On March 17th 2018, the members of the United Kingdom Escape Artists had their sixteenth Annual General Meeting at The Yeoman of England in Northampton.

As ever the meeting was a great opportunity for those that attended to not only learn about the craft but also to test and debut new and impressive escapes. We were also pleased to welcome back the founder member, James Peters.

The day consisted of lectures, demonstrations and escape challenges.

The first talk of the day was given by Chris Gower. Over the past 50 years Chris has built up the largest collection of handcuffs in Europe at nearly 1000 items. His talk was on Handcuff Keys and all members received a booklet which showed some
historical articles followed by photos of 50 Keys that he believes would open over 99% of handcuffs that might turn up in modern times. His specialty is opening high security locks and he went through the reason that Chubb introduced their Escort Handcuffs which replaced the Hiatt Home Office pattern in about 1966. Three main methods of accepting a challenge and escaping from them were demonstrated including showing a special pair that he made where any key would open them. He tried to demonstrate making a mold of the key and using epoxy resin to create a copy - this did not work and more research is clearly required. Finally he showed how to decode the key and demonstrated the specialized lock pick and decoder to open a pair of the Escort Handcuffs. However, he did point out that two hands are needed and doubted if picking the lock was feasible when on the wrists.

Later in the day, Weasel Dandaw showed the members a Chinese Torture Board that he had recreated along with Chris Gower. It had taken many hours to build, as they only had a photo to go by. This type of device was a form of punishment, which caused the wearer to endure hours/days of discomfort. It consists of a board that was locked around the neck & arms (similar to a pillory, but free standing) & then shackles were placed around the wrists. Weasel was placed in the CTB & the shackles were riveted shut. He then proceeded to slowly work the shackles until he managed to free first one hand, then the second. This wasn't done by slipping as the shackles were fitted with extra studs to prevent this. It was accomplished by slowly working each bow of the shackles until the rivet popped. He then went on to pick the main padlock & was able to completely liberate himself.
The David De-Val Straitjacket has been expertly remastered and reproduced by PropDog, Allan Taylor and the family of David De-Val. One of David's original Straitjackets was reverse engineered to make an exact copy which was then tested by various escape artists and members of the UKEA (United Kingdom Escape Artists) and improvements were made where they thought necessary, such as reinforcing the rivets on the inside of the jacket and the UKEA then gave it their official seal of approval, making this one of the best straitjackets ever created!

The gimmicks are in both sleeves and are expertly hidden, so much so that a spectator could completely examine it and even put the jacket on themselves without ever finding the secret.

One of the most important improvements on this straitjacket is that it comes in a small, medium and large. Something never done before with straitjackets, usually you end up with an extremely bad fitting one that's either way too tight or way too baggy. With our new size option, you can get one to fit perfectly!

As guide to sizing, think of it as purchasing a t-shirt or sweatshirt, if you wear a small t-shirt, then the small would be the best option, if you wear a large, then the large would be best. Please check out the videos below before purchasing, we go in depth into the sizes and this will help you make a decision based on your build.

If you purchase one of our straitjackets and find that it's either too big or too small, please don't worry! Just pop it back in the post to us and we'll exchange it for a bigger or smaller size. If you're a very large built person or quite overweight, you may struggle a bit with the large size. Please feel free to purchase the large and if you can't get in it, simply return it to us and we'll give you a full refund. If we get enough people wanting an even larger size, then we will produced an XL version in the future.

"Wild about Harry" John Cox" Houdini web site www.wildabouthoudini.com
On March 17th Wolflock married his sweetheart. This beautiful cake was made by his mother. Perfect for an escape artist!

Wouldn’t you just love to have a cake like that at your wedding! I wonder if Mrs. Cuchet is available for hire?
Our mate S. Rob is at it again. It’s back to the pen and paper to bring us Necromantic Occult Escapology. The basic premise of this book is to use Hermes, the messenger of the Greek Gods to access Hades. Hades of course is the Greek God of the dead.

This ritual comes with a warning, to use Hermes to close the door once finished with the ritual lest something unseemly occur.

Getting Hades interested in helping you out seems to include some form of sacrifice. Rob points out that for those who do not want to kill an animal or something like that there are alternatives. He will offer you a few in the book.

As usual, before getting into the rituals, Mr. Rob offers up a simple rope escape to use with his rituals. You can probably substitute any escape you like to work into your show. As usual the work is Mr. Rob is probably not for everyone, but it does have its’ place. Many people would probably not think of summoning the dead as part of an escape show, though I might point out that our figurehead leader in the escape world, Harry Houdini spent an incredible amount of time at seances. Even if he was there as a debunker most of the time, it seems like the two might go together better than you might think.

