Chapter 5
Norman Cross: Designing and Operating an Eighteenth-Century British Prisoner of War Camp

Harold Mytum and Naomi Hall

Abstract Norman Cross, near Peterborough, England, was the first PoW camp designed on principles that have since become standard across the globe. Understanding this late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century internment camp can be achieved using a wide range of sources. Surviving craft manufactures and documentary and cartographic evidence create a rich resource that can be augmented by archaeological survey and limited excavation. Both the principles and practices applied by the camp administrators and aspects of the prisoners' lives can be identified and contrasted from these varied sources.

Introduction

The first ever prison built for prisoners of war was at Stapleton in Gloucestershire, close to Bristol, to house prisoners from the American War of Independence; little, however, is known of the layout of the early prison which was built in 1782 but reused in the Napoleonic war. The site was later converted into a workhouse and subsequently many of the original buildings were demolished to make way for a hospital. Norman Cross marks a turning point in the treatment of PoWs, despite being the second internment prison to be built, as its design was revolutionary and much more developed than what appears to have been constructed at Stapleton. It is remarkable how many of the features displayed at Norman Cross have recurred since

H. Mytum (✉)
Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, School of Histories, Languages and Cultures, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
e-mail: hmytum@liv.ac.uk

N. Hall
Wessex Archaeology, Salisbury, UK

H. Mytum and G. Carr (eds.), *Prisoners of War: Archaeology, Memory, and Heritage of 19th- and 20th-Century Mass Internment*, Contributions To Global Historical Archaeology 1,
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-4166-3_5,

at PoW camps across the world, largely through independent identification of the same key factors in managing and providing for potentially rebellious, militarily trained, inmates. It is fortunate that not only are there excellent (if at times conflicting and problematic) illustrations of the layout of the camp, but also almost the whole site has not suffered disturbance and much is still open fields. In contrast, a later prisoner of war establishment on Dartmoor has continued as one of Britain's most formidable prisons, still in use to this day (Evans 1982; Thomson 1907), and others have been adapted to various uses or demolished.

Historical Background

During the eighteenth century, increasing numbers of prisoners were captured and retained by the warring parties for the first time as by-product of a new form of conflict between emerging nation states. In Britain and across Europe, civilian prisons were used to house these inmates, as were converted barracks and other buildings in military installations and other civilian structures such as church crypts, caves, and disused industrial buildings (Abell 1914:207). Generally, however, these were *ad hoc* arrangements that involved adaptations largely to ensure short-term security and were not planned for the purpose of interning prisoners of war either in large numbers or for prolonged periods of time. From 1756, Sissinghurst and Portchester Castles, for example, were adapted for this purpose (Abell 1914; Cunliffe and Garratt 1995). British successes in military and particularly naval conflicts of the Napoleonic wars, combined with French refusal to exchange prisoners as regularly as had previously been the case, created an unprecedented number of prisoners. Although officers could be let out on parole, a new strategy had to be developed to house the large number of soldiers and sailors that entered captivity.

From initial hostilities in 1793, prisoners were shipped back to Britain and held in military buildings that were rapidly adapted for this purpose. As these became full, ships were acquired to serve as hulks but these were also quickly becoming occupied (Branch-Johnson 1970; Campbell 1994), and more investment was clearly necessary. Despite complex bureaucratic procedures that impeded progress, funds voted by Parliament in 1793 were eventually deployed to build a whole new complex for the specific purpose of incarcerating PoWs (Walker 1913:5–10). As with most subsequent policies for internment, the authorities at all stages underestimated the scale of the operation and did not appreciate the length of time that such centers would be required. By 1810 there were over 40,000 prisoners held, mainly at five locations of which Norman Cross was one of the largest (Table 5.1).

This chapter considers aspects of the planning and use of Norman Cross. The archaeological investigations allow some insights into the prisoner experience at the camp and, whilst the finds from the site and other items now in museums and private hands that are known to come from the camp cannot be tied closely to the various phases of occupation and use, they can be combined with the documentary sources as a whole and provide an important counterpoint to the official view of camp life.

Table 5.1 Number of PoWs at various locations in Britain, April 1810 (after Walker 1913, Appendix E)

Prison	Healthy	Sick	Total
Chatham	4,970	139	5,109
Dartmoor	5,269	85	5,354
Greenham	17	0	17
Norman Cross	6,236	36	6,272
Stapleton	4,705	92	4,797
Yarmouth	18	18	36
Forton prison and Portsmouth hulks	11,799	582	12,381
Plymouth prison and hulks	7,275	182	7,907
Total imprisoned	40,739	1,134	41,873
On Parole	2,538	172	2,710
Total POW	43,277	1,306	44,583

The Transport Commissioners began their planning for an internment camp in late 1796, and ignoring the obfuscation of the Barrack Master-General Oliver de Lancey, selected the Norman Cross site and made the necessary plans to commence construction that year. By the end of March 1797 the camp was staffed and ready to accept its first contingent of PoWs, with the first arriving on the April 7 (Walker 1913:11–16, 46). The combination of documentary sources, physical remains on the site, and the archaeological surveys and excavations combine to provide insights into the original design and modifications to this complex, and thus into the aspirations of the planners in the first place and of the users (both official and prisoner) on the other. A full appreciation of the problems encountered and solutions found by all parties would require larger scale excavation and analysis than has been carried out to date, though the trial work conducted in 2009 (Hall 2010a) indicates both significant indications of construction methods and life ways within the prison on the one hand, and the potential for more extensive investigation on the other.

