

## SOME OTHER PRISON ESCAPES

**Redoine Faïd (2013)**

**George Blake (1966)**

**Julien Chautard (2009)**

**Others - Summaries**

**Redoine Faïd escapes: It wasn't the first time that Faïd, an armed robber being held in the death of a police officer, had gone on the lam. Here are a few other notorious prison escapes.**



A special police officer stands guard in front the jail of Sequedin near Lille, northern France, April 14. Redoine Faïd, an inmate, used explosives and took hostages to escape out of jail on Saturday morning, local media reported.

### **PARIS**

Redoine Faïd's escape from a French prison landed him on [Interpol's](#) most wanted list Monday, two days after he took four guards hostage and used explosives hidden inside tissue packets to blast his way out of a prison in Lille. Faïd freed his hostages along his getaway route.

It wasn't the first time that Faïd, an armed robber being held in the death of a police officer, had gone on the lam. He was arrested in 1998 after three years on the run in [Switzerland](#) and [Israel](#), according to the French media. Faïd was freed after serving 10 years of his 31-year sentence, then swore he had turned his life around, writing a confessional book about his life of crime and going on an extensive media tour.

"When I was on the run, I lived all the time with death, with fear of the police, fear of getting shot," he told Europe 1 radio at the time.

Here's a look at other notorious prison escapes:

#### HIGH-RISE CRIME

Two bank robbers, onetime cellmates at a downtown [Chicago](#) lockup, used a rope made from bed sheets tied together to drop 20 stories to freedom in December 2012. Authorities say they apparently broke a cell window, pulled out the bars then descended to freedom from the downtown [Metropolitan Correctional Center](#). Hours later, the rope of sheets — at least 200 feet (61 meters) long and knotted every 6 feet (2 meters) — was still dangling down the side of the building. Both men were recaptured within weeks.

#### DIRTY LAUNDRY

Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman spent months corrupting his guards at a Mexican prison, then tricked them into thinking they would get a cut of some gold being smuggled out of the prison the night of Jan. 19, 2001. Instead, he smuggled himself out on a laundry cart with the help of a maintenance worker on his payroll. Security camera footage from that night disappeared and computer records of the vehicles entering and leaving the prison were erased. Guzman has since risen to the top of the [Sinaloa cartel](#), [Mexico](#)'s most powerful international drug trafficking network, and has been in hiding ever since. He is considered to be among the world's richest men.

#### ESCAPE FROM SAN QUENTIN

In 1979, bank robber Forrest Silva Tucker and two other [San Quentin](#) inmates built a kayak out of plastic sheets, wood, duct tape and Formica. The vessel held together just long enough for the three to paddle a few hundred yards to freedom. A few years later, police said, Tucker joined the Over-the-Hill-Gang — a group of elderly thieves who robbed [Boston](#)-area supermarkets. Tucker was visiting a girlfriend in [Florida](#) in 1999 when he was caught again.

#### KNITTING NEEDLES

George Blake, a British double agent, used a ladder made of rope and knitting needles to escape Wormwood Scrubs jail in 1966, five years into his 42-year sentence for treason. With the help of accomplices, he made his way to the border of [East Germany](#) hidden in a secret compartment inside a camper van. Blake ended up in the [Soviet Union](#) and still lives in [Russia](#), where he receives a [KGB](#) pension and last year celebrated his 90th birthday.

#### THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

Ronnie Biggs was part of a gang that stole sacks containing 2.6 million pounds sterling from a Glasgow-to-London mail train in August 1963. The haul from what was dubbed the Great Train Robbery would be worth more than 40 million pounds (\$60 million) today. Biggs escaped from prison in 1965 by scaling a 30-foot wall with three other inmates. Styling himself "the last of the gentleman crooks," Biggs charged \$50 — later hiked to \$60 — for visitors to join a barbecue at his home where they could also buy the T-

shirt: "I went to [Rio](#) and met Ronnie Biggs ... honest." He spent decades thumbing his nose at British authorities from his home in [Brazil](#) before returning to [Britain](#) aboard a plane chartered by a tabloid newspaper. Biggs was freed from prison in 2009 on compassionate grounds after a series of strokes.

### 1966: The Blake prison escape



A short history of the miraculous prison break of Soviet double-agent George Blake from a British jail, organised by two libertarian activists.

In 1966, the most notorious prisoner in Britain was sprung from jail. George Blake was a British double-agent serving 42 years for spying for the Soviet Union. At the time this was the longest jail sentence ever imposed by a British court.

For 22 years the truth of his escape remained a secret. Common wisdom held that it must have been a professional operation masterminded by the KGB, the IRA or even the British security services. However in 1988, two radical peace activists revealed that they had rescued Blake from prison and smuggled him out of the country to Eastern Europe.

Michael Randle and Pat Pottle were founder members of the Committee of 100 anti-nuclear direct action group and describe themselves as libertarians and "quasi-anarchists". In 1962, at the height of the Cold War, they had both been sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for conspiracy to organise the Committee of 100 demonstrations at the nuclear base USAF Wethersfield in Essex. They both had first hand experience of prison and it was their outrage at the "vicious" sentence imposed on Blake that led them to attempt to free him. They believed the sentence was "unjust" and that "helping him was a decent human response."

Being ex-cons in the same prison Blake was in not only enabled them to empathise with Blake, but also gave them contacts on the inside who could help with the escape. It also meant they had some knowledge of the layout of the prison and the level of security.

They had experience of covert planning from their time in the peace movement in the early 60s, a movement which managed to pull off impressive actions like the Spies for Peace campaign in 1963, when peace activists invaded a secret underground bunker intended for members of the government in time of nuclear war. The "Spies" stole documents from the shelter and sent them to all major national newspapers, revealing for the first time the existence of a national network of these 'Regional Seats of Government' and the government plans for an all-out nuclear war.

Randle and Pottle used their experience of direct action in planning the Blake escape. Pat Pottle said, "I was determined that if I was to get involved with the break it should not fail because of silly or obvious mistakes... If we were to be caught it should not be the result of inadequate planning."

While in prison for the Wethersfield actions, they had met Blake and also Sean Bourke (serving 7 years for sending a bomb to a senior policeman), who plotted the escape with them. After their release they kept in touch with the two longer term prisoners and when Sean was staying in a half-way house, preparing for release from prison, he made contact with Randle and Pottle. He told them that Blake had appealed to him to help him escape, rather than spend the rest of his life in prison.

When the idea of escape was originally raised, Blake suggested that they contact the Russian Embassy for help. But from the beginning Randle and Pottle ruled out any idea of dealing with the murderous Soviet Union. It was their liking for Blake personally and sympathy for his 42-year "death sentence" which motivated them. As Michael Randle said: "It was to be an entirely unprofessional – almost one could say DIY – affair."

