

**SITE 6:**
**RENNER’S PARK ROMANO-BRITISH FARMSTEAD**

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**Introduction**
During 1973 and 1974, construction work continued to be monitored along the south-east bank of the proposed reservoir. The site (code EMP 73) was initially discovered in June 1973, in an area known as Renner’s Park about 100m north east of the north end of Normanton Hall gardens at SK 9362 0670, and excavations were directed by M.S. Gorin. The site comprises a series of loosely associated features excavated separately which seem to centre on a group of masonry buildings, and include a well, an H-shaped corn drier, and an ironworking furnace. Unfortunately, only the corn drier was planned in detail (fig. 24), and no overall plan of the features was made. This report is based on the photographic evidence and site records.

**Description of the Excavated Features**

*The Buildings*
The buildings and well were discovered during the construction of a large pipe trench on the south shore of the reservoir. The pipe trench cut directly through the complex of buildings which could not be recorded before they were destroyed. A portion of the complex was temporarily preserved under a roadway for construction traffic, but by the time this area was available for examination, the traffic had caused so much damage that the surviving evidence was impossible to record. The buildings were clearly constructed with foundations of limestone masonry blocks and spread over an area of 60m east-west by 30m north-south.

*The Well*
The well lay in the western part of the building complex. During the excavation of the pipe trench, a machine operator noticed that a well had been cut through and that half of it was preserved in the south section. The well had been cut to a depth of 2.85m, but fortunately the remaining depth of 1.75m below this was undamaged. The well was circular and constructed almost entirely of ironstone blocks, with occasional limestone blocks as well. The lowest two courses were of larger blocks, giving an irregular squared off impression. The internal diameter of the structure at the bottom was 0.68m east-west, and 0.57m north-south.
The total depth of 4.6m was backfilled with a mix of domestic rubbish and masonry rubble. The lowest 0.75m was taken up by a large square masonry block, with a mortice slot cut into its upper surface, probably the pivot for a door or gate post. In addition there was a discrete group of substantially complete pottery vessels of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware and grey ware (p.89 nos. 122-129), and a fragment of leather which may have been from a sandal, but which is now lost. The fill immediately above this for a metre comprised mainly animal bone, and a small amount of pottery. The bulk of the fill in the top 2.85m had fallen out of the open section, but it was clear from what remained that the top part of the well had been filled with domestic rubbish including animal bone and limestone and ironstone rubble, but no pottery.

The Corn Drier
About 30m north of the complex of buildings, lay a corn drier (fig. 24), built on a north-south axis with the firing chamber at the south end. Machinery had already removed the 0.25m of topsoil overlying the structure and ploughing may well have caused some damage. However, the lack of surrounding rubble suggested that the structure had survived more or less intact. The flue leading from the firing chamber was constructed of ironstone and limestone blocks. The rest of the structure was constructed of pitched limestone slabs, in places formed in herring-bone fashion, set into the surrounding ironstone. The flues would appear to have been covered by large limestone slabs, one of which was found in the main flue. The slabs varied from between 50-90mm in thickness. The fill of the flue contained a small colour coated ware beaker of later third or fourth century date (p.89 no.130), and more pottery was recovered from the fill of the main firing area.

The Ironworking Furnace
In June 1974, a hearth was discovered 40m to the east of the corn drier. Only the lower 0.25m of the structure remained undamaged; it was orientated in a west-east direction, with the flue to the west. The structure had been dug into the natural ironstone and was 0.95 – 1.0m long. The flue was 0.35m long, and 0.15m wide. The floor of the flue and the chamber was covered by a 20-30mm thick layer of fine (fire) deposit. Lying partially in this layer within the large chamber, was a large slab of stone (0.5m x 0.35m x 0.07m) which was heavily burnt. A larger slab of the same thickness overlay this (0.5m x 0.6m), and was partially burnt on its lower surface. It became apparent once the chamber had been fully excavated that it was rectangular in shape rather than circular, and its dimensions were identical to that of the large slab, suggesting that the slab may have acted as a covering to the chamber. The rubble filling of the structure above these slabs, contained two crushed pots, one in greyware, the other buff. Unfortunately this feature was neither planned nor photographed.

Discussion
The evidence for this settlement is very fragmentary but appears to reflect the pattern more clearly defined on Site 1, with a collection of features of agricultural and industrial function centred around a masonry farmstead. The dating derived from the fills of the features indicates a fourth century date for their abandonment, but the previous development of the site is unknown.

During periods of low rainfall in the summers of 1990 and 1991 the level of the reservoir was low enough to expose the area of the site, and it was observed that the building complex destroyed by the pipe trench extended further to the east. The topsoil that had previously masked it had been washed away to reveal sections of masonry walling (B. Thomas pers. comm.). However, no records of these observations were made.