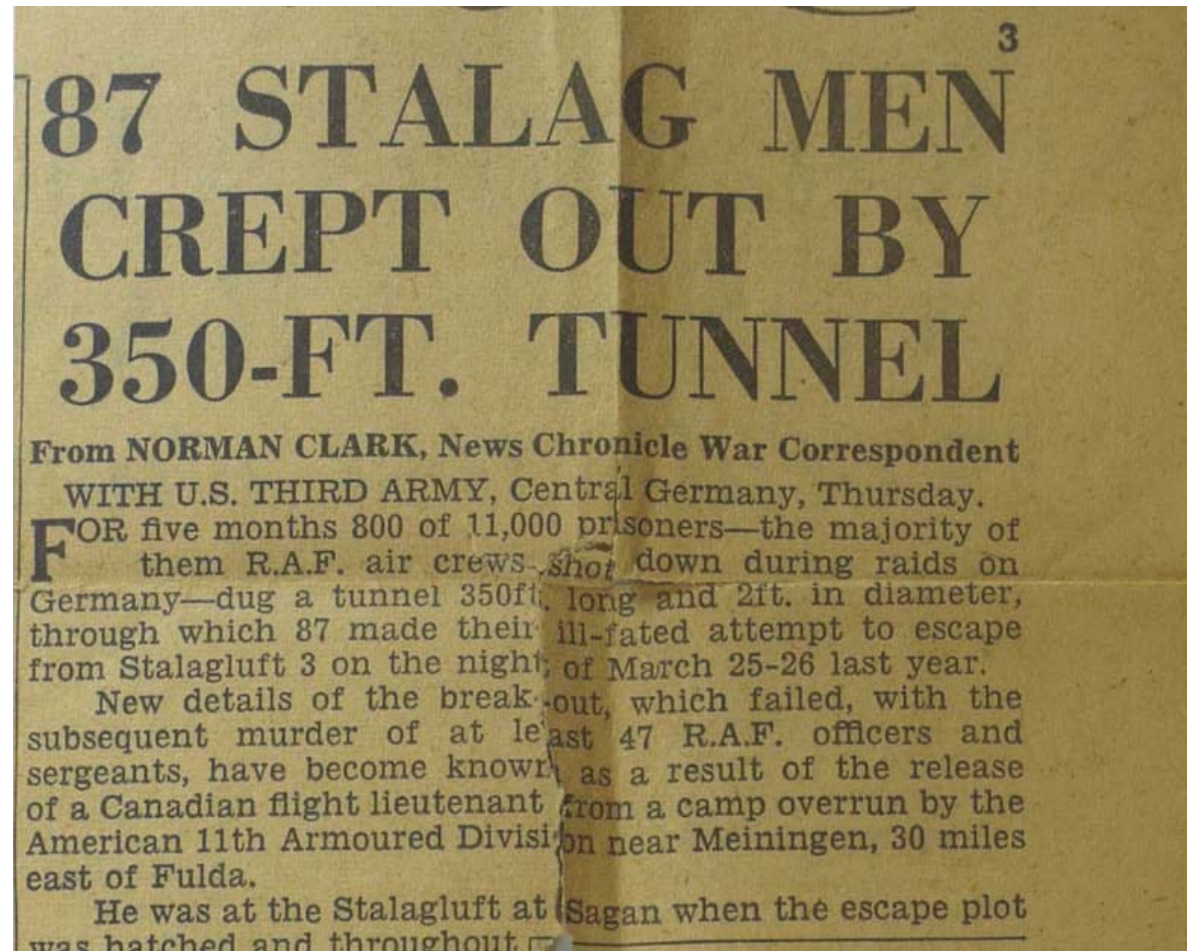


Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945
The Great Escape case study

Source M - News Chronicle report describing the escape -
date unknown



Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945

The Great Escape case study

continued...

was hatched and throughout the incident, and knew all the details.

"We had the bad luck to choose the night of a great R.A.F. raid on Berlin to make the break-out," he told me.

"All the lights of the camp were extinguished and the guards tripped. But between midnight and 5 a.m. 87 men passed through the tunnel, crawling for nearly a quarter of a mile through a tunnel wide enough only for the body.

"To avoid the Germans' seismographic detection gear the tunnel went to a depth of 26ft.

Less said the better

"The entrance to the tunnel was beneath the floor of one barracks building and ran under another and the triple wire fences to the road.

"The tunnelling was easy," the pilot said, "except that it was through sand and had to be shored up with timber every few feet.

"The hardest thing was disposal of the soil. Every ounce had to be concealed from the Germans."

When I asked him how this was done his eyes narrowed and he said:

"I won't tell you. I won't tell anyone. Too much has been written about escape methods, and when you come in personal association with a bid like the Sagan one the less the Germans know the better."

"But the escape attempt had the blackest luck. A police dog discovered the exit and the game was up.

"None of us in camp heard the sound of a single shot. Some of the 87—but very few of them—got away.

12 came back

"The majority were rounded up and taken in April to the Gestapo prison at Goerlitz, where, handcuffed in fours, they were taken away for interrogation.

"In the middle of April, 12 of the escapees turned up again at Sagan and told the story of what had happened.

"Soon afterwards caskets containing the ashes of 47 men were brought to the camp by the Gestapo with the curt explanation that our comrades had been shot attempting to escape again.

"No one had the slightest doubt what had really happened."