

AWM 65

[677]

CHINCHEN, GEOFFREY TALBOT  
250704

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
ACCESS STATUS

CHINCHEN

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

The following biographical details are required for use at  
R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London.

SURNAME ... CHUNGHEN ..... NUMBER ... 250704 .....  
CHRISTIAN NAMES ... GEORGEY TALBOT .....  
AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING ... A/F/LT ..... M.E. 3 Sqn .....  
DEGREES ETC. ....  
DATE OF BIRTH ..... PLACE .....  
EDUCATED .....  
DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE .....  
PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE .....  
PLACES OF TRAINING .....  
CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES .....  
SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC. ....  
FATHER .....  
WIFE .....  
HOME ADDRESS .....  
SIGNATURE .....  
DATE .....  
DATE OF EMBARKATION .....

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS ... D.F.C. M.B.E. .....  
CATEGORY Prisoner of war 1942 ..... INTERVIEWS .....  
Safe 2.9.44 .....  
RADIO ..... OTHER REFERENCES .....  
.....  
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.....  
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Personal file

G3

SECRET.

M.I. 9/3/P.G.(F)2494

ESCAPED FROM FORT BISMARCK  
(STRASBOURG) TO SWITZERLAND  
AND LEFT SWITZERLAND ON  
1 SEP 44.

The information contained in this report is to be treated as  
SECRET.

ACCOUNT OF ESCAPE OF

A.704 P/Lt. Geoffrey Talbot CHINGHEM, D.F.C., R.A.A.F., 3 Sqn., D.A.F., R.A.F.

Captured : ACROMA, 14 Jun 42.  
Left : NAPLES, 17 Sep 44.

Escaped : STRASBOURG, 9 Oct 43.  
Arrived : U.K., 19 Sep 44.

Date of Birth : 30 Jul 15.  
R.A.F. Service: Since 2 Feb 40.

Peacetime Profession: Salesman.  
Private Address: Gowses term Beach,  
GEELONG,  
VICTORIA,  
Australia.

14 Jun 42,  
Baled out  
NORTH AFRICA  
and captured.

I took off from GAMBUT (NORTH AFRICA) at 1800 hours on 14 Jun 42 and was shot down by light Flak at about 1830 hours. I baled out and landed between "KNIGHTSBRIDGE" and ACROMA. I was immediately taken prisoner by an armoured patrol, and remained with a German Armoured Division in the front line for a few days. I was then taken to DERNA about 20 Jun, and from there to camps at MADALEMA, BARCE, and BENGHAZI.

30 Jun 42,  
Taken to  
ITALY.

On about 30 Jun I was taken to IMALK by air and was kept at Transit camp No. 75 (BARI) from 1 Jul until mid-Oct 42. I was then transferred to Camp 78 (SULMONA).

11 Sep 43,  
Left for  
GERMANY.

From there I was taken about mid-Jul 43 to Camp 19 (BOLOGNA). The camp was taken over by the Germans on 8 Sep, and on 11 Sep we left for GERMANY. I tried to escape through a hole in the truck, but the guards discovered the hole. About 12 men, however, succeeded in getting away. We arrived at MOEBURG (GERMANY 1:100,000, Sheet 148, 9570) about 16 Sep, and remained there about a fortnight.

/On 26 Sep I .....

INTERVIEWED BY: I.S.9(W). 20.9.44.

Distribution of this Report by M.I. 9:

D.D.M.I. (P/W). M.I. 9. I.S. 9. I.S. 9(W).  
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E.D.S. G-2 Div. S.H.A.E.F. S.F. G-2 Div. S.H.A.E.F.  
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E.M.F.P.I. (Major C.E. Young).  
A.A.R. Australia House. I.S. 9(C.M.F.).  
M.A.A.F. File.

APPENDIX A.

Distribution: I.S. 9.

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APPENDIX D.

Distribution: M.I. 9(a).

I.S. 9. I.S. 9(W).  
A.L.O. M.I. 9.  
P/W & X Det. MIS, ETOUASA.  
I.S. 9(W.E.A.) (2 copies)  
File.

On 26 Sep I was taken to STRASBOURG (GERMANY, 1:250,000, Sheet K 42, W 09) by train and imprisoned at Fort Bismarck, a little to the North of the town. While in the camp we heard that the prisoners were shortly to be moved, and Lt. HUNTER, A.I.F. and myself decided to try and escape. We heard that another escape was being made about 6 Oct, and on the night of the attempt we hid by cementing ourselves up inside a bricked off part of a passage. When the alarm was given, there was a general roll-call and our names were reported missing. There was a general search with dogs through the fort, but we were not discovered, and it was presumed we had escaped with the others. We then emerged from behind the wall and spent the next few days avoiding roll-call.

