

Home Run.

Gerald ran the back of his fingers over the dog-eared photo pinned to the wooden upright of his bunk. Betty and Peter. With a fair wind he would soon be back home with them.

'You're next.'

Gerald kissed the photo, he'd always taken it with him before, but today for some unknown reason he left it in situ. He slipped through the gap behind the latrines and hand over hand lowered himself to the tunnel floor. He wormed along the tunnel, the acid rising in his gut. Deep breaths he told himself as he concertinaed up, then stretched out; inch by inch.

Gerald hauled on the bed-sheet rope and pulled himself free. He rolled onto his back and looked at the stars. They must be able to hear his heart right up there in space. He was free of Stalag Luft VI. Time to evade.

Gerald's eyes returned to the stars. There was the Plough, but instead of keeping his back to it and heading South for Switzerland as they'd expect, he took a bearing and headed North towards Sweden.

Gerald walked for four nights flat, hiding in the forest by day. Keeping out of sight by reemploying schoolboy tree climbing tricks and lashing himself to a suitable bough, high in the crown. Sleep was rare, his senses attuned to every falling leaf and barking dog.

He guesstimated that he'd covered just over a hundred miles. It was hard keeping a straight line in the forest. The roads and tracks had to be circumnavigated with care. Not all ran South - North so he had to keep re-acquiring the plough where the trees thinned.

That night he hit a railway. Gerald's feet falling in with the sleepers each a perfect Teutonic distance apart. He could feel the trains through the vibrations of the rails well before they arrived, giving him ample time to dive into the forest. He should jump one. The first two were passenger expresses. The next was a slow goods. Emerging from the shadows, he ran along the side, unhooked a door and slid himself into the wagon which from its smell and state, had previously housed turnips.

Lubeck read the station sign as the train clanked to a halt in the goods sidings. Gerald could smell the salt air and almost touch the ships docked in the harbour. There were three with the Swedish flag painted large on their flanks. Guards were posted to stop intruders. Being on the inside, it was easy as, to steal aboard, stowaway, then jump ship in Stockholm. Finding the British Console was the hard bit.

Three weeks later, he was back in blighty; walking down his street. He felt ignored. Everyone was looking to the skies.

God a home-run escape from Germany and Hitler's last laugh was to drop a doodlebug on his head.

Gerald raced into his house as the explosion rippled through the windows and front-door, he grabbed Betty and charged out, just as Peter ran up the garden path.

