

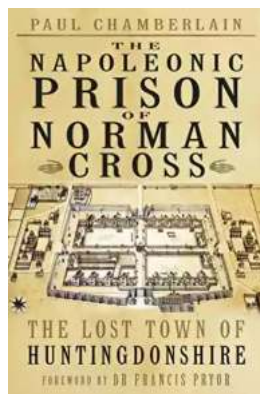
The Napoleonic Prison Of Norman Cross: A Forgotten Piece of History

Hidden deep in the English countryside lies a historical gem that has been largely forgotten over the years - the Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross. This article aims to shed light on this fascinating piece of history, exploring its origins, daily life within its walls, and its legacy in shaping the course of European history. Prepare to be transported back in time to a period of war, captivity, and resilience.

The Origins

Following Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the British government found itself facing an unprecedented challenge - what to do with the thousands of French prisoners of war they had captured. Norman Cross, located near Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, became the answer to this dilemma.

The site was selected for its strategic location, situated equidistant between London and York. Construction began in 1796, and by 1803, the prison was ready to accommodate up to 7,000 prisoners.



The Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross

by Chris Ward (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

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Life Within the Walls

Life at the Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross was far from glamorous. The prisoners, mostly soldiers from Napoleon's army, experienced cramped and unsanitary conditions. The huts they lived in were nothing more than wooden boxes, often overcrowded and infested with vermin.

However, the prisoners were not simply left to languish in their captivity. Far from it, they formed their own microcosm within the walls of the prison. They established a vibrant community, complete with makeshift schools, theaters, and even a market. French prisoners utilized their skills to create beautiful crafts and artwork, showcasing their creativity and resilience in the face of adversity.

Escape Attempts

Being held captive did not quell the prisoners' desire for freedom. The Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross became known for its numerous escape attempts, some of which were rather creative and audacious.

One such attempt involved a group of prisoners digging a tunnel several feet long under their hut. They managed to avoid detection until they emerged on the other side of the prison wall. Unfortunately, their plan was foiled when they were apprehended by patrolling guards just a few meters from freedom.

The Legacy

The Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross served as a significant turning point in the treatment of prisoners of war. It was the first purpose-built camp constructed solely for the purpose of incarcerating captured enemy soldiers. The success of

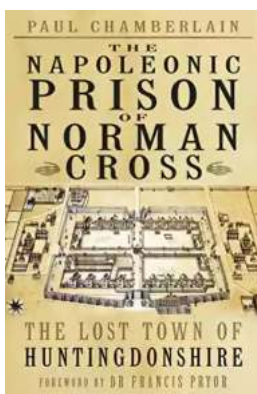
this prison influenced the construction and management of similar facilities throughout the 19th century.

Today, little remains of the original prison, but the memory of the thousands of men who lived within its walls lives on. The Norman Cross Prison Cemetery, located nearby, serves as a poignant reminder of the lives lost during those challenging times. Visitors can pay their respects and reflect on the human cost of war.

Uncovering History

The Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross is not a story often told, but it is one that deserves to be remembered. Its impact on the treatment of prisoners of war and its legacy in shaping the early 19th century make it a vital piece of history.

Next time you find yourself in the English countryside, take a detour to Norman Cross. Explore the site's history and appreciate the resilience and ingenuity of those who were once held captive within its walls. The Napoleonic Prison of Norman Cross may be forgotten, but its story should never be.



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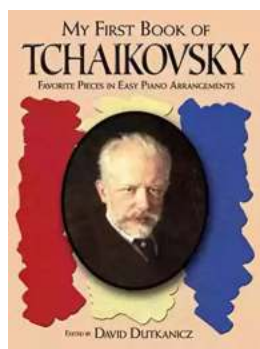


Norman Cross was the site of the world's first purpose-built prisoner-of-war camp built during the Napoleonic Wars. Opened in 1803, it was, however, more than just a prison: it was a town in itself, with houses, offices, butchers, bakers, a hospital, a school, a market and a banking system. It was an important prison and military establishment in the east of England with a lively community of some 7,000 French inmates. Alongside a detailed examination of the prison itself, this detailed and informative book, compiled by a leading expert on the Napoleonic era, explores what life was like for inmates and turnkeys alike – the clothing, food, health, education, punishment and, ultimately, the closure of the depot in 1814.



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