At the end of the eighteenth century, British architects were well acquainted with the design and operation of prisons (Evans 1982), whether for felons or debtors, though in contrast there had been no demand to design and construct military barracks for standing forces at home. The character of PoWs was different, however, and so a particular response was required. The analysis of the earliest phase of the site, using the two earliest plans, termed by Walker (1913:18–19, Plate II) as the Hill (Fig. 5.1) and Washingley (Fig. 5.2) plans, reveals the layout of the complex in its early phase of use and can be combined with archaeological evidence to reveal detail on the methods of construction and site use.

Many features of the original design were retained throughout the history of the camp until most were demolished and the rest sold in 1816. There is not space here to consider all the changes made through this time, but sufficient to consider the original design and some relevant changes that allowed over 6,000 prisoners to survive within the physical and operational constraints that limited their choices but also created opportunities. It is possible to consider the authority's planning and implementation on the one hand, and the prisoner reaction on the other.

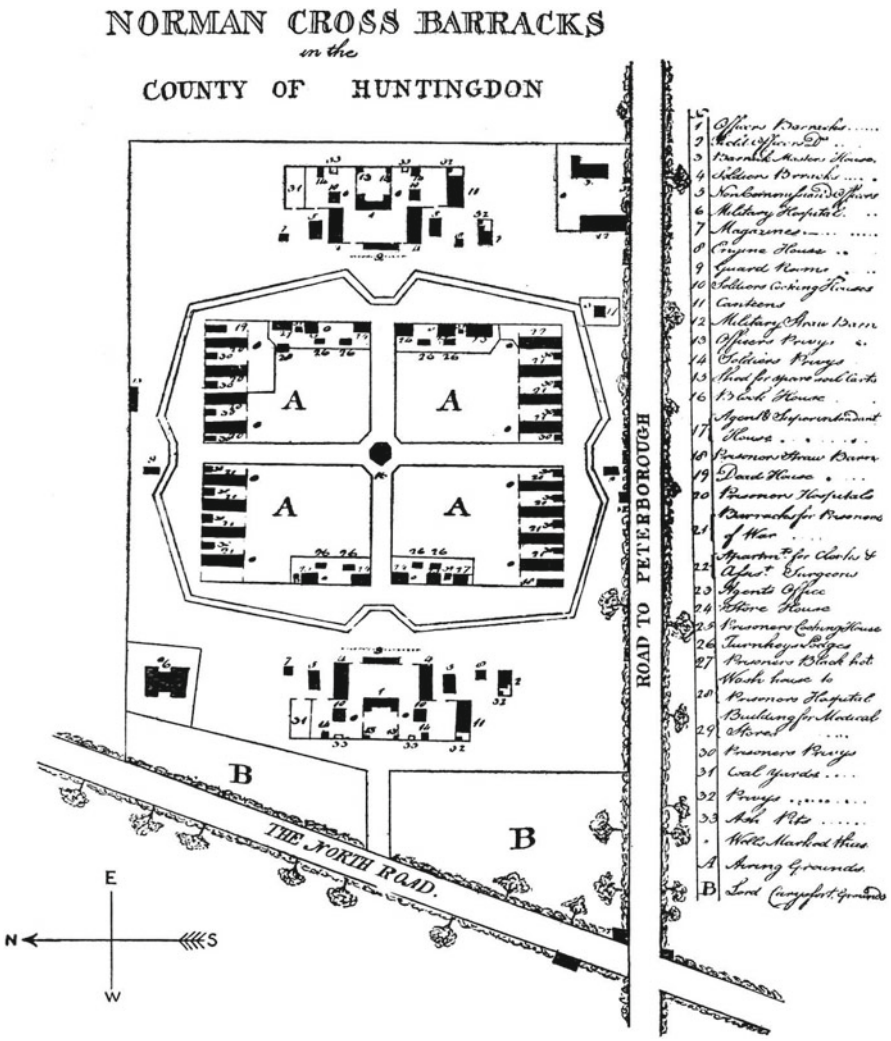

Fig. 5.1 Plan of Norman Cross 1797–1803 by Hill; note schematic North to the left (after Walker 1913)

Planning and Operation at Norman Cross

The camp had several functions: to prevent prisoner escape, to keep order within the camp, to prevent or at least limit disease, and to house and feed the prisoners. As nothing had been previously attempted on this scale, and use by PoWs was its only role, the design of Norman Camp is most enlightening. Each of these functions can therefore be considered in turn, with the solutions evaluated both in the light of

