

I båda våra bästa liv samtalar fyra vänner om hur du bäst har det anlivets utmaningar och glädjämnen.

Första reager för att ha väldigt många vänner är att ha en väldigt generös definition av begreppet vän.

Utan pekpinnaren.

Så ska jag få ligga eller vadå?

Nej, det behöver man inte.

Lyssna på våra bästa liv där du hittar dina poddar.

Våra bästa liv är en del av Acast-familjen.

En av dessa gemens[nie fylls ju så stort med l golvet.

Oavsett vad man kommer till, kommer till vi.

Naja, approximately 1 dagar.

Du sa det som irrigen.

swayalone.

Av en av de bidetчивара.

Syss lien med att hysna ur miners uniform he
fires av Koldiths front.

Ges ;)

och hittades även von Koldiths

stortdagen varend ger i faget двоén

Historien nu.

Är Koldiths podcast om människor och händelser som förändrade världen.

Programledare är Urban Lindstedt.

Det med tidasflottet Kolditz utanför Leibsir blev under andra världskriget ett krigsfängeläget för allierad och fyserare som var flyktbenägna eller tyskfientliga.

På Kolditz blev flyktförsök en avancerad sport där de olika nationerna tävlade mot varandra.

Flykt och flyktplaner upprätthöll moralen hos de uttråkade fyserarna och fångarna gjorde allt för att driva med sina tyska fångvaktare.

Men med tiden växte en ömsesid respekt fram mellan fångvaktare och fångar.

Lägger Åflag 4C vara ett mikrokosmos av samhällena som officerarna kom ifrån.

Det brittiska klasssystemet präglade tillvaron hos de brittiska officerarna och fransmännen var uttalat antisemitiska.

Här fanns det utrymme både för hjältemod och förräderi.

Ben McIntyre är författare till ett antal böcker under världskriget och spjölhistorier.

Han är aktuell med boken Kolditz, flykten från nazisternas fängelse.

Välkomna.

Vi är här i Gattenburgs bokfärg men det är det första gången du är här i Gattenburg.

Det första gången jag har varit i Gattenburg är det fascinerat. Det är en stor färg.

Det är det största i Nordic.

Det är väldigt impressivt.

Så det här är en historia om världskriget.

Det är inte en ordentlig historia. Det är så många historia om världskriget.

Men det är en plats som heter Kolditz.

Hur skulle du beskriva den här platsen?

Det är en stor historia om världskriget men från en helt annorlunda vantage.

Kolditz är en enormt gottisk kastel i East Germany.

I Leipzig.

Och i världskriget var det användas som en kampanj för kastade alldeles.

Detta är inte bara Britannisk men amerikansk, främst, dutch, belgen och polis.

Och det var en specifik högkastel.

Det är en kastel på en hiltop overlooking den liten Kolditz.

Och det var intendent att det var möjligt att skapa från.

Det var den idéen.

Det var runna av den germaniska armenien.

Och det var en plats där officer som försökte skapa från andra kampanj.

Det var hållet där.

Och det var helt säkert.

Det var den idéen.

Det var en stor kastel.

Och det var många kastelser som kastade på början av kastelsen.

Och de var de flesta.

Och de var de flesta i den högkastel som kastade på Barbdvaj och Sörtsleit.

Det var att de skulle vara kastade.

Att de inte skulle kunna få ut dem.

Och det var två städer med det här planen.

Först var att om man skapade alla de mest kastade kastade i en plats.

De encouragee alla andra att skapa.

Och det var naturligtvis det som skapade.

Det blev en center för att skapa.

Och den interna competitionen för att få ut av den här kastelsen

och för att få tillbaka till de hemlande kastelserna var intensiv.

Så i något sätt är det en historia om hur kastelsen var kastad på andra kastelser.

Det är inte en historia om bombar, gränser, kastelser och så vidare.

Men i en typ av missologi av WWII

skapade de från kastelsen en annan typ av kastels.

Ja, och några av de kastelserna var de jämfört i kastelserna.

De skapade i kastelserna jämfört i kastelserna.

Absolut, de första kastelserna var faktiskt poliska.

De var de som kastade efter den germaniska invasionen i Polen.

De kastade inte första kastelserna.

Och det blev en kastelskamp i 1940.

I november 1940.

Det var en annan problem med kastelserna.

Det var för att det var 10 år senare.

