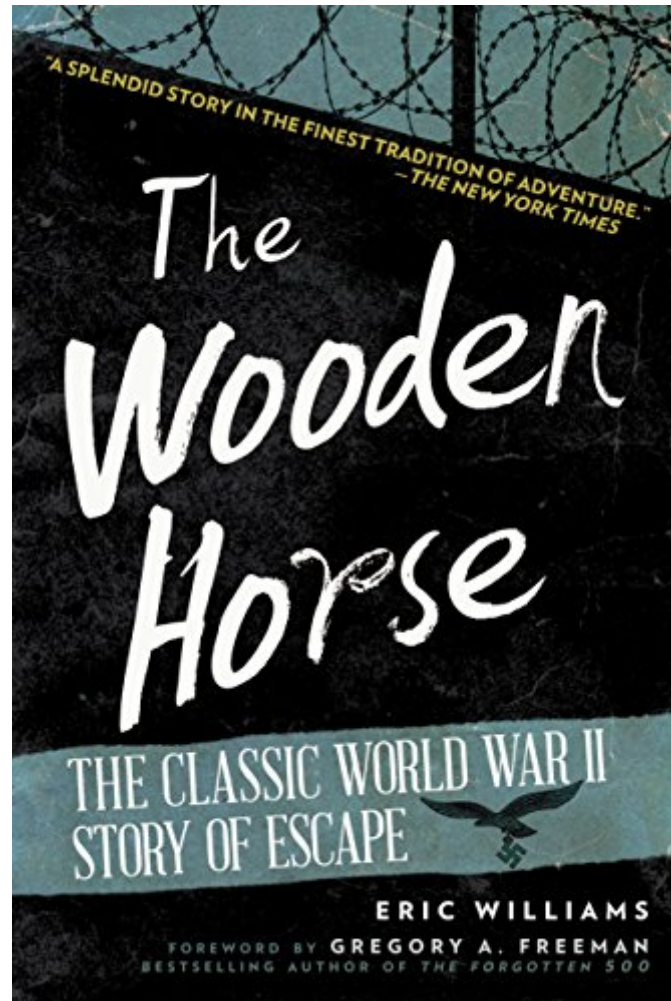


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# The Wooden Horse: The Classic World War II Story Of Escape



## Synopsis

An epic adventure—the most brilliant escape and evasion from the Nazis ever written. Eric Williams, a Royal Air Force bomber captain, was shot down over Germany in 1942 and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III, the infamous German POW camp. Digging an underground tunnel hidden beneath a wooden vaulting horse, he managed to escape after ten months and, accompanied by a fellow officer, made his way back to England. In this thinly fictionalized retelling, Williams relates his story in three distinct phases: the construction of a tunnel (its entrance camouflaged by the wooden vaulting horse in the exercise yard) and hiding the large quantities of sand he dug; the escape; and the journey on foot and by train to the port of Stettin, where Williams and his fellow escapee stowed away aboard a Danish ship, the Norensen. From painstakingly digging the tunnel to secretly depositing the dirt and gravel around the camp to dodging searchlights and search dogs and climbing barbed wire fences, this is an escape story hard to beat. For sheer heroism, courage, and perseverance, this classic is arguably the most ingenious POW escape of WWII. The Wooden Horse became a legend among servicemen long before its publication in 1949 and has remained one ever since. Skyhorse Publishing, as well as our Arcade, Yucca, and Good Books imprints, are proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in fiction—novels, novellas, political and medical thrillers, comedy, satire, historical fiction, romance, erotic and love stories, mystery, classic literature, folklore and mythology, literary classics including Shakespeare, Dumas, Wilde, Cather, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

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## Customer Reviews

I first read this book when I was in grade school. It was making the rounds of my classmates and it predated the appearance of Brickhill's Great Escape by several years. It started a lifelong fascination with any kind of WW2 POW experience and by extension with the Battle of Britain and its participants. I never forgot the book and actually sought out an online used copy several years ago. The Kindle version has an extensive forward by the author, which I do not recall having read before. Maybe I skipped reading it, or I might have read earlier versions of the book that did not include it. In the forward, I learned that the Wooden Horse was written as a novel, based on the author's actual experience. Apparently, there was no market for an actual memoir at the time, since they were probably a dime a dozen in the immediate post-war years. The story is well written and still as fascinating as I recall from the other two times that I read it. Perhaps more so because of the extensive background information I have absorbed on the general subject over the years. One thing that stands out is how honorably the WW2 Germans apparently treated their western ally officer POWs during most of the war, compared to the way that they apparently treated everyone that came within their power in the east - POWs and conquered populations alike. As one Colditz alumnus once described it, a German POW camp was like a bad hotel compared to the way the Japanese treated their POWs.

I enjoyed this book immensely. It is unbelievable what these men went thru. This book gives a different depiction of the German prisoner of war camp from other accounts. The Germans in this camp were not as brutal as I've read/seen in other camps. Since this is a true story, I am inclined to believe this was the case. The story itself was at times disjointed and hard to follow, but in total it was a very good book. I recommend it highly.

Growing up in England during the 1950's I was exposed to many stories about life in and escapes

from German POW camps during WWII, some good, others not so good. Sixty years later, I was intrigued by the synopsis of *The Wooden Horse*, so I downloaded and read it. It didn't immediately grab me - the description of POW camp life was a bit slow, but it gave the author (who turned what I believe was his own escape into a novel to avoid problems with the British Official Secrets Act) a chance to set the scene and develop the characters. The author and his fellow escapees dug a tunnel from underneath a wooden vaulting horse (hence the title), carrying the dirt laboriously dug out in hand sewn bags made from old clothing and hiding it around the camp. With clothing to make themselves passable (and inconspicuous), forged travel documents, and some German currency, they managed to scramble through the tunnel and away from the camp before their absence was discovered. Their escape plan had some specific objectives, but lacked detail (specific information being hard to come by), but by good luck, ingenuity, and help along the way they made it to Sweden, where they were forced to kick their heels while the British bureaucracy took its sweet time getting them repatriated. As I said, it was a bit slow to start, but picked up and became quite interesting and suspenseful (I wasn't sure they were really going to make it), particularly after the escape itself, with what I think must be some good characterizations of what life must have been like for many poor Germans and other nationals forced to work for the Nazis under appalling conditions.

Incorrectly worded comment above! This is not a "story"! A story implies it did not happen. This, along with *The Great Escape* are true accounts of two of many attempted escapes from German Prisoner of War camps in Europe during WWII. Both are books that are excellent reads. They are fascinating and show what people can do when put in certain circumstances. I think they should be required reading in high school. A real tribute to a generation of men who are almost all gone now. Kudos to our parents/grandparents etc. for putting yourselves in harms way to fight for our freedom.

One of my favorite movies is *The Great Escape*. While I was finally reading the book, there was mention of this author and his book since he was another prisoner in the camp. This book is much better written than *The Great Escape*. There is an explanation in the beginning of the book as to why it is listed as Fiction due to the secrecy at the time. Unlike *The Great Escape*, the story kept moving without one chapter looking like another. The end of the book though seemed as if the author just wanted to get done with it. I got somewhat lost as to who the people were. The last chapter was almost like he just needed to fill a few more pages.

I suppose it is never easy to write about the difficulties one has faced without smudging the edges of the reality of it all. scars that no longer bleed. passing through the drama of it all but not quite conveying all of the feelings that one experiences. I did enjoy the read and I will always be amazed at the British psyche when under such duress as a prison camp. not much emotion expressed and a very stiff upper lip through it all. not much introspection but in just the observations and inferences it read helped in my attempt to understand a part of history that I will never experience.

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