Sean Bourke worked out a plan with Blake, exchanging notes via another inmate whose prison job took him between the pre-release hostel where Bourke was, and the long-termers' D-wing where Blake was kept. Bourke set up a small network of helpers to smuggle things into the prison and bought walkie-talkies so they could keep in contact even when he was released from prison. He smuggled one of these in to Blake, choosing a type which could not be picked up by the police radios.

Their plan was as follows: D-block, where Blake was housed, was the block nearest to one wall of the prison. The prison blocks have large gothic windows at each end made up of a number of smaller panes of glass, divided by cast iron struts. Blake was to make his exit from the prison landing through one of these windows. Removing two of the panes of glass and one of the struts would make a hole eighteen inches by twelve – just big enough to squeeze through. Blake had made himself a wooden frame of exactly these dimensions, which he kept in his cell to practice squeezing through. From the window, Blake would be able to drop down into the yard.

The panes of glass were removed from the window a couple of days before the day of the escape and the iron cross-bar was broken and then stuck back in place with tape, so that it could be quickly removed when the time came.

They planned to make the escape attempt between 6 and 7pm on a Saturday evening when most of the inmates and staff would be at the weekly prison film show. The only two screws on duty were normally watching television in a room without a clear line of sight to the window Blake would be exiting from.

Bourke would park a getaway car nearby and throw a specially designed rope ladder (the rungs were made of size 13 knitting needle – sufficiently light to be thrown but still strong enough to hold Blake's

weight) over the wall at a prearranged point. There were security patrols that went round the perimeter walls, but Bourke had timed them and reckoned there was enough of a gap for the escape between each circuit they made.

There was a watchman posted in the prison yard who would be able to see the escape, but they figured that if they moved quick enough, Blake could be over the wall before the watchman had a chance to raise the alarm. And even when he this did happen, they would have a few minutes head-start on any pursuing prison officers.

To work out how long it would take a search party to get round the side of the prison to the point where Blake would be dropping over the wall, Bourke took to jogging around the perimeter of the prison every morning, claiming he wanted to get fit before release, and timing his run with a stop-watch.

Bourke also made some dummy runs in the getaway car to work out timings. On the day of the escape he just had to drive a short distance to the near-by flat they had rented under a false name which was to serve as a safe house. He was eventually released from prison and moved into the safe house just round the corner from the prison. Michael Randle raised money from friends, changed it in banks a couple of times to prevent it being traced and then gave it to Bourke to buy a getaway car (for £65!).

The day before the escape they went over all the plans, then burnt their maps and notes (and of course the sheets of paper underneath their notes, to remove the possibility of impressions being traced on underlying pages).

On the night, the escape went more or less to plan apart from Blake breaking his wrist in the 20-foot drop down the other side of the prison wall – a danger that they had failed to consider in the planning.

The ready co-operation of lots of 'normal' people in the escape attempt was a key factor in its success. There were many outraged at Blake's clearly politically-motivated sentence who were willing to help in small ways. For example, Randle and Pottle managed to find a sympathetic doctor who treated Blake's broken wrist – no questions asked.

Wild speculation began almost immediately after the successful escape – with the newspapers reporting that Blake was already out of the country and safely in Eastern Europe or that he had been spotted on a plane landing in Sydney.

Blake had lots of supporters in prison who sympathized with his predicament and were joyous at his escape. The police met with a "wall of silence" when they tried to get any information from Blake's fellow prisoners. One lag described the atmosphere in Wormwood Scrubs the morning after the escape as being "like Christmas Day after Father Christmas has been."

The original plan for getting Blake out of the country was to disguise him by turning him black. While hiding out in the safe house, Blake was instructed to take a medicine called meladinin, designed for the treatment of vitiligo, a disease which causes white spots to appear on the skin. By taking extra large doses, and spending time under a sun lamp, Blake would be able to pass as an Arab, helped by his knowledge of Arabic, which he had studied in prison.

Randle and Pottle forged a prescription to get large doses of meladinin, destroying the equipment used to forge the prescription afterwards, and going in disguise to the pharmacy to buy it. However, Blake never actually took the meladinin because he was worried about the side effects – large doses can cause liver damage.

It all started to go wrong when the boisterously over-confident Sean Bourke became increasingly sketchy. He had talked about getting forged passports from ‘underworld contacts’ but it later turned out he had no idea how to go about doing this. The meladinin idea and the false passports were finally abandoned and they settled for smuggling Blake out of the country instead.

It started to go from bad to worse. Sean Bourke had originally bought a getaway car in his own name. When this was discovered he was ordered to sell the car and buy another one under a false name.

But after Blake had been broken out and was holed up in the flat they had rented, it turned out that Bourke had lied to Randle and Pottle and actually used the original car which was registered to him in the escape. This was soon found by the police and identified as the car used in the getaway.

The ‘safe’ house Bourke had rented for Blake to stay in turned out to be a bedsit with shared facilities and a landlady who came in to clean once a week – not suitable at all for an escaped convict.

It later turned out that unbeknownst to Randle and Pottle, Bourke had purposefully endangered the whole project by sending photos of himself to the newspapers, phoning the police and telling them the whereabouts of the getaway car, and sending a death threat to the cop he had originally sent prison for sending a bomb to.

It appears that many of Bourke’s bizarre actions and his blasé attitude to security were driven by a desire for notoriety – a desire to make a name for himself and then be able to make some sort of career out of this. This was indeed what he did in a small way by publishing a book about the escape in 1970 that practically named all the other participants in the escape.

Due to the discovery of the car and the situation with the flat, Blake was moved through a series of ‘safe’ houses around London, mostly staying with friends of Randle and Pottle’s. This proved to be almost as dodgy as staying in Sean Bourke’s bedsit. The wife of one friend who agreed to temporarily shelter Blake told her analyst all about it – because of course the analyst “requires her to be completely frank and not to conceal anything from him”. Needless to say Blake was swiftly found somewhere else to stay.

The police were looking for Sean Bourke because of finding the getaway car, so it was decided that he should also travel to the USSR to meet up with Blake and stay there until he was able to safely return home to Ireland.

It was finally decided to smuggle Blake out in a camper van. Randle and Pottle got a friend with some knowledge of woodwork to build a compartment into the camper van. Michael Randle took his family to East Berlin in the camper van – with Blake hidden underneath. The wholesome family and the children in the back of the van, cheerfully sitting on top of the most wanted man in Britain, easily fooled the few cops and customs officers who happened to look in the back of the van. They never told the children they were sitting on top of an escaped spy, and managed to keep the whole thing from them.

George Blake was thus successfully delivered to East Berlin in December 1966, the conclusion to one of the most successful and most notorious prison escapes ever.

*Taken from Do or Die! #10*

### **Arsonist Arrested After Prison Escape Act**

3:40pm UK, Tuesday 31 March 2009



Julien Chautard escaped from Pentonville prison last week.

Police have arrested a convicted arsonist who escaped from Pentonville prison by clinging to the underside of a security van.