Det var en bra plats att sätta en kastelskamp
för att det var full av kastelser.
Det var full av kastelser.
Det var stort kastelssystem.
Det var bästtäder.
Det var missgångar.
Det var fem stort kastelser.
Och så i fack var det Swiss cheese.
Och det var många olika möjligheter.
Låttställningen av kastelserna.
Det var en bra plats att sätta en kastelskamp.
Det bästa plats att sätta en kastelskamp är i en liten field.
Det kan låta människor vara förstå senare.
Skälingen var extremt stort.
Rekoniseras fästelsen, rejdligarensplats från 50 fjol.
Det är bäst att protectera familjer, ljuder och päts.
Ensur att det är säkert med din säkerhetskameran.
Allt detta med ingen människa fjol.
Göt djurkameran säkerhetsdividerna nu.
Ufi.com.
EUFY.com.
Hello and welcome to the Ralph's Show.
At Ralph's, everyone wins when it comes to saving big.
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How would you describe the life in the cold it's well, it was well,
it was unlike any other prison camp in in Germany.
I was when I read it, I didn't think being a prisoner of war would be like that.
No, it in order to understand cold it's we have to put aside
what prison camps mean to us in the second world war.
The idea of a prison camp in the second world war immediately summons up
appalling, concentration camps, death camps,
places of routine, barbarism and brutality.
Cold it's wasn't like that, it wasn't a pleasant place.
It was a gloomy, cold, unpleasant, damp castle.
But it was not a concentration camp.
And bear in mind that the prisoners in it were officers.

This is a very important point.
These were not ordinary soldiers.
These were people of war.
And in the intensely hierarchical world of the western military
in the middle of the 20th century,
being an officer meant you had certain privileges.
So under the Geneva Convention, these men were allowed food parcels.
They were allowed to communicate with home.
They were allowed to get supplies.
They were allowed to get sporting equipment.
So in a way it was rather different from the run of the mill POW camp.
Look, it wasn't a lovely place.
Nobody wanted to go on holiday in cold it's.
Although you can now by the way.
I thought you'd be in there on the holiday.
You can, it's a hotel now.
Part of it is a kind of youth hostel.
I lived in cold it's.
It's still damp.
No, it's actually rather comfortable now.
But it's some, I wouldn't recommend it particularly.
But it's, you know, it wasn't quite the same as a normal POW camp.
But it was a place of intense boredom, great stress.
Many of the prisoners were soldiers who had been,
who were professional soldiers.
They weren't the conscript army.
These were people who'd been captured at the beginning of the war.
And many of them, there was a particular kind of atmosphere
of gloominess inside cold it's.
Because these were people who felt they had failed.
They felt they'd failed to achieve the thing that they'd been trained to do.
They'd been captured.
And they felt they'd failed to achieve the thing that they'd been trained to do.
They'd been captured.
And many of them were like, they'd been officers in their several generation
of officers in their families.
That's right.
I mean, many military traditions.
Many of them, certainly the older ones, had fought in the first world war.
So they, you know, this was an intense humiliation.
So there was a sort of almost desperate atmosphere inside,
a sort of a determination to get out whatever happened.
Mm.

One thing that surprised me, that was that all the officers had, I would call it in English, people who served them. Ordinary soldiers who served them. Well, this is, I mean, again, this was a revelation to me when I was researching the book. I didn't realize that running through the middle of cold it's was this sort of intense sort of socioeconomic division. Because yes, as officers, they had the right to have servants. People to cook and clean to, you know, polish their boots and make the food and so on. And these were also prisoners. They were people brought from other camps, ordinary soldiers, privates. And it wasn't just the British. I mean, all the officers, the Poles, the French, they all had their own orderlies, as they were called. And what's even more extraordinary about it is that these prisoners, these servants, were not allowed to escape. They were told that they could not try to get out of the castle. Their job was to cook and clean. I mean, today it seems to us extraordinary that one group of people should have the right to escape. And one, another group, because of their lower socioeconomic status. Do you know if British officers still have that kind of servants? Oh no, no, not in the same way. Although no, they have Batman. I mean, senior officers have Batman to sort of look after them, I suppose, and to do the things. It's not quite the same these days. It's not, the division is not quite so intense. I think the problem, if just talking about the book, not reading it, is that, as you said before, as the Swedish audience, when we think of camps, we think more of the extermination camps in Poland and things like that. And then you think of these horrible SS guards and so on. But how was the relationship between the officers and the German guards? Well, this is a very good point. This was a prison that was not run by the SS. It wasn't run by the extremist fascists. It was run by the German army. And the German army had a kind of sneaking respect for the prisoners. I mean, there was a kind of code of honor that existed between the officer classes of the German army and the officer classes of the Western army of the...

There was still something left from the Napolek Wars here with it.
Well, it certainly goes back to the First World War.
I mean, there was a sort of...
They treated each other with a certain amount of respect.
Now, we shouldn't exaggerate this because they were enemies.
And if you were trying to escape from cold hits and you were caught
and you did not surrender, you would be shot.
You know, it was a dangerous game.
But in a way, certainly the beginning of the war,
if you escaped from cold hits and you got into the German countryside
and you were captured, probably the worst that would happen to you
was that you would be brought back to cold hits
and put in solitary confinement
and then released back into the prison population.
Until the latter part of the war, you wouldn't be killed.
Now, this changed over the course of the war,
as it became more desperate and Hitler became more convinced
that there were, rightly, that there were Allied soldiers
operating behind the lines.
As the war goes on, it becomes more and more dangerous.
It ceases to be a game. It becomes a matter of life and death.
But there was a certain sneaking, grudging, honour code, really,
that applied between the German officers and the British officers.
And we often forget that because the war was such a brutal
and horrific experience for most people.
In certain circumstances, it was actually oddly civilised.
The Germans went out of their way to follow the Geneva Convention
in a slightly German way.
There were a set of rules under which prisoners were to be held.
And some of the Germans took great offence at any suggestion
that they were violating those rules.
They insisted that they were sticking to the regulations.
And by and large, they did.
I mean, there were Nazis among the German officers in cold hits.
Undoubtedly, there were people with fascist views,
but they did not make up the majority.
No.
But especially the British officers,
they went a long way to, I wouldn't say harass,
but a little nasty to the German wars.
Well, absolutely. Bear in mind that a lot of these British officers
had more or less come straight from school.
And they had a tradition of what we would say in Britain,

