a security guard while attempting to hijack a security fan. He was sentenced to life in prison and locked up at the Luynes prison. Like a typical Frenchman, Payet decided that tunnels, steel files, and holding guards hostage were

soooooo passe. He subsequently hijacked a helicopter and staged a daring escape from the roof of the prison.

Payet was quickly recaptured and thrown back in prison, with French officials reasonably concluding that lightning wouldn't strike twice. Except it did, and Payet escape by hijacked helicopter once again. Payet was recaptured, but proved that he was a special type of God-touched bastard by escaping via a hijacked helicopter for an unbelievable third time. He was finally recaptured in 2007 and imprisoned once again. Experts predict an impending escape by hovercraft.

## The Texas 7



Despite the Titanic-like hubris that surrounds many of the modern “inescapable” maximum security prisons that dot the country, they actually have a pretty impressive track record when it comes to holding the nations most dangerous criminals. Which makes the escape of the so called Texas 7 that much more impressive.

What's even more impressive is how this rag-tag group of hardened criminals managed to escape. They covertly kidnapped several guards and maintenance workers and then, instead of holding them hostage as one would expect, stole their uniforms and strolled out the front door. But while most of the people on this list are easily cheered as either charismatic, innocent, and not bloodthirsty, the Texas 7 are a good example of why we build prisons in the first place. During the crime spree that followed their escape, an unlucky cop named Aubrey Hawkins crossed paths with the gang. The seven shot Hawkins no fewer than eleven times, and then just to be sure, *ran over his corpse* as they fled the scene. Fortunately, having bungled the whole “laying low” thing, the seven were recaptured within a month and are now safely stowed away in separate prisons.

## The Escape from Alcatraz



In American lore, there is no other prison more famous for its inescapability than Alcatraz Island. Located on an island in the middle of the San Francisco bay, if you somehow manage to get out of your cell and aren't spotted while traversing several yards of bare rock, there's still a miles-long swim through the waters of the bay. Waters which, at last report, were classified by experts as "testically-shriveling cold".

Officially, no one has ever escaped from Alcatraz alive. But because this is America — the land of impossible dreams and disrespect for authority — there is Frank Morris. In 1962 Morris got together with some fellow inmates and decided to Shawshank his way out of there. Not only did he burrow through the wall of his cell, but Morris also constructed an elaborate dummy so that, unless they looked closely, guards would think he was still in his cell. He then crawled through an air duct, across the island, and used a makeshift pontoon boat to head out in to the bay. His body was never recovered so for the sake of the dreams of all the little criminals out there, let's just say he made it and has been living in secrecy ever since.

## Mary, Queen of Scots



Queen Mary could never seem to catch a break. After being exiled to France for several years, she returned to her home country right as the Scottish nobles were rebelling. She was subsequently imprisoned at various times as that bickering of inbred rich people the British call “history” took place. Being one of 6 people in the British Isles with anything approaching an education at the time, Mary conceived of several plots to escape her imprisonment.

The first consisted of that age old trick of dressing like something other than a prisoner and walking out the front door. Unfortunately, someone realized that the disguised queen—being the only person without heavily calloused hands and not covered in filth—was trying to escape. Her second attempt was almost too adorable to not be apocryphal. Having befriended a local orphan, the queen convinced the little scamp to let her out of the castle where she managed to steal a horse and escape.

Bill Cody



America was quite a different place in the 1800s. Sure you can point to things like the fact that we actually considered war with France, war with ourselves and war with Indians to be dire threats. But more importantly, back in the good old days America had celebrities that were actually worth a damn.

Buffalo Bill Cody was a traveling performer so famous, you probably recognize his name even today. He was the guy who made Annie Oakley famous. He was also a total badass that could probably kill a modern-day traveling performer like Barry Manilow with a glance.

Cody's most famous act of total awesomeness came in the form of a courageous escape after being captured by Indians. Cody knew his captors needed fresh food so he convinced them to allow him to guide them to a nearby buffalo herd. The Indians slapped Cody on a slow-moving donkey and had him lead the way. He proceeded to outrun the horse-mounted Indians. On a donkey. And it wasn't like he shouted "Look! Brightly-Colored Beads!" then ran before they could react. No, the chase was close, lasted for miles, and ended with Cody seriously wounded and barely surviving. Let's see Spidey do *that*.