Julien Chautard, 39, was arrested in the Piccadilly area of central London shortly before 9am this morning.

A [Scotland Yard](#) spokesman said his friends and family encouraged him to call police.

Chautard made a phone call to Islington CID and told Detective Inspector Yasmin Lalani that he would be in Piccadilly this morning.

Det Insp Lalani thanked Chautard's family, members of the public and the media, saying "without their help this positive result might not have been possible".

Chautard was sentenced to seven years in jail at Snaresbrook Crown Court last week for arson and endangering life in an incident in Hackney.

But the convict spent just minutes inside [Pentonville prison](#) in north London before he slipped out underneath the van he had arrived in.

It is believed Chautard may have crawled underneath the van and clung on as it was driven back through the prison gates.

Prison officials have launched an official enquiry into how staff failed to notice the inmate's escape.

### **Manhunt on for dangerous arsonist after daring escape from Pentonville Prison**

Blundering prison officers are facing the sack after a dangerous arsonist escaped by slipping under a security van.

Blundering prison officers are facing the sack after a dangerous arsonist escaped by slipping under a security van.

Julien Chautard (below), 39, broke out of jail almost as soon as he had arrived after being sentenced at court to seven years behind bars. But never even made it to his cell.



Julien Chautard

He was counted off the van which brought him from court – but tricked officers by simply hiding behind the vehicle.

Incredibly, they failed to spot an inmate was missing and gave the driver permission to go back into the “air lock” which leads out of the jail.

Chautard had by then got under the van – and escaped by hanging from its underside.



His getaway method on Friday remained a mystery for seven hours as Pentonville Prison in North London was scoured by officers ordered to stay until 2am on Saturday.

Only then was it noticed on CCTV footage that a shadow under the van had not been there as it entered the jail.

One Pentonville source said: "There's been hell to pay. The governor got all the staff in the chapel and told them 'Someone will get the sack for this'.

"We were told police units and even helicopter crews were out searching because the guy had burned a house down and is seen as a serious threat.

"He saw his chance when he got out of the van and slipped underneath and away."

Scotland Yard said Chautard was sentenced at Snaresbrook court, East London, for "arson being reckless as to whether life was endangered".

A spokesman added: "He is white, 5ft 7in, slim, with fair hair and blue eyes, and he has connections in France and to the Hackney, Edgware and King's Cross areas of London."

### **Nazis, spoons and Johnny Depp: The top 10 most daring jailbreaks**

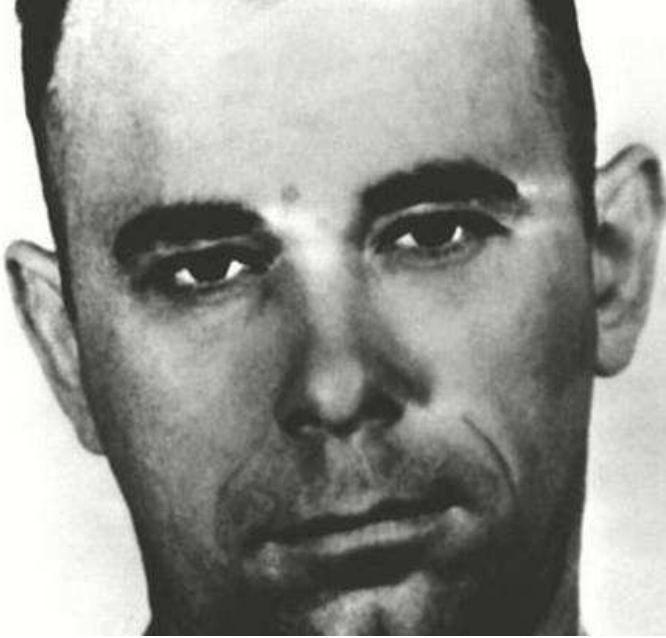
With news today of arsonist Julien Chautard's escape from Pentonville prison, we take a look at the top ten most daring jailbreaks.

With news today of [arsonist Julien Chautard's escape from Pentonville prison](#), we take a look at the top ten most daring jailbreaks.

**1.** There was embarrassment for the Greek government earlier this month after two of the country's most notorious criminals managed to escape a maximum security prison via helicopter.

Four prison guards and a helicopter pilot have since been arrested. Watch footage below.

**2.** Set to be immortalised in a Hollywood film with Johnny Depp in the leading role later this year, John Dillinger's 1933 escape from Lima jail in Ohio remains one of the most infamous.



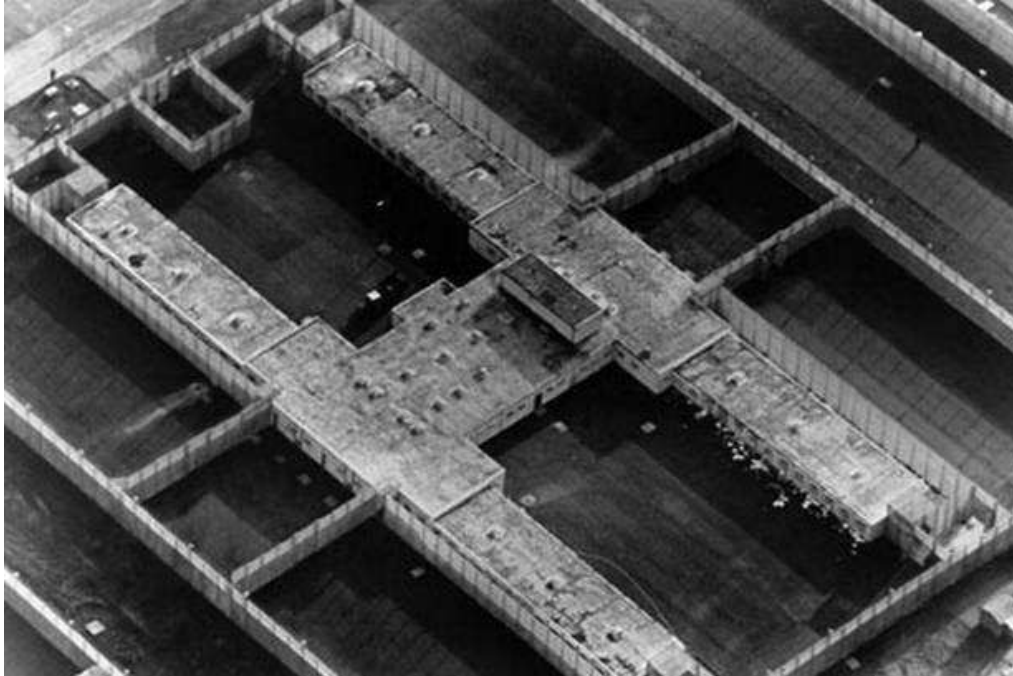
John Dillinger (Pic:Rex)

Prison wardens had found what appeared to be a jailbreak plan in the notorious US bank robber's pocket.