sort of teasing the school masters there.
We're talking about upper-class schools.
This is public schools.
What we would call a public school,
what would probably be called here a private school.
And there is a great tradition of teasing the masters,
teasing those in authority.
It's just the tradition they take with them from the public schools.
That's right.
I mean, it sounds absolutely ridiculous, which it was.
But there was a tradition developed in cold hits
of what they called goon-baiting.
Now, baiting someone in English is to sort of tease and mock them
and to kind of generally goad them
and try and drive them, make them furious.
And a goon was the nickname for the German guards.
And this goon-baiting took all sorts of bizarre forms.
You know, they would whistle on parade.
They would hide during parades.
They would put on ridiculous accents.
They would dress badly, dress backwards, put their hats on.
But they'd do anything, really, to try and annoy the German guards.
And it worked a lot of the time.
Yeah, yeah.
Another thing that surprised me is that even after the war,
there seemed to be some kind of respect between the officers
and the German guards.
I don't remember his name now, the most famous officer there.
When he was on television in this show,
I think we had it in Sweden as well.
Here are your life.
Yeah, this is your life.
This is your life.
One of the officer guards actually was on that program.
Yeah, he was the surprise guest.
Have you seen this on Netflix?
I haven't, alas, I fear the footage is no longer existing.
But it's been described to me.
This is one of the most extraordinary relationships.
This is one of my favorite characters in the whole book.
He's a character called Reinhold Eggers,
who was the head of security at Cold It.
He wasn't the highest ranking officer.

He wasn't the commandant, but he was in charge of security.
He was in charge of trying to stop the prisoners from escaping.
Reinhold Eggers was a German officer, he was a lieutenant.
He'd fought in the First World War.
He was older than most of the prisoners.
He was already in his 50s.
But he was a man of great civilization and education.
He'd been a schoolmaster before the war.
He'd actually taught in Britain at a school in Britain.
He had great respect for the British culture.
He was constantly offended, by the way,
that the Brits were so rude to him in Cold It.
So when they'd actually been very polite to him back in Britain.
And so he tried to sort of treat them with considerable respect, really.
That said, he did his best to stop them from escaping.
I mean, he was absolutely useless.
That was his job. I mean, he was ruthless in that respect.
And he did it very well.
But you're absolutely right.
After the war, one of those who'd escaped from Cold It,
a man called Pat Reed, was sort of celebrated on television.
Many years later in the 1970s.
And Reinhold Eggers was only too happy to appear on the programme
to say, you know, this was my enemy and now he's my friend.
Yeah, you seem to have a rich source material here.
A lot of the people who were forced to stay at Cold It,
they wrote books afterwards.
Yes, I mean, Cold It's, particularly in Britain,
Cold It's became part of the national mythology.
It was an important part of it.
Oh, oh, absolutely.
I mean, people saw Cold It as a kind of emblem of resistance, if you like.
It was a way that these imprisoned men continued the war by other means.
And former prisoners from Cold It were greatly celebrated in Britain.
And indeed in other countries too, particularly in France,
there were many French prisoners who escaped from Cold It.
And it became a kind of symbol of resistance, if you like.
And a little mini industry grew up around Cold It.
People, you know, books about Cold It were best sellers.
There was even a board game.
Have you played it?
I have. I've got it.
You can still buy Cold It.

Is it good?

It's great fun.

The board game takes about a week to play.

And it's fantastically complicated.

And it's all about, you know, getting enough rope to kind of scale down the chapel walls and all that sort of stuff.

But no, it's great fun.

And that was designed, that game, by one of the former prisoners from Cold It.

It was his invention.

And so the idea that this kind of gothic castle was turned into a board game, seemed sort of mad to us.

But for my purposes, it was actually incredibly lucky because many books were written about Cold It.

Not all of them were published.

And that's been fascinating, too, finding a lot of unpublished material on Cold It.

And then there's also a lot of official declassified material on Cold It.

There's a great deal in the National Archives in Britain now that was never available in the 60s, 70s and 80s.

And so it's possible now to write, well, I hope I've done so, to write a book about Cold It that sort of strips away some of the mythology and tells a much more real story, I hope, about what it was actually like in this play.

Because the story has been told before.