9 Oct 43,  
Escaped from  
STRASBOURG.

On the morning of 9 Oct the camp was evacuated, and the numbers of prisoners checked. We hid again behind the wall, and as we were already missing, no thorough search was made for us. The fort was still guarded, however, as some civilian internees had remained behind, but the vigilance was much relaxed, and we managed to make a ladder from bedding, and climb out of the moat.

Crossed into  
FRANCE.

Once out of the fort, we headed due West, walking only at night and living off the country. We had no proper civilian clothes, but had removed all badges from our uniforms. We passed the village of STILL (V 7595) and reached a small hamlet called NIDECK. Here we were given food and a route across the mountains to LUVIGNY (U 5089). At LUVIGNY we contacted a Frenchman who guided us to GELLES (U 4285) where we arrived on 19 Oct. We hid there in a house for about ten days, as our feet were in very bad condition.

17 Nov 43,  
Reached  
SWITZERLAND.

We were then taken by train to NANCY (N.W. EUROPE, 1:250,000, Sheet 9, U 81) where we remained four days with a French family. We then intended to try and get to PARIS, but at NANCY we heard that escape by this route and via SPAIN was impossible, so we decided to try and reach SWITZERLAND. We left NANCY by train to BELFORT (GERMANY, 1:250,000, Sheet K 48, A 39). From BELFORT we were guided across the Swiss frontier on foot, crossing the frontier on 17 Nov, in the vicinity of CROIX (A 4172). We contacted the Swiss authorities at TRUNTRUP (FORREVERUY) (A 56) and from there we were sent to BERNE.

During our internment F/Lt. R.S. JONES, R.A.A.F. (S/P.C.(IT)2495) and I were put in touch with members of the F.F.I. and we decided to try and leave SWITZERLAND and rejoin the Allies.

1 Sep 44,  
Left SWITZERLAND  
and contacted  
Americans at  
GRENOBLE.

On 1 Sep 44 we were put in touch with members of the Resistance. We crossed the Swiss frontier and were taken straight to GRENOBLE (FRANCE, 1:250,000, Sheet 32, J 62) by car. There we contacted advance American units and were taken to ST. TROPEZ (Sheet 43, U 41). We left ST. TROPEZ by sea on 3 Sep for NANTES. We left NANTES by air on 17 Sep, arriving in U.K. on 19 Sep.

SECRET

M.I.9/S/P.C.(F) 2494.

ESCAPED FROM FORT BISMARCK  
(STRASBOURG) TO SWITZERLAND  
AND LEFT SWITZERLAND ON  
1 SEP 44

The information contained in this report is to be treated as

SECRET

STATEMENT OF ESCAPE OF

A.704 F/Lt. Geoffrey Talbot CHINCHEN D.F.C., R.A.A.F., 3 Sqn., D.A.F.

Captured : Acroma, 14 Jun 42  
Left : Naples 17 Sep 44

Escaped : Strasbourg, 9 Oct 43.  
Arrived : U.K., 19 Sep 44.

Date of Birth : 30 Jul 15  
R.A.F.Service : Since 2 Feb 40.

Peacetime Profession: Salesman  
Private Address: Govesstern Beach,  
Geelong, Victoria.

I took off from Gambut (North Africa) at 1800 hours on 14 Jun 42 and was shot down by light Flak at about 1830 hours. I baled out and landed between "Knightsbridge" and Acroma. I was immediately taken prisoner by an armoured patrol, and remained with a German Armoured Division in the front line for a few days. I was then taken to Derna about 20 Jun, and from there to camps at Madalena, Barce, and Benghazi.

On about 30 Jun I was taken to Italy by air and was kept at Transit camp No. 75 (Bari) from 1 Jul until mid-Oct 42. I was then transferred to Camp 78 (Sulmona). From there I was taken about mid-Jul 43 to Camp 19 (Bologna). The camp was taken over by the Germans on 8 Sep, and on 11 Sep we left for Germany. I tried to escape through a hole in the truck, but the guards discovered the hole. About 12 men, however, succeeded in getting away. We arrived at Moosburg (Germany) 1:100,000, Sheet 148, 9570) about 16 Sep, and remained there about a fortnight.