Despite denying he was about to attempt an escape, he was kept under surveillance by guards.

Four days later, a group of fellow inmates escaped using the very same method laid out in the discovered notes. The escapees later returned, shot the sheriff and freed Dillinger.

**3.** The biggest jailbreak in British penal history took place in 1983, when 38 prisoners escaped from the maximum security Maze prison in County Antrim, Northern Ireland.



Maze Prison

(Pic:PA)

Once considered one of the most escape-proof jails in Europe, one Maze officer died of a heart attack as a result of the escape and 20 others were injured, including two who were shot with guns that had been smuggled into the prison.

Half of the escapees were recaptured within two days. However 19 managed to make it to the Republic of Ireland with four getting as far as the United States. One prisoner has never been seen or heard of since.

**4.**In 1996, resourceful Brit David McMillan managed to escape from Thailand's hard-line Klong Prem Central Prison while awaiting trial on drug charges.

With the threat of the death penalty hanging over him, McMillan cut the bars of his shared cell with a hacksaw then negotiated four walls before scaling the prison's electrified outer perimeter using a bamboo ladder.

Within four hours he had managed to board a flight to Singapore with a fake passport.

**5.** Alfréd Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba were two of only a few prisoners known to have escaped from the Auschwitz death camp during the Holocaust.

The pair, both Slovak Jews made good their escape after hiding in a wood stack for four days.

Prior to the getaway, Wetzler mapped out a detailed plan of the camp, which included construction details of the gas chambers, crematoriums and, most significantly, details of the Zyklon used in the Auschwitz's deadly gas chambers.

Wetzler's notes were later used to compile a report, revealing for the first time to the outside world the truth about the camp as a place of mass murder.

**6.**After spending just two years as a British WW2 Prisoner of War in Germany's Colditz Castle, Pat Reid dashed through the prison's kitchens, through the yards and crawled across a dry moat. It took him four days to reach Switzerland with a fellow escapee.



Colditz Castle (Pic:PA)

Pat defied the Nazi's, who believed Colditz was impossible to escape from.

Capitalising on his triumph he wrote two books, *The Colditz Story* and *The Latter Days at Colditz*. The former book was made into a BBC mini-series starring Robert Wagner.

To make the task easier for future prisoners, Pat joined up with Parker Brothers and developed a board game relating to his time as POW. One player gets stuck with a German flag while the rest pick the part of an American, British, Dutch, French or Polish prisoner.

**7.**After countless failed attempts by scores of less fortunate prisoners, three lags successfully broke out of California's Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay for the first time in 1962 with the help of little more than a few spoons and a homemade raft.



Alcatraz

Frank Lee and Brothers Clarence and John Anglin placed dummy heads made of soap, toilet paper and real hair in their beds to fool prison officers checking in at night.

Meanwhile, they made their break for freedom Shawshank Redemption-style and cut through the back of their cells with sharpened cutlery, before shimmying through a ventilation duct and down a pipe.

The raft which took them off the island was made of no more than a few pieces of driftwood and raincoats sewn together.

**8.**In 1970 Billy Hayes, an American student studying in Turkey, was caught trying to smuggle hashish out of the country.



Midnight Express (Pic:Rex)

He landed himself a life sentence but escaped in 1975 to Greece before making it back to the States.

His experiences formed the best-selling book *Midnight Express*, which eventually became a movie starring Brad Davis (above).

The film courted criticism, however, over a number of plot exaggerations, the biggest of which being the details of Hayes' jailbreak.

The film sees him make a violent escape in which he unwittingly kills a prison warden. In reality Hayes made a far less dramatic exit via the sea surrounding the jail.

**9.**In 1984, the largest ever mass death row escape in American history took place at Mecklenburg Correctional Center in Virginia.

The six inmates had taken note of how lax prison guards were about following procedures and duly took advantage.

Hiding in a guards office while on his way back from recreation, one of the lags overpowered the correctional officer then used his keys to release all of the locks in the housing unit.

Inmates took over the unit and stole the uniforms of other guards.

They then bluffed their way out of the unit by donning riot helmets that hid their faces while carrying a purported bomb (in actuality a prison TV covered with a blanket) out to a waiting van, which they then drove out of the prison.

All six were recaptured within 18 days, and were eventually executed as planned.

**10.** Stalag Luft III was a German Air Force prisoner-of-war camp during World War II that housed captured air force servicemen.



Steve McQueen

On the night of 24th of March, 1944, over 200 captured Allied aircrew attempted a mass break out.

The attempt was the culmination of many months of careful preparation, including the digging of a narrow tunnel over 330 feet in length.

Of the 76 who made it out of from the prison camp, only three made it home, with 50 executed by the Gestapo.

The story inspired Christmas TV movie staple The Great Escape. Like Midnight Express, more than a few liberties were taken by the film's makers.

For example, Steve McQueen's iconic motorcycle dash for the border was entirely fictional, due to the fact that no serving members of the American armed forces were involved in the final escape.

### **Great prison escapes**

When a prisoner last week slipped out of Pentonville clinging to the underside of a van, he took his place in a daring tradition of escapes involving dynamite, helicopters and nail clippers



Convicted arsonist Julien Chautard handed himself into police after escaping from Pentonville prison.  
Photograph: Metropolitan Police/PA

French-born arsonist Julien Chautard handed himself into police yesterday after an audacious escape in which he succeeded in slipping away from a group of new arrivals at Pentonville prison in north London. As the other prisoners were being marched inside, Chautard managed to duck behind the prison van that had just brought them there there from Snaresbrook crown court (where Chautard, 39, had been sent down for seven years). He then succeeded in leaving the jail a few minutes later clinging to the underside of the same van. Pretty smart, Julien. But how does this daring breakout rank against some of history's best and boldest?

#### **John Gerard, London, 1597**

Gerard, a Jesuit priest, made a particularly inspired escape from the Tower of London. After first writing to Catholic sympathisers, and inserting secret clues in each letter hidden by an invisible ink of his own devising, the priest hacked his way through the stones around his cell door, finessed his way past the guards in the corridor outside, and reached a high wall overlooking the Tower's moat. Far below, a rowing boat waited in the darkness. The oarsman tossed Gerard a rope, which he knotted round a handy cannon and, on hearing the signal that the other end had been safely tied off on the other side of the moat, shimmied down to safety. He was never recaptured.

#### **Casanova, Venice, 1755**

As persistent and meticulous in engineering his jailbreaks as he was in seducing other men's wives, the convicted adulterer found himself in 1755 behind bars in The Leads, so named for the impenetrable lead that covered its walls and roof. To cut a long story short, Casanova fashioned a digging implement out of an iron rod and spent months working on a tunnel in the corner of his cell. When he was moved to another cell, he feared he would be watched so asked a monk next door to do his digging for him. The pair made good their escape by using the same trusty iron tool to batter down the doors in their path.