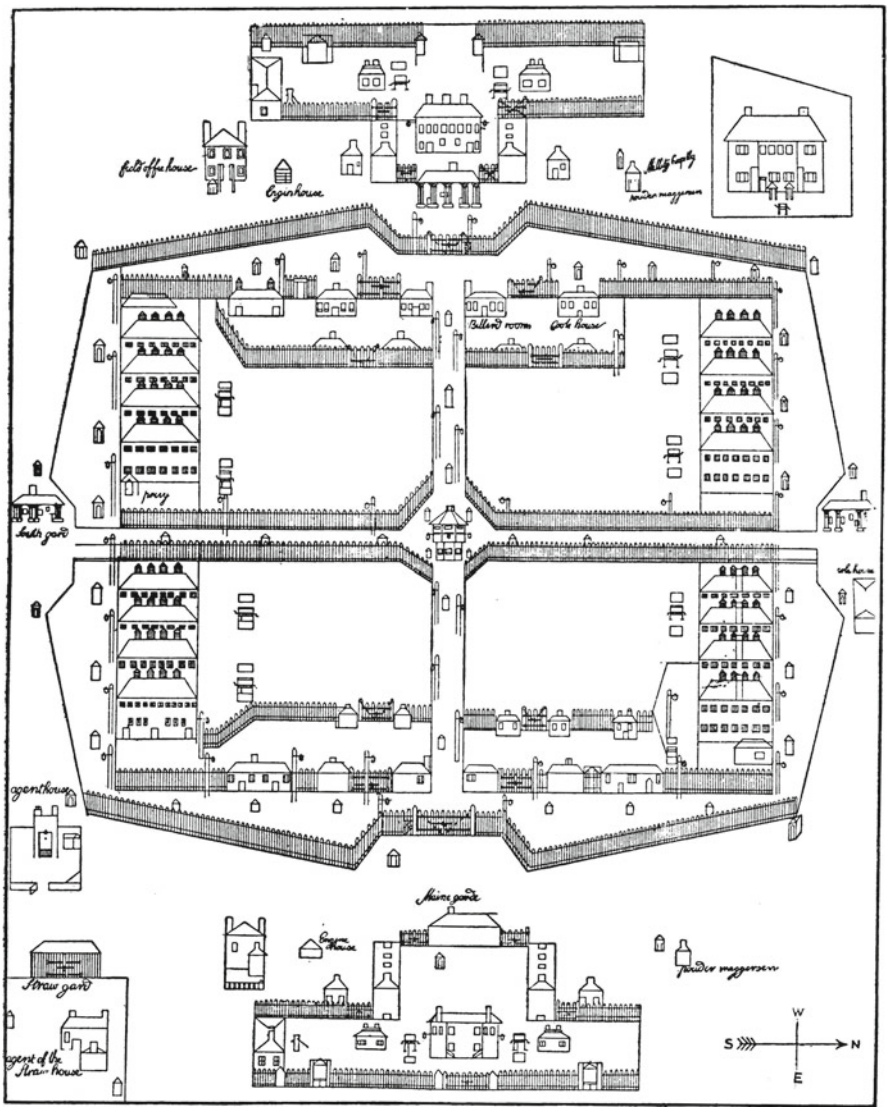

Fig. 5.2 Plan of Norman Cross 1797–1803 by Walshingley; note schematic North to the right (after Walker 1913)

contemporary experience but also as a blueprint that may have affected subsequent prisoner of war treatment by the British in the generations to come. Evidence comes from the Hill and Washingley plans, contemporary accounts of camp administration, surviving products of the camp craftsmen, and the archaeological investigations. This creates a clear picture of the organizational intentions and methods of the authorities and some of the legal and illicit activities of the internees as they attempted to make the most of their enforced incarceration.

Preventing Prisoner Escape

The prison location just outside the market town of Peterborough was selected as it was far from the sea, to make it difficult for any escapees to return to France, and away from any large population centers where it would be easier to merge into the crowded urban environment. However, the ease by which prisoners and supplies could be transported to the camp was also a factor in its location, meaning that security had to be a matter of high concern.

The design of the site was based around management of inmates within a secure environment. This was achieved through a series of boundary features, combined with internal divisions to control riots and a complex arrangement for observation. The basic shape of the camp was octagonal, though at the four cardinal points gates were set in recesses to increase control and improve visibility of the areas immediately outside the gates. Whilst this would have been partly linked to prevention of mass escape, it was also to control access to the camp and manage the external market that took place immediately outside the eastern gate.

The boundary of the internees' camp was originally marked by a timber palisade, though this was replaced by a brick wall, and a small length of this still survives. The wall was built after an attempted mass escape in September 1807 when the weakness of the perimeter fence was revealed after 500 prisoners managed to flatten a section and were only beaten back by soldiers using their bayonets, causing many injuries (Walker 191:154). The excavations across the line of the defenses were only narrow trenches (Fig. 5.3), so only one of the palisade postholes was located in Trench 1; it was substantial, and although truncated by later activity was still 1.2 m deep, indicating a significant line of defense. Contemporary maps and illustrations of the camp suggest that the internal and external palisades were all made to a height of about 4 m and could not be easily scaled. The surviving brick wall is to a similar height, and though for most of its length it was removed following the sale of the camp, the robber trench for this was found and suggests a foundation to match a wall of this height.

Walker described (1913:26) a 9 yard-wide wide ditch, dug to a depth of 5 feet around the camp perimeter, apparently only added in 1809 and paved to create what was termed the "silent walk" for sentries to patrol the exterior. Excavation has clarified this description (Hall 2010a). On the west side of the camp, Trench 1 was excavated to explore the boundary features. The inner ditch was 2.3 m wide and 0.7 m deep and with a slightly steeper outer face; beyond lay a more substantial steep-sided ditch, 2.7 m wide and not bottomed in the excavation because of safety reasons after reaching a depth of 1.1 m. The two ditches were separated by a shelf that probably marked the walkway described by Walker, but with the paving robbed out and only its base of compacted chalk and gravel remaining. Beyond these lay the bank which was not substantial at this point, this may explain why the later brick wall seems to run inside it here. Two parallel narrower ditches demarcating a roadway on this side of the camp that lay beyond the bank. The main camp ditches were also found on the northern perimeter in Trench 4 (Fig. 5.3), again with the walkway