On 26 Sep I was taken to Strasbourg (Germany, 1:250,000, Sheet K 49, W 09) by train and imprisoned at Fort Bismarck, a little to the North of the town. While in the camp we heard that the prisoners were shortly to be moved, and Lt.Hunte A.I.F. and myself decided to try and escape. We heard that another escape was being made about 6 Oct, and on the night of the attempt we hid by cementing ourselves up inside a bricked off part of a passage. When the alarm was given, there was a general roll-call and our names were reported missing. There was a general search with dogs through the fort, but we were not discovered, and it was presumed we had escaped with the others. We then emerged from behind the wall and spent the next few days avoiding roll-call.

On the morning of 9 Oct the camp was evacuated, and the umbers of prisoners checked. We hid again behind the wall, and as we were already missing no thorough search was made for us. The fort was still guarded, however, as some civilians internees had remained behind, but the vigilance was much relaxed, and we managed to make a ladder from bedding, and climb out of the moat.

Once out of the fort, we headed due West, walking only at night and leaving off the country. We had no proper civilian clothes, but had removed all badges from our uniforms. We passed the village of Still (V 7595) and reached a small hamlet called Nideck. Here we were given food and a route across the mountains to Luvigny (U 5089). At Luvigny we contacted a Frenchman who guided us to Celles (U 4285) where we arrived on 19 Oct. We hid there in a house for about ten days, as our feet were in very bad condition.

We were then taken by train to Nancy (N.W.Europe, 1:250,000, Sheet 9 U 81) where we remained four days with a French family. We then intended to try and get to Paris, but at Nancy we heard that escape by this route and via Spain was impossible, so we decided to try and reach Switzerland. We left Nancy by train to Belfort (Germany, 1:250,000, Sheet K 48, A 39). From Belfort we were guided across the Swiss frontier on foot, crossing the frontier on 17 Nov, in the vicinity of Croix (A 4172). We contacted the Swiss authorities at Pruntrut (Porrentruy) (A 56) and from there we were sent to Berne.

During our internment F/Lt. R.S.Jones, R.A.A.F. (S/P.G. (IT) 2495) and I were put in touch with members of the F.F.I. and we decided to try and leave Switzerland and rejoin the Allies.

On 1 Sep 44 we were put in touch with members of the Resistance. We crossed the Swiss frontier and were taken straight to Grenoble (France 1:250,000, Sheet 32, J 62) by car. There we contacted advance American units and were taken to St. Tropez (Sheet 43, U 41). We left St. Tropez by sea on 3 Sep for Naples. We left Naples by air on 17 Sep, arriving in U.K. on 19 Sep.



P.O.W. REPORT

Name A. 704      Rank Plt. Lt.      Nationality Australian

Surname GIBCHEN      Christian Name Geoffrey Talbot

Unit No. 3 Sqdn., R.A.A.F.      Date and Place of Capture 14. 6. 42 Near Knightsbridge, Libya.

Date and Place of Final Escape 9.10.43 Fort Blisart, Strassbourg, France.      Date of Arrival in Switzerland 18.11.43.

Brief Circumstances of Capture. Shell from unsecured column hit motor of Kittyhawk aircraft when low. Engine burst into flame. Parachuted from approx. 700 feet. Landed near enemy transport and immediately taken prisoner by Germans.

Where Imprisoned

<u>Camp No. and Place</u>	<u>Imprisoned From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>How Escaped</u>
Libya various places	14.6.42	1.7.42	
No. 75 Bari	2.7.42	15.10.42	
78 Sulzona	16.10.42	14.7.43	
19 Bologna	15.7.43	12.9.43.	
Hoodburg Germany	15.9.43	26.9.43.	
Strassbourg (France)	27.9.43	9.10.43.	

note: as all dates from memory, they are approximate only.

Attempted Escapes

<u>Where Escaped</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Brief Details</u>
Between Knightsbridge and Acreia Libya.	15.6.42	Evaded guards and left in a Dockers heapers car* but absence must have been soon noticed as I was caught by two armed staff cars in about 20-25 minutes.
No. 78, Sulzona	June, 1943.	I was one of 10 members of a tunnel party. We dug 75 feet of tunnel but it was found few days before completion. After unsuccessful attempt to make hole in floor of truck I thought of making a hole near door handle which with assistance I accomplished. We drew for turn to leave. I was number 13. Hole discovered before my turn. 12 officers got out.
On train to Germany near Trento	13.9.43.	

