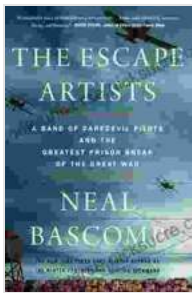


# The Band of Daredevil Pilots and the Greatest Prison Break of the Great War

In the annals of the Great War, many daring feats were performed, but few match the audacity and scale of the mass escape from Holzminden POW camp in 1918. At the heart of this remarkable enterprise was the Band of Daredevil Pilots, a group of highly skilled and extraordinarily brave airmen who risked their lives to help their comrades break free from captivity.



## The Escape Artists: A Band of Daredevil Pilots and the Greatest Prison Break of the Great War by Neal Bascomb

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 24719 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 354 pages
Lending	: Enabled



The Band of Daredevil Pilots was formed in early 1918 by a group of British and Canadian airmen who were held prisoner at Holzminden, a notorious POW camp located in Germany. The camp was home to over 10,000 Allied prisoners, and conditions were harsh. The prisoners were subjected to hard labor, poor food, and unsanitary conditions. Many died from disease or malnutrition.

Despite the grim conditions, the prisoners at Holzminden were determined to escape. They knew that their chances of survival were slim if they remained in the camp, so they began to plan a daring breakout. The plan was to tunnel under the camp's perimeter fence and then steal a train to take them to freedom.

The Band of Daredevil Pilots was essential to the success of the escape plan. They used their skills as pilots to fly over the camp and gather intelligence on the camp's defenses. They also used their planes to transport supplies and equipment to the prisoners who were digging the tunnel.

On the night of July 24, 1918, the prisoners launched their escape. Over 1,000 prisoners escaped through the tunnel, and the Band of Daredevil Pilots flew overhead to provide cover. The prisoners then boarded a train that took them to the Dutch border. Over 500 of the prisoners made it to safety, and the Band of Daredevil Pilots played a major role in their success.

The mass escape from Holzminden was one of the most daring and successful prison breaks of the Great War. It is a testament to the courage, ingenuity, and sacrifice of the Band of Daredevil Pilots and the prisoners who risked their lives to escape from captivity.

### **The Band of Daredevil Pilots**

The Band of Daredevil Pilots was made up of a group of highly skilled and experienced airmen. They were all volunteers, and they were willing to risk their lives to help their comrades escape from Holzminden.

The leader of the Band of Daredevil Pilots was Captain Harold Balfour. Balfour was a highly decorated pilot who had already been awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest military honor in the British Empire. He was known for his bravery and determination, and he was the ideal leader for the daring escape plan.

Other members of the Band of Daredevil Pilots included:

- Lieutenant Ronald Gardner
- Lieutenant Alan Bott
- Lieutenant Keith Caldwell
- Lieutenant Arthur Scarf
- Lieutenant John Whitehead

The Band of Daredevil Pilots were all highly skilled pilots, and they were also experts in navigation and reconnaissance. They used their skills to gather intelligence on the camp's defenses and to transport supplies and equipment to the prisoners who were digging the tunnel.

## **The Escape Plan**

The escape plan was hatched by a group of prisoners who were held in the same barrack at Holzminden. They knew that their chances of survival were slim if they remained in the camp, so they began to plan a daring breakout.

The plan was to tunnel under the camp's perimeter fence and then steal a train to take them to freedom. The tunnel was dug over a period of several months, and it was a major undertaking. The prisoners had to dig through

hard earth and rock, and they had to be careful not to make any noise that would alert the guards.

Once the tunnel was complete, the prisoners began to gather supplies for their escape. They collected food, clothing, and medical supplies. They also stole tools and equipment from the camp workshops.

On the night of July 24, 1918, the prisoners launched their escape. Over 1,000 prisoners escaped through the tunnel, and the Band of Daredevil Pilots flew overhead to provide cover. The prisoners then boarded a train that took them to the Dutch border. Over 500 of the prisoners made it to safety, and the Band of Daredevil Pilots played a major role in their success.

## **The Legacy of the Band of Daredevil Pilots**

The mass escape from Holzminden was one of the most daring and successful prison breaks of the Great War. It is a testament to the courage, ingenuity, and sacrifice of the Band of Daredevil Pilots and the prisoners who risked their lives to escape from captivity.

The legacy of the Band of Daredevil Pilots lives on today. They are remembered as a group of brave and selfless men who risked their lives to help others. Their story is a reminder of the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity and to achieve great things.

## **Image Gallery**

PRAISE FOR NEAL BASCOMB

"THE MOST PAINFUL AS A GRIEF STRIKE" — *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

*The Times*

"A ROLLICKING GOOD YARN"

*Times* Book Magazine

"WONDERFUL"

*Sunday Times*

"A FORTH BRITANNICA" "GRIPPING AND DISTURBING READ"

*Mail on Sunday*





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Holzminden POW camp in 1918.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

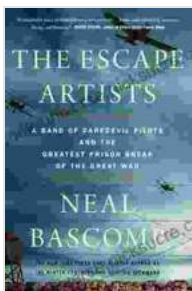
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The train that the prisoners stole to escape from Holzminden.

## Further Reading

- The Escape from Holzminden
- The Band of Daredevil Pilots
- Band of Daredevil Pilots: The greatest escape of the First World War



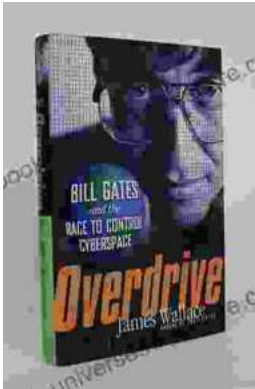
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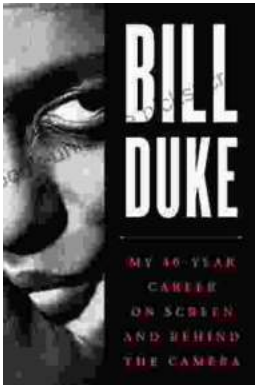


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