



## PRESS RELEASE

# ***First-hand accounts and rarely seen photos reveal the trials and eccentricities of life inside Second World War prisoner of war camps***

## ***Guests of the Third Reich***

**Anthony Richards**

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**80 years on from the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, a new publication from Imperial War Museums (IWM) will collate incredible first-person recollections and seldom-seen images to create a comprehensive insight into the British prisoner of war experience in Europe between 1939 and 1945.**



*Guests of the Third Reich* tells the story of the more than 170,000 British prisoners of war (POWs) that were taken by German and Italian forces during the Second World War. Drawing on IWM's extensive collection of eyewitness accounts, private diary entries and excerpts from recorded interviews, this gripping narrative paints a vivid picture of the lives of Allied troops forced to surrender and live under enemy surveillance, from capture and arrival, to daily life and eventual liberation. Photographs also provide an unparalleled glimpse at life behind the fences of infamous internment camps such as Stalag Luft III and Colditz.

Told through the eyes of the men themselves, *Guests of the Third Reich* provides an overview of what daily life was like for prisoners, battling to maintain hope and morale in spite of what were sometimes squalid conditions, scarce food, back-breaking labour and heinous treatment. The publication features the stories of prisoners as they attempted to stave off boredom and depression by tending to allotments, forming sports teams, bootlegging alcohol or plotting audacious escape attempts.

*Guests of the Third Reich* conveys the story of those in captivity in a personal and engaging way, including two previously unpublished accounts of attempted escapes from Colditz. The publication also includes fresh retellings of notable events such as Squadron Leader Roger Bushell's infamous Great Escape, the Wooden Horse plan enacted from Stalag Luft III, and the building of the famous Colditz glider.

## **Anthony Richards, IWM's Head of Documents & Sound, *Sunday Times* bestselling author and author of**

***Guests of the Third Reich* says:** "The first-hand accounts in this book provide us with a vivid and fascinating insight into what life was really like as a POW during the Second World War. Many modern-day perceptions of life as a POW are largely influenced by post-war films such as *The Great Escape*, but the reality of what POWs in Europe faced while imprisoned varied enormously. Each prisoner's experience was unique. For every prisoner that enjoyed theatrical shows, another might have never heard music within their camp. The nuance and insight of these first-person perspectives allow us all to have a deeper appreciation for the plight of the Allied soldiers as they fought for our freedoms."

**Ends**

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## Notes to Editors

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## About the author

**Anthony Richards** is Head of Documents & Sound at IWM. Since 1995 he has worked on the diaries, letters and memoirs in the museum's care, and is responsible for its extensive collection of personal testimony in both written and audio form. He is the author of *In Their Own Words: Untold Stories of the First World War* (2016), *The Somme: A Visual History* (2016), *The War on Paper: 20 Documents That Defined the Second World War* (2018) and The Sunday Times best-seller, *D-Day and Normandy: A Visual History* (2019), all published by IWM.

## IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2.5 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.