Details of Final Escape and subsequent journey until taken over by Organisation

Arranged to be walled up in fort three days before escape and as Germans searched fort with Alsatian dogs and found nothing, they gathered escape made good. Went into hiding on subsequent days during roll call. On day of escape all officers left for new camp so guards relaxed and vigilance relaxed. After coming out of bricks and cemented hiding place had to dodge Germans in fort for two hours. In moonlight forced way into moat surrounding this underground fort. It took about one hour to find way out as walls 15 to 20 feet high with barbed wire and spiked top. Headed west living on grapes, apples and cabbages. Travelled mainly at night. Crossed guarded road and river which was frontier into France but owing to inaccuracy of compass and mountainous country headed too far south and found guarded road again as apparently these frontier road overlap their ends. Headed into France and given two days rest by peasant. Moved on with name of man who would assist and at his cottage rested up as ankles in bad condition. From here assist with food, shelter, railway tickets, etc. (Sgd) P.L. Brass, Interrogating Officer.

Date: 11.9.44.  
Place: Glien

Personal file — F/lt. G. T. Chinchin

(EJS)

250704

DEPARTMENT OF AIR

359dm

Melbourne.  
20.6.45.

MORNING PRESS RELEASE

Directorate of  
Public Relations.  
Bulletin No. 5266.

M.B.E. AWARDED TO GEELONG PILOT ESCAPEE.

With the award of the M.B.E. to Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey T. Chinchin, D.F.C., of Western Beach, Geelong (Vic.), another award goes to the credit of the famous No. 3 R.A.A.F. Kittyhawk Squadron which harassed the Italians in the Western Desert.

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his work in many dive-bombing and ground strafing attacks on enemy installations in the Western Desert in May-June, 1942, and for the outstanding courage and sound leadership he displayed.

Flight Lieutenant Chinchin has had a lively career since he left Australia for the Middle East in September, 1941.

Early in '42, he was wounded by shrapnel in the arm and knee, and about five months later, out of hospital and back on operations, was taken prisoner of war at Benghazi.

He was taken to Camp 78 in Italy, and about a year later transferred to another Italian P.O.W. camp. A few months later, his chance of escape came, and during transfer to a German camp, he escaped and found his way to Switzerland.

Next word the R.A.A.F. had of his activities was a signal telling of his arrival in the United Kingdom in September last year, followed closely by another expressing his desire for a further operational posting overseas before returning to Australia.

Before he joined the R.A.A.F. he was sales organiser in the Victorian branch of Ford Motors. He is the son of Mrs. J. D. Welsh, of Western Beach, Geelong (Vic.).

Authorised by ....?..... D.P.R.

M.E.  
(EJS)

Melbourne.  
20.6.45.

DEPARTMENT OF AIR.

MORNING PRESS RELEASE.

Directorate of  
Public Relations.  
Bulletin No.5266.

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With the award of the M.B.E. to Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey T. Chinchon, D.F.C., of Western Beach, Geelong (Vic.), another award goes to the credit of the famous No.3 R.A.A.F. Kittyhawk Squadron which harassed the Italians in the Western Desert.

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Authorised by      ---D.P.R.



COPEY OF CITATION OF AWARD OF MEMBER OF BRITISH EMPIRE.

*Page 4420 1-6-45*

Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Talbot CHINCHEN, D.F.C. (Aus.25070A) No.3 Squadron.

This officer's aircraft was shot down by light anti-aircraft fire on 14th June, 1942. After landing safely by parachute between "Knightsbridge" and Acroma he was immediately taken prisoner. He remained in the enemy front line for a few days and was then taken to a number of prison camps in North Africa. On 30th June, 1942, he was flown to Italy. Flight Lieutenant Chinchon was imprisoned in several camps and was eventually sent to Camp 19 (Pologna) where he remained for about 9 months. The camp was taken over by the Germans on 8th September, 1943, and a few days later he left for Germany. During the journey 12 of the prisoners escaped through a hole in the truck but the hole was discovered by the German guards before Flight Lieutenant Chinchon could follow them. He was taken to Moosburg, but 2 weeks afterwards, was sent to Strasbourg by train. He was imprisoned at Fort Bismark, north of Strasbourg, whilst in this prison he and an Army officer decided to try to escape. On hearing that a number of other prisoners were to make a bid for freedom on 6th October, 1943, they cemented themselves inside a bricked-off part of a passage. When the alarm was given the 2 were reported missing and after the camp was evacuated some days later the vigilance of the guard was relaxed. The two were able to escape by using their bedding as a ladder and climbing out of the moat surrounding the fort. Once free they headed west, walking only by night. They reached Lavigny and were guided then to Celles where they arrived on 19th October. Owing to the condition of their feet they were obliged to rest in a house for about 10 days. Flight Lieutenant Chinchon and his companion were taken by train to Nancy where they were cared for by a French family for 4 days. They were informed that escape to Spain via Paris was impossible at that time so they turned their attention to the possibility of going to Switzerland. They received assistance and guidance and crossed the frontier into Switzerland, on 17th November, 1943. During internment Flight Lieutenant Chinchon and another officer of the Royal Australian Air Force decided, with the aid of the F.F.I. to return to France and re-join the Allies. They re-crossed the frontier on 1st September, 1944, and contacted advanced American units at Grenoble.