## Papillon

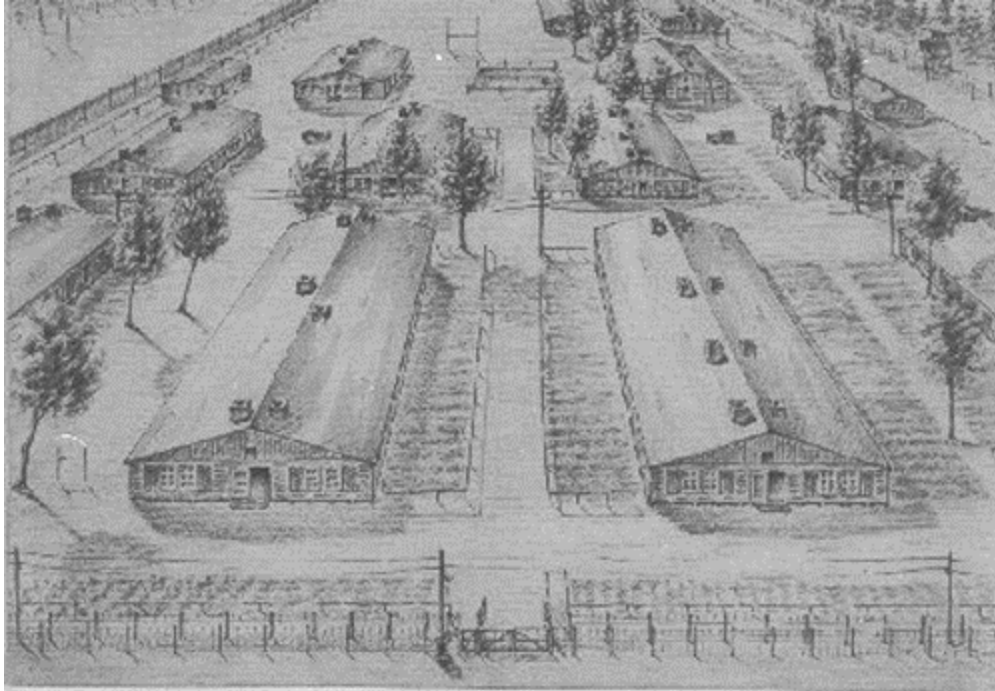


Papillon was the nickname of convicted criminal Henri Charrière and his multiple, daring escapes from several French prisons. He became famous after he published his autobiography in 1969 and it was made into a movie starring Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman.

Papillon's escapades included escaping an island penal colony by floating away on a bag of coconuts, hiding out with a colony of lepers, and befriending a group of South-American natives deep in the jungle. His exploits became legendary, and Charrière for a while was known as one of the most accomplished escape artists in history. That

was until people realized it was all fake. According to recent reports, the “real” Papillon, the man on which Charriere based his book, was a real person named Charles Brunier. Charriere, on the other hand, never once attempted escape and was, in fact, considered a model prisoner.

### ”The Great Escape”



While we’re on the topic of movies starring Steve McQueen, there’s what’s considered “The Great Escape” or the escape of 76 POWs from the German prison camp Stalag Luft III (which, by the way, included precisely no Americans). Stalag Luft III was constructed as the prisoner camp for prisoners who kept escaping. There were two rows of barbed wire, seismic sensors to prevent tunnel-dwelling, and the barracks were raised on stilts so any tunnel would be visible.

The airmen in the camp dug tunnels thirty feet deep, reinforced with scavenged wood, and they even put in a ventilation and mini tram system for ferrying dirt just because they were classy like that. And they did this three times over, constructing the tunnels simultaneously.

All told, 76 prisoners made it out, but only 3 actually made it safely to neutral territory. Hitler, showing his usual amount of restraint, said he was tired of these guys escaping all the time and violated the Geneva convention by having the majority of them shot. But Steve McQueen made it out alright, mostly due to the fact that the person his character was based on, once again, never existed.