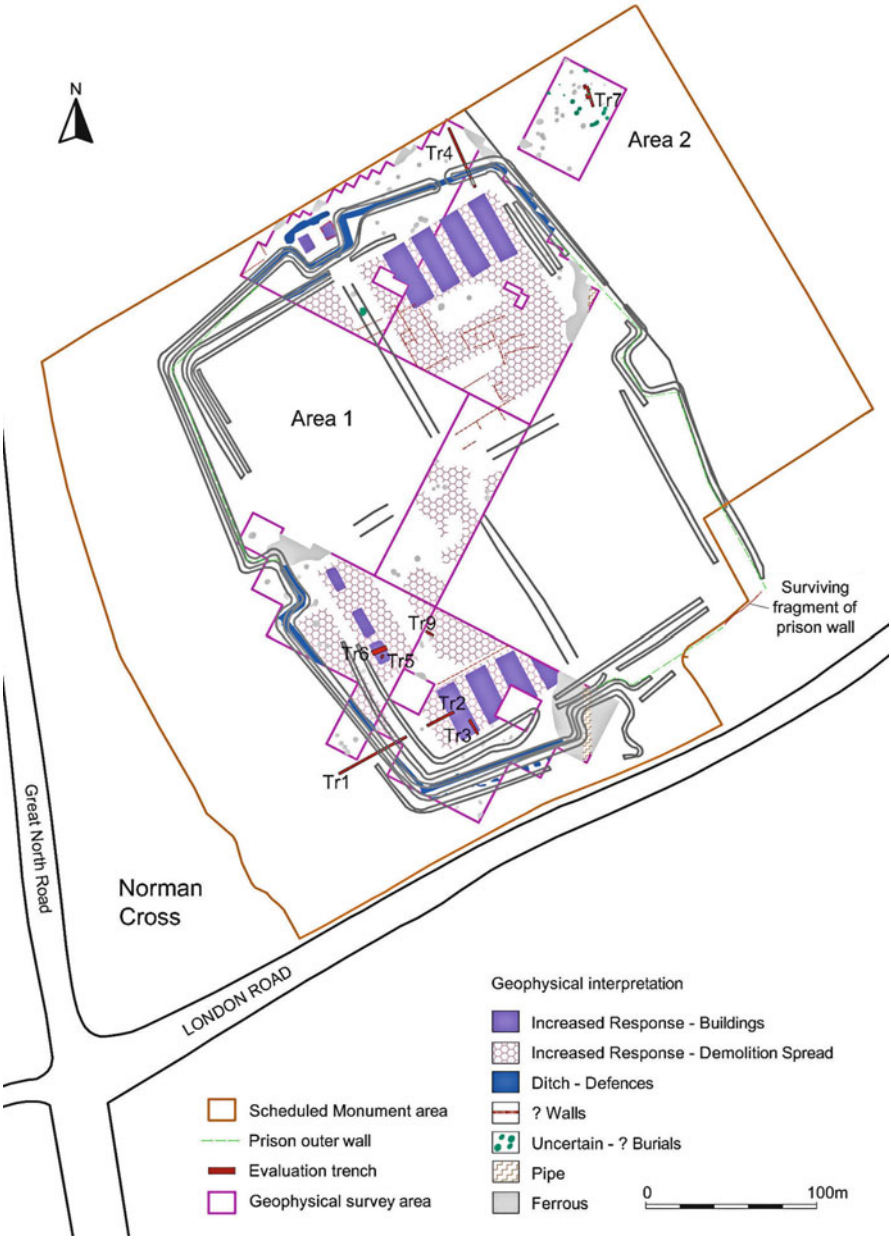

Fig. 5.3 Plan of geophysical survey results and excavation trenches (adapted by Kate Chapman from original courtesy Wessex Archaeology and GSB Prospection)

in between; the bank beyond the ditches was more substantial on this side of the camp, and here the northern edge was cut by the robber trench for the brick wall, indicating that on this side the wall was constructed on the outer edge of the bank. The changes in the alignment of the bank and wall show slight alterations over time in the outer definition of the camp, but these are relatively minor.

Either side of the gates and at the other external corners of the fort were wooden sentry boxes, within which the guards could shelter and between which they patrolled. This ensured that there were no escapes but also that neither illicit goods were smuggled in, nor illegal products of the craft workers were sent out of the camp. In total about 60 guards were on duty at any one time as sentries inside and outside the camp. The remainder of the soldiers was housed in barracks just outside the camp to the east and west, and could be engaged quickly in the event of a riot. In addition, the local yeomanry could be called up to provide extra support and look for any escapees.

Keeping Order Within the Camp

Some of the security measures within the camp acted to prevent escape, but they also represented a preventative level of security that controlled unrest and deterred escape attempts. The camp was split into four quarters, with roads bisecting the camp and defined on each side by palisades, making four large compounds (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). Along the external northern or southern edges of each compound were arranged four two-storey barracks buildings, with the northeastern compound largely set aside for the hospital wing. The ends of the barracks faced into a large open zone which acted as a recreation area, but access to this was restricted to the daytime and the barracks area was fenced off and locked at night by the turnkeys who had lodges in service compounds on the internal long sides of the quadrants. The turnkeys were the controllers of all access into the quadrants but also to the camp as a whole, and they were some of the few civilian workers in the camps.

Where the main roads met at the center of the camp, there was an open area in which stood a substantial timber building. This octagonal four-storey structure with cannons facing out of every side at the uppermost level was able to provide visibility for guards in all directions, who were able to look over the palisade fences and into the interiors of the exercise areas, as well as along the roads. The third floor had slits for viewing and muskets, with larger wide windows on the second floor. At ground level, there were four sentry boxes for the militia to stand guard. This concept of a central observation along the main route ways and from above down into the exercise yards had not been applied at previous prisons and marks a significant development in the control of prisoners of war.

