



Pen & Sword Books Ltd

47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS

Tel: +44 (0)1226 734222 Fax: +44 (0)1226 734438

Email: enquiries@pen-and-sword.co.uk Website: www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

URN: 236855



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MILITARY

## Captive Scorpion

The Story of PoW Trooper Mick Holland of the Long Range Desert Group and his Nine Escape Attempts

**Author:** Brendan O'Carroll

### Highlights

- Holland served seven months with the Long Range Desert Group as an interpreter, medical orderly, and gunner, demonstrating versatility and courage in one of WWII's most specialized units.
- Captured in 1942, he made nine escape attempts—seven in Italy and two in Germany—spending more time evading capture than in PoW camps.
- Holland preferred to escape alone, using stealth, planning, and fluency in German and Italian to outwit his captors, embodying the LRDG's motto: "Not by Strength, by Guile."
- Final Bid for Freedom – In one of his most daring efforts, Holland stole a German Colonel's staff car and nearly reached the Swiss border before being recaptured at the final checkpoint.
- Highly illustrated with 250 images

### Description

Trooper Mick Holland served seven months with the Long Range Desert Group as an interpreter, medical orderly, and gunner until his capture in September 1942. From there until the end of the war he spent more time 'on the run' than in PoW camps. He made seven escape attempts in Italy and two in Germany. Holland's accounts take the reader on an incredible journey that exhibit an exceptional man with great tenacity and determination.

The story begins with his time in the LRDG and the events leading up to his capture. This is followed by an overview which describes the life and conditions in the PoW camps in Europe, subsequent chapters outline the dramatic stories of his nine escape attempts

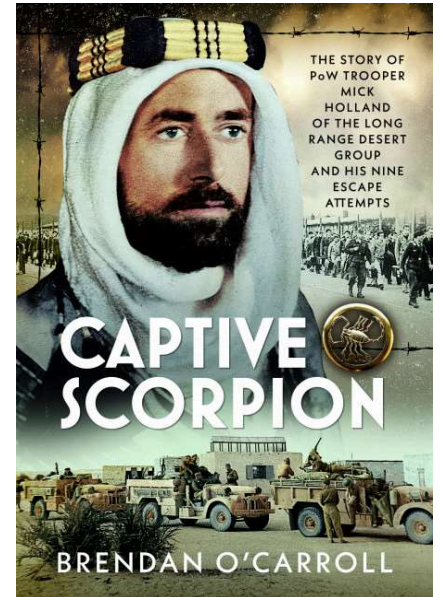
His evasion skills were reflective of the LRDG motto 'Not by Strength, by Guile'. Holland was a persistent and determined escaper who preferred to operate alone to bring less attention to himself. He gave his whole focus to the problems of planning escapes and was alert to seizing every opportunity and, if necessary, creating one.

Holland spoke both German and Italian and was very stoic in all he did. He fought with the Italian partisans for several months and on another occasion was intercepted by a German unit in Italy and was given the option of being returned to a PoW camp or being imbedded with them as an interpreter. The offer was accepted but after six weeks he found the opportunity to escape again. Later in Germany he stole a Colonel's staff car and almost made it to the Swiss border before being captured at the final checkpoint.

This is an engaging and dramatic story of an intelligent and resourceful man who utilised all his LRDG Special Forces skills to help evade the enemy and win his eventual freedom.

### Author Details

Brendan O'Carroll lives in Auckland, New Zealand and is now retired after 47 years with the New Zealand Customs Service. With a long time interest in military history, his speciality is the Long Range Desert Group. He interviewed over 30 veterans while writing *The Kiwi Scorpions: The Story of the New Zealanders in the LRDG* (2000), *Bearded Brigands* (2002), and *Barce Raid: The LRDG's Most Daring Exploit in World War Two*. (2005). His Pen and Sword titles include *The LRDG in the Aegean* (2020), *The Long Range Desert Group in Action 1940 -1943* (2020), *Fighting with the Long Range Desert Group*, *Merlyn Crow MM's War 1940-1945* (2022), *The Long Range Desert Group in North Africa* (2023), and *R Patrol Long Range Desert Group* (2024). He has written numerous other published works and articles. In 2006 his work was recognised by awards from the New Zealand Military Historical Society.



**Price:** £ 29.99  
**Price:** \$ 54.95  
**Pages:** 256  
**Trim:** 246x172  
**Format:** Hardback  
**ISBN:** 9781036146474  
**Illustrations:**  
250 mono illustrations

**Pub Month:** February 2026

**Imprint:**  
Pen & Sword Military  
**Subject:**  
Captive Scorpion

**Key Dates:**

**Regional Interest:**  
Nationwide; Worldwide

**Rights:**  
World language rights

**Author Local Area:**  
New Zealand

**Marketing Activity:**