It's more like the, what do you call it, a game, a funny game.

But you write a lot of stories here.

It's kind of sad and depressing as well.

Yeah, I mean, there are elements of Cold It that were absurd and enjoyable, almost.

I mean, people did regard escaping from Cold It as a kind of game to begin with.

But beneath that, there are many, many other layers to Cold It.

There was, you know, it was a place of great conflict, of great class and political conflict, of racial conflict.

How was the relationship between the, because there was officers from different nationalities here, from Poland, France, Holland, Britain?

Yes, I mean, relations were usually quite good between the different nations.

But not always, I mean, there was a terrible conflict between the French and the British.

Yeah, I can imagine.

Very early on in the war, when some of the French officers declared that they would not be billeted, would not be housed in the same area as their own Jewish compatriots.

They refused to be.

They took the anti-Semitic.

Yeah, they took the anti-Semitic line.

And these were sort of Vichy sympathising French officers,

who adopted the racist attitudes of the Germans, who had them already.
And that led to intense conflict with the British contingent.
So there were great internal divisions.
And then there were, as you've mentioned, there were the sort of class divisions between the sort of ruling class who were the officers and the orderlies who had to serve them.
And the orderlies, astonishingly, actually went on strike at one point.
How come they went on strike?
They just said, we're not going to serve the officers anymore.
We need the same rights.
There's no reason why we should have to do this.
It didn't work as a strike, of course, because there were no industrial relations inside Colditz.
They were simply shipped out and the whole new set were brought in.
But it gives you an idea that the sort of outside world was intruding into this strange artificial place, the political tensions outside.
And there were great political divisions inside Colditz.
There were communists.
There were people who were sort of nearly fascists.
There were others who adopted all sorts of different political views.
So in a way, that's what I love about this story, is that it's a little microcosm of the wider world.
It's a way, you know, it's almost like it was sort of, it was a reflection of wider society, but stranger.
Colditz
Colditz
Colditz
Colditz
Colditz
Oh wow, oh my god.
I'm so excited. Thank you.
That's the sound of Casey getting a random act of helpfulness.
We just told him the helpful SoCal Honda dealers will be replacing his old manual wheelchair with a brand new power wheelchair.
And we paid him for sharing that story on the radio.
And we can help you too with a great deal on a reliable award-winning Honda, like the 2023 Accord.
To find the helpful SoCal Honda dealer near you and to submit a random act of helpfulness for someone you know, visit SoCalHondaDealers.com.
Unlock multidimensional protection with UV securities dual camera devices.

See wider, closer, clearer.
Even recognize faces and read license plates from 50 feet away.
It's best to protect your family, children and pets.
Ensure there's safety with your security cameras.
All this with no monthly fee.
Get your dual camera security devices now at uv.com.
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you get the same great prices, deals and rewards
on pickup or delivery that you do in store,
with no hidden fees or markups.
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Ralph's, fresh for everyone.
Save big on your favorites with the buy five or more, save a dollar each sale.
Simply buy five or more participating items
and save a dollar each with your card.
Ralph's, fresh for everyone.
One of the more interesting characters in the book is...
I mean, every one of these, you know, they have existed.
No one is still alive now.
But it's this Indian doctor.
Well, yeah.
How come he even...
How come he ended up in the British army to begin with?
Well, this is one of the hidden stories of Colditz.
I mean, the story of the Indian doctor,
the only non-white person in the prison camp.
I mean, he was the only one and he was an Indian doctor.
He had served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, the British Army.
He was from India, upper class.
He was an Indian Brahmin, but he'd been educated in Britain.
But he was very Indian. He was extremely Indian nationalist.
I mean, he was opposed to the Raj.
He was opposed to British rule in India.
But nonetheless, he had volunteered to join the British Army.
He was a very distinguished doctor, in fact.
A very good surgeon, knew what he was doing.
And he was captured at the beginning of the war.
And he was brought to Colditz,
where he suffered the most terrible racism.
Yeah, but can you give an example?

Well, I mean, they used to tease him.
They nicknamed him. They made him cook curry.
He was also told he was not allowed to escape from Colditch,
by the other officers.
They said, you're the wrong colour.
They said, if people, you know, you'll never get anywhere
and you'll endanger everyone else if you try to escape.
And his name was Berendranath Mazumdar.
And he was an extraordinary character in many ways.
And what strikes me, in a way, so extraordinary,
is that his story has never been told before,
because it's absolutely unique.
And he...
He didn't fit the narrative of the time.
He didn't fit the narrative. He was the wrong colour.
He didn't fit this idea of white, upper-middle-class British officers
with moustaches, escaping from Colditch.
He was a Brahmin.
And in fact, he suffered so much
that he eventually went on hunger strike in Colditch
and told the Germans that unless you move me
to an all-Indian camp, and there was one in occupied France,
he said, unless you do that, I'm going to starve myself to death.
And in fact, they did move him.
And I don't want to give it away for the readers,
but the final part of his story is unbelievably dramatic.
You know, he...
Let's just put it this way. He wins in the end.
All the British officers, I think he's some kind of traitor.
But even... And the Germans tried to turn him.
Yeah, man, they take him to a nice hotel in Berlin.
And he's been able to talk to other Indian nationalists.
Well, this is because, yeah, you're right, Obann.
This is because he was an Indian nationalist.
He was opposed to British rule.
And the Germans believed that if they could persuade him
to do radio broadcasts to India,
to encourage other Indians to turn against the British,
that it would somehow help their war effort.
And so, yes, they tried to bribe him.
They offered him money, they offered him an apartment.
And to his credit, he said, no, he said, I can't do this
because I've given my word, I've...