## Giacomo Casanova



Yes, this is the same Casanova everyone uses nowadays as a descriptor of philanderers. Apparently, Italian officials didn't quite like the fact that he was sleeping with all of their wives so they through him in a prison with lead-lined walls. No seriously he was imprisoned for sleeping with too many peoples' wives.

Fortunately for players everywhere, Casanova managed to procure an iron tool, and began the slow, arduous process of digging his way out of prison. That was all well and good, until he was transferred and put under constant watch. Hereupon he displayed the charisma he was legendary for, and convinced another prisoner to first dig to his cell, then they would both escape together. Desperation makes strange bedfellows, and in this case it put a monk named Balbi in the same boat with perhaps one of the most promiscuous men in history.

### **The Berlin Wall Balloon**



While East Berlin during the Soviet occupation wasn't technically a prison, the Soviets sure did their damndest to make it look and feel like one. Barbed wire, dogs, guard towers, and execution if you were caught escaping were all facts of life for East Berliners. So it's no surprise that some went to ridiculous lengths to escape.

Some built tunnels or crammed themselves into tiny secret compartments of cars. The Wetzel and Strlzyck families went with a slightly crazier option. Buying nylon cloth in small batches and constructing a makeshift flamethrower, they actually managed to build a working hot air balloon over the course of several months. And not only that, but they successfully flew it over the wall and landed in West Berlin. The flight was something of a PR coup at the time, and the Soviets responded by making it virtually impossible to purchase lightweight cloth in East Berlin.

## Alfie Hinds



Alfie Hinds was a British criminal with a serial escape record. Arrested in 1953 for robbing a jewelry store, he was sentenced to a 12 year term — the majority of which he spent breaking out of prison. He managed escapes from three separate maximum security facilities, most of which were accomplished by picking the right time to walk out the front door.

Hinds adamantly insisted on his innocence, and tirelessly pursued any means to get the charges against him dropped. Needless to say, he spent a lot of time out of prison and arguing in court. During one such occasion, he came upon the opportunity to smuggle some things into his jail cell. What did this criminal mastermind choose? A hammer? A gun? A steel file? No, Hinds successfully smuggled in a padlock...which he used to lock three guards in a room and walk out the front door of his prison. And so Alfie Hinds goes down in history as possibly the only criminal to every escape from prison using exactly the same tools that were used to imprison him.

## **Slawomir Rawicz**



A lot of people forget that while Germany was invading Poland in 1939, so was Soviet Russia. Slawomir Rawicz was a Polish officer who found himself sandwiched between a rock and the hardest place in history, and was captured by the Russians. Shipped off to remote Yakutsk, Siberia — also known as the most bumfuck nowhere place on the planet.

In the Siberian Gulags, even if you escaped the harsh climate miles from civilization was expected to kill you off anyway. Rawicz set off with a small contingent to prove that Poles are capable of much, much more than simply putting screen doors on submarines. His ragtag band traversed Siberia, the Gobi desert and finally crossed the Himalayas in the dead of winter to find freedom in British-controlled India. In case you missed it, that means that Rawicz traversed—on foot and running from the law—what are well-known as the most hostile climates on the planet.

## Doug Bader



Doug Bader was an RAF pilot shot down over German-occupied France in 1941. He was captured and treated quite congenially by the Nazis for many years. **No, seriously.** This was probably due to the fact that he didn't have any legs. The Germans most likely thought "Where's a POW with no legs going to run to?". The answer, it turns out, is anywhere he goddamn wants to.

Bader orchestrated multiple escapes, aided by the fact that nearly everyone is willing to help out a charming, no-legged guy with a British accent. He escaped with the prisoners at Stalag Luft III, among many, many other attempts. He was so frequently an attempted escapee, the Germans threatened to take away his legs. He was eventually shipped off to the "inescapable" Colditz castle, where he presumably conspired to help construct the famous "Colditz Cock": a plane designed to fly out of the prison, a plan foiled only by the humorless Americans when they liberated the castle in 1945.

### **Forty-six years on the run for a world record**

Britain's most notorious escaped prisoner has won a place in the Guinness Book of Records, but his details will be included only if he is caught or gives himself up.

