

# *The Great Escape* survivor taught at Dornoch Academy

JACK HARRISON, a veteran thought to be the last survivor of the Second World War prisoner of war breakout immortalised in the film *The Great Escape*, who died last Friday, was teaching at Dornoch Academy when he was called up.

Several people in the town still remember him.

Harrison, one of scores of Allied servicemen who tried to flee Stalag Luft III during the Second World War, passed away aged 97, at Erskine veterans' home in Bishopton, Renfrewshire.

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**by Alison Cameron**

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In the daring "great escape", a total of 76 prisoners broke out of the camp in March 1944, but only three reached safety. Fifty of those recaptured were shot.

Harrison was waiting to go down the tunnel when the underground escape attempt was noticed, and he frantically burned his forged documentation before changing back into a POW uniform.

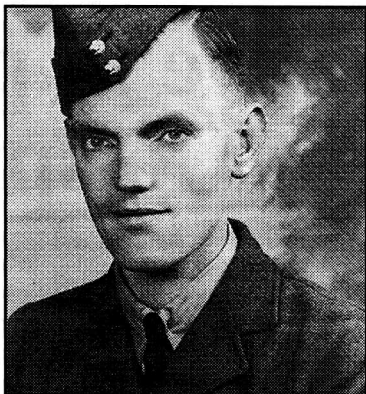
The episode was featured in the blockbusting 1963 film, which starred the likes of Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, James Garner and Richard Attenborough.

Mr Harrison had been working as a maths and classical teacher at Dornoch Academy when he was called up to serve in the RAF as a pilot.

He was shot down on his first mission in November 1942 to bomb German supply ships at the Dutch port of Den Helder.

After being captured by German forces, he was eventually transferred to Stalag Luft III on the Polish border.

On the night of March 24, 1944, around 200 prisoners prepared to escape through a tunnel, code-named



Harry, about 33ft (10m) under the ground. Two other passages, called Tom and Dick, had already been discovered by the camp guards.

Mr Harrison was number 98 on the escape list, but the breakout was noticed as the 77th POW was making his bid for freedom.

After the war, Mr Harrison returned to his wife Jean in Glasgow and resumed his career as a teacher there.

One of the Dornoch Academy pupils taught by him was Molly Sutherland, nee Gunn, of River Street, Dornoch. She says: "I remember him well. He was a very good teacher – very strict and I was a little bit scared of him but then I was only young. But he was also very fair.

"I remember that when he got married, some people threw confetti in the school and it got all over the floor. I got a row even though I hadn't thrown it.

"I recall him being very good looking as well!"

Another former pupil, who did not wish to be named, said: "I do remember him because he was quite striking. I don't think he was at Dornoch for long. I seem to remember he was somewhat strict with us all."