As I have pointed out before this kind of material might make nice window dressing for a show. Since Mr. Rob is using Greek Gods as a backdrop for this work, that might go very nicely with a hotel or theater that has a Greek motif. I can think of two off the top of my head, one in Atlantic City and the other in Las Vegas. These are two cities known for entertainment and at least Vegas is known for magic.

One of the possibly more controversial topics in this book is that of exorcism. Then again, what a great show it would be if the escape artist has been plagued with unsuccessful work must excise the demons before he can continue properly again. I could actually see that working and being entertaining.

S. Rob’s books are available from amazon.com. Check it out if you like!
Rebecca and Allan Taylor, holders of the 2017 Mick Hanzlik award, performed a double mail bag escape with a twist. Allan was secured into an original De-Val Straitjacket while Rebecca had handcuffs and leg restraints secured onto her. The bag was checked and a Padlock was chosen by Tony Gough from a pack of 3 sealed locks.

Allan and Rebecca were now in darkness and a race against time was in place so as not to breathe in the smoke. Dramatic music played along with lights highlighting the smoke filled bag, at 4 minutes 30 seconds, Allan appeared out of the bag just as the music changed into “Happiness” by Ken Dodd—Allan had a facemask and a hat as a sign of respect to Ken Dodd who has passed away earlier that week. To everyone’s surprised Rebecca also appeared, however she was secured into a second “new De-Val Straitjacket!

Allan and Rebecca entered the “clear” double bag and Tim secured the top with a bar and padlock, at this point the bag was filled up with Smoke!
The electric chair is known across the world as a method of execution. It is a very visual item to see up close and even more so when seeing someone sitting strapped in to it!

This year we saw Andy Robertson bring along a full size replica wooden electric chair complete with belt restraints fitted and a realistic head cap. To make things even more difficult Andy was blindfolded Andy demonstrated a full view escape attempt from the chair whilst securely restrained. The UKEA members were extremely impressed with the escape and performance and voted for Andy to receive the Mick Hanzlik award for best escape of the day. The Award is named after Houdini Historian and Master Locksmith Mick Hanzlik.

Tim gave us a fantastic demonstration of improvised restraints that he has been challenged with to extricate himself from his apprentice engineers in the interest of raising money for Teenage cancer trust. During the demo he shared some of the tools and concealment techniques he used to find my way out of their hideous creations. We would love to share some of the detail but it was just too good to share.

Tony Gough performed an escape that consisted of him sitting on a chair and being cuffed by the wrists on each side and to the chair arms. He had to pick his way out of each cuff in order to escape in time with dramatic music that finished with a large sound of an explosion. Tony made perfect timing and escaped just as the explosion went off.
It was also a double celebration as Mr Robertson also received the first “De-Val” award for his escape from Peterhead Prison Museum on the 31st of October 2017, which not only recreated the cell escape methodology made famous by UK Escapologist & Historian David De-Val and Harry Houdini but was the first time that any such escapology test escape had been made in Scotland.

The De-Val award is awarded for the best Escape / public demonstration of Escapology by an Escape Artist / performer in the twelve months between the AGM meetings.

Attendees: Allan Taylor, Rebecca Taylor, Joe Cooper, James Peters, Dan Robinson, Tony Gough, Andy Robertson, Chris Gower, Tim Houlton, Robin Fox.

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A special Chainletter thank you to Allan and Rebecca for reporting on this incredible event for all of us to read about! Break a Chain!
Recently I did a show in which I got to live out a special fantasy. I got to do something onstage I have wanted to do for years... No no, it is nothing inappropriate, so get your mind out of the gutter if you please.

The other thing is I could have made this happen anytime by stooging it, but I never did. It somehow seems wrong to make a laugh this way, and boy did I get a big laugh, it brought the house down.

These are the moments that make shows worth doing, where the audience gets to see just how quick you are and what happens when you can think fast on your feet.

Here is what happened, I was the emcee and escape artist in a show I do every year at the Westminster Community Playhouse as a fund raiser for the venue. I had walked out on stage to do my set as the “Escape artist” and I pulled out my trusty, time-worn and stained Straitjacket. A woman somewhere in the middle of the audience announced to the quiet and anticipating room, “Oh my god!”

With out missing a beat I whirled around looking over my shoulder back and forth and yelled, “Where?”

The woman laughed first, then it grew, and it got big. Everyone was laughing at the ridiculous assumption that I thought the woman had seen the good lord himself.

I enjoyed the laugh and let everyone think it was spontaneous; it wasn’t. The truth is I have been using that line for years in my classroom for years whenever a student announces that particular interjection. Worse yet, I stole it. It was uttered by The Joker in 1978 in a Batman comic book. And yes, I do remember that.

Want to learn more about S. Rob the world’s most prolific occult writer? Want to see his other books? https://www.srob.co.uk/