This month John Hannan broke the world record for the longest period spent on the run. He escaped from Verne prison in Dorset in December 1955 while serving a 21-month sentence for car theft and assaulting two police officers. Thirty days into his sentence he and fellow prisoner Gwynant Thomas slipped out after nightfall and scaled the jail wall with knotted sheets.

The men, both 22, were wearing grey prison overalls but broke into a nearby petrol station and stole overcoats as well as beer and cigarettes. Thomas was arrested within 24 hours after the pair were spotted by a lorry driver. But, despite a hunt involving tracker dogs and roadblocks, Hannan escaped.

A police description then said Hannan was 5ft 7in with brown hair, blue eyes and a proportionate build. Now 68, he is believed to be living in his native Ireland. Although no longer a high priority, a police spokesman said he remained a wanted man and regular checks were made in the hope of bringing him to justice.

'We are no longer actively searching for John Patrick Hannan, but we'd still love to find him, even after all these years - there's a small matter of some unfinished business,' a Dorset police spokesman said. 'If he does learn we are still looking for him, we would love to hear from him, even if he just drops us a line to let us know he's still around.'

The previous escape record of 45 years and 11 months was held by Leonard Frisco, an American who was turned in by his son after an argument.

If caught, Hannan would face a charge of escaping from lawful custody and have to finish the remainder of his sentence. It would then be up to the Home Secretary to decide whether he should be pardoned.

Hannan's record puts the escapes of many better known criminals to shame. Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs spent 32 years on the run before returning to Britain this year to finish his sentence.

Robber turned author John McVicar spent two years as 'public enemy number one' after escaping from Durham prison in the 1960s. More recently, road rage killer Kenneth Noye spent two and a half years on the run, having fled Britain using a false passport. He was captured after the girlfriend of Stephen Cameron, the man he murdered after an argument in the road, was flown to Spain to identify him.

Two audacious escape attempts of recent years failed. Six prisoners who got out of Whitemoor high-security jail, after smuggling in a gun and tools to cut the fence, were quickly caught.

Armed robber Ronnie Easterbook tried to escape while being taken to the Old Bailey in a prison van. He had obtained a small piece of Semtex, which he disguised as a cheese triangle. He suffered minor injuries from the blast.

THESE villains are six of Britain's most wanted

prison escapers - and they are just the tip of the iceberg.

Nearly 500 fugitives are currently on the run from jail, the Home Office has revealed.

The number of escapers has soared as prison officers struggle to guard an all-time record number of 75,000 inmates.

At Leyhill Prison, Glos, 82 inmates escaped between November 2002 and October last year.



Many of the 500 prisoners there are convicted killers and paedophiles.

Five murderers were among 56 prisoners who escaped from Sudbury open prison, Derbys, in one year to last April.

One of the most wanted of Britain's 500 fugitives is cop killer JAMES HURLEY, 42, who escaped 10 years ago while serving life at Wandsworth jail, London.

He was the getaway driver for a robbery gang who shot dead off-duty PC Frank Mason when he tackled them in Hemel Hempstead, Herts, in 1988.

Another fugitive high on the list is ALAN BYRNE, 53, who escaped nine years ago while serving life for murdering a security guard.

Police are also keen to recapture CLIFFORD HOBBS, 43, and NOEL CUNNINGHAM, 41, who are believed to be abroad after gunmen sprang them from their prison van as they arrived at court.

Other wanted escapers include KARL GASKIN, 31, who was serving five years for wounding when he escaped at Christmas.

CARL CURREY, 37, serving life for wounding with intent, fled while on an escorted day trip in Plymouth last month.

MICHAEL BILLINGS, 36, has been on the run for nearly 14 years after scarpering while halfway through his Old Bailey trial for armed robbery.

If these men and hundreds more ARE recaptured, the authorities will struggle to fit them into Britain's bursting jails.

But a police source said: "We can always find a place for scum like Hurley."

Longest escapee is JOHN HANNAN, now 72, who got away 49 years ago in Dorset while doing 21 months for assault.

ALAN BYRNE

SERVING four life sentences for murdering a security guard and wounding another.

ON THE RUN for nine years after two gunmen ambushed prison officers taking him to hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne.

NOEL CUNNINGHAM

FACING charges of plotting a pounds 1.25million security van robbery.

