

Buckden Palace

Buckden Palace was a residence of the medieval bishops of Lincoln, allowing a midway break on the journey from London to their cathedral city. This Episcopal palace was entirely rebuilt in brick by Thomas Rotherham, who became bishop in 1472. After his transfer to York in 1480, it was completed by Bishop Russell.

The dominant feature is a tower modeled on the great brick tower at Tattershall Castle. Buckden's tower house is oblong in plan with octagonal corner turrets rising above parapet level. However, it is less ambitious in scale and lacks the machicolated crown, which gives Tattershall such distinction.

The broad chimneybreast is a prominent and altogether domestic feature. Another obvious weakness is the tower's proximity to the steeple of the parish church. They are separated only by the width of the former moat. This is typical of the castellated mansions of the later Middle Ages and shows that the builder was more interested in status than defense, though such towers must have had some value as refuge in the event of local danger.

The tower house could serve as a self-contained residence but the palace buildings were far more extensive. The inner courtyard contained a lavish suite of residential buildings and it is a pity they have all vanished. It is unusual to find a courtyard of this era, which is not quadrangular, so the layout was probably dictated by an older moated enclosure.

As well as the tower house, the inner courtyard preserves its diapered gate tower, with a range of ancillary buildings attached and the length of wall connecting the gatehouse to the tower house. This wall is pierced by arrow-slits but is too thin for a genuine curtain - the wall-walk is carried on a row of arches. Much of the precinct wall survives, as well as an outer gate giving access from the High Street.