Yeah, he was very true to his word,
because he was treated so badly, I'd called it.
And he was given a choice to live a really comfortable life in Berlin.
But he didn't.
But he didn't do it. And I think that makes him extraordinary in a way.
I mean, what is also remarkable about Mazumdar's story
is that he never talked about it after the war.
I think he was so sort of traumatised by the experience
that he never openly talked about it.
But before he died in 1996, he recorded a set of interviews with his wife.
Much younger than him and still alive, I'm glad to say.
He described what had happened to him in Kolditsen.
She hadn't listened to these things for 30 years.
And we sat down in her house in the west of England
and listened to these tapes.
And they're incredibly moving, this description of what had happened to him
during the war, wonderful things.
Who was the first prisoner to escape Koldits?
Well, the first successful escape.
I mean, one needs to make a distinction.
There were many, many escape attempts.
Most of them didn't succeed.
Most of them did not succeed.
Most of them, even the...
Just getting outside the walls of Koldits was very difficult.
But getting outside Germany was far harder.
That was the hardest part.
That much the hardest part.
You had to have papers, you had to have maps, you had to have compasses.
You had to know where you were going.
You also had to be very lucky.
So in fact, in the end, there were only...
While there were hundreds of attempted escapes, only 16 people.
16?
Yeah, once they managed to get out, managed to get all the way home again.
So it was very rare to do a home run.
But the first successful one was actually a Frenchman
who was really extraordinarily lucky.
I mean, just managed to hide in the right place.
And he managed...
It wasn't a planned escape either.
No, no, it was a sort of impromptu ad hoc idea.
He just hid in a pile of wood

as they were coming back from the exercise yard.
Then he managed to walk all the way to the Swiss border.
And he just happened to choose a train that was crossing the border.
And he climbed onto the front of it and hid on the bumper between the headlights
as it was going across the border into neutral Switzerland.
So he got out.
I mean, it was a million to one chance, but he got away with it.
Which escape was the most extraordinary?
Well, I mean, many of them were pretty remarkable.
The one that I like simply for its hoots, really,
is the story of one of the British officers
who simply made his own German uniform.
He spent months sewing a perfect replica officer's uniform.
And he made it out of different bits of other uniform
and dyed it all and got the right hat and the right boots.
And he simply managed, with an accomplice, with a Dutch accomplice,
to walk out of the front gate of Colditz, dressed as a German officer,
and was even saluted by the German sentries on guard at the gate as he walked through.
And he, too, managed by train and by different forms of transport
to get all the way to the Swiss border and just for sheer brass bravado.
I loved that story. I thought it was extraordinary.
Another extraordinary thing about this story
is how the prisoners are able to communicate back with the military
and the secret services in the United Kingdom.
There was a whole system of communication between London and Colditz.
And this was based on a secret code that was developed very early on in the war.
Was this something they had learned before the war?
No, they had to learn it during the war.
It's a very complex and extraordinary story.
The rules of the code were smuggled out very early on.
And because, as I said at the beginning, prisoners were allowed to write letters home
and they were allowed to receive parcels and letters from home.
So there was a way of communicating, but hidden within those letters
and often physically hidden within the parcels were secret messages.
Now, you might ask what possible information could prisoners of war have
that would be of interest or use to the war effort.
Well, the answer is a great deal because the population of these prison camps
was changing all the time and prisoners were able to come in
and explain how they'd been captured, what the troop dispositions were
in various parts of Germany, what morale was like in different places,
who was being moved where.
And actually, by the end of the war, huge amounts of secret intelligence
was being passed, not just from Colditz, but a lot of it from Colditz,