The area between the palisaded quadrants and the exterior boundary was open ground of varying width, with six sentry boxes along each side, creating a dense pattern of guards that was matched by further sentry posts along the internal roads. Observation at night was enhanced by lamps on tall posts arranged outside all sides of the quadrant palisades. Whilst there was no externally raised walkway around the

perimeter, there was such a density of guards within and outside the camp that all movements could be easily observed. That illicit goods moved in and out of the camp was only possible because of bribery and collusion; several cases were reported, leading to disciplinary action for both guards and inmates. Smuggling was largely organized through the carriage of items on the body and within sacks of provisions, rather than over the palisades at night since this would have been observed by many men.

Miscreants in the camp could be punished by a range of penalties at the camp, from the least severe with a reduction of rations, to being sent to the camp's Black Hole which was located in the service enclosure in the hospital quadrant. This was a place where prisoners could be placed in unlit isolation; there are no detailed contemporary descriptions, and the excavations in the vicinity were inconclusive (Hall 2010a:13–14). Those for whom this was insufficient were sent to one of the hulks, clearly considered to be worse than being held in one of the land prisons. Other potential punishments included putting prisoners at the bottom of the list of potential exchange prisoners, or the closure of the market at the east gate of the prison, preventing access to luxuries and sale of prisoners' manufactures (Walker 1913, 64–65). British criminal law also applied within the camp, so prisoners could be taken to the local assizes and sentenced, with one being hanged for a stabbing.

Preventing and Limiting Disease

Despite the crowded housing, the requirement to be outside for a considerable portion of the day and the provision of latrines and good water supplies from wells in each exercise area created an infrastructure that was relatively resilient. Moreover, there were frequent medical inspections by both British doctors and French staff who ensured that there was effective communication. Any inmates considered at risk were moved to the medical wing.

At a very early stage, as the camp was being constructed, it was realized that some illness was inevitable within such a large population, and so some form of medical facilities should be incorporated into the design. The northeastern quadrant was planned with two barrack blocks reserved for the hospital, fenced off within this quadrant and with an additional building in the corner labeled as the dead house on Hall's plan. Here the deceased were laid until burial outside the camp. Whether this was so that bodies could be removed rapidly from the sick to allow the medical staff to identify cause of death and so consider any preventative measures, or whether it was to store bodies for a sufficient time that they were no longer attractive to body-snatchers is unknown. However, this was the period when illicit acquisition of bodies to supply the London and Scottish medical schools was a major concern (Mytum and Webb 2013), and internees' remains, with their graves unattended, would have been a ready source of supply. The hospital blocks had their own privies and also had a separate washhouse to limit the spread of disease, even though the epidemiology of many of the conditions was poorly understood.

Mortality at Norman Cross was not abnormally high, but large numbers of people living in close proximity with limited concepts and practices of hygiene inevitably led to sickness and death. Well over 1,700 prisoners are recorded as having died in the camp from the incomplete documentary record that survives, and this would have required a considerable amount of space for burial. A major typhoid epidemic in 1800–1801 caused the vast majority of deaths, and although a separate cemetery to house the 1,020 who died at this time was supposed to lie well to the west (Walker 1913:173), this was not located in the albeit limited trial excavations. For the rest of the time the mortality rate was relatively low, with only 18 dying in the whole of 1814 (Walker 1913:164). Many who died in the epidemic were those who gambled away their possessions and food rations, as discussed in the following section, and it would seem that in time they were allocated their own barrack block in the hospital quadrant, presumably to keep them away from the other prisoners both for their own safety and to isolate those most likely to succumb to infection from the more healthy inmates.

Walker (1913:173) notes that workmen digging for gravel had in his lifetime found human remains northeast of the camp, though he considered that this was not the main burial area. This burial area was confirmed by the archaeological investigations (Hall 2010a). Single and multi-occupant graves were found immediately to the north of the camp, east of the route in through the north gate, in Trench 4; more graves were located in Trench 7 further to the east (Fig. 5.3). The presence of nails suggests that simple wooden coffins were used, as was becoming common for even relatively poor civilians at this time. The graves were widely spaced in what might have been rows 4–5 m apart as this spacing can be seen in both trenches which, being 80 m apart, suggests that an extensive area was used for burial. The southeasterly edge of the cemetery cannot have been far from the soldiers' barracks and service buildings on the east side of the camp; its northern extent was not beyond those recovered in Trench 4, as evaluation excavation in the field to the north failed to locate any further interments (Hall 2010b).

The camp did not possess a consecrated burial ground, and it is of note that the burials were placed in a north–south orientation. Most of the prisoners were Roman Catholics, though some were Protestants; it would seem that no religious provision was made at the time of the funerals. In contrast, those soldiers who died whilst billeted at the camp's barracks were interred in the local churchyard at Yaxley and with a full burial service by the local priest or curate. However, the frequency of these deaths caused strain on the available churchyard space as the war dragged on. Land was therefore purchased next to the barracks southeast of the camp, and consecrated by the Bishop of Lincoln in 1813, though this area was subsequently incorporated into the garden of what had been the barrack-master's house (Walker 1913:175).