ON THE RUN for nine months after gunmen disguised as postmen shot prison van driver at Inner London Crown Court.

CARL CURREY

SERVING life for wounding with intent.

ON THE RUN for five weeks after giving his guard the slip while on a day release trip to an aquarium in Plymouth. Police believe he is in London or Surrey.

KARL GASKIN

SERVING five years for wounding and criminal damage.

ON THE RUN for three months after escaping from North Sea camp, Lincs, and then kidnapping his 10-year-old son.

CLIFFORD HOBBS

FACING same pounds 1.25million charges as Noel Cunningham.

ON THE RUN for nine months and believed to have fled abroad with South Londoner Cunningham after being sprung.

JAMES HURLEY

SERVING life for murdering PC Frank Mason in 1988. Photo is computer-aged to show him as he should look today

ON THE RUN for 10 years after escaping from prison van. Spotted in Ireland.

1955, an inmate called John Hannan escaped from The Verne using knotted sheets to scale the prison wall. Hannan continued to evade capture for many years, so that by 2001, he entered the record books as having been on the run longer than any other prisoner in the world.<sup>[1]</sup>

In August 2004, a convicted burglar escaped from The Verne Prison in a laundry van to visit his sick mother. The inmate used the metal edge of a lighter to cut his way through the canvas of a prison service lorry, and then caught a taxi to see his mother. The convict subsequently gave himself up to police 2 days later.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Convict to break fugitive record**



John Hannan was sentenced to 21 months  
An inmate who escaped from a Dorset jail is about to enter the record books.

If John Hannan continues to evade capture on Friday, he will have been on the run longer than any other prisoner in the world.

In 1955, John Hannan was sentenced to 21 months in Verne Prison on the island of Portland for car theft and assaulting two police officers.

He escaped with another inmate by using knotted sheets.

When John Hannan was sentenced, Verne was known as the "prison without bars".

His escape, a month into his sentence, was a relatively easy matter.

Mike Cook, the current governor, said: "We think it was the knotted sheet trick.

"The wall in 1955 was probably a little lower than it is today, but I think it was probably feasible to get the knotted sheets, throw it over and just up and over and away."

Hannan escaped with another inmate.

Wearing grey prison overalls, they made their way along the railway line that used to run to the mainland.

A tracker dog lost their scent near the Portland naval base.

### **Wanted man**

The pair broke into a petrol station and stole beer, cigarettes and overcoats.

Former mechanic at the garage Norman Hounsell said: "We found the toilet window open, which was a very small one and that was the only way he could have got into the garage.

"All he had to do was pull the bolt on the door and he could have had anything he wanted."

John Hannan's companion was recaptured. Hannan, if he is alive, remains a wanted man.

Inspector Tony Rudd of Portland Police said the investigation is still continuing.

He said: "Continual checks are made making life extremely difficult for the individual concerned and indeed for their family and friends."

The great escape record is currently held by an American, Leonard Frisco.

“  
**Continual checks are made making life extremely difficult for the individual concerned**  
”

**Inspector Tony Rudd,  
Portland Police**



The scene at the petrol station in 1955

He spent 45 years and 11 months on the run before being turned in by his son.

### **Burglar flees jail in laundry van**

**A convicted burglar escaped from a jail in a laundry van to visit his sick mother, a court has been told.**

Alvin Harvey, 30, used the metal edge of a lighter to cut his way through the canvas of a prison service lorry at The Verne Prison in Portland, Dorset.

A court heard Harvey took a taxi to see his mother in Aldershot, Hampshire, who has a shadow on her lung.

He pleaded guilty to escaping from custody, criminal damage and making off without paying the £120 taxi fare.

### **'Very foolish'**

Dorchester Crown Court heard Harvey had been told about his mother's condition in a letter from his sister.

Tim Shorter, defending, said: "He took an opportunity to escape.

"He went to see his mother. She was extremely angry with him and he realised he was very foolish and within a relatively short period of time he gave himself up."

The taxi driver recognised Harvey from media reports and contacted police.

Harvey gave himself up at Woking police station in Surrey on 11 August - two days after he escaped.

Judge Keith Bassingthwaite sentenced Harvey to eight months, to run concurrently with his current sentence for burglary.