was being passed back to Britain and it made a huge difference.
And here is another unsung hero before your book, Julius Morris Green,
a Scottish dentist.
He seemed like an unlikely hero.
Totally unlikely. He was a sort of fat, cheerful, slightly hopeless soldier.
A very good dentist.
But as a dentist, he was based in Kolditz, but because he was such a good dentist,
they would use him to travel around the different prison camps,
doing dental work for, not just for prisoners, but also for prison guards.
And that's the important thing.
I mean, Green also spoke pretty good German.
And of course, people always talk in dentist's waiting rooms.
Yeah, they are a bit nervous.
They're a bit nervous, so they talk too much before they go under the drill.
And he just was brilliant at extracting information from different sorts of people.
And he was the chief coded letter writer in Kolditz.
He was also Jewish, which meant that he was under extreme danger.
I mean, if they had realized his ethnicity, he would have been in real trouble, Julius Green.
But he was an extraordinary man and very cheerful.
And throughout the war, he managed to continue doing this
and wrote then a very funny account of his life as the Kolditz dentist.
And chief spy, really.
I mean, he was the most important spy inside Kolditz.
And there were important information he could pass on to the allies.
Absolutely. I mean, one of the things that he was doing was identifying potential bombing targets
for the Allied air cover, I mean, for Allied planes.
And he was very good at this.
I mean, he would manage to extract information about where different kinds of industrial plants
were operating from his travels around Germany.
I mean, he was under guard the whole time.
But nonetheless, he was able to gather this information.
We don't know, it's impossible to quantify exactly how much difference he made.
But he is one of the great unsung heroes of the war.
And the thing I love about him is that he never sang his own praises.
He was always very modest about what he'd done.
He went back to be a dentist again after the war.
Yeah, he just became an ordinary dentist in Glasgow.
No, I mean, and he didn't even tell his family what he'd done.
His family, of course, had a pretty good idea of what he was up to
because he would be writing these letters home
that appeared to be incredibly boring.
I mean, there was nothing, you know, but actually if you knew the code,
they contained, and the family would simply pass these letters on to MI9,

which was the section of British intelligence that was dealing with prisoners affairs. And these terribly boring letters about what was going on inside college actually contained very, very important information, hidden, literally hidden between the lines. One of the big, big characters of cold hits is the boredom. You know, they have these escaping games and everything, and they put up theater, theater, and they read and everything. But this is young men. Most of them are young men. And they are absolutely bored to... Bored to pieces, and of course boredom, it's interesting, boredom is a much misunderstood factor in human affairs. Boredom changes the world frequently. People do strange things when they're bored. And it's often overlooked in history because boredom occurs when nothing much seems to be happening. But actually boredom is very important. Boredom can start wars. Boredom can stop wars. But boredom is a really fascinating subject, I think. And in cold hits, boredom sort of expressed itself in all sorts of unlikely ways. Yes, there was this kind of intense competition to escape. But that was only one of the ways, a goon-baiting that we mentioned earlier, this teasing. That was another way of trying to tackle this incredible boredom. But the psychological impact of prolonged boredom is also very interesting. I mean, there were serious mental health problems. Several people get mental problems. I mean, it was actually quite widespread. And again, and there were suicide attempts, and there were various people who really did become very, very mentally unwell inside there. And again, that is one of the subjects that is never discussed about cold hits. The myth of cold hits is that everyone was cheerful and happy all the time. It was all marvellous, and we had a great time, and then war ended and we came home. It wasn't like that. I mean, war isn't like that. And there's one other element of the boredom in cold hits that's worth remembering. Unlike an ordinary prison, these prisoners had no idea when or whether they would ever get out. So it's not like being a civilian prisoner

where you can chalk the days off on the wall.
You know your sentences X number of years,
an X number of months, an X number of days.
If you're in cold hits, you had no idea whether you would ever get out.
And the horizon of the future appeared to be completely endless.
So I think that lent a very particular sort of texture to the tedium.
But still, they had very good information about what's happening in the war
because they built up a system where they...
Well, they actually knew much more about what was happening in the war
than the Germans did.
I mean, they knew much more than their captors
because amazingly, they had managed to build a radio.
A radio, a secret radio was hidden in one of the attics of cold hits.
Even two radio.
They had two, so they had a backup.
So when the first one was found, it didn't make any difference.
They just kept listening to the BBC.
And it was hidden in one of the attics,
and it operated throughout almost the entire war.
And what would happen is they would get the evening news.
And then people listening would write it all down.
They'd make copies.
And then they'd read it out to the different groups of soldiers.
Only a tiny handful of prisoners actually knew where the radio was.
But everyone knew if there was one.
And it was a great way of boosting morale inside the castle.
But Eggers, who, as I say, was no fool,
he knew that somewhere they were getting information
because he couldn't work out how it was
that the prisoners knew so much about the progress of the war.
And he searched and searched and searched.
And he never found it.
And in fact, the radio was only found several years after the war.
When they were doing renovations to Cold It's castle,
they took down a partition in one of the attics.
And there, lo and behold, was this wartime radio
that had just sat there untouched for 20 years.
But they had traitors in Cold It's who reported to the Germans.
They did. I mean, this is human nature.
In these circumstances, of course, there were people who...
I mean, it's easy for us looking back on the war
to think, well, we would have been on this side
or we would have been on that side