#### **Colonel Thomas E Rose, Virginia, 1864**



Rose, one of 1,200 Union officers banged up in a former grocer's warehouse in Richmond, Virginia, during the American civil war, dug his way to freedom with a few colleagues using pocket knives and pieces of scrap wood. Their 50ft tunnel started in the store's cellar and ended in an empty shed. Rose was so chuffed with his construction that he returned to the jail a few days later and led another 15 men to freedom. In all, 93 Union officers used the route, prompting even the Confederate Richmond Examiner to describe the feat as "an extraordinary escapade".

#### **Papillon, French Guiana, 1933, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1939, etc**

Henri Charrière, a Paris underworld mobster, was sentenced to hard labour for life in 1931 and transported to the prison of St-Laurent-du-Maroni in French Guiana. He bust out of there in November 1933 and sailed to Colombia, where he was rearrested. He escaped again, and spent several happy and sexually active months in a native pearl divers' village before being packed off to solitary confinement on St Joseph's Island back in French Guiana. After several further attempts to escape, he ended up feigning madness on the grounds that the penal colony's mental hospital would be easier to leave than its jail. This, too, failed – but he did get to be played by Steve McQueen in a major Hollywood movie in 1973, and makes it on to this list for sheer perseverance.

#### **Frank Morris, Clarence and John Anglin, Alcatraz, 1962**

Alcatraz, built to house America's most violent criminals on an island in the San Francisco bay, was considered escape-proof. This trio proved that theory wrong. For six months they chipped away at the concrete around the ventilation shafts in their cells using nail clippers, bits of a fan and a few spoons, concealing their nightly progress by filling the holes with paste made from old newspapers. They finally wiggled through the jail's ventilation system and set off on a raft made of barrels, wire mesh and old raincoats across the water. Where, sadly, they very probably drowned.

#### **Ronald Biggs, Wandsworth, London, 1965**

The second of the £2.6m Great Train Robbers to escape from prison did so with three other inmates using a rope and a tubular ladder thrown over the wall of the prison exercise yard from a van with a platform on top parked outside. "The four prisoners immediately made for the ladder and climbed over the top," a Home Office spokesman said at the time. "Prison officers tried to stop them, but were prevented by other prisoners in the yard." The four made good their escape in three getaway cars. Biggs fled to Paris for plastic surgery and a new ID, then to Australia and finally to Brazil, where he stayed for 35 years before voluntarily returning home in 2001.

#### **Billy Hayes, Sea of Marmara, Turkey, 1975**

Sentenced to 30 years in a Turkish jail for drug smuggling in 1970, the 22-year-old American spent a brutal year in Istanbul's Sagmalicar jail before being moved to an island prison. After six months of planning, he fought a prison guard, stole his uniform, and clutching \$2,000 his father had smuggled into the prison in a photo album, rowed all night through a fierce storm to the mainland. There he dyed his blond hair black, walked halfway across Turkey and finally swam across a raging river to reach Greece. Watch the 1978 film *Midnight Express* for an (apparently highly inaccurate) idea of what it was like.

#### **Pascal Payet, assorted French prisons, 2001, 2003, 2007**

Payet, AKA Kalashnikov Pat, was serving 30 years for murder in Luynes jail when he escaped by helicopter for the first time. He was on the run for six years, during which period he organised the escape of three of his former fellow inmates, again by helicopter. Eventually recaptured and incarcerated in Grasse high security jail in the south of France, Payet flew to freedom once more in July 2007, in a Squirrel helicopter hijacked, along with its pilot, from the glamorous resort of Cannes half an hour earlier. The chopper landed on the penitentiary's roof, from where three heavily armed men set off in search of Payet. Amazingly, there have been 10 successful helicopter escapes from French jails in the past 20 years.

### **Antonio Ferrara, Fresnes, Paris, 2003**

Ferrara, a legendary underworld explosives expert capable of blowing a safe open while leaving the cash inside unharmed, was sentenced to eight years for two armed robberies (he was suspected of 15 more). In March 2003, a couple of police cars pulled up in front of the gates of Fresnes jail outside Paris. Six men, dressed as police officers, got out. Three of them promptly opened fire on the two watchtowers with AK47s, while the others blew the front gates open with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Ferrara, meanwhile, calmly dynamited his cell door, jumped in one of the cars and was gone.

### **Prisoner escapes by clinging on to bottom of security van as it drives out of jail**

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Julien Christopher Chautard escaped from Pentonville prison by hiding himself under the security van he arrived in

As the prison gates clanged shut behind him, arsonist Julien Chautard was facing seven years behind bars.

But the 39-year-old criminal, who had been sentenced just a few hours earlier, was never to see the inside of his cell at Pentonville jail.

In a scene straight out of Hollywood, he managed to slip away from his guards and hide under the prison van that had brought him from court.

Hethen found a way to cling by his fingertips to the underside of the van and stay there as it drove out of the jail - leaving prison authorities to turn Pentonville upside down in a vain search for the escapee.

Chautard had been sentenced at Snaresbrook Crown Court in East London on Friday for arson reckless as to whether life was endangered and a further charge of arson in Hackney, North London.

As the Serco prison van arrived at Pentonville in North London at 7pm on the same day prison officers failed to spot him disappear from among a group of new arrivals.

Then, emulating Robert De Niro's psychopath character Max Cady who hangs on to the underbelly of a car in the remake of the thriller Cape Fear, he is thought to have crawled under the security van and stayed there as it left the jail.

His escape went undetected for seven hours as prison officers searched the jail until 2am.

Initially, it appeared Chautard had vanished into thin air. It was only when CCTV footage was checked seven hours later that officers noticed a shadow under the van that had not been there before.



Chautard made his escape by clinging on to the underside of the van as it left the jail

The prison governor is said to have ordered all staff into the jail's chapel and warned them that someone could be fired for the blunders.

A source said: 'We were told police units and helicopter crews were out searching because the guy had burned a house down and is seen as a serious threat.'

'He saw his chance when he got out of the van and slipped underneath and away.'

Underneath the van were found his fingerprints and boot prints.

Scotland Yard is searching for French-born Chautard who has connections in France and also has links to Hackney, Edgware and King's Cross in London.



The convicted arsonist made his getaway as he was being processed at Pentonville prison

Six prisoners escaped from jails between 2007-08. The level of 'absconds' - escapes from open prisons - is much higher.

Prisoners escaping from custody in recent years include robbers Clifford Hobbs, 49, and Noel Cunningham, 48, who had accomplices shoot a guard so they could break out of a prison van on the way to Inner London Crown Court in 2003.

Hobbs was tracked down to Spain and jailed last year for a further 12 years.

Cunningham is still on the run and is one of Scotland Yard's 12 'most wanted' men.