### **Prison official recounts jailbreak in book on Gartree's history**

Published on **03/10/2006 11:10**

GARTREE prison, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, will always be remembered for the notorious escape which saw a helicopter land in the exercise yard and lift a killer and gangster to freedom in 1987.

The prison's head of finance Dick Callan still vividly remembers that day and has now written a book recounting Gartree's history. Michael Whelan reports.

Stranger than fiction

DARING helicopter escapes, riots and attempted hostage-takings are normally the stuff of fiction – but for one Harborough man it has all been in a day's work.

Dick Callan (50), has spent the last year researching and writing a book about the 40-year history of Gartree Prison.

Mr Callan, who has spent more than 20 years in the prison service including several spells at Gartree, said the book has been a labour of love as he was able to combine his interest in history with his interest in his place of work.

His book delves into not only the history of the prison, but the history of the site and its use during the Second World War as an RAF base.

Mr Callan, who began working at Gartree in 1983 as a clerical officer and is now head of finance, said: "More has happened at Gartree in the last four decades than at some older prisons in their entire lifetime.

"How many other prisons have had a helicopter escape or two riots?"

Mr Callan said he first thought about writing a book detailing the history of the prison two years ago and began his research in earnest.

He added: "I approached the current prison governor, Julia Morgan, who was very enthusiastic and allowed me access to the past governors' daily journals, which are a bit like a captain's log.

"I also visited Harborough Library and The Mail offices to see what I could find out."

As well as reading, Mr Callan was also lucky enough to speak to a number of former employees, some of who had spent more than 30 years working at the prison.

He said: "I'm also indebted to a number of the former governors who were happy to either speak or write to me about their experiences."

The book, price 10, is available from Quinn's bookshop and Waterstone's (formerly Ottakar's) in Harborough.

Helicopter escape still remembered 19 years on

GARTREE Prison will always be remembered for one of the most dramatic – and daring – prison escapes of all time.

At 3.16pm on December 10, 1987, a helicopter landed on the prison's sportsfield and picked up John Kendall and Sydney Draper.

Kendall, an East London gangland boss, was serving eight years for burglary while Draper had been jailed for life for murder and theft.

Mr Callan admits he saw very little of the escape but he remembers the day vividly.

He said: "It was an amazing event that people still remember to this day – that it even happened is just bewildering.

"On that particular day I was the staff clerk at the prison and I had the job of meeting people at the front gates and take them where they needed to go in the building."

Mr Callan said at the time of the escape he had met someone who was having an interview at the prison and was walking them through the offices.

He said: "I was just approaching the room when the man who was supposed to be carrying out the interview burst out of his room and started shouting that there was a helicopter in the exercise yard."

Mr Callan did not see the helicopter take off or land, but was still working at the prison in subsequent weeks when both men were recaptured.

He added: "There was just a sense of amazement over the whole prison; we couldn't believe it."

Life on the run!

DICK Callan is better known to many as a former international-class middle distance runner.

Mr Callan said he used to regularly run against Olympic legends Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett in competitions.

He narrowly missed selection for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles when he finished fourth in the trials for the Great Britain team.

Sebastian Coe went on to claim gold in the 1,500m and silver in the 800m events.

Mr Callan said: "At that time, I was sometimes running twice a day, but my legs have caught up with me now and I've cut it down to about four times a week. I no longer compete in races as I've long since moved on to training other runners. But I've still got some fond memories of my time in the early 80s when I was competing at the higher levels."

Mr Callan was one of the founder members of Harborough Athletic Club and was its first chairman.

He added: "The club has gone from strength to strength down the years and these days dozens of people of all abilities meet at Harborough Leisure Centre on Tuesday evenings."

## **Diamonds In My Hand**

Saturday, 3 November 2012

Ruby Sparks was a jewel thief who was born in the early twentieth century in Tiger Yard. His dad was a fence and his mum was a prizefighter.

He got the nickname Ruby from one of his earliest jobs. When he was a kid he would get into a mail sack and a friend would hang the sack by the railway to be picked up by the mail train. He would then get out of the bag and pilfer the mail. On one occasion he came across a box, belonging to a Maharajah, which was full of red stones. He gave them away thinking they were worthless when they were, in fact, rubies.

