

BRANSTON Barn, Rectory Lane
(Grid reference TF019673)

Catherine M. Wilson

A substantial stone-built barn just off Rectory Lane in Branston was purchased during 1980 for conversion to a house. The barn was of considerable interest since, as well as its original agricultural use, it had also been used as a gas works and a cornmill.

The owner kindly allowed the Industrial Archaeology Sub-Committee to survey the remains before their removal.

The barn itself was probably built in the 18th century but its industrial activities belong to the end of the 19th

century. White's Directory for 1892 records for Branston that 'the village has much improved during the last 20 years and private gas works were erected by the late Hon. Alexander Leslie-Melville from which gas is supplied to many of the houses'. There were few remains of the gas works, all retorts, purifying equipment etc., having been removed sometime ago. The pits for the gas holders were, however, clearly visible as was the concrete base for the scrubber. We were fortunate in being able to copy a photograph (Plate IV) taken in the 1920s showing the equipment *in situ*. The owner of the photograph, Mr Footitt, thought that the gas works went out of use about 1930.



Plate IV Branston barn. The gas works with equipment *in situ*, 1920s.
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Plate V Branston barn. A similar view today. Catherine M. Wilson.

The cornmilling equipment consisted of two pairs of stones, one pair Peak stones on a fairly conventional hurst frame (Plate VI), the other pair, French stones, at a higher level and on an unusual long cast iron shaft with a decorative cast iron column containing the tentering adjustment. It is possible that this second pair of stones was re-used from a watermill and installed later than the first pair. Both pairs were under-driven by a steam engine in a lean-to on the end of the barn. The surviving chimney seems to relate to this engine, rather than to the gas works.



Plate VI Branston barn. The drive gear to the Peak stones.
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