**Yard's 'most wanted man' is arrested in Amsterdam**

o



Arrested: Noel Cunningham is believed to have been found in Holland

One of Scotland Yard's most wanted men has been arrested

He was caught living under a false identity in the Netherlands and is believed to have been arrested in Amsterdam on Tuesday.

Noel Cunningham, 47, escaped from a prison van on June 10, 2003, while on his way to court to face charges of conspiring to steal £1.25million from a Securicor van.

He was being taken from Brixton Prison to the Inner London Crown Court when the van was ambushed by two armed men, who shot one prison guard and beat another.

Cunningham escaped with his accomplice Clifford Hobbs.

Hobbs stayed with friends in south London before fleeing on a fake passport to France, Portugal and eventually Malaga in Spain.

He was arrested and extradited to the UK in 2007.

Before their escape, Cunningham, 48, and Hobbs were due to appear in court on charges of conspiring to steal £1.25 million from a Securicor van.

Hobbs was jailed for life in February last year after he admitted organising an 'inside job' on the security van in March 2003.

Officers, who had been tipped off about the raid, moved in as the van made a pick-up from a cafe in Effra Road in Brixton, south London.



Most wanted: Cunningham escaped from a prison van with Clifford Hobbs while on his way to court to face charges over a failed security van raid

Hobbs and Cunningham were arrested at the scene in a stolen BMW and sent to Brixton Prison to await trial.

Hobbs, from Rotherhithe, south east London, also admitted escaping from lawful custody and a jury at Woolwich Crown Court found him guilty of having a firearm with intent to escape from custody.

#### **'PREMIER LEAGUE CRIMINAL' JAILED FOR DARING PRISON ESCAPE**



Noel Cunningham Clifford Hubbs

**A 'premier league criminal' who was on the run for six years after a daring prison van escape faces eighteen years behind bars.**

Rotherhithe men Noel Cunningham, 48, and Clifford Hobbs, 49, were broken out in a 'sophisticated and cunning' ambush when the vehicle arrived at Inner London Crown Court in 2003.

The pair were facing a £1.5million robbery trial when a man dressed as a postman shot a prison van security guard in the knee as they opened a gate to the court.

The postman and another man entered the van and pistol-whipped a different security guard - forcing him to open the cell doors. Mark Gadsden, the prosecutor in Cunningham's case, said the Rotherhithe man had planned his escape after being told 'weeks in advance' of his June 2003 court date.

Cunningham then became one of Britain's 'Most Wanted' men as he was smuggled out of the country and lived under a string of assumed identities in Holland until he was arrested last year.

He was finally brought to justice at Woolwich Crown Court, following a short trial amid tight security. DS Neil Lemon, from the Met's Trident Command, said: "It is abundantly clear that both Noel Cunningham and Clifford Hobbs are premier league criminals. The prison van escape was meticulously planned and ruthlessly executed.

"The shooting of the Securicor guard was unprovoked and totally unnecessary and has resulted in his being unable to work again. Today's sentence reflects the serious nature of the offences committed and will hopefully act as a deterrent to those considering similar actions."

Cunningham was found guilty of causing grievous bodily harm, possession of a firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence, and possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, on May 6 following the trial. The charges all relate to his escape from the prison van on June 10, 2003.

Previously, on January 29 this year Cunningham had admitted conspiracy to steal, the original offence he was charged with before he went on the run.

On Friday, at Woolwich Crown Court, the 48-year-old was sentenced to six years imprisonment for the conspiracy to steal offence, eight years for causing grievous bodily harm with intent and four years for

having a firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence, all to run consecutively. He was jailed for a further four years for possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, to run concurrently.

Cunningham, formerly of Greenland Quay, Rotherhithe, was found guilty of having a firearm with intent to escape, possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence and wounding with intent.

Hobbs, previously of Hull Close, Stave Dock, Rotherhithe, was jailed for life and given a minimum eight-year sentence after admitting conspiracy to steal, escape from lawful custody, and being convicted of having a firearm with intent to escape from lawful custody in January 2008.

### **Prison van escapee surrenders**



Noel Cunningham and Clifford Hobbs

One of three prisoners who escaped from a prison van in London today has given himself up.

Scotland Yard said Tony Peters, who was due to appear in court on a robbery charge, has surrendered himself to police and is currently in custody at a south-east London police station

Earlier, he and two other prisoners - Clifford Hobbs and Noel Cunningham - escaped after men disguised as postal workers opened fire on a Securicor van pulling up to the barrier at Inner London crown court in Southwark, south London.

The driver of the prison van, carrying 10 men to court from Brixton prison, also in south London, was shot in the knee and his colleague was pistol-whipped.

Detective Superintendent Mick Allen of the serious crime directorate at New Scotland Yard appealed to anyone who saw this "audacious" crime to come forward. But he warned that the two remaining escapees are "extremely dangerous" and possibly armed.

"We do not wish anybody to attempt to approach them," he said.

Mr Allen said he believed Mr Hobbs and Mr Cunningham - who were appearing on charges of theft and conspiracy - were the gunmen's intended targets, while Mr Peters, may just have been "pulled into this".

After the escape the men fled through a park called Newington Gardens, just behind nearby Avonmouth Street, and then went into Bath Terrace.



A witness, Trudy Hagan, told Sky news she was upstairs at a nearby social security office when she saw the incident.

"I looked out of the window and I saw a prison van shaking and I heard someone shouting, 'Open the door! Open the fucking door!'"

"I saw somebody come round the front. He was dressed as a post office man. I heard two shots fired and heard lots more shouting."

A spokesman for the prison service said: "The driver was threatened by a man with a shotgun who proceeded to shoot the driver in the knee through the door of the van. The other security staff on board, the passenger, was pistol-whipped.

"The driver got out of the vehicle and there followed an escape from the back of the van by three prisoners."

Mr Hobbs, from Rotherhithe, south-east London, is described as white, 180cm (5ft 11in), stocky, with short brown hair and wearing glasses.

Mr Cunningham, who lives nearby in Greenland Quay, is also white, the same height but heavily built and said to have dark cropped hair.

They and two other men were arrested in south London in March by Flying Squad officers as they allegedly prepared to target a Securicor van loaded with £1.25m.