Housing and Feeding the Prisoners

The creation of living space for large numbers of prisoners was a challenge in itself, but this would have been unsuccessful if an infrastructure to support this population

Table 5.2 Food supplies for Norman Cross PoWs (from Walker 1913, 70–71)

Daily allowance after November 1997	
Beer	1 quart
Beef	8 ounces (replaced by fish on Wednesdays and Fridays)
Bread	26 ounces
Cheese	2 ounces (or 1/3 ounce salt butter)
Dried peas	1/2 pint
Fresh vegetables	1.5 pounds
Also 1/2 pound of soap and 3/4 pounds of tobacco leaf per month	
Daily allowance for hospital patients	
Tea	2 pints (1 pint morning, 1 pint afternoon)
White bread	1 pound
Beef or mutton	1 pound
Broth	1 pint
Green vegetables	1 pound (or 1 pound of potatoes)
Malt beer	2 quarts
Where required, fish, poultry, veal, lamb or eggs could be substituted	

was not also provided. Excavations demonstrated that the timber buildings were set on brick foundations (Hall 2010a, b), and the maps with elevation drawings such as that by Washingley (Fig. 5.2) demonstrates that the housing comprised two-storey barrack-like buildings, with glazed windows and brick chimneys. Walker (1913:91) calculates that the accommodation was very cramped. Hammocks were hung in threes, one above another on the ground floor, and in two layers on the higher floor. There was a width of only 0.6 m allocated within the building to accommodate each hammock, which suggests a very high density, though conditions for sailors at sea could be even worse, and may have been similar at least at times for soldiers in military barracks.

Supply of provisions for the prisoners was assisted by the location of Norman Cross. It was situated within a rich agricultural landscape, and was also at the intersection of two roads, that from the markets of Peterborough and the major north–south route way of the Great North Road, which allowed those who provided rations specified in contracts to deliver these easily by cart. Moreover, water transport allowed more distant supplies to be brought cheaply within a few miles of the site. The documentary sources indicate a diet similar in quantity to that provided for British soldiers, but this was adapted after November 1797 to better suit French culinary tastes (Walker 1913:69–72). The diet was particularly generous, and in theory flexible according to need, for those who were sufficiently ill to be housed in the hospital wing (Table 5.2). There were frequent complaints about the quality of the foodstuffs, and so it was agreed that prisoner representatives could be selected by the inmates to inspect the provisions as they were delivered. Sometimes extensive official investigations took place where quality was poor, and whilst some cases of corruption were uncovered it would seem that the prisoners had at least as good a diet as they would have received in the forces. The meals were prepared at a cook

house in each quadrant by some of the inmates with the necessary skills and selected by the prisoners themselves. As French cooks operated the kitchens, and were paid by the camp authorities for this responsibility, the meals could be prepared to menus that were culturally acceptable, and even if not very varied were sufficient to more than stave off starvation. A representative from each group of 12 inmates would be allowed access in turn to the cook house to receive the rations and return with them to his comrades; there were no designated dining areas.

Inmates were able to purchase additional food, of a variety of kinds, at the external market, according to a number of civilian accounts. Local people could bring their surplus produce for sale to the east gate market controlled by the military, where they could negotiate with internee representatives who would spend the prisoners' money and bring the items back into the camp. The archaeological evidence supports this with faunal remains of sheep, pig, rabbit, and poultry represented in the assemblages, indicating a varied diet for at least some (Grimm 2010). The cattle were generally adults, as were the sheep, perhaps reflecting the use of mutton, but the pigs were subadult, as would be expected to maximize meat levels. It is assumed that herbs and perhaps spices were used by the French cooks, but these are not attested archaeologically.

Prisoner Life Ways at Norman Cross

Whilst many aspects of life were heavily constrained both deliberately and incidentally by the design and operation of the camp, prisoners still had considerable flexibility in the ways that they could use their time and how they interacted with each other, with the prison personnel and, to a certain extent, even with the population beyond the gates. Unlike some of the hulks and other prisons (Cohen 1995; Denn 2004; Garneray 2003), no former inmates wrote accounts of their experiences that have survived, making the archaeology even more important as a source that can balance the official documentation. Nevertheless, there is sufficient material from a variety of sources to indicate a range of activities that took place within the camp and also the nature of commercial interactions with the outside world.

Daily Life in the Camp

Life within the camp was cramped, repetitive, and with limited choices. It was structured around blocks of time delimited by daily set times to rise and go to sleep and by meal times; by weekly events such as the markets; and by other rotas such as the 1 in 12 days when it was the turn of each internee to carry out the various camp chores required to keep the institution running. These would have included cleaning, minor maintenance, and emptying the latrines. Whilst the creation of material goods is the most lasting evidence of prisoners making use of their time (see below), other activities were also undertaken. Those with skills or knowledge would teach

others, for a fee, and some formed theater troupes and performed in the exercise areas. These activities are again often visible in later internment contexts, indicating a reaction to the unusually large amounts of time available, and to the potential improvement of prisoners' skills so that on release they could obtain more lucrative employment than they had been able to find previously.

Crafts and Manufactures

It is clear that there was already a tradition of military prisoners making craft items for sale in order to generate income that could be expended to supplement their diet and clothing, or even create savings that could taken out of the camp when prisoners were released. Manufacturing within Norman Cross comprised both officially sanctioned products that could be exchanged internally and sold at the east gate market, and illicit products that had to be smuggled out of the camp for sale, involving the complicity of camp guards or regular visitors to the camp such as suppliers of foodstuffs. A large number of items sold to local people or given to camp staff have survived; a substantial collection of over 250 bone and over 150 of straw marquetry items is housed at Peterborough Museum (Walker 1913:128–30), though many other examples are held in private collectors' hands (Lloyd 2007). What survives is often of high quality, and it is likely that many less impressive items that were made and sold have not been retained, creating a biased sample of the products of the time. Nevertheless, these reveal a wide range of skills and levels of ingenuity that were applied to the creation of items that were either to be worn or displayed as curios.Many items were specifically commissioned, and some clients purchased items over more than a decade (Lloyd 2007:99).

