

Wingfield Manor

At South Wingfield are the stately ruins of a mansion erected by Sir Ralph Cromwell in the 1440s. Lord Cromwell was High Treasurer of England and builder of the grass brick tower at Tattershall Castle. Unlike Tattershall, Wingfield Manor is all of one period and entirely of stone.

It follows the late medieval trend for two courtyards, one containing Cromwell's residential buildings and the other a base court for retainers. This arrangement is often described as a security measure but here the distinction was purely a social one. Neither courtyard can be described as defensive and both are entered by gatehouses that have side arches for pedestrians in addition to the main arch. The flanking turrets cannot make up for such a weakness. In fact the only defensive feature, apart from the commanding position above the River Amber, is an oblong tower house rising at one corner of the inner courtyard.

Tattershall's tower was a comfortable residence and a symbol of lordship, but the tower here is a comparatively modest affair and can never have dominated the mansion. Its outer half was blasted down after the Civil War. The tower house is unusual for its distance from the principal apartments, which are situated at the far end of the courtyard. The hall is notable for its porch, its bay window and its vaulted undercroft. It is peculiar to find the solar and the domestic offices lumped together beyond the west end of the hall.

Shortly before his death in 145, Lord Cromwell sold the mansion to John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. It remained in Talbot hands for over a century. During that time Mary Queen of Scots spent portions of her long imprisonment here, in some discomfort. In 1643, the house was wrested from the Roundheads by the Earl of Newcastle.