#### **Most Wanted 'van robber' arrested in Spain**



Image 1 of 2

Clifford Hobbs

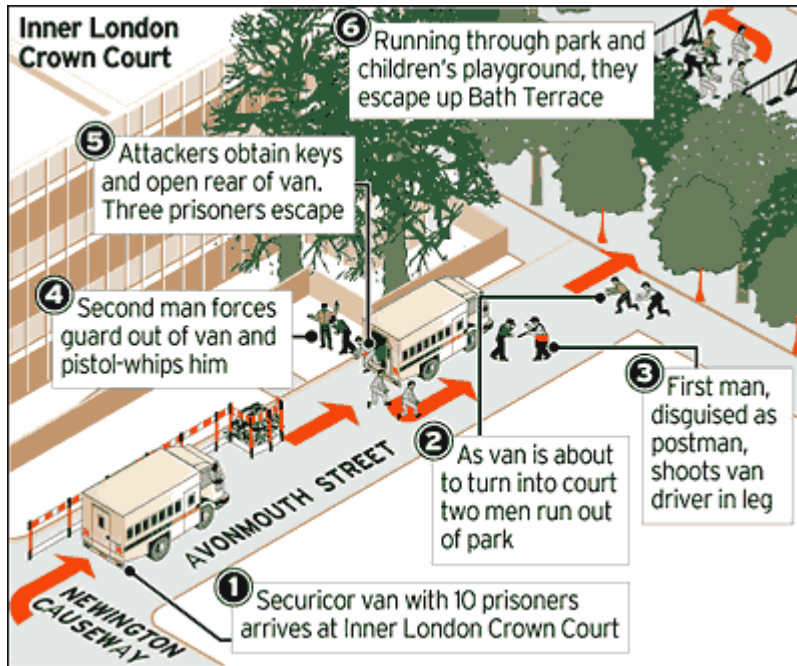


Image 1 of 2

Graphic showing how Hobbs escaped

By Matthew Moore and agencies

3:45PM BST 06 Aug 2007

- [How Hobbs made his dramatic escape](#)
- [Scotland Yard's Most Wanted men](#)

An escaped prisoner wanted in connection with a £1.25 million security van robbery has been arrested in Spain.

Clifford Hobbs, 47, who has been described as "extremely dangerous", was held in the Malaga area on a European arrest warrant.

Hobbs was [sprung from a prison van by armed men in June 2003](#) as he was being transported to court to face the robbery charge.

He is listed on the Scotland Yard website as one of the force's twelve Most Wanted men.

#### Related Articles

- [Danger men on the run](#)



11 Jun 2003

The arrest follows an operation involving Scotland Yard, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (Soca) and Spanish police. Hobbs will remain in custody in Spain while the UK authorities arrange for his extradition.

Hobbs, and his co-accused Noel Cunningham, 41, were "sprung" by two men - one dressed as a postal worker and both with handguns - who lay in wait for a van taking 10 prisoners from Brixton prison, in south London, to Inner London Crown Court, in Southwark.

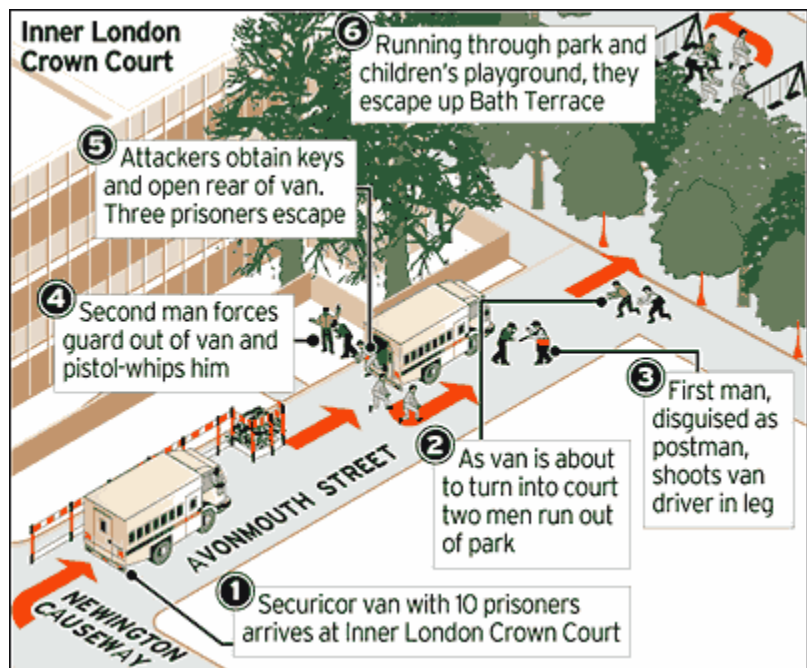
The attackers pounced when the van arrived at the court. They shot the driver and pistol-whipped a colleague across the face.

Police believe that they then stole the men's keys to open the back of the van.

Hobbs, Cunningham and a third man who was not involved in their case, escaped.

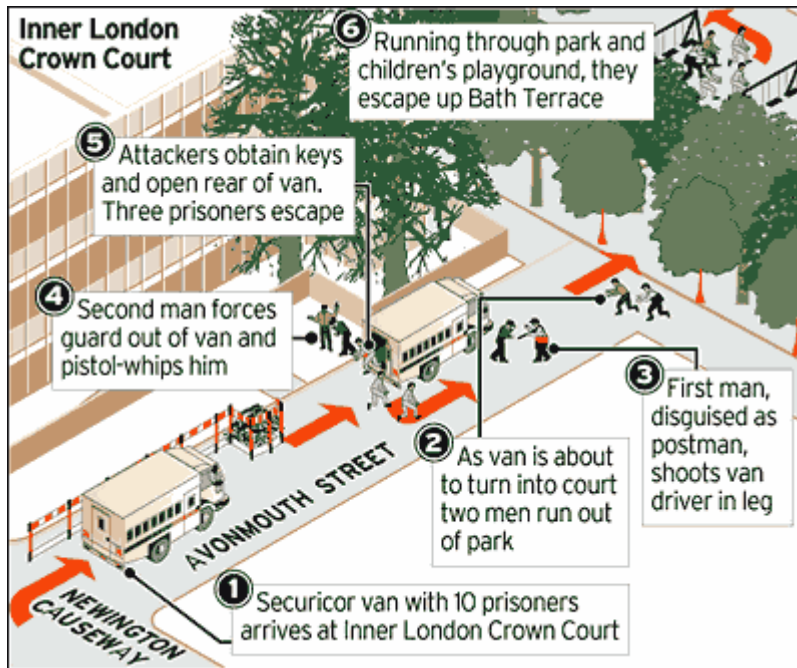
The other fugitive gave himself up hours later but Hobbs and Cunningham were spirited away through the backstreets of Southwark. The seven other prisoners chose not to escape.

Police had warned people not to approach the fugitives, and a £50,000 reward was offered by Securicor for their capture.



Hobbs was jailed for 12 years in the Eighties for his part in an attempt to snatch £430,000 being delivered to the BBC.





TWO dangerous gangland suspects escaped in an armed prison van hijack yesterday - and police believe it was an inside job.

Clifford Hobbs, 41, and Noel Cunningham, 43 - connected to some of the underworld's most notorious hoods - were freed by two men thought to be acting on information from inside van operators Securicor.

One of the attackers was dressed as a postman and had a shotgun hidden in his mail bag.

He and his accomplice waited on a park bench until the high-sided white Daf vehicle arrived on its routine stop at Inner London Crown Court in Borough, South London.