The official products consist mainly of objects made from bone, derived from the carcasses that arrived as part of the rations. The French cooks dismembered the animals into the joints for cooking, but could save the bones for use in the production of many different items. The animal bone must have been distributed through internal market systems within the camp about which nothing is known. Relatively simple bone dice, dominoes, pipe tampers, and apple corers are recorded, but other items were far more complex. Some of the bone products were elaborate models which have been retained and survive in various collections. They are formed from assembling large numbers of small bone elements to create miniature furniture, watch stands, and mirror surrounds (Lloyd 2007:104–27). Perhaps the most popular range of products were games, including chess pieces, boxes for cards, or boxed sets of dominoes (Lloyd 2007:192–219). The most elaborate products had working parts, ranging from small models of wagons with turning wheels to far more sophisticated items such as spinning jennies or guillotines (Lloyd 2007:163–91). Most of these items were quite small, despite their mechanical ingenuity, with the spinning jennies being up to 0.2 m high, though the guillotines could be as tall as 0.6 m. (Lloyd 2007:173). A small number of large models, such as a chateau 0.6 m high and 0.75 m long with moving water wheel and figures show what could be achieved,

but both limitations on available material, and probably the size of models desired by customers, limited the number of such items. Extremely accurate models of ships, some with small cast bronze cannon, were also produced (Lloyd 2007:128–59). Clearly the skills of the craftsmen and the prices charged for the items must have varied greatly. It is likely that some models were the creation of a number of workers, though little is known of the organization of production within the camps.

Straw was another product that could be used for decoration, often on frameworks of wood and incorporating limited amounts of bone and metalwork fittings such as handles and hinges. These gave the appearance of marquetry and were decorated with elaborate mainly geometric decoration, though sometimes more complex scenes could be produced (Lloyd 2007:47–103). Products included boxes and chests in many different designs, and some, including tea caddies, were decorated instead with rolled paper (Lloyd 2007:160–62); this material was also used to make artificial flowers set in frames (Walker 1913:182).

Another straw product that began as a legal item was that of plait, used in the decoration of hats. A few prisoners must have already been trained in this craft as it was a major industry in some regions of France, and the skills spread through the various PoW camps. Indeed, Inward (1922:17) notes that a machine for splitting the straw, made in bone and used by the prisoners, was then copied in iron by a Dunstable blacksmith for local plait producers, thus greatly increasing the British output. Straw could be turned into hats, bonnets, and baskets, or the decorative plait used as hat decoration. However, some parts of England has vibrant indigenous straw-working industry, such as that around Luton and Dunstable (Sharpe 1994), and after pressure from these areas the making of millenary in the camps, where labor was inevitably much cheaper, was banned in 1799, though the straw plait production was not prohibited until 1806 (Lloyd 2007:65). This then led to illicit movement in of straw, and removal of finished plait, a product relatively easily hidden compared with hats or baskets, and also for its size the most valuable.

Another illicit product was that of lewd or pornographic models and pictures, of which a few survive. Despite a generally earthy level of humor within military circles, these were greeted by strangely puritanical polemics by the authorities, an attitude repeated by Walker (1913:148). Certainly the surviving products do not suggest that the level of documented outrage was justified (Lloyd 2007:173), unlike the other major concern which was over the forgery of paper money, a new form of currency at this time and so relatively easy to copy. Forgery took place at a range of prisons, including Norman Cross (Walker 191:146–47), and was presumably either smuggled out or used to purchase goods at the east gate market.

The archaeological evidence for craft working is mainly in the form of worked bone waste (Mepham 2010). Even in the limited excavations, nearly 800 pieces were recovered. Most were small fragments indicating use of knives and saws for cutting, with lathes also used for turning. Walker (1913:131) had not thought that this technology was available within Norman Cross and that lathe-turned items must have come in from outside; this was clearly not the case, but given the value of more complex items it is likely that capital could have been accrued by prisoners to purchase such an item. A wide range of products were demonstrated in the unfinished or broken artifacts, including dominoes, dice, flea combs, buttons, handles and a

Fig. 5.4 Worked bone excavated at Norman Cross (Courtesy Wessex Archaeology)

crochet needle (Fig. 5.4). Various bone strips and other shaped items were also recovered. These may have been made as components of the more complex artifacts. Two fragments of ceramic tile in a fabric identical to those used for roofing the buildings were found in the plow zone. They are of particular interest because they had been deliberately shaped into small rectangles, perhaps as blanks for bead manufacture (Mepham 2010:15).

No certain craft tools were recovered, presumably because care was taken not to lose them within the camp as replacement would have been difficult and costly, and they would have been some of the few possessions taken away by those leaving the camp on release. The possible exceptions are three fragments of broken window glass with finely chipped edges, perhaps adapted to perform cutting or scraping functions (Mepham 2010:18). They were discarded as they would not have had any intrinsic value outside the camp where more effective metal tools would have been widely available. A small amount of slag related to iron smithing, but whether this was by the prisoners is unclear.

Gambling and Fighting

Official controls to prevent antisocial behavior were commonplace, and the turnkeys were in charge of discipline and could call upon troops if required. Disputes inevitably emerged in such overcrowded conditions with limited opportunities to escape clashing personalities or political or religious differences. Illicit weapons were manufactured and some were used, resulting in prosecutions.

