

Radion Theatre/BBC Lincolnshire

When Eamon de Valera visited Lincoln in 1950 he and Labour M.P. Fenner Brockway gave a talk about Irish unification to a crowd of 800 at this cinema. Brockway had been in Lincoln Prison in solitary confinement during the escape and the Irish rebels had smuggled out a letter to his wife. It is now the headquarters of the BBC Lincolnshire.



LCHS

In 1919, Lincoln Christ Hospital School was a hospital for British soldiers injured in World War One. Opposite the school was a stile where on that misty night some soldiers and their girlfriends (nurses from the hospital) were in the way. Frank Kelly vanished in the haze trying to find a way round, but the prisoners and their helpers bluffed their way past the obstacle and walked along the road towards the city.



Wragby Road

Three Irish rebels, Michael Collins, Harry Boland and Frank Kelly were watching the prison from Wragby Road. They saw the prisoners flash a signal using a match and replied using a torch.

Note:
There is no public access to the allotments. It is best to start a walking tour from Wragby Road.

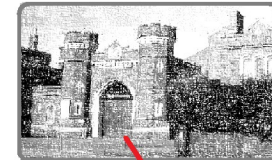
Allotments

The escapees met Frank Kelly, Michael Collins and Harry Boland at the back of the prison and made their way across the allotments toward Lincoln Christ Hospital.

Queensway

The day after the escape, the authorities found a grey sock down this street and thought it was prison issue, but it was a red herring.

Exercise yard



Prison

In 1918 during the dying months of World War One, the British concocted a story that Irish republicans were plotting with the Germans and had 70 leading rebels rounded up. Half were sent to Usk Prison and the rest, including Eamon de Valera, to Lincoln Prison (where a pacifist objector to the war, Fenner Brockway, was also in prison). Michael Collins, the head of the Irish republican intelligence network, evaded capture and was soon plotting to get them out. De Valera 'borrowed' a key off the prison chaplain, Peter Taylor, and other prisoners made a copy using materials smuggled into the prison in cakes. Around 7pm on the 3rd of February 1919, three of the prisoners including de Valera escaped using this homemade key to unlock their cells and then the door in the exercise yard.

Peacock

This part of Lincoln was far less built up in 1919 and this was the nearest pub to the prison, so the guards drank here. The escapees would have known this and hurried past.



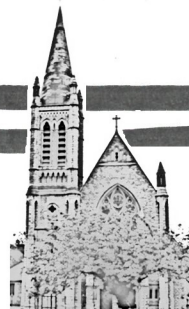
Adam and Eve

Here a taxi awaited to take the escapees out of the city to freedom.



Lindum Hill

While the escapees made their way via Worksop to a safe house in Manchester, their helpers (Collins and Boland) went down the hill catch a train to London.



St Hugh's

Eamon de Valera later became Prime Minister and President of Ireland. In 1950, he visited Lincoln and went to Mass at St Hugh's where Peter Tayler, the prison chaplain in 1919, was now the priest. It seems he forgave the rebels for stealing his key!

A map of Éamon de Valera's dramatic escape from Lincoln Prison

On the evening of the 3rd of February 1919 Éamon de Valera, arguably the most famous and influential Irish statesman of modern times, along with two other Irish rebels, Seán McGarry and Seán Milroy, dramatically escaped from Lincoln Prison. Follow their route down Wragby Road and Lindum Hill with this handy guide to his escape and his 1950 return to Lincoln.