Hiding out ... Noel Cunningham

They then sprinted up to the vehicle as it stopped.

The "postman" took the gun from his sack and pointed it at driver Neil Chetty, 24. He was then cold-bloodedly shot in the leg through the van door.

Police believe it was to terrify a Securicor colleague into opening the rear doors to the prisoner compartment.

After he did, he was pistol-whipped. Eye witness Paul Rhodes said: "The gunman was screaming at the guards 'Get out of the f\*\*\*ing van'.



On the loose ... Clifford Hobbs  
Picture: REUTERS

"Then I heard banging and shouting from inside the van. The men were screaming 'Get us f\*\*\*ing out **NOW!**'

"A few seconds later a shot rang out. Then I saw the men run off."

*Cunningham, Hobbs and their armed helpers are thought to have fled to a getaway car and are now believed to be in a gangland hideout.*

A third prisoner among the 10 inside the van also escaped, but later gave himself up.

Police are almost sure the hijack was carried out with inside help.

A Scotland Yard source said: "Vans carrying prisoners are constantly arriving at the court. None of them have any particular features so without help it would be difficult to hit the right one."

Hobbs and Cunningham were due to face trial after an armoured van, also owned by Securicor, was targeted in South London in March.

The duo faced a charge of conspiracy to steal £1.25million. They have links to other gangsters and made jail visits to the Dome Robbery gang.

### **Escaped murderer John Massey climbed Pentonville prison wall**



John Massey is thought to have escaped from within the prison

[Continue reading the main story](#)

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- [Escaped arsonist hands himself in](#)

Convicted murderer John Massey, who has escaped from Pentonville prison in north London, climbed the wall using a makeshift rope, the BBC understands.

It is thought Massey, 64, hid in the prison gym and went onto the roof before scaling the wall using netting.

Massey - serving life for a 1975 pub murder - was reported missing at 18:30 BST on Wednesday. Police say he should not be approached.

The Ministry of Justice has launched an investigation into the escape.

It is thought he used discarded netting, which may have been used for a sports activity, to fashion the makeshift rope.

Massey - one of the UK's longest-serving prisoners - was convicted of shooting dead a man with a sawn-off shotgun at The Cricketers in Clapton, Hackney.

BBC home affairs correspondent Danny Shaw said the escape was a major security breach causing deep embarrassment for the prison authorities.

It is highly unusual for inmates to escape from within the confines of a closed prison such as Pentonville, our correspondent added.

Police want anyone who spots Massey to call 999.



Pentonville prison houses up to 1,250 category B and

C male prisoners

The BBC News website understands that Massey had previously escaped from Coldingley prison, in Surrey, in April 1994, and was subsequently reported to be living in Spain before being returned to prison.

Massey was released on parole in June 2007 - after spending the previous 18 months in an open prison on Derbyshire - and ordered to live in a bail hostel in Streatham, south London.

But he broke his curfew after a few months to go and live with his dying father and, after a number of days, was recalled to prison.

After two-and-half years, he was sent to Ford open jail, in west Sussex, from where he absconded.

He was arrested 10 months later and taken to Pentonville before Wednesday's escape.

Up to 1,250 category B and C male prisoners - not the most serious category A offenders - are housed at Pentonville.

Category B prisoners are defined as those "for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary but for whom escape must be made very difficult".

Category C prisoners are defined as those "who cannot be trusted in open conditions, but who do not have the resources and will to make a determined escape attempt".

Conditions at Pentonville prison, which was built in 1842, have been heavily criticised by inspectors.

In March 2009, convicted arsonist Julien Chautard spent minutes inside Pentonville before he [escaped by clinging to the underside of the security van he had arrived in](#).

### **Murderer's prison escape route revealed: Killer hid on roof then used bedsheets to climb to freedom**

John Massey is believed to have hid in the prison's gym until he could sneak on to the roof and escape over the 20-foot wall





Wanted Police say John Massey is "potentially dangerous"

Metropolitan Police

Murderer John Massey escaped from Pentonville jail using a makeshift rope, it emerged today.

Massey, one of Britain's longest serving prisoners, is believed to have hid in the prison's gym until he could sneak on to the roof and escape over the 20-foot wall.

It is thought he used a rope made from torn up bedsheets or discarded sports netting to escape from prison for the third time in his 31-year jail sentence.

Scotland Yard has warned Massey, 64, remains "potentially dangerous".

He was jailed for life for shooting a bouncer dead with a sawn-off shotgun outside a nightclub in east London, in 1975. He also attempted to kill a police officer.

A major manhunt is now under way and police are carrying out door to door inquiries to discover his whereabouts.

The Ministry of Justice has launched a major investigation into how Massey – once known as "Big John" in London's criminal underworld – was able to escape in daylight without being spotted.

A local source said: "My friend who works in the prison said the guy went to the gym and hid in the roof and waited for everyone to go.

"He waited and escaped from there."

Massey was reported missing at 6.30pm last night – although it remains unclear when he was last seen by prison officers.

An MoJ spokeswoman denied claims he took advantage of low staffing levels at the North London jail caused by budget cuts.

Massey first escaped from prison in April 1994 and fled to the Costa del Sol, calling himself Paul Pascoe while living it up with a topless model.



HMP Pentonville in North London

PA

It was claimed at the time that Massey escaped while playing pool with his two prison escorts during a home visit.

He was captured two years later when armed police swooped after a bar brawl in which two Britons were stabbed.

When Massey was released on parole in June 2007, he was ordered to live in a bail hostel in Streatham, south London, under a curfew.

After several months, he broke his curfew and stayed with his dying father in Kentish Town, north London.

When he was recaptured he was recalled to prison. But two-and-a-half years later he sent to Ford open jail in West Sussex.

Massey reportedly walked out of the prison after hearing news that his sister Carol was gravely ill.

He was rearrested 10 months later and taken to Pentonville, a Category B prison.

Earlier this year he complained in an interview about being returned to jail for visiting ill relatives.

He said: "How are the public in danger of me?"

"I didn't commit any crime in the time I was free and my mother's neighbours know and respect me and say I was an asset to the community."

Speaking about being back inside since Carol's death, he said: "The pain is excruciating at times but it is nothing compared to the agony I'd be feeling if I hadn't answered her call.

"I know I have done right."

Massey's 85-year-old mother is thought to be still alive and living in nearby Camden.

Scotland Yard said if the public recognise Massey they shouldn't approach him, instead they should call 999.

Pentonville, in Islington, north London, houses up to 1,250 category B male prisoners, rather than the most serious category A offenders.

Category B prisoners are described as those "for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary but for whom escape must be made very difficult".

Pentonville was described by prison inspectors as one of Britain's most challenging jails to run last year, but the inspection also found "no obvious problems with physical security".

Convicted arsonist Julien Chautard escaped from the same jail in 2009 by clinging to the underside of a security van.

He later handed himself in to police and was once again jailed.