SITE 5: ‘EMPINGHAM 1968’
ROMANO-BRITISH MASONRY BUILDING AND CORN DRIER
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Introduction
This report on the 1968 excavations has been edited from an original unpublished report written by the director Anthea Diver. The corn drier was excavated in 1971 and planned by Bill Thomas. Between Easter and Midsummer 1968, a small excavation was carried out at SK 9425 0800, about 200m north of the river Gwash, just above the 60m contour. The site (code EMP 68 Site 3) had originally shown up as a dark soilmark after ploughing. An area of approximately 100 sq. m was stripped and a number of features were identified below about 0.25m of ploughsoil. Further excavation on the site was not possible because the field was needed for cropping. Further evidence of the site was detected in 1971, 10m to the south of the 1968 excavation at SK 9423 0798, when a stone-built structure was exposed by the mechanical scrapers.

Features Excavated in 1968
In the south-west corner of the excavated area, a 5m length of limestone walling faced on both sides, 0.75m thick and with a rubble core, ran in an easterly direction. The wall had been constructed within a foundation trench, the edges of which were filled with yellow sand. The wall then narrowed to 0.6m and began to curve north-eastward for a distance of 2.0m before being cut by a field drain running north-south across the site. The drain was of semicircular profile and covered with irregular limestone slabs along its entire length. East of the drain, a roughly aligned scatter of limestone rubble wall footings about 1.0m wide continued to curve northwards to form a shallow crescent but it is not clear whether they form a continuance of the same wall, as the alignment is slightly off set. The northern part of the stripped area was excavated more fully, and the walling was found to be mortared. At the northern end of this section of walling were traces of burning, though this was not intense enough or large enough to suggest a hearth. On excavation, the field drain was found to cut an oval-shaped pit feature with a dark fill, but containing no finds.

Features Excavated in 1971
Clearance of the overlying rubble left by the machines revealed a structure resembling a corn drier. Unfortunately, the south and west sides of the structure had been completely destroyed, but the remaining part comprised a flue running west to east for 1.75m, which turned at right angles to run south for 2.75m. The internal wall of the flue was created by a rectangle of well-jointed, smooth and very flat limestone slabs that showed signs of gentle heating and might have formed a drying floor. The external wall surrounding the flue was constructed of flat, faced limestone slabs of which three courses survived. The fill of the flue comprised a 50-70mm depth of dark, sooty material, indicating the lengthy use of the structure before its abandonment. However, the internal faces of the slabs forming the external flue wall showed no evidence of the burning apparent on the internal wall. Eight fragments of thin Collyweston limestone slabs (20-30mm thickness), were found in the flue on the north side, and these may have been used as roof covering. At the north-west corner of the structure was an area of intense burning to the limestone, mixed with dark charcoal-filled soil, indicating the stokehole.

Discussion
The features excavated in 1968 were associated with Roman pottery of later third and fourth century date (p.89). The sections of walling would thus appear to relate to one or more phases of buildings of later Roman date, but no overall plan is clear. Disturbance and robbing of the masonry probably occurred during construction of the field drain (undated, but probably medieval or post-medieval), as well as subsequent ploughing. No pottery was associated with the corn drier excavated immediately downslope to the south, so it is not possible to confirm the contemporaneity of the two structures. However, it is likely that the corn drier is also late Roman, and that together the structures formed part of a complex of outbuildings or a separate farmstead, contemporary and perhaps associated with, the villa on Site 2, lying 100m to the north.