*Sup*



COPY OF CITATION OF AWARD OF MEMBER OF BRITISH EMPIRE.

Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Talbot CHINCHEN, D.F.C. (Aus.250704) No.3 Squadron.

*Spare*

This officer's aircraft was shot down by light anti-aircraft fire on 14th June, 1942. After landing safely by parachute between "Knightsbridge" and Acroma he was immediately taken prisoner. He remained in the enemy front line for a few days and was then taken to a number of prison camps in North Africa. On 30th June, 1942, he was flown to Italy. Flight Lieutenant Chinchén was imprisoned in several camps and was eventually sent to Camp 19 (Pologna) where he remained for about 9 months. The camp was taken over by the Germans on 8th September, 1943, and a few days later he left for Germany. During the journey 12 of the prisoners escaped through a hole in the truck but the hole was discovered by the German guards before Flight Lieutenant Chinchén could follow them. He was taken to Moosburg, but 2 weeks afterwards, was sent to Strasbourg by train. He was imprisoned at Fort Bismark, north of Strasbourg, whilst in this prison he and an Army officer decided to try to escape. On hearing that a number of other prisoners were to make a bid for freedom on 6th October, 1943, they cemented themselves inside a bricked-off part of a passage. When the alarm was given the 2 were reported missing and after the camp was evacuated some days later the vigilance of the guard was relaxed. The two were able to escape by using their bedding as a ladder and climbing out of the moat surrounding the fort. Once free they headed west, walking only by night. They reached Luigny and were guided then to Celles where they arrived on 19th October. Owing to the condition of their feet they were obliged to rest in a house for about 10 days. Flight Lieutenant Chinchén and his companion were taken by train to Nancy where they were cared for by a French family for 4 days. They were informed that escape to Spain via Paris was impossible at that time so they turned their attention to the possibility of going to Switzerland. They received assistance and guidance and crossed the frontier into Switzerland, on 17th November, 1943. During internment Flight Lieutenant Chinchén and another officer of the Royal Australian Air Force decided, with the aid of the F.F.I. to return to France and re-join the Allies. They re-crossed the frontier on 1st September, 1944, and contacted advanced American units at Grenoble.

NOVEMBER 18, 1944.

AUSTRALIANS AT INVESTITURE.

Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Talbot CHINGHEN, pilot, of Geelong, Victoria. Born on July 31, 1915, he was a salesman before joining the R.A.A.F. on February 2, 1940. The citation to his D.F.C., announced on September 18, 1942, stated: "This officer has shown outstanding courage and devotion to duty. Although this pilot has been shot down and on numerous occasions had his aircraft severely damaged, it has in no way diminished his keenness or fighting spirit. During the fighting from May 26 to June 1, 1942, he led numerous formations in dive-bombing and machine-gun attacks on important enemy concentrations, always pressing home these attacks with great determination and courage, inflicting considerable damage on equipment and troops. His steadiness and sound leadership have proved a big factor in the success of his formations on these and many other operations such as fighter swoops, bomber escorts, and Army co-operation work in earlier phases of the Western Desert campaign".

18/9/42. DFC

✓ Acting Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Talbot CHINCHEN, Royal Australian Air Force. No. 3 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron. ( since reported missing). This officer, has shown outstanding courage and devotion to duty. Although this pilot has been shot down and, on numerous occasions, had his aircraft severely damaged, it has in no way diminished his keenness or fighting spirit. During the fighting from 26th. May to 1st. June, 1942, he led numerous formations in dive-bombing and machine gun attacks on important enemy concentrations, always pressing home these attacks with great determination and courage, inflicting considerable damage on equipment and troops. His steadiness and sound leadership have proved a big factor in the success of his formations on these and many other operations such as fighter sweeps, bomber escorts and Army co-operation work in earlier phases of the Western Desert campaign.

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