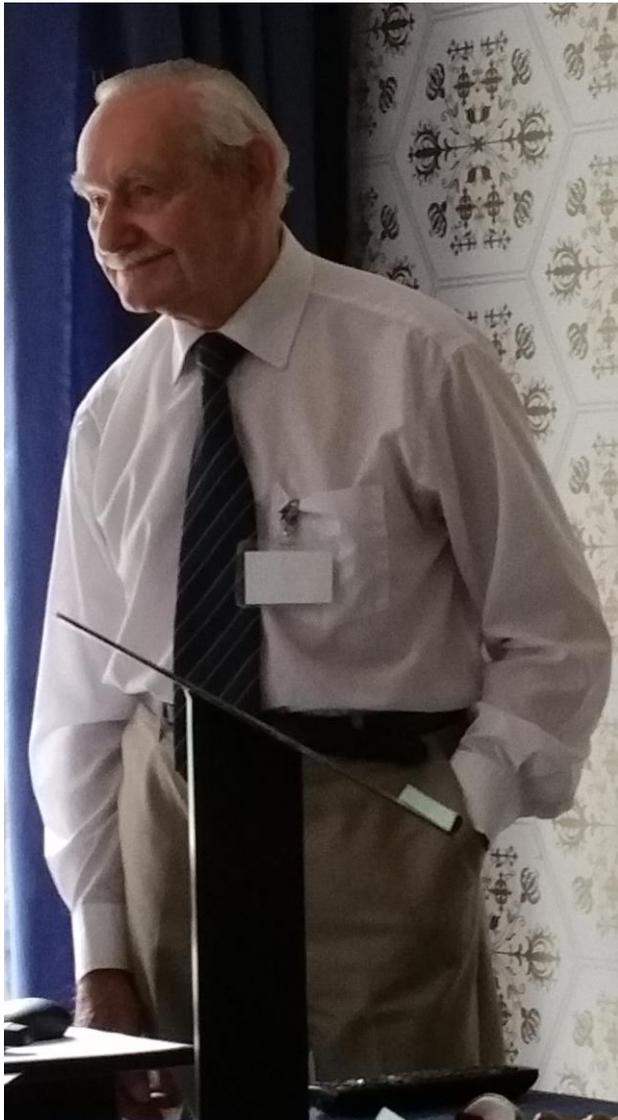


KYRLE PROBUS 18 AUGUST 2016

The daring exploits of 'The Last Escaper' – Squadron Leader Peter Tunstall – were recalled in an entertaining talk at the Kyrle Probus Club meeting on Thursday 18 August.

Club member John Harley, who became great friends with Tunstall after they met during his National Service in the RAF, explained that 'The Last Escaper' is Tunstall's autobiographical account of his five years spent as a prisoner of war, ending up at Oflag 4C – Colditz Castle.



“Peter was one of the last three Colditz PoWs still alive at the time he wrote his book,” said John. “By then he also had the distinction of being the only British WW2 PoW escaper still alive.”

In an extract from a filmed interview at his home in South Africa, Tunstall, a great raconteur, spoke of being incarcerated first at Spangenberg Castle in north western Germany. The prison was surrounded by a 30 foot moat, home to a group of wild boars, with perimeter wire and armed guards on patrol.

But Tunstall sensed there was a weak link in the security, which was duly exploited after an 'Aladdin's Cave' was discovered in an abandoned part of the castle. It contained a wardrobe of civilian suits; briefcases; a Luger automatic pistol with ammunition; a hunting rifle and maps of the area..... even a box of cigars. The former German occupant had been sent off to war.

The use of the pistol was frowned upon by the camp's senior officer, but the break-out was approved. Tunstall with two others boldly confronted the guards in their purloined suits, on top of Luftwaffe uniform; a pistol made from lead off the roof and a holster made from riding boots.

"If the balloon went up the other PoWs would have put wet grass on the castle fire to send up a smoke signal," Tunstall, who spoke German, said. The escape remained undetected and the trio lived off the land for ten days until Tunstall was recognised by a guard who had formerly been stationed at Spangenberg.

They also fortunately survived being questioned by the Gestapo before they were sent to Warberg and then on to Colditz, where Peter met Douglas Bader, another formidable trouble-maker.

Tunstall died in 2013.