



My Escape from Donington Hall

Gunther Pluschow

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It was an escape from a PoW camp as daring and fraught with danger as any immortalised by Hollywood. Yet the story is less familiar than most – as it concerns the only German prisoner of war to escape from captivity in mainland Britain and make it home during either World War.?? After being caught in Gibraltar during an earlier attempt to return to his homeland, Pluschow and other captured Germans were shipped to Plymouth and then on to the PoW camp at Donington Hall, where he arrived in May 1915. On July 4 he and fellow prisoner Oskar Trefftz broke out by climbing over two 9ft barbed wire fences, before changing clothes and walking 15 miles to Derby where they caught a train to London.? By the next morning the men's escape was featured in the Daily Sketch newspaper with both names and descriptions of the pair. They went their separate ways but Trefftz was recaptured at Millwall Docks. Realising he had to alter his appearance, Pluschow removed his smart tie and handed his coat in at the cloakroom at Blackfriars station. The German then used scraped-up coal dust, boot polish and Vaseline to change his fair hair to greasy black and covered himself in soot to make him appear as a dock worker. Pluschow then stowed away on a Dutch steamer ship at Tilbury docks, talked his way past a policeman in Holland before travelling to Germany by train. Upon his return home he received a hero's welcome and was presented with the Iron Cross First Class.??This extraordinary story is told in Gunther's own words for the first time in English.



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