As an adult he was a successful jewel thief, his getaway driver and lover was society beauty Lillian Goldstein. One day Lillian's car broke down before she could get to the rendezvous and Ruby was captured. He was sentenced to ten years in Dartmoor prison.

Conditions were so harsh that one one occasion Ruby was so hungry that he ate the wooden table in his cell. He was punished by being placed in a cell with a metal table. A fellow prisoner asked him what the table tasted of, he replied: "wood".

Ruby was the first man to escape from Dartmoor, and returned to London to find Lillian. But he was not the same man and she was not the same woman.

We was recaptured and after he had done his time he managed a club in the West End called "The Penguin Club".

**Billy Hill** (William Charles Hill) (1911 – 1984) was one of the foremost perpetrators of organised crime in London from the 1920s through to the 1960s. He was a smuggler, operated protection rackets and used extreme violence. He project managed cash robberies and, in a clever scam, defrauded London High Society of millions at the card tables of John Aspinall's Clermont Club.

## [] Biography

Hill was born into a London criminal family and committed his first stabbing aged fourteen.<sup>[1]</sup> He began as a house burglar in the late 1920s, then specialized in "smash-and-grab" raids targeting furriers and jewellers in the 1930s. During World War II, he moved into the black market, specializing in foods and petrol. He also supplied forged documents for deserting servicemen and was involved in West End protection rackets with fellow gangster Jack Spot.

In the late 1940s, he was charged with burgling a warehouse and fled to South Africa. Following an arrest there for assault, he was extradited to Britain, where he was convicted for the warehouse robbery and served time in prison. This was Billy's last jail term. After his release he met Gypsy Riley, better known as Gyp Hill, who became his common-law wife.

In 1952, he planned the Eastcastle St. postal van robbery netting £287,000 (2010: £6,150,000),<sup>[2]</sup> and in 1954 he organised a £40,000 bullion heist. No one was ever convicted for these robberies. He also ran smuggling operations from Morocco during this period.

In 1955 Hill wrote his memoir *Boss of Britain's Underworld*. In it he described his use of the shiv:

*I was always careful to draw my knife down on the face, never across or upwards. Always down. So that if the knife slips you don't cut an artery. After all, chivving is chivving, but cutting an artery is usually murder. Only mugs do murder.*<sup>[3]</sup>

Hill was the mentor to Ronnie and Reggie Kray, advising them in their early criminal careers <sup>[4]</sup> and relations remained cordial throughout.

## [] Phone Tapping

In late 1956 Home Secretary Gwilym Lloyd George authorised the tapping of Hill's phone. At the time gang warfare had broken out in London between Hill and erstwhile partner in crime, Jack "Spot" Comer. <sup>[5]</sup> In 1956, Jack Spot and wife Rita were attacked by Hill's bodyguard, Frankie Fraser, Bobby Warren and at least half a dozen other men. Both Fraser and Warren were given seven years for their acts of violence. <sup>[6]</sup>

The Bar council approached the police and requested the tapes in order to provide evidence for an investigation of Hill's barrister, Patrick Marrinan's professional conduct. <sup>[7]</sup> When this use of tapping powers was revealed to Parliament in June 1957, Leader of the Opposition Hugh Gaitskell demanded a full explanation. Butler pledged that it would not be a precedent and that he would consider withdrawing the evidence and asking the Bar council to disregard it. <sup>[8]</sup> Marrinan was subsequently disbarred and expelled by Lincoln's Inn, <sup>[9]</sup> but Butler was forced to appoint a committee of Privy Counsellors under Sir Norman Birkett to look into the prerogative power of intercepting telephone communications. <sup>[10]</sup>

## [] Big Edge

In the 1960s Hill was busy fleecing aristocrats at card tables. In Douglas Thompson's book *The Hustlers*, and the subsequent documentary on Channel 4, *The Real Casino Royale*, the club's former financial director John Burke and Hill's associate John McKew, claimed that John Aspinall worked with Hill to cheat the players at the Clermont Club. <sup>[11]</sup> Some of the wealthiest people in Britain were swindled out of millions of pounds, thanks to a gambling con known as 'the Big Edge'. <sup>[12][11]</sup>