or we would never have done that.
But you never know that until you're in the circumstances.
And people behave in many unpredictable ways.
And yes, there were people who we now perceive as traitors.
Then, I suppose, they were opportunists.
They were people who believed that they had a better chance
of not only saving their own lives,
but in some cases saving the lives of their families.
I mean, the Poles, for example,
that there was certainly a character within the Polish community
who appears to have been in collusion with the Germans.
But his family back in Poland was under threat.
They were going to murder the whole lot.
So in a way, you can say those are the very difficult moral choices.
The British also, there was one character
who had been planted by the Germans as an informer.
But he was kind of a stupid man, man.
He was unbelievably thick, yeah.
And he was identified very swiftly
for being the kind of the informer that he was.
And he sort of half confessed very early on.
He was an idiot, actually.
And I'm not saying that to excuse him.
But he was a traitor, too.
He was a fascist.
He was a Nazi.
He had enjoyed all the fruits
that the Nazi regime could offer him.
He lived in great comfort in Berlin.
And after the war, he was convicted as a traitor
and was very, very nearly hanged.
He was reprieved at the last moment
because of a sort of technical legal issue.
But yeah, no all communities, the French, too.
There was a traitor in the French ranks, too.
This happens. We are all human.
And it won't be tied anyone, I think,
who believes that they would never behave in that way.
Because you cannot possibly know
until you are in those circumstances.
Who were the deprimante at Colditz?
Well, I mentioned before that there was a kind of class system in Colditz.
So you had the kind of ruling class,

who were the officers,
who had the working class, who were the orderlies.
But even above that,
there was a kind of aristocracy in Colditz.
There was a very small group of prisoners
who were identified by the Germans
as the prominente, the prominent ones.
Now, these were people, prisoners who the Germans believed,
were of particular political and social value.
So there were two nephews of the King of England.
There was a nephew of Winston Churchill.
There was the son of the American ambassador to the UK.
There were various individuals.
In a way, they weren't so much prisoners as hostages.
These were people being held in order to barter.
Hitler had a calculation that at some point
he might need to trade in these people,
to exchange them for German prisoners.
Or indeed, there was a theory that the SS were keeping them
in order to trade them for their own lives
towards the end of the war.
And they were held in different quarters.
They were held under very tight security.
They had particular privileges,
which other groups did not.
They had better food.
They had their own gramophone records.
You know, it was a strange life.
They lived in a kind of privileged world within the community.
And it's so strange to us now,
the idea of this incredibly stratified class system.
But believe it or not, even within the prominente,
there was another club.
There was a kind of...
There was a upper class.
The upper, upper, upper class,
which was a kind of club called the Bullingdon Club.
Which was a members-only club.
And you had to belong to the Bullingdon Club back in Britain
before you could join the Bullingdon Club in Colditz.
I mean, I'm glad to say this world doesn't really exist in Britain anymore.
And I think like the Germans,
you can see they don't really understand the British

when they're going to use these people as bargaining chip.

They have this church's nephew,
who actually was a communist.

Ja.

Churchill didn't care much about him.

No, I mean, they had this idea when...

I think Hitler believed that other...

Churchill was sort of in some ways like Hitler,

that he would have kind of bargained on the basis of privilege.

Whereas actually the last thing Churchill would have done, I think,
would be to afford particular privileges to a member of his own family.

He was far too clever to do that.

I mean, that would have been outrageous.

In fact, the fact that this poor man, Giles Romely,
was his nephew by marriage...

You know, it meant that the poor man had to spend the entire...

He was a journalist. He should never really have been a prisoner.

He should have, you know, he was a civilian.

He should have been sent back, but he was held on to
because he was Churchill's nephew.

And the poor man spent most of the war in prison.

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You mainly focus on the British prisoners,

but what kind of lives did they have after the war?

Because after the war, most of them were released and got back to Britain.

They were liberated by the Americans.

The American troops liberated Coldwits.

It was very close.

They were very nearly...

I mean, they came, I don't want to give it away too much, but...

But then the last day of the war, you know, it's chaos.

Chaos and the peril, the danger was huge.

And the SS were massing and there was a fear, rightly a grounded fear, that Coldwits might be used to mount a kind of last defense by the SS.

And so they were all in great peril.

After the war, it's very interesting.

For a few years after the war, none of them talked about it.

I think the experience was so traumatic.

Some never recovered.

I mean, you know...

Not even Pat Reed.

Pat Reed, not initially, for the first few years.

And then by the mid 1950s,

it became a way of sort of dealing, I think, with the trauma initially.

They began to talk about what had happened in Coldwits.

And then, as I say, it became this kind of mini industry.

More and more people emerged to write about Coldwits and to talk about it.

And it became this sort of...

It became a symbol of national pride in lots of ways.

Particularly in Britain, but not just in Britain, but for other prisoners as well.

But the other story, the story of what actually Coldwits had been like, as I say, some of them really never recovered.

The particularly tragic story of one soldier who had...

One of the ways of trying to escape from Coldwits was to pretend that you had gone mad, to feign insanity.

Because in some cases, that meant you could be swapped out for other prisoners and sent home.

And there's one character called Frank Flynn.

In a way, whose story is, I think, the most moving of all of them.

I mean, he pretended to be insane.

He pretended to have lost his mind.

And the more he pretended, the more it became true.