One of the greatest sources of discord was the widespread gambling culture in which wages, food, and even clothing could be wagered on cards and dice. Domino sets as well as dice were manufactured for external sale (Fig. 5.4), but were clearly also widely available to inmates. Some of the gamblers were both unsuccessful and addicted, leading to destitution through wagering both the clothes they were wearing and their future rations. These desperate individuals were then highly vulnerable to the cold and infection and were ostracized by the majority of the inmates. These were named *Les Misérables* at Norman Camp, but a similar and better documented subculture is recorded at Dartmoor where they were known at the "Romans" (Daly 2004; Thomson 1907:45–58) where they were housed together and created their own brutal internal social structure. It seems that many at Norman Cross became housed in one barrack block in the quadrant with the hospital.

It is noteworthy that the reaction to internment creating the gambling passion is recorded at a variety of locations around Britain at this time, suggesting a common response to the stresses of incarceration. Such extreme reactions do not occur in later PoW contexts, though less dramatic versions may have been indulged in by those abandoning normal cultural norms in such circumstances. Moreover, Thomson (1907:52–53) gives examples of Dartmoor "Romans" who returned to successful conventional lifestyles after the war, which further suggests that this was a peculiar reaction to internment conditions, rather than the activities of inevitable gambling addicts for whom destitution in a different form would have been their fate in normal life.

Conclusions

The innovations at Norman Cross are both substantial and impressive. The arrangement of the secure perimeter and segregated compounds, an emphasis on order, observation, discipline, and a measure of self-governance amongst the inmates is often found elsewhere at later dates. The provision of a reasonable diet, accommodation, and exercise space, and the concern that the equivalent rights and facilities were available to those held by the enemy, created a dynamic that promoted a disciplined yet enlightened regime. Likewise, the allowing of craftwork and educational and cultural activities, accepted in earlier situations, was here shaped into a more structured form, as was the provision for medical care.

Designed and built rapidly, the deliberately transient construction at Norman Cross means that little remains above ground. Unlike Stapleton and the later camps at Dartmoor (built 1805) and Perth (built 1812), this was largely of wood and, given its limited maintenance and heavy occupation levels, it was not considered worth offering for reuse and was instead sold off at the end of the war. Although the PoWs were only present at Norman Cross from 1797 until 1802, and then again from 1803 until 1814, they too have left a legacy on the site and in their artwork that stands testament to their resilience and ingenuity, a phenomenon repeated in subsequent PoW experiences. Now the site has the archaeological advantage of being a

"greenfield" site, and its heritage value should not be underestimated. The initial research that has already been undertaken indicates its potential, and preservation and if possible further investigation is highly desirable.

Acknowledgments The excavations were originally part of a Time Team television program. The illustrative material from the excavations is courtesy of Wessex Archaeology and GSB Prospection, and their clients Videotext Communications.

References

Abell, F. (1914). *Prisoners of War in Britain 1756 to1815. A record of their lives, their romance and their sufferings*. London: Oxford University Press.

Branch-Johnson, W. (1970). *English prison hulks*. Chichester: Phillimore.

Campbell, C. (1994). *The intolerable hulks: British shipboard confinement 1776–1857*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books.

Cohen, S. S. (1995). *Yankee sailors in British Gaols: Prisoners of War at Forton Mill, 1777–1783*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Cunliffe, B. W., & Garratt, B. (1995). *Excavations at Portchester Castle Volume 5: Post-medieval 1609–1819*. London: Society of Antiquaries of London.

Daly, G. (2004). Napoleon's lost legions: French prisoners of war in Britain, 1803–1814. *History, 89*, 361–380.

Denn, R. J. (2004). Captivity narratives of the American Revolution. *Journal of American Culture, 2*(4), 575–582.

Evans, R. (1982). *The fabrication of virtue: English prison architecture 1750–1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garneray, L. (2003). *The floating prison: An account of nine years on a prison hulk during the Napoleonic Wars (Frenchman's account)*. London: Conway Maritime Press.

Grimm, J. (2010). Animal bone. In N. Hall (Ed.), *Norman Cross. Archaeological evaluation and assessment of results* (pp. 22–23). Wessex Archaeology Report reference: 71507.01. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/system/files/71507_TT%20Norman%20Cross.pdf

Hall, N. (2010a). *Norman Cross. Archaeological evaluation and assessment of results*. Wessex Archaeology Report reference: 71507.01. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/system/files/71507_TT%20Norman%20Cross.pdf

Hall, N. (2010b). *Norman Cross*, *Great Haddon*, *Peterborough*, *Cambridgeshire*. *Archaeological Evaluation Report*. Wessex Archaeology Report reference: 75670.02.

Inward, H. (1922). *Straw Hats, their history and manufacture*. London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons.

Lloyd, C. L. (2007). *The arts and crafts of Napoleonic and American Prisoners of War 1756–1816*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club.

Mepham, L. (2010). Worked bone. In N. Hall (Ed.), *Norman Cross. Archaeological evaluation and assessment of results* (pp. 23–24). Wessex Archaeology Report reference: 71507.01. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/system/files/71507_TT%20Norman%20Cross.pdf.

Mytum, H., & Webb, K. (2013). Bodysnatchers and Mortsafes: An archaeology of fear. In L. Burgess & H. Mytum (Eds.), *Death across the sea*: *Studies in British and American Historic Mortuary Practices*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

Sharpe, P. (1994). The women's harvest: Straw-plaiting and the representation of labouring women's employment, c. 1793–1885. *Rural History, 5*, 129–142.

Thomson, B. (1907). *Story of Dartmoor prison*. London: William Heinemann.

Walker, T. J. (1913). *The depot for prisoners of war at Norman Cross, Huntingdonshire 1796 to 1816*. London: Constable.