

## My dad was a hero of real-life Great Escape

*7:00am Wednesday 10th November 2010*

THE Great Escape conjures up much more than Steve McQueen flying past Nazi guards on a motorbike for Colin Kirby Green.

Colin's dad Tom was one of 50 prisoners executed during the Second World War after an escape bid immortalised in the Hollywood film.

The bomber pilot had a key role in helping 76 men escape from Stalag Luft III prisoner camp, in Poland, in March 1943.

Colin, 75, of Mill Street, Brightlingsea, is now to take part in a 3,000-mile bike ride across Europe to see his father's grave for the first time.

The charity ride, on Triumph motorbikes, will raise cash for the Help for Heroes charity and the Royal British Legion.

Colin said: "My father achieved 36 missions and was shot down on the 37th.

"All the crew of his plane (a Wellington) were killed during the crash, but he survived and, after being in a series of prisoner of war camps, ended up in Stalag Luft III. He became chief officer in charge of security, keeping activities of the tunnel hidden from the Germans, and he was one of the 76 who got out of the tunnel and away."

Only three of those who escaped made it back to the UK.

The others were recaptured, and 50 were executed by the Gestapo in 1944.

Colin said: "My father died when I was eight and I remember being told about it while I was at boarding school.

"I have never visited his grave, so when I was offered the chance to be a guest on this trip, I couldn't turn it down."

Colin was invited to the premiere of the Great Escape film, along with other relatives of the airmen, at the Odeon in London's Leicester Square in 1963.

The film is famous for its Triumph motorcycle chase in which Captain Hiltz, played by Steve McQueen, is caught after a failed attempt to leap a barbed wire fence.

Colin said many families were happy with the accuracy of most of the film, but were unhappy with Steve McQueen's motorcycle episode, which he said was fabricated.

He said: "At least one good thing to come out of that is that Triumph is sponsoring this charity event, even though the chase scene was complete hokum. I wish some of those families who were angry with the film could be here to see our trip." The two-week trek across Europe will take place in June next year.

Colin has met other members of the team who will be riding their bikes to the camp. He will follow them in a support vehicle.

He said: "It was good to meet everyone and hear their stories.

"I'm looking forward to trip. I regularly drive to central Italy with a co-driver, but this time I'll be a passenger, so I can nod off."

Anyone who wants to donate money is asked to go to [www.greatescape2.net](http://www.greatescape2.net)

[Back](#)

© Copyright 2001-2010 Newsquest Media Group

**<http://www.gazette-news.co.uk>**