And in fact, by the time he was released on the grounds of insanity, he was actually mentally very, very unwell.

And he never really recovered.

He never really recovered.

And he talked about it in later life.

I mean, he again made a tape, an audio tape,

which he's held in the Imperial War Museum in London.

And it rather movingly describes what the real psychological impact was on him.

And it's a very moving document.

Mm.

So, one thing we haven't talked about this is,
after every escape, failed escape,
you were put into, what do you call it?

Solitary confinement.

Yeah, yeah.

And today we know what that can do with Europe.

Yeah, I mean, you know, sometimes, you know, the really committed escapers
would try and escape again and again and again.

And they often, they spent months in solitary confinement.

And solitary confinement was completely solitary.

You know, you didn't speak to anyone, you didn't see anyone.

And you could sit there for months.

For months.

Yeah, yeah.

I mean, some of them were there for a very long time.

And the impact of that was obviously appalling.

You know, and particularly in a period when there was no psychological help available.

There was nobody to talk to about this.

You couldn't emerge from solitary and go and see your psychiatrist.

Because nobody, you weren't even allowed to talk about it.

You just had to pretend that it was perfectly fine.

And as we all now know, repressing that kind of trauma is extremely damaging.

As we talked about before, the really difficult thing about escaping
is when you get out of the castle and you're going to get to the Swiss border
or the Spanish border.

And I was kind of surprised because, you know, I done a lot of podcasts
about Third Reich and everything.

And I was kind of surprised that it was even possible to go like some long distance
in the war in Germany.

It required a great deal of planning.

You had to have all sorts of escape equipment, really, to pull off a success.

So you needed money?

You needed to have money? You needed to have identity papers?

You needed to have maps?

You needed to have a compass to show you which direction to go?

You needed to have disguises.

You couldn't escape because in prison they were all wearing their uniforms.

They were wearing military uniforms.

So you had to have a civilian disguise in order to get out.

You had to take trains. You had to spend Reichsmarks.

You know, and all of that required organisation.

That required a huge amount of planning and teamwork.
Everyone had to kind of work together.
So inside cold it's, there were people who specialised in making fake uniforms.
There were people who specialised in making counterfeit money.
You know, there were also, as I said, there were these care packages that were brought in and smuggling in escape equipment.
Things like, you know, the materials to build a radio.
What you might need to create a false uniform if you needed a hacksaw to cut through the bars of your cell.
These were all things that had to be brought secretly, smuggled into cold it.
So much of the book is really about this kind of escape industry that was taking place inside the castle.
To the point where, I mean, and the ingenuity.
And it's so amazing that they could do this under the guard.
Under the noses of the guard, I know.
I mean, even to the point, and this is one of my favourite stories about cold it.
They even managed to build, believe it or not, a glider, an aeroplane.
Which was going to be launched off the top of the roof of cold it.
And then fly, glide across the river onto the other side of the river.
And they built it.
I mean, it took a year.
It took 600 different pieces of wood.
The whole thing was bound together in sort of mattress covers soaked in porridge to make them taught enough.
But they built the damn thing.
And it was a two man glider.
And they were going to catapult it off the roof.
And it might have worked.
I mean, we don't know because, of course, the war...
Is there in a picture of it?
There's one photograph of it, yeah.
So it undoubtedly existed.
My own belief is that it would probably have plummeted the minute it took off and are killing both people in sight.
It didn't fly because the war ended before it could be used.
But it was an astonishing piece of engineering.
I mean, absolutely amazing.
And virtually everyone in the camp contributed in some way towards building the glider.
When you did the research for the book, what surprised you the most?
I think I was most surprised by the way that different people inside Cold It's responded to the challenge of Cold It's in different ways.
Because I'd grown up as a boy with the story of brave British soldiers and the board game which I played on holiday.

And it was all a bit of a game and all that sort of stuff.
Actually, individuals behave in very many different ways.
And we can never predict how we are going to behave
when faced with these sort of circumstances.
And much of many of the books I write are really about this.
They're about what would you do?
What would you as an individual reader, if you found yourself in this circumstance,
which of these people would you have been?
Would you have been a traitor?
Would you have been one of those scaling down the walls
with rope made from bed sheets?
Would you have been acting in the theatre?
Would you have been making counterfeit clothes?
Would you have been reading books?
I think I might have been one of those prisoners
and there were several of them who discovered the very good library in Cold It's
and decided I'm just going to read my way through the war.
And that's a perfectly decent and honourable thing to do.
There was no requirement to escape.
I know I would be that guy.
Well, many of us would and I suppose that's what I hope this book asks.
I hope it asks that question.
En väldigt simpla fråga.
Men en som ingen av oss kan svara på med nån särskilt,
vilket är vad du har gjort.
Ben Macintyre. Tack så mycket.
Det har varit en bra klart.
Det är en rykande aktuell skildring av en händelse
som inte bara skakade Sverige i sin samtid,
utan även väckerfrågor om hur långt vi har varit.
Det har varit en bra klart.
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