Marked cards could be discovered too easily; <sup>[1]</sup> instead the low cards were slightly bent across their width in a small mangle before being repackaged. High cards were slightly bent lengthwise. <sup>[11]</sup> Hill's Card sharks were introduced to the tables by Aspinall; they could read whether a card was high, low or an unbent zero card (10 to king) thus gaining a 60-40 edge. <sup>[1]</sup> The final stage involved "skimming" the profits from the table to avoid attention. On the first night of the operation, the tax-free winnings for the house were £14,000, (2007: £280,000). <sup>[11]</sup>

John Burke quit in late 1965, a year into the scam. <sup>[12]</sup> He had been tipped off about an investigation but Aspinall was determined to carry on. <sup>[13]</sup> However Aspinall no longer had someone to deal with "the dirty end" of the operation. After two years operation the Big Edge was closed. Hill respected Aspinall's decision and the partnership dissolved.

## [] Churchills

Billy Hill was also involved in property development. He bought for Gyp the biggest nightclub in Tangier, Churchills, which she ran from 1966 until the mid-1970s. Billy retired from crime in the 1970s and died peacefully on January 1, 1984.

In 1963 Mickey Spillane was playing Mike Hammer in *The Girl Hunters* in London where he met Hill and showed him around the set. When the prop department couldn't find Spillane a real M1911 pistol, Hill brought the producers several real pistols to use in the film. <sup>[14]</sup>



Billy's only child Justin Hill republished Hill's memoirs in December 2008 with a modern introduction and previously unpublished photographs.

## [] Notes

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- ☆ FIRST successful **escape** from Dartmoor Prison
- ☆ FIRST British 'Public Enemy Number One'

*John 'Ruby' Sparks, Dartmoor Prison. 10 January 1940*

Unable to steal the five keys he needed to **escape**, Sparks memorised the pattern of each one in a feat of mental photography. It took the 38-year-old Camberwell burglar a year to make the keys, using metal secretly removed from the machine shop, after which he simply let himself out. His audacious **escape** earned him the distinction of being the first British criminal to be named 'Public Enemy Number One', having also been the first man to **escape** from **Strangeways** Prison (see 1927). Sparks never escaped again, but his Dartmoor record of 170 days on the run has never been bettered.

## *Dangerous criminal still at large*

Walter ("Angel Face") Probyn (37), regarded as one of Britain's most dangerous criminals, was recaptured last night half an hour after three men broke out of the top-security wing of "escape-proof" Durham Prison.

But late last night John Roger McVicar (28), serving a total of 23 years for offences involving firearms, was still at large.

A third prisoner—as yet unnamed—was captured by a patrolling prison officer soon after the break-out.

A Home Office statement said:—  
"Preliminary evidence suggests that brickwork was removed in a shower room,

enabling the three men to climb through a duct and gain access to a small exercise yard, and two of them to climb from there on to the roof of the courthouse adjoining the main prison.

"One man was prevented by a patrolling prison officer from making good his escape from the yard. The prison officer was not



**JOHN McVICAR**



a police statement late last night gave warning that McVicar "may be violent."

The Home Secretary has instructed the inspector-general of the prison service, Brigadier M. H. K. Maunsell, to proceed to Durham and report.

McVicar, whose offences include armed robbery, robbery with violence, and using firearms with intent to resist arrest, escaped from Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight, in 1966.

Recaptured, he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in February, 1967, and in July the same year received a further five years for conspiring to rob an armed security vehicle.

Probyn was moved to Durham from Parkhurst in September last year.

He is serving a 12-year sentence imposed in February, 1965, for shooting at Detective Sergeant Patrick Gibbins at Poplar, London, when cornered by 25 policemen. At the time of the shooting he was "on the run" from Dartmoor Prison, and had escaped from custody 15 times.

The escape was timed when the prisoners were on association or just returning to their cells—it is during association times, when prisoners are allowed to mix freely and watch television, that supervision is most difficult.

The top-security wing of Durham Prison houses a handful of Britain's most hardened criminals.

### **Interlocking